

Favorite Holiday Recipes

The Best Recipes for Special Occasions



**Tested recipes for
Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, and more.**

Thank you, Nancy!

We wish to extend a warm and gracious “thank you” to Nancy Rogers, owner of Nancy’s Kitchen for her generous contribution of recipes and advice for this book.

Nancy’s web site can be found at www.nancys-kitchen.com

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Table of Contents

Foreword.....	4
What's for Breakfast (or Brunch)?.....	5
Bacon and Cheddar Corn Pancakes	6
Pumpkin Pancakes.....	7
Orange Marmalade Syrup Recipe	7
Cranberry Orange Scones	8
California Golden Raisin Muffins	9
Country Breakfast Pizza	11
Make Easy Pannekoeken for the Holidays	12
Traditional Dutch Pannekoeken.....	13
Easy Baked Omelet.....	14
Texas Chili Corn Bread	15
Getting Ready for the Big Day	16
Selecting and Baking Your Holiday Ham	17
Holiday Cranberry Relish.....	19
How to Make Better Mashed Potatoes	19
Garlic Mashed Potatoes	20
Thanksgiving Potatoes	20
Twice Baked Potatoes.....	20
Butternut Squash and Green Beans with Maple Syrup.....	22
How to Peel and Cube a Butternut Squash	23
Spicy Candied Yams	23
Louisiana Candied Yams.....	24
Turkey Dressing.....	24
Holiday Ambrosia	25
Cranberry Peach Cobbler.....	26
Turkey Divan Casserole	26
Green Bean Casserole	27
Scalloped Corn Casserole.....	28
Turkey Enchiladas.....	28
Black Bean and Rice Chili Recipe	29
Chicken, Bacon, and Tomato Salad	30
Breads	32
How to Make Kaiser Rolls	33
How to Make Easy Challah (Braided Bread).....	34
How to Make Cheesy Dinner Rolls	36
Pepper Cheddar Bread	37
How to Make Easy Sourdough Bread.....	38
October Pumpkin Bread Recipe	41
Sweet Chocolate Braided Bread.....	42
Sweet Afterthoughts.....	45
Plum Pudding.....	45
Pumpkin Pie Squares.....	47
Impossible Pumpkin Pie	48
Orange Walnut Coffeecake	49
Pumpkin Cheesecake in a Gingersnap Crust	50
Cranberry Nut Cheesecake.....	51
White Chocolate Cheesecake	53
German Chocolate Cheesecake.....	54

Foreword

Everyone loves a holiday. Holidays are for celebrations, for worship, for friends and family, and for good times. And the centerpiece for many of these good times is food. Whether it's a gracious dinner, a warm brunch, or a casual meal with friends, we always look forward to the food.

There's a special joy in making really great food and serving it to our family or friends. For these occasions, the time in the kitchen is not a chore and we want to serve the very best. It is for these times that we put together this book.

Here you will find many of our favorite recipes—recipes that we have come to love and that we love to share. You'll find breakfast and brunch recipes, recipes fit for a Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner, great breads, and scrumptious desserts. We hope that you love them as much as we do.

Because we're bakers, not chefs, we approached our friend, Nancy Rogers, who owns Nancy's Kitchen, and asked for her help. She loves to cook, knows recipes, and has thousands of cookbooks. She graciously consented to help us with this volume by sharing holiday recipes that she has used for years and trusts. We appreciate her warm generosity.

Every recipe in this book has been tested, either by the staff at The Prepared Pantry or by Nancy. That doesn't mean that all are foolproof for no recipe is but these are deemed reliable and should work very well for you.

We hope that you enjoy this book and that it is a wonderful resource, providing ideas and recipes for your family and friends for years to come.

Sincerely,

Dennis and Merri Ann Weaver
[The Prepared Pantry](#)

Part 1: What's for Breakfast (or Brunch)?

Holidays and special guests provide the opportunity to make something special for breakfast—and often it's a late breakfast or brunch. These are special times when we linger and enjoy our family or friends. Something special is what we want to cook. Here you will find some favorites.

In this section you will find recipes for special pancakes, for scones and muffins, pannekoeken and omelets. You'll find a breakfast pizza and skillet cornbread.

We think you will love these recipes.



Bacon and Cheddar Corn Pancakes

When we started this recipe, we intended to make a savory pancake, one that would work for lunch or a quick, light dinner but these pancakes are so good with maple syrup, we thought it perfect for breakfast or brunch—especially for a holiday or guests. If you do choose these for lunch or dinner, try a milk gravy or a cheddar sauce.

This recipe calls for corn kernels. You can use canned, fresh cooked, or frozen. In the summer, it's a good way to use a couple of ears of leftover corn from the night before.



Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups cornmeal
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1/2 of a 12-ounce package of bacon, cooked crisply
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 2 large eggs, whisked
- 4 tablespoons melted butter or oil
- 1 1/2 cups buttermilk
- additional milk if required
- 1 cup grated cheddar cheese
- 1 cup corn kernels

Directions

1. Mix the milk and cornmeal together in a large bowl. Set it side. Soaking will help soften the cornmeal for a smoother pancake. Snip the bacon into pieces and set aside.
2. In another bowl, mix the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt and sugar together. Set aside.
3. Add the eggs, melted butter, and buttermilk into the cornmeal mix. Add the flour mixture to that and stir until combined but not smooth. Do not over mix. Fold in the bacon, cheddar, and corn kernels.
4. Pour about 1/2 cup of batter onto a hot, lightly-greased griddle. Cook for about two minutes on medium heat or until the edges are set and the bubbles begin to cook into open craters. Turn over and cook on the other side. Serve hot.

Pumpkin Pancakes

You can make these pumpkin pancakes with a mix or with your favorite recipe. For testing, we used our [buttermilk pancake mix](#). You can use a good [whole wheat pancake mix](#) or even your favorite “from scratch” recipe.

The recipe that follows makes six large pancakes. If you are cooking for a family, double or triple the recipe.

Ingredients

1 1/2 cups [pancake mix](#)
1 teaspoon [cinnamon](#)
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1 large egg
1 tablespoon brown sugar, packed
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
3/4 cup canned or pureed pumpkin
1 cup water, more or less

Directions

1. In a medium bowl, mix the pancake mix and spices together.
2. In another bowl, whisk the egg and the brown sugar together. Stir in the oil, the pumpkin, and most of the water.
3. Add the liquid ingredients to the dry ingredients. Stir with a spatula until just combined adding more water to obtain the right consistency. Serve hot with maple syrup.

Baker's note: If you are using a “scratch” recipe, follow the recipe directions but used reduced liquid to compensate for the liquid in the pumpkin puree.

Orange Marmalade Syrup Recipe

Try this syrup on your pancakes or waffles. It also works well on ice cream or as a sauce for your favorite dessert.

3/4 cup sugar
1 1/2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 1/4 cups orange juice
3 tablespoons butter
1/2 cup water
1 tablespoon grated orange peel

Mix the sugar and cornstarch in a saucepan. Add the juice, butter, and water and bring to a boil, stirring as needed. Add the orange peel.

Cranberry Orange Scones

We're partial to the combination of orange and cranberry and so this makes one of our favorite scone recipes.

Dried cranberries are so flavorful—we wanted to load this scone recipe with orange to balance the abundance of cranberries. So we used the zest from two oranges, orange-flavored yogurt, and the juice to make an orange glaze. These are not boring scones.

You can use any quality dried cranberries in this recipe. We recommend that you try our [super. cold-processed cranberries](#). Instead of being processed with a hot corn syrup bath, these are cold-processed and not partially juiced so that more of the pectin and juice remains with the berry for a brighter flavor and color.

We cut out these scones with a [donut and biscuit cutter](#) but of course, you can cut them into wedges or squares.



Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon [cinnamon](#)
1/4 cup very cold butter
3/4 cup [dried cranberries](#)
zest from two oranges (reserve 1/2 teaspoon for the orange glaze)
1 large egg yolk
3 tablespoons brown sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 six-ounce tub of orange-flavored yogurt

For the glaze:

1 cup powdered sugar
1-2 tablespoons orange juice
1/2 teaspoon orange zest
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Directions

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

1. In a large bowl, stir together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and cinnamon. Use a pastry knife to cut the butter into the dry ingredients until the mixture is coarse and uniform. Stir in the cranberries and zest.

Baker's note: Use very cold butter. The secret to flaky scones is to keep the butter a solid. If the dough gets warm enough to melt the butter before baking, you will have a very different consistency. The little pieces of butter create steamy pockets in the scones in the hot oven.

2. In a small bowl, mix the egg yolk, brown sugar, vanilla, and yogurt together. Form a well in the dry ingredients and pour in the liquid mixture. Stir to combine then remove to a floured counter and knead until almost uniform.

Baker's note: Do not over-knead. Too much kneading will develop the gluten in the flour and make the scone tough.

3. Pat the dough into a 3/4-inch thick circle. Cut into wedges or circles. Place the scones on a lightly-greased baking sheet.

Baker's note: Use a cookie cutter or a glass with the edges dipped in flour to cut shapes. Do not pat the edges down but leave the cuts as sharp as possible to allow the scones to rise in layers.

Work the cut dough pieces as little as possible. The more you handle the dough, the more the gluten will be developed and the more likely the butter will melt. Either will cause tougher scones.

4. Bake for 10 to 14 minutes or until the tops are lightly browned. Remove to a rack to cool. Serve warm.

To make the glaze, stir the powdered sugar and orange juice to get a drizzling consistency. Add the zest and vanilla.

California Golden Raisin Muffins

One of our practice recipes in our [free baking lessons](#) is a wonderful bread called [Golden California Raisin Bread](#). It's made with plump golden raisins and a touch of orange and cinnamon. There was just one thing wrong--we have to wait for the yeast to rise to enjoy this combination of flavors. So we set out to make muffins with those same flavors. Now we can wake up to the aroma of golden raisins, orange, and cinnamon.

This is a wonderful muffin to serve to your guests or your family on that special occasion. There are so many special flavors in this recipe that it really is an interesting, complex muffin.



The recipe calls for your choice of part rye, whole wheat, or all-purpose flour. Hands down, our favorite is the rye flour. [Rye flour](#) does have gluten-forming proteins and therefore makes the muffins especially tender. Rye flour has a very mild, distinct flavor—not the strong caraway flavor often associated with rye breads. The slight, background flavor of the rye adds to the mystique of the muffins.

Ingredients

1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup rye flour, all-purpose flour, or whole wheat flour
3 tablespoons brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon [cinnamon](#)
1 tablespoon grated orange peel
4 tablespoons cold butter
1/2 cup orange juice
1/2 cup buttermilk
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 large eggs
1 cup [golden raisins](#)
1 tablespoons granulated sugar
1/4 teaspoon [cinnamon](#)

Directions

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Grease 1 regular-sized [12-muffin pan](#).

1. In a large bowl, stir together the flours, brown sugar, salt, baking powder, baking soda, and cinnamon. Stir in the grated orange peel.
2. Use a pastry knife to cut the butter into the dry ingredients and continue cutting until the mixture is coarse and uniform.
3. In another bowl, stir together the orange juice, buttermilk, vanilla extract, and eggs. Form a well in the dry ingredients and pour in the liquid mixture. Add the raisins. Stir to combine. (Do not over-stir. Some lumps are acceptable.) Mix the granulated sugar and cinnamon together and sprinkle on the tops of the muffins.
4. Spoon the batter into the muffin tins. Quickly place the muffins in the oven and reduce the heat to 375 degrees. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes or until the tops are lightly browned and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool for five minutes and then remove the muffins to a rack to cool.

Baker's note: *The initial burst of heat in the hot oven will help the muffins rise into a nice dome. How quickly the muffins bake will depend somewhat on how well your particular oven retains heat.*

If you are having trouble releasing your muffins from the pan, chances are you are ready for a new pan. Buy a good quality, heavy, nonstick pan. Make sure it is dark-colored to absorb heat, not a stainless or aluminum pan.

Country Breakfast Pizza

Here's a breakfast dish that goes together in a hurry, will impress your holiday guests, and the kids will love it. It's a skillet pizza that only takes fourteen minutes in the oven.

There are lots of breakfast pizzas. We like this one. It's a twist on the breakfast sandwiches that you get at the drive-through, a combination of eggs, ham, and cheddar on a biscuit crust—with a splash of salsa.

Ingredients

2 tablespoon butter
1 2/3 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons baking powder
2/3 cup milk
more flour if needed

1 tablespoon butter
1/2 small onion, diced
1/4 green or red bell pepper, chopped
diced ham, crumbled bacon, or sausage bits
5 large eggs
pepper and salt
Salsa
2/3 cup grated cheddar
2/3 cup grated mozzarella

Directions

1. Place the two tablespoons of butter in a nine-inch, oven-proof skillet. Place the skillet in the oven. Turn the oven to 425. Check on the butter after about five minutes. After the butter is melted, remove the skillet from the oven.
2. Place the flour, sugar, salt, and baking powder in a medium bowl. Stir to combine well. Add the milk all at once. Stir with a fork until it starts to come together and then remove the dough to a counter. Knead the dough until it is smooth, one to two minutes, dusting the counter with additional flour as necessary.
3. Stretch the dough into a disk. Place the disk in the buttered skillet. Press the dough across the bottom and up the sides of the skillet.



4. Place the skillet back in the oven and bake the crust for twelve minutes at 425 or until the crust begins to brown. Remove the skillet from the oven.
5. While the crust is baking, in another skillet, melt the one tablespoon of butter and sauté the onion, pepper, and ham or other meat in the butter until the vegetables are almost tender. Stir in the eggs and pepper and salt to taste. Cook until done, stirring frequently.
6. While the eggs are cooking, spread salsa in the bottom of the crust.
7. Spoon the cooked eggs into the crust on top of the salsa. Sprinkle the tops of the eggs with the cheeses. Place the pizza back in the oven at 425 degrees and bake for two more minutes or until the cheese is melted and bubbly. Serve hot.

Make Easy Pannekoeken for the Holidays

We weren't sure where to put this—we bake them for breakfast, lunch and dinner. We often use different toppings and ingredients in the morning than for the rest of the day.

Pannekoeken are easy—as easy as a pancake. In fact, there is less prep time than with pancakes—mix the batter and stick it in the oven. (In our test kitchen with the ingredients sitting on the counter, we were 2 1/2 minutes to the oven.) They are great without toppings and sublime with toppings.



No matter how you top your pannekoeken, there are several easy steps that make them almost foolproof. (A recipe for traditional pannekoeken follows.)

1. Place one-half cube of butter in a Dutch Baby pan or an ovenproof skillet with rounded sides.
2. Preheat your oven to 400 or 425 degrees depending on the recipe. Put the rack in the center, not the top, shelf. When you turn the oven on, place the pan with the butter in the oven. When the oven reaches 250 degrees the butter should be melted. Remove the pan from the oven.
3. Whisk the eggs and the salt in a medium bowl. Add the milk. Whisk in the flour until nearly smooth. Your batter is now ready.
4. Pour the batter into the pan. Cover with toppings if desired. Bake. Serve hot.

Be sure and use a whisk for mixing. A whisk will remove the lumps much quicker than a spoon or spatula. This is a perfect task for the [Mister Twister Whisk](#).

Pannekoeken makes an excellent canvas for your imagination. Here are some suggestions to get you started. You can make these recipes in an ovenproof skillet but they are more fun with a quality [Dutch baby or pannekoeken pan](#).

When we lived in Minnesota there was a chain of pannekoeken restaurants. They served these Dutch pancakes with all types of toppings, some cooked into the batter but often used as toppings after the pancake is baked.

Apples are the classic complement to pannekoeken. They can be cooked in the batter, sautéed, made into a compote, or simply sliced thinly and used as a topping. But meats, cheeses, and vegetables work also, especially for a dinner or lunch dish. When made with meats or vegetables, leave them as they are or drizzle them with a white sauce, a cheese sauce, or syrup.

- Traditional Pannekoeken
- [Apple and Bacon Pannekoeken](#)
- Sausage, pears, and dried cherries
- Traditional (with sautéed apples in brown sugar and cinnamon)
- Apples and sausage
- Blueberries and cottage cheese
- Bananas and pecans
- Peaches and honey raisin sauce

We hope this is enough to get your imagination rolling.

Traditional Dutch Pannekoeken

This pannekoeken is designed for an 11 to 12-inch Dutch baby pan or a skillet with rounded sides. This is a five ingredient-five step recipe that really goes together quickly.

Ingredients

1/4 cup butter
3 large eggs
1/8 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup milk
3/4 cup all-purpose flour

Directions

1. Place the butter in a [Dutch Baby pan](#) or an ovenproof skillet with rounded sides.
2. Preheat your oven to 400 degrees. Put the rack in the center, not the top, shelf. When you turn the oven on, place the pan with the butter in the oven. When the oven reaches 250 degrees the butter should be melted. Remove the pan from the oven.
3. Whisk the eggs and the salt in a medium bowl. Add the milk. Whisk in the flour until nearly smooth. Your batter is now ready.
4. Pour the batter into the pan. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until the top starts to turn golden brown. Serve hot with [your favorite syrup](#).

Easy Baked Omelet

This recipe is dedicated to all of the klutzes among us who often mutilate our omelets while trying to fold them or for the distracted among us that need to just stick a baking dish in the oven and forget it until the timer goes off.

And it's easy. Notice that there are only two steps to this recipe. Prep time is less than ten minutes.

This is a puffy omelet recipe. It will mushroom in the oven and then fall back as it cools. Still, it is a lighter omelet than what is fixed on the stovetop.



Use this basic cheese omelet recipe or add meat and veggies to create any omelet you desire. (If you add veggies, consider sautéing them or partially cooking them in the microwave before adding them to the egg mixture.)

Ingredients

1/3 cup flour
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/8 tsp. salt
dash pepper
1 1/2 cups milk
8 eggs
1 1/2 cup shredded cheddar or other cheese

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

1. Mix the dry ingredients in a bowl. Add enough milk to make a paste and then add the remaining milk a little at time, stirring after each addition, until you have a smooth mixture. Add the eggs and cheese.
2. Grease a 9-inch pie pan with butter. Pour the omelet mixture into the pie pan and bake for 40-45 minutes or until the omelet starts to brown and a knife inserted in the center comes out clean.

Variations

Add herbs, spices, sautéed vegetables, ham, or other meats or vegetables as desired to this recipe as you would for stovetop omelets.

Texas Chili Corn Bread

This recipe was adapted from *Baking in America* by Greg Patent. (We recommend this book.) We use chiles instead of jalapenos, red bell pepper instead of pimentos, and garlic powder instead of clove garlic but feel free to experiment.

- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3 large eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 red bell pepper, chopped and diced
- 1/2 medium sized onion, chopped and diced
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 4-oz can diced green chiles, drained (less if you prefer a less spicy bread)
- 1 cup corn kernels--fresh, frozen, or canned
- 1 1/2 cups grated cheese, cheddar or jack



1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. Grease a ten-inch skillet and place it on the middle shelf in the oven.
2. In a large bowl, stir together the cornmeal, baking powder, sugar, and salt. In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs then stir in the rest of the ingredients, reserving 1/2 cup of the grated cheese.
3. Form a well in the dry ingredients and pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients. Mix with a spatula until well combined.
4. Carefully remove the hot pan from the oven and immediately pour the batter into the pan. Sprinkle the remaining cheese on top and return to the oven.
5. Let bake for 20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center of the pan comes out clean. The top will be a rich, golden brown. Let cool for ten minutes before unmolding.

Part 2: Getting Ready for the Big Day

We don't claim to any special turkey skills. Instead this section is intended to provide help and recipes with side dishes and leftovers—though we did slip in a section about choosing and baking a ham. Here you will find some great side dishes, many of them classics and favorites. Our friend Nancy Rogers of Nancy's Kitchen provide many of these.

In this section you will find recipes and directions for extra special potatoes like garlic mashed potatoes and twice baked potatoes. You'll find candied yams, butternut squash and cranberry sauce. Of course we included a recipe for turkey dressing and the old standby—green bean casserole.

But what do you do with the leftovers? We included recipes for turkey divan and turkey enchiladas. You'll also find salads and soups that you can make with your leftovers.

We hope that this section of the book proves to be a wonderful resource for your holiday meals.



Selecting and Baking Your Holiday Ham

Use this guide to help you select and prepare your baked ham for that special meal. With this guide, you will be able to identify and understand the various types of hams and select the best ham for your family. We'll even tell you how to bake your ham.

This guide is organized in a question-and-answer format for easy reference.

What are the different types of hams that I should consider?

A ham is cured pork, specifically the entire back leg of a hog. But ham is very different than uncured pork. It's the curing process that changes the flavor and texture of the meat. Cured hams can be either cured in brine—the most common—or dry cured. There are four major types of brine-cured hams: fresh, cured, canned but not pasteurized, and canned and pasteurized. With the exception of some dry-cured hams, any ham that is not pasteurized must be refrigerated.



Dry cured hams are usually more expensive, are quite salty, have a unique flavor, and are not commonly used as dinner hams. A country ham is a dry cured ham that is usually heavily salted and is usually soaked to remove some of the salt before it is cooked and eaten. Dry cured hams are not generally found in grocery stores. Dry cured hams include prosciutto, serrano, and like types.

Hams may be whole or half. A half will be labeled either as a rump half or a shank half. In some cases, a half ham has had a cut removed and is therefore a rump portion or a shank portion. A shank portion will have more connective tissue and will be less meaty.

What about water content?

Except for dry cured hams, hams absorb moisture from the curing brine either by soaking or injection. In smoking and drying, that moisture may be removed. The government dictates that the moisture level must be indicated by the labeling. The driest product labeled "Ham" will not exceed ten percent added water. A product labeled "Ham with Natural Juices" is the next driest, then "Ham Water Added" and finally a "Ham and Water Product" which has as much as 35% water.

Should I be concerned about nitrites?

The brine used for curing is a combination of water, sugar, salt, and sodium nitrite. After several days of curing, the ham is washed free of brine, cooked, and is sometimes smoked. According to government allowances, the finished product cannot contain more than 200 parts per million of nitrite. All processors are regularly inspected by the USDA to assure compliance.

The nitrites used are approved by the FDA as safe in the concentrations allowed.

How do I select a quality ham?

Hams may be one of those items where you usually get what you pay for. Mass produced, inexpensive hams may be processed in as little as twelve hours. More expensive hams may not be ready for market with less than two weeks of processing. Additionally, the best hams come from selected pigs that have been fed high protein diets prior to slaughter.

Processors may vary the amount of salt or sugar in a ham to meet company specifications. Additionally, the smoking process may vary. When you find a ham that has the flavor that you like, stick with it.

Color and appearance are important considerations in selecting a ham.

Select a fresh ham that is a bright grayish-pink. Those fresh hams that have a pale, soft, watery appearance are less desirable. A fresh ham that has a greenish cast may indicate bacterial growth and should be avoided.

Select a cured ham that has a bright pink color. A lighter-colored pink or a non-uniform coloring may be the result of improper curing or exposure to store lights. Again, a greenish cast may reflect the presence of bacterial growth. Avoid those hams that have a multi-colored appearance. It may suggest the presence of bacteria.

Avoid those hams that have excessive marbling. These may have a greasy taste.

The general rule is to plan on six to eight ounces of boneless ham per serving and eight to twelve ounces of bone-in ham per serving.

It is the opinion of some that bone-in hams taste better.

How do I prepare my ham?

Most hams, including many canned hams, require refrigeration before baking. Unless it is pasteurized and states that refrigeration is not required, keep your ham in the refrigerator.

As with all meat products, make certain that your ham is properly baked--though a ham marked "fully cooked" does not need to be cooked again. A meat thermometer is essential. Measure the baked temperature of the meat in the thickest portion of the ham and in at least two spots to make sure that the thermometer is not inserted into a pocket of hotter fat. Make certain also that the thermometer is not placed against the bone.

To be safe, a fresh ham should be baked to 170 degrees and a cured uncooked ham baked to 160 degrees—many bacteria can survive to temperatures of 140 degrees. If you are warming a fully cooked ham, heat it to 140 degrees.

If you are purchasing a bone-in ham, be certain of your carving skills. Carve at right angles to the bone. Let the baked ham set for five minutes before beginning to carve.

Sources: University of Minnesota, About.com, House of Hams

Related links:

[Glazes](#) for your ham.

[Jellies and jams](#) to glaze your ham.

A [ham recipe](#) for your leftovers.

A [ham salad recipe](#) for your leftovers.

[Recommended rolls](#) to go with your ham dinner.

Recommended [breads for ham sandwiches](#).

Related [kitchen tools](#).

Holiday Cranberry Relish

This is a tested recipe from Nancy Rogers of Nancy's Kitchen.com.

4 cups fresh cranberries
2 oranges
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar

Directions

1. Wash the cranberries and the oranges. Cut the oranges into quarters and remove the seeds and the white pith in the center.
2. Put the cranberries and oranges through a food processor or blender. Add sugar and mix well.

Baker's note: *This is best if made at least two days before your holiday dinner. Store in your refrigerator.*

Recipe courtesy of Nancy Rogers, www.nancys-kitchen.com.

How to Make Better Mashed Potatoes

Peel the potatoes. Cut them into chunks, then cover them with cold water in a very large pot. Bring to a boil, then simmer until very tender all the way through. Drain the potatoes, then put them back into the pot over VERY low heat to evaporate any excess liquid. This will dry the potatoes.

While the potatoes are drying, heat whole milk just until hot, but not boiling. A good rule of thumb is to use about 2/3 cup milk for every 2 to 3 pounds of potatoes. You can use a mixture of cream and milk, if desired. Add butter or margarine to the hot, dry potatoes, keeping them over very low heat. Mash with a hand masher until the butter is melted and the potatoes are very smooth.

With an electric mixer, beat the potatoes (with the pot still over low heat) as you add the hot milk, a little at a time, until the potatoes are the desired consistency. Scrape sides of the pot with

a rubber spatula. Do not overbeat. Stop beating when they are creamy and fluffy. Add salt and white pepper to taste. The white pepper is used so that they are no "unsightly" black specks in the potatoes.

Notes: Always work quickly so that the potatoes do not cool down. Lukewarm potatoes turn gluey. Adding cold milk can turn hot potatoes gluey.

Recipe courtesy of RecipeGoldmine.com.

Garlic Mashed Potatoes

2 pounds red potatoes
1 pound soft butter
5 ounces Romano cheese
1 tablespoon oregano
Salt to taste
1/4 cup chopped garlic

Wash potatoes and boil until tender and soft. Place potatoes in mixer with rest of ingredients and mix on low speed until potatoes are mashed.

Recipe courtesy of RecipeGoldmine.com.

Thanksgiving Potatoes

4 red potatoes
1/4 c. melted butter
1/2 c. cheddar cheese
4 oz. sour cream
Salt & pepper
1/2 c. chopped onions

Boil potatoes until soft. Drain, cool, cut into 1 inch cubes. Sauté 1/2 cup chopped onions in butter. Toss with potatoes and other ingredients. Spoon into greased baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until bubbling. Can be made the day before.

Recipe courtesy of Nancy Rogers, www.nancys-kitchen.com.

Twice Baked Potatoes

It's easy to make Twice Baked Potatoes. Here's how:

Ingredients

8 large baking potatoes
1/2 pound bacon (optional)
1 cup milk or cream
2 cups sour cream
1/2 cup butter
1 teaspoon salt
2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
chives



Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

1. Select uniformly-sized baking potatoes that are free from major blemishes. Scrub and wash the potatoes. Bake them without aluminum foil as you would regularly baked potatoes in the preheated oven for an hour or until soft. Let them cool for fifteen minutes.
2. Fry the optional bacon until crisp, let cool, and crumble. If you prefer, cook the bacon in the microwave and snip the bacon into bits with kitchen shears.
3. Slice the potatoes lengthwise. Scoop the potato flesh from the skins being careful not to tear the skins. Save the skins. To the potato flesh add the milk or cream, sour cream, butter, salt, one cup of the grated cheese, and a desired amount of chives. Mix with an electric blender until smooth.
4. Spoon the potato mixture into the potato skins. Top each with the remaining cheese and optional bacon bits. Bake for another 15 minutes.

Tips for success

1. When you scoop the potatoes from the skins, leave a little flesh next to the skin to provide a more sturdy shell.
2. Potatoes come in different sizes and peoples' tastes vary. Add ingredients to taste. If the potato mixture is not flavorful enough, add more sour cream or cream cheese. Make sure that the salt is adequate.
3. These potatoes can be made ahead with the final bake just before meal time. Store the filled potatoes in the refrigerator covered with plastic. At mealtime, bake in a preheated oven. Because the potatoes are cold, you may need to bake the potatoes for an extra five minutes or so to assure that they are heated through.

Butternut Squash and Green Beans with Maple Syrup

This is a great vegetable dish. It's easy to make with cubed squash. Consider this for your next company dinner or save it for the holidays.

To make this dish, use one butternut squash, as many beans as you wish, a handful of nuts and some maple syrup. Sounds like a pretty good combination.

This is a wonderful side dish recipe (though I did make a meal of this). The secret to this dish is to not overcook the vegetables.



Ingredients

1 large butternut squash, peeled and cut into 3/4-inch cubes (see following instructions)
salt and pepper
vegetable oil
1-2 pounds fresh green beans
2 tablespoons butter
1/2 cup slivered almonds
1/3 cup maple syrup
dash of allspice (optional)

Directions

1. Place the squash cubes on a large baking pan. Drizzle one to two tablespoons of vegetable oil over the squash. Salt and pepper to taste.
2. Bake the squash for 20 minutes or until nearly tender, turning once during cooking.
3. While the squash is cooking steam the green beans until they turn color and start to become tender. Do not overcook the beans; they will continue to cook in the skillet.
4. While the beans and the squash are cooking, melt the butter in a large, non-stick skillet. Place the slivered almonds in the butter and sauté for several minutes.
5. Place the squash and the beans in the skillet with the almonds. Pour the maple syrup over the vegetables and stir. Cook until the dish is hot and the vegetables are nearly tender, stirring often. Add more salt and pepper to taste. Serve hot.

How to Peel and Cube a Butternut Squash

Once you realize that you can easily peel and cube a butternut squash, a new venue of cooking opportunities appear. Use these tasty cubes in soups, in casseroles, or build an array of great side dishes.

Because a butternut squash has a smooth skin, it is easy to peel. The squash consist of two parts—the neck and the bulb. With a sharp knife, cut the neck from the bulb. The horizontal cut should be just far enough into the bulb to expose the seed cavity.

Cut the stem end off the neck. Use a potato peeler to remove the skin from the neck. Because it is smooth and uniform, it will only take a few moments.

Use a spoon to remove the seeds from the cavity of the bulb. Once the seeds are removed, cut the bulb into 3/4-inch horizontal slices. Use a sharp knife and remove the skin from the slices. If you prefer, you can use your potato peeler to remove the skin from the slices.

Cut both the slices and the neck into 3/4-inch cubes. Use these cubes in your cooking.



Spicy Candied Yams

This is a tested recipe from Nancy Rogers of Nancy's Kitchen.com.

3 or 4 large yams
1 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
2 teaspoon. nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon. salt
1/4 cup lemon juice
1/2 cup cold butter

Fresh or canned pineapple slices, optional

Directions

1. Peel and slice the yams into thin slices. Rinse and pat them dry. Place them in a shallow baking dish
2. Mix the sugars, nutmeg, salt and lemon juice in a mixing bowl. Sprinkle the mixture over yams in the baking dish.
3. Slice butter the butter into chunks and lay the chunks over the sugar mixture.
4. Cover and bake the yams dish at 325 degrees for 45 minutes or until yams are tender and syrup is the desired thickness. Garnish with pineapple if desired.

Recipe courtesy of Nancy Rogers, www.nancys-kitchen.com.

Louisiana Candied Yams

6 medium yams
1/2 cup butter
1/4 cup water
4 cups granulated sugar

Directions

1. Peel and slice yams into slices about a quarter inch thick. Rinse and pat them dry.
2. Place the sliced yams in a large skillet, add the water and butter and pour the sugar over all. Cover tightly with well fitting lid and simmer over medium heat for 30-35 minutes or until the yams are tender.
3. Spoon syrup over potatoes once. Do not stir, because it will break your potatoes up.

Recipe courtesy of Nancy Rogers, www.nancys-kitchen.com.

Turkey Dressing

This is a tested recipe from Nancy Rogers of Nancy's Kitchen.com.

Ingredients

10 medium-sized baking powder biscuits broken into chunks
2 to 3 cups of yellow cornbread broken into chunks
1 loaf (1 lb.) white bread toasted and broken into chunks

1 1/2 cup chopped onions
2 cups chopped celery

1 cup chopped celery tops
2 cups water

1 tablespoon sage
1 tablespoon poultry seasoning

1 cup chicken bouillon or turkey drippings
2 large eggs

Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. Mix the breads together in a large bowl and set aside.
2. Place the onions, celery, and celery tops in a medium saucepan. Add the water. Simmer until the vegetables are tender. Add the sage, poultry seasoning, and bouillon or turkey drippings.
3. Pour the vegetable mixture over the broken bread and toss. If it's not as moist as you like, add more liquid. Cool. Add eggs and salt and pepper, mixing lightly.
4. Place dressing in greased baking pan. Bake at 300 degrees for 30 minutes. If you like it extremely moist, pile the dressing higher in the pan. For drier dressing, spread it 2 inches thick in the pan.

Recipe courtesy of Nancy Rogers, www.nancys-kitchen.com.

Holiday Ambrosia

This is a tested recipe from Nancy Rogers of www.nancys-kitchen.com.

2 grapefruit, sectioned
3 oranges, sectioned
2 tangerines, sectioned
1/3 to cup granulated sugar or more to taste
1/2 cup shredded coconut

Directions

1. Place half the fruits in serving dish and sprinkle with half the sugar and coconut.
2. Add remaining fruits and then the remaining sugar and coconut.
3. Chill for at least one hour before serving. Makes 8 servings.

Recipe courtesy of Nancy Rogers, www.nancys-kitchen.com.

Cranberry Peach Cobbler

This is a tested recipe from Nancy Rogers of Nancy's Kitchen.com.

1 package Duncan Hines yellow cake mix or equal
1/2 teaspoon [cinnamon](#)
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1 cup butter, softened
1/2 cup [walnut pieces](#)
1 can peach pie filling
1 can whole cranberry sauce

Vanilla ice cream

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

1. Combine cake mix, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a medium bowl. Cut in butter with a pastry blender until crumbly. Stir in nuts and set aside.
2. Combine the peach pie filling and cranberry sauce in an ungreased 13 x 9 inch pan.
3. Sprinkle the dry crumb mixture over the fruit.
4. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes or until golden brown. Serve with ice cream.

Recipe courtesy of Nancy Rogers, www.nancys-kitchen.com.

Turkey Divan Casserole

This is a tested recipe from Nancy Rogers of Nancy's Kitchen.com.

2 10 oz packages of frozen broccoli
2 cups diced, cooked turkey
1 10 1/2 oz. can cream of mushroom soup
1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup grated cheddar cheese

Directions

Preheat oven to 375 F.

1. Cook the frozen broccoli according to producer's directions.
2. Layer the broccoli in an 8 1/2 x 13-inch baking dish. Spread the turkey evenly on top of the broccoli.

3. Combine the soup with the milk, mix until smooth, and then pour the soup mixture over the turkey. Sprinkle the grated cheese on top.
4. Bake for 30 minutes or until done. Let stand 5 minutes and serve

Yield: 6 Servings

Recipe courtesy of Nancy Rogers, www.nancys-kitchen.com.

Green Bean Casserole

This is a tested recipe from Nancy Rogers of Nancy's Kitchen.com.

2 boxes frozen French-style green beans
1 medium onion, chopped
butter
1 c. sliced water chestnuts
1 c. shredded cheese
1 can mushroom
1 can French fried onion rings

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

1. Set the green beans on the counter to thaw.
2. Sauté the chopped onion in butter.
3. Layer the sautéed onions in a greased casserole dish. Add in layers, half of the beans, half of the water chestnuts, half of the cheese, and half of the mushroom soup. Repeat these layers.
4. Bake for 25 minutes or until heated through. Add onion rings and bake for another 5 minutes. Serves 6.

Recipe courtesy of Nancy Rogers, www.nancys-kitchen.com.

Scalloped Corn Casserole

This is a tested recipe from Nancy Rogers of Nancy's Kitchen.com.

1 15 ounce can corn
2/3 cup milk
1 1/4 teaspoon salt
Dash of pepper
1 large egg, slightly beaten
2 tablespoons butter, melted
2 cups soft bread crumbs

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Butter an 8 x 8-inch baking dish.

1. Mix the corn, milk, seasonings, and egg together in a small bowl.
2. Mix crumbs and butter together and place 1/4 of the crumb mixture in bottom of the buttered dish.
3. Add half of the corn mixture, then another 1/4 of the crumbs. Repeat the layers, ending with the balance of crumbs.
4. Bake for 30 minutes or until done. Serve hot. Serves 6.

Recipe courtesy of Nancy Rogers, www.nancys-kitchen.com.

Turkey Enchiladas

When you have leftover turkey and gravy, this is an easy—and terrific—dish to make.

Ingredients

8 six-inch tortillas
1/2 cup chopped onion
1 cup sour cream
1/4 teaspoon ground pepper
2 cups turkey gravy
1 four-ounce can of chopped chilies, drained
1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
2 cups chopped cooked turkey meat
Sliced ripe olives (optional)
Chopped tomatoes (optional)
Sliced green onions (optional)

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease an 8 1/2 x 13-inch baking pan.

1. Place tortillas on a plate and cover with plastic wrap. Heat in the microwave until warm and soft, about one minute.
2. Place chopped onion in a medium bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and cook in the microwave for two minutes or until slightly tender.
3. Mix the cooked onions, sour cream, ground pepper, gravy, chili peppers, and 1/2 cup cheese together in the medium bowl.
4. Mix about 1/2 cup of the sauce with the turkey meat. Spoon this filling onto the eight tortillas. Roll the tortillas and place them seam side down in the prepared pan. Top with the remaining sauce.
5. Bake for 35 minutes or until heated through. Sprinkle with remaining cheese and return to the oven until the cheese is melted, three to five minutes. Let stand for five minutes. Garnish by scattering the optional olives, tomatoes, and green onions over the enchiladas.

Black Bean and Rice Chili

This thirty minute chili hits the spot on a cold winter day. It's made with canned beans so it's a snap to put together. We think you will love this hearty soup.

It calls for lean ground beef but you can substitute diced turkey if you prefer.

As listed, this is a fairly mild chili. If you like it hot, add more spices.

Ingredients

3/4 cup uncooked white rice
1 large onion, diced
2 pounds lean ground beef
1/2 tablespoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground pepper
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 29-ounce can tomato sauce
2 15-ounce cans black beans, drained
2 25-ounce cans diced tomatoes
1/3 cup brown sugar



1 cup water
cilantro

grated cheddar cheese for garnish

Directions

1. Cook the rice according to package directions.
2. Sauté the onion until it is tender-crisp. Add the onion to a large soup pot.
3. Sauté the ground beef with the salt and pepper. Drain the grease from the cooked ground beef in a colander. Add the ground beef to the pot. Add the garlic powder and oregano to the pot. Add the tomato sauce, black beans, tomatoes, and brown sugar to the pot. Add the water and as much cilantro as you would like.
4. Stir to mix and heat the soup to simmering. Serve hot with grated cheese.

Chicken, Bacon, and Tomato Salad

This salad recipe was inspired by the perennially favorite club sandwich. It boasts chicken or turkey, bacon, tomato, and mozzarella on a bed of spinach greens and is then topped with a creamy vinaigrette.

The dressing can be made with either yogurt or mayonnaise—whichever you prefer. It's made with equal parts lime juice and honey with just a bit of prepared mustard.

For the Salad

1/2 pound bacon, cooked and crumbled
1 1/2 cups sliced, cooked chicken or turkey meat
2 medium tomatoes, sliced
1/2 cup grated mozzarella cheese
spinach greens

For the Dressing

1/2 cup plain yogurt or mayonnaise
1/4 cup lime juice
1/4 cup honey
1 dash salt
1/2 tablespoon prepared mustard



Directions

1. Fry the bacon until it is crisp. Crumble it into bits or cut it up with kitchen shears.
2. While the bacon is cooking, mix the dressing ingredients together. Whisk until smooth.
3. Arrange the chicken or turkey, tomatoes, cheese, and spinach greens on a plate. Serve with dressing on the side.

Part 3: Breads

They say bread makes the meal.

Most of the time, when we have company coming, we reach for a bread mix. They are just quicker and easier when there is so much to do. Often, we reach for roll mixes—sour cream potato rolls or onion rolls or parker house rolls. We are partial to Kaiser rolls so we often make Kaiser rolls, usually from a mix. We've included directions for Kaiser rolls in this section. You'll also find directions for cheesy dinner rolls.



When we don't make rolls, we usually make fancy bread. Cranberry nut is a favorite as are sour cream white and Tuscany tomato basil.

Sometimes we get serious about bread for company or holidays. We make crusty sourdough bread because our guests enjoy it so much. (It's likely to be the star of the meal.) You'll find a festive loaf laced with red and green pepper bits that just looks so much like Christmas and yet is very good with its cheddar cheese base.

We make braided breads because they are fun and so impressive. You'll learn how to make these breads in this section. We included a chocolate braided bread, a chocolate challah if you will, because we like it so much. It's a little overwhelming for a heavy meal but it certainly impresses at a party.

Enjoy these breads for the holidays.

How to Make Kaiser Rolls

Want to impress your family and friends at the next holiday gathering? Serve sandwiches on Kaiser Rolls. They'll look so professional--like they came from the bakery. You don't have to tell them how easy they were. If you can make dinner rolls, you can make Kaiser Rolls.

You can make Kaiser Rolls out of any lean bread dough but if you would like to make your rolls from a mix, we suggest using our Sunday Dinner Rolls. Simply leave the butter out and add another half-tablespoon of water. To make it even easier, we'll knock 33% off the price of our Sunday Dinner Rolls.



A Kaiser Roll is merely a lean roll, specially shaped, and baked in a steamy oven to make it crusty. Choose a recipe or mix for a lean bread dough—or leave the butter or oil out of the recipe. Make per the directions for rolls including letting the dough rise the first time.

Here's how to shape the rolls:

Step 1:

Cut a piece of dough off about twice what you would use for a dinner roll. (We scale the dough at 3.5 ounces for our sandwich rolls.) Roll the dough out into a rope about eight inches long.



Step 2:

Form a simple over-hand knot in the center of the dough. Leave the knot loose; do not try to draw it tight. You will have two protruding ends a couple inches long.



Step 3:

Take one of the ends and continue it around the rope and push it down through the center hole. It should look like the picture to the right.

Step 4:

Take the other end of the dough, go around the rope, and push the end up through the center hole. The finished roll should look like the one to the right.



It's more complicated to try to describe the forming process than it is to form the rolls. After the first couple, you'll breeze right through without even thinking.

Now let the formed rolls rise covered on a baking sheet. When they are ready to bake, brush them with a whisked egg and one tablespoon water, then sprinkle them

with sesame or poppy seeds. You can bake them as you would dinner rolls but if you would like crusty roll like true Kaiser Rolls, follow the direction for baking breads in a steamy oven.



To form the thick, chewy crust that is typical of artisan breads, follow these instructions: Place a large, shallow, metal pan in the oven on the lowest shelf. You will pour hot water in this pan to create steam in the oven. High heat is hard on pans so don't use one of your better pans. An old sheet pan is ideal. Fill a spray bottle with water. You will use this to spray water into the oven to create more steam.

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. When the oven is hot and the bread is fully risen and is soft and puffy--being very careful not to burn yourself with the rising steam and with a mitted hand--pour about two cups of very hot water in the pan in the oven. Quickly close the oven door to capture the steam. With spray bottle in hand, open the door and quickly spray the oven walls and close the door.

Immediately put the bread in the steamy oven. After a few moments, open the door and spray the walls again to recharge the steam. Do this twice more during the first ten minutes of baking. This steamy environment will create the chewy crust prized in artisan breads.

You can use this baking procedure for crusty hearth breads also. For rolls, bake for ten minutes at 450 degrees then lower the temperature to 350 degrees until done. How long you will bake them will depend on how quickly your oven loses heat but it will probably be about ten additional minutes (a total of 20 minutes). As for all hearth breads, the internal temperature of your crusty rolls should be about 210 degrees. (If crusty rolls are not well baked, the internal moisture will migrate to the crust and make it soft.)

You can make Kaiser Rolls out of any lean bread dough but if you would like to make your rolls from a mix, we suggest using our Sunday Dinner Rolls. Simply leave the butter out and add another half-tablespoon of water.

How to Make Easy Challah (Braided Bread)

While challah is a traditional bread baked for the Jewish Sabbath, it has become popular with everyone, everywhere. It's attractive and has a firm, egg-rich texture that works for dinner, sandwiches, or French toast. It is typically braided with three, four, or six strands of dough. (The braided strands are symbolic of love.)

Challah is really very easy to make, especially from a mix. There is a sense of satisfaction in working the dough by hand and crafting such an attractive bread and it certainly will impress guests.



For this bread, choose your favorite mix or recipe. You will need to modify our directions below to fit your recipe or mix but you will get the idea. We chose one of our traditional bread mixes to give us two loaves but you can also use a couple bread machine mixes. Here are the instructions using the mix we chose:

The package directions call for two cups of water. For the firmer dough needed, reduce the water amount. To make the dough egg-rich, crack two large eggs into a measuring cup and add warm water--enough to total 1 2/3 cups. Whisk the mixture together with a fork then heat it in the microwave until warm (110 degrees).

Mix the bread according to package instructions using only one packet of yeast (not two as per the mix instructions) and the egg and water mixture in place of the two cups of water. You may substitute 1/4 cup oil for the butter if you desire. You should have a slightly firmer dough than most doughs.

Place the bread dough in a greased bowl, cover, and let rise until doubled—about 1 1/2 hours.

Prepare a large baking sheet by greasing and sprinkling with cornmeal. Use a lighter colored sheet to help keep the bottom from burning.

Once raised, use a knife to divide the dough into three equal pieces (or four if you choose to make a four-braid bread). Roll the pieces under the palms of your hands into three long ropes as shown. You may need to let each rest for five to ten minutes to allow the dough to relax to get the proper shape. Using this mix, you should have three ropes nearly 24-inches long. If you want the loaf to be larger in the center and less rectangular shaped, make the ropes thicker in the middle and tapered toward the ends.



Braid the three ropes as shown in a common three strand braid just as if you were braiding pigtails. (Some people find it easier to create a symmetrical shape if they start braiding from the center.) When you get to the ends, wet them, pinch them together, and tuck them under. You should have a neat, symmetrical loaf when you are through. You can shape the loaf somewhat with your hands. If you don't like how the loaf looks, simply pull the braids apart and start again.

Place the finished loaf on the prepared sheet. (The formed loaf will be about 12-inches long but after rising and baking, you will have a finished loaf of about 24-inches so be sure to allow room on your sheet for expansion.) Cover the loaf and let rise until doubled, about one hour.



Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Prepare a glaze by whisking one egg with one-half tablespoon of water. Just before baking and when the loaf has fully doubled, remove the plastic wrap and gently brush glaze over the entire surface of the loaf. Sprinkle the top with poppy seeds or sesame seeds as desired. (Tip the loaf so that you can sprinkle seeds on the sides as well.)

Bake the bread for 20 minutes then cover the bread with a large sheet of aluminum foil to protect the top. Continue baking for another 20 to 30 minutes or until the bread crust is a deep golden brown. The interior of the loaf should register 190 degrees with an insta-read thermometer.

Use an egg turner to loosen the bread from the pan and transfer the loaf to a wire rack to cool.

Note: If you choose to bake two loaves, reduce the baking time by five to ten minutes.

How to Make Cheesy Dinner Rolls

Everyone loves cheesy rolls. They are simple to make; just add grated cheese and knead it into the dough until it's evenly distributed.

Serve cheesy dinner rolls with nearly any meal. They also make great sandwich rolls. And if you can make dinner rolls, you can make cheesy dinner rolls. After all, it's basically adding grated cheese to the dough. But the following pointers will help make that batch of rolls a booming success.



- If you get too much cheese in the dough, you'll overwhelm the yeast and the dough will not rise properly. Try 1/2 cup grated cheese for every one cup of flour in the recipe.
- For the best flavor, use a sharp tasting cheese. Sharp cheddar works well but any sharp cheese will work.
- Since you're trying to maximize the cheese flavor, there's no reason to add other fats to the mix to bog down the yeast. If the recipe calls for butter or oil, leave it out—there's more room for cheese.
- If you want to give the rolls a little extra zip, add 1/4 teaspoon white pepper or 1/2 teaspoon ground dry mustard to the ingredients. No one will ever know that it's there and you'll accent the flavor.
- The cheese will slow down the rise. Be patient. If it takes twice as long to rise, that's okay. Let it get nice and puffy.

- The cheese may increase the baking time by five minutes. The lactose in the cheese will accentuate the browning of the rolls. Let the rolls get to a rich golden brown color or use your thermometer. The internal temperature should be at least 190 degrees.

Pepper Cheddar Bread

We know of three ways to add fresh veggies to bread: stuff the bread hot-pocket fashion, add bits of chopped veggies to the dough, or puree the vegetables and add the puree to the dough. In this recipe, bits of green or red peppers are laced through a cheddar bread. It makes for an attractive, unusual bread.

Consider this a type of bread. We've made this bread with bacon bits instead of green peppers. We've also used sautéed onions instead of peppers. Don't hesitate to experiment.



This is a great cheddar bread. The addition of bell peppers is an extra. There is just so much cheese that you can add to a bread before it is weighed down and the rise becomes very slow. Get the most pronounced flavor from your cheese by using a sharp cheddar. A slow rise will only enhance flavors, so be patient.

You may need to adjust the moisture used in this bread. It's easy to add a little more flour; a little more difficult to dribble in a bit of water. Because it is easier to add flour than water, start your dough a bit on the wet side and add flour as needed.

Ingredients

1 bell pepper, either red or green
5-6 cups white bread flour
3 tablespoons granulated sugar
1 seven-gram packet of instant yeast
1 3/4 cups warm water, 110 degrees
2 1/2 cups grated sharp cheddar cheese
2 tablespoons melted butter
1/4 teaspoon white pepper
1/2 tablespoon salt

Directions

1. Dice the bell peppers. Spread the pepper pieces on a paper towel on a plate and cook them in the microwave until tender. Set them aside to cool.
2. Place about two cups of the bread flour, sugar, and yeast in the bowl of your stand-type mixer. Add the warm water and beat with a dough hook until it is partially mixed. The purpose of this mixing is to hydrate the yeast.
3. Add most of the remaining flour to the bowl. Add the cheese, melted butter, white pepper, and salt. Knead with the dough hook at medium speed for four minutes. Add the

vegetables and knead them in. Since the vegetables are moist, you will likely need to add flour to reach the right consistency. Set the dough in a greased bowl, turn once, and cover. Set the bowl in a warm place and allow it to double in size.

4. Grease two large loaf pans. Form two loaves, cover them, and let them rise until doubled and puffy.
5. Bake at 375 degrees for 25 minutes or until done. The internal temperature should be 190 to 200 degrees. Remove the bread from the pans and let the bread cool on a wire rack.

Baker's Note: A soft dough rises more quickly than does a firm dough. Since this recipe calls for so much cheese, make the dough a little softer than normal with just a bit more water.

How to Make Easy Sourdough Bread

Sourdough simply uses wild yeast in place of commercial yeast to leaven the bread. It relies on the wild yeasts that are in the air all around us and cultures those yeasts in a warm, wet environment created with water, flour, and sometimes other components.

When creating a sourdough starter, we always felt like we were on an expedition trying to trap invisible yeastie beasties with our flour and water concoctions. Because we couldn't see the beasties, we were never sure what we had captured. While usually successful, we never felt like we were in control. Maybe that is the way sourdough bread should feel, a symbiosis with nature.



But there is an easier way: use commercial yeast in the starter. I know, that's heresy to the sourdough bread zealot but we only care about the bread. Using commercial yeast is easier, it's the alcohol from the long cool fermentation that creates the sourdough-like flavor, and the wild yeasts will eventually take over the starter anyway. Because it's easy, it's no big deal if you abandon your starter after a few weeks; you can readily start another when you're back in the mood or have the time.

Using this recipe for sourdough bread, a small amount of yeast is used in the starter. As the starter is used and refreshed with new feedings of flour and water, wild yeasts are introduced and cultivated.

Here is the recipe:

For the starter:

1 cup warm water (about 110 degrees)
1/4 teaspoon yeast
1 cup high gluten unbleached flour.

Mix the starter in a glass or steel bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and set it aside at room temperature until it is doubled and bubbly, maybe 4 to 6 hours.

For the sponge:

A sponge is a pre-ferment, a wet mixture of flour and yeast that acts as an incubation chamber to grow yeast at the desired rate. It is added to the dough.

1 cup of the starter
3/4 cup warm water
2 cups flour

Mix the one cup starter with the flour and water, cover, and set aside to ferment until it has tripled in volume. At room temperature, it will take four to eight hours. You can put it in a cool place--about fifty degrees--and let it perk all night. (In the winter, your garage may be just right.) You can also put it in the refrigerator overnight. At temperatures of forty degrees, the yeast will be inactive but the friendly bacteria will still be working and enhance the sour flavor of the bread. If you retard the growth with lower temperatures ("retard" is the correct term for slowing the growth of the yeast), simply bring the sponge to room temperature and let it expand to three times its original volume before proceeding.

For the dough:

All of the sponge
1 1/2 cups flour (more or less)
2 teaspoons salt

Mix the salt with the flour. Knead the combination into the sponge by hand until you have a smooth, elastic, slightly sticky dough, adding more flour as needed. Put the dough in an oiled bowl and let it rise again until doubled, about an hour.

Bakers note: Notice that the salt is not added until the last stage. Salt in the sponge would inhibit yeast growth.

Form the loaves:

Though you can make this bread in pans, it works best as a large freestanding round or oval loaf or two smaller loaves. Place a clean cotton cloth in a bowl or basket in which to hold the loaf. Lightly dust the interior of the bowl with flour. Place each formed loaf upside down in a bowl on top of the dusted flour. Cover the loaves with plastic and let them rise again until doubled. This rising will probably take less than an hour.



Bakers note: You want a light dusting of flour on the cloth to be transferred to the bread, not a heavy caking. Softly sifting flour from a strainer is the easiest way to achieve an even coating. A [stainless steel strainer](#) is available in our store.

If you choose to bake the bread in pans, omit this step. Instead, let the dough rise in a greased bowl covered with plastic until doubled. Form the loaves for pans, place the loaves in greased pans, and let rise until well-expanded and puffy. Bake at 350 degrees until done, about 30 minutes.

To bake crusty bread:

To form the thick, chewy crust that is typical of artisan breads, follow these instructions: Place a large, shallow, metal pan in the oven on the lowest shelf. You will pour hot water in this pan to create steam in the oven. (High heat is hard on pans so don't use one of your better pans and don't use a glass or ceramic pan which might shatter.) An old sheet pan is ideal. Fill a spray bottle with water. You will use this to spray water into the oven to create even more steam.

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. When the oven is hot and the bread is fully risen and is soft and puffy--being very careful not to burn yourself with the rising steam and with a mitted hand—turn your head away and pour two or three cups of very hot water in the pan in the oven. Quickly close the oven door to capture the steam. With spray bottle in hand, open the door and quickly spray the oven walls to create more steam and close the door. The oven is now ready for the loaves.

Work quickly to get the bread in the oven before the steam subsides. Gently invert the loaf or loaves onto a slightly greased non-insulated baking sheet on which a little cornmeal has been dusted. With your sharpest knife, quickly make two or three slashes 1/4-inch deep across the top of each loaf. This will vent the steam in the bread and allow the bread to expand properly. Immediately, put the bread in the steamy oven. After a few moments, open the door and spray the walls again to recharge the steam. Do this twice more during the first fifteen minutes of baking. This steamy environment will create the chewy crust prized in artisan breads.

Let the bread bake at 425 degrees for fifteen minutes in the hot steamy oven then reduce the temperature to 375 degrees and bake for a total of 35 to 40 minutes. Check on the bread ten minutes before the baking should be complete. If the top is browning too quickly, tent the loaf with aluminum foil for the remainder of the baking to keep it from burning. The bread is done when the crust turns a dark golden brown and the internal temperature reaches 210 degrees. It is important that the bread is well-baked to drive moisture from the loaf. If the bread is under baked, the excess moisture will migrate to the crust and you will no longer have the dry chewy crust of a great artisan loaf.

This sourdough bread is to die for. The prolonged rising gives the yeast plenty of time to convert the starch to sugars and the friendly bacteria a chance to impart their nut-like flavors.

Storing your crusty bread:

Unused crusty bread should be stored in a paper bag at room temperature. If the bread is stored in a plastic bag, the crust will become soft.

October Pumpkin Bread Recipe

Pumpkin makes a wonderful addition to bread, adding color, nutrition, and flavor. There are two ways to add pumpkin: grated or pureed. If you add grated pumpkin, you will have flecks of deep orange color and the bits of pumpkin tend to give the bread a chewier texture. The other way is to add pumpkin purée. The following recipe uses pumpkin purée.



This is wonderful bread. Be prepared to adjust the amount of flour that you use to accommodate different moisture contents of the pumpkin purée. If you like, you can substitute up to three cups of whole wheat flour for the white bread flour. (The picture is of bread with whole wheat flour.) We like golden raisins in this bread but suit your own taste.

This bread is not sweet like a dessert bread. You can add more sugar if you like. You can also add one cup of chopped walnuts. And if your kids don't like raisins (like ours), you can leave them out.

Ingredients

5 1/2 to 6 1/2 cups white bread flour (you can substitute up to 3 cups whole wheat flour)
1/4 cup brown sugar
1 seven-gram packet of instant yeast
1 1/3 cup warm water, 110 degrees
1/2 tablespoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1 cup puréed pumpkin or canned pumpkin
1/2 tablespoon salt
6 tablespoons melted butter
1 1/2 cups raisins, golden raisins, or currents

Directions

1. Place half the bread flour, sugar, and yeast in the bowl of your stand-type mixer. Add the warm water and beat with a dough hook until it is partially mixed. (The purpose of this mix is to hydrate the yeast.)
2. Add the rest of the flour, the spices, the pumpkin, the salt, and the butter. Knead with the dough hook at medium speed for four minutes. When the dough comes together, add the raisins and continue beating for the remainder of the four minutes or until the gluten is developed. You will likely need to adjust the moisture level either by adding flour or water. Place the dough in a greased bowl, turn once, and cover. Set the bowl in a warm place and allow it to double in size.

3. Grease two 9 x 5-inch loaf pans. Form two loaves, cover them, and let them rise until doubled and puffy.
4. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 minutes or until done. The internal temperature should be at 190 to 200 degrees. Remove the loaves from the pans and let the bread cool on a wire rack.

Incidentally, try this bread toasted with [Red Current Jelly](#). It is terrific!

Baker's Note: *The pumpkin in this bread makes it very moist. Pumpkin has a very mild flavor and acts as background for the spices and this has a mild bread combination of spices. Add more spices if you like.*

Sweet Chocolate Braided Bread

While challah is a traditional bread baked for the Jewish Sabbath, it has become popular with everyone, everywhere. It's attractive and has a firm, egg-rich texture that works for dinner, sandwiches, or French toast. It is typically braided with three, four, or six strands of dough. (The braided strands are symbolic of love.)



Challah is really very easy to make. There is a sense of satisfaction in working the dough by hand and crafting such an attractive bread and it certainly will impress your guests.

In this version, we added chocolate for the dough and a chocolate cream cheese filling and then we drizzled the bread with a chocolate cream cheese glaze. It may not be real challah but it is absolutely scrumptious—maybe our best chocolate bread ever.

Braiding bread is not complicated; it just looks impressive. To see illustrations for braiding bread, check out the instructions earlier in this section.

This recipe can be doubled.

Ingredients

3 to 3 1/2 cups bread flour
1 packet instant active dry yeast
3/4 cup water, heated to 110 degrees
1/3 cup brown sugar
1/3 cup cocoa
4 tablespoons butter

1/2 teaspoon salt
1 large egg at room temperature

For the filling

5 ounces cream cheese
1 ounce semi-sweet baking chocolate, melted
3 tablespoons granulated sugar
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 egg yolk
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg

Chocolate glaze directions follows.

Directions

1. Mix about one cup of the flour, the yeast, and the heated water until smooth. This will hydrate the instant yeast. If you are using other than instant yeast, hydrate the yeast separately.
2. Add the brown sugar, cocoa, butter, salt, and egg and mix. Add enough of the remaining bread flour to make a soft but not tacky dough. Knead until the gluten is developed, about four minutes with a stand-type mixer at medium speed. Set the dough in a greased bowl, cover, and let it stand until doubled, about one hour.
3. To make the filling, beat the cream cheese until soft and smooth. Add the melted chocolate while it is still hot and mix until smooth. Add the sugar, flour, egg yolk, vanilla, and nutmeg and mix until smooth.
4. Once the dough has risen, use a knife to divide the dough into three equal pieces. Roll the dough pieces with a rolling pin to rectangles 15 inches by 5 inches. Spread one-third of the filling down the center of each leaving a one-inch border with no filling. Roll the rectangle into fifteen-inch long ropes with the filling inside. Pinch any seams together and roll the ropes with your hands on the counter until smooth.
5. Braid the three ropes as if you were braiding pigtails. (Some people find it easier to create a symmetrical shape if they start braiding from the center.) When you get to the ends, wet them, pinch them together, and tuck them under. You should have a neat, symmetrical loaf when you are through. You can shape the loaf somewhat with your hands. If you don't like how the loaf looks, simply pull the braids apart and start again. Prepare a large baking sheet by greasing it and sprinkling it with cornmeal. Place the loaf on the pan, cover the loaf, and let it rise until doubled, about one hour.
6. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Bake the bread for 20 minutes then cover the bread with a large sheet of aluminum foil and bake for another ten to fifteen minutes to until done. The bread should "thump" when tapped on the bottom and the interior of the loaf should register 190 degrees with an insta-read thermometer. Let the bread cool on a wire rack.
7. While the bread is cooling, make the glaze. With a hand-held mixer, beat one ounce cream cheese with one teaspoon vanilla. Add 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar and 2

tablespoons cocoa with enough warm water to make a glaze of drizzling consistency. Drizzle the chocolate glaze generously over the bread.

Baker's notes: *To quickly bring an egg to room temperature, place it in a cup of warm water.*

Part 4: Sweet Afterthoughts

We're ending this little baking book with a few sweet afterthoughts. Holiday desserts deserve a substantial book unto themselves and we didn't know where to start—we just have too many favorites. So we exclude cookies and pies and included a very few cheesecakes. We already have a [three volume cookie guide](#), a [booklet or pie recipes and methods](#), and our [A to Z Cheesecake Guide](#). We invite the reader to download these and include them in his or her baking library.



In this section, we included a few outstanding desserts, those that first came to mind when we conceived this book because they were so outstanding and so valuable at holiday time.

In this section, you will find a recipe for plum pudding. It's not the classic steamed pudding but rather a dense cake that is conventional in it's directions but with the caramel plum sauce, it is outstanding. You'll find our ever-faithful pumpkin pie squares in tabular form so that you can make as many or as few of them as you need. These have been a family standby for parties and reunions forever and a lot easier than baking a bunch of pies. You'll find an orange coffeecake recipe that is so good you'll have to keep it on hand for the holidays.

You'll also find a listing of our favorite holiday cheesecakes including our pumpkin cheesecake in a gingersnap crust and our cranberry nut cheesecake. Of course, we had to add a couple others like our decadent white chocolate cheesecake and our German chocolate cheesecake.

We consider these essential holiday sweets. We hope you enjoy them.

Plum Pudding

We think this plum pudding recipe has old English origins. Never mind that you don't have any fresh plums—this recipe calls for dried plums that are rehydrated in hot water before baking. And it's not the type of pudding that most Americans think of—it's a dense, moist cake topped with a caramel plum sauce. Check it out. We think you will love plum pudding.

Plum Pudding Recipe

2 cups dried plums (prunes), 1/4 to 1/2-inch diced
1/2 cup very hot water



1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 tablespoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg or allspice

1/2 cup butter
3/4 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs

1/2 cup chopped walnuts
2 tablespoons milk or as needed for the right consistency batter

Caramel Plum Sauce

1/2 cup butter
1 3/4 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1 cup condensed milk
1 teaspoon rum or vanilla flavor

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Prepare an 8 x 8-inch pan by greasing and dusting with flour or lining with parchment paper.

1. Place the diced plums in a small bowl. Heat the water to boiling in the microwave. Pour the water over the plums and set aside to rehydrate.
2. Mix the flour, baking powder, salt, and nutmeg together in another bowl. Set aside.
3. Cream the butter and sugar together. Add the eggs and beat until light and fluffy.
4. Add the plums and water and the nuts and combine. Add the dry ingredients and combine. Add enough milk—about two tablespoons—to make a soft batter.
5. Remove the batter to the prepared pan. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until the pudding tests done when a toothpick is inserted in the middle. Cool in the pan on a wire rack for five minutes then invert the pudding to remove the pan. Continue cooling on a wire rack.

For the plum sauce:

1. Melt the butter in a saucepan. Stir in the sugar, cornstarch and milk.
2. Heat until bubbling and thickened. Remove from the heat and add the flavoring.

Serve the plum pudding topped with sauce.

Pumpkin Pie Squares

We love this recipe. We especially love this recipe for a crowd.

This is like a pumpkin pie with a nutty topping. But it's a lot easier than making a bunch of pies. But you can make it as big or as small as you need.

This recipe is designed for a small, a medium or a large batch. Use an 8 x 8-inch baking pan for the small, an 8 1/2 x 13-inch pan for the medium, and a 10 x 15-inch pan for the large.



Ingredients

	Small	Medium	Large	
Crust				
Quick oats	1/4	1/2	2/3	cups
Brown sugar	1/4	1/2	2/3	cups
All-purpose flour	1/2	1	1 1/4	cups
Butter	1/4	1/2	2/3	cups
Filling				
Pumpkin	1	2	2 2/3	cups
Eggs	1	2	3	large
Evaporated milk	3/4	1 1/4	1 3/4	cups
Sugar	1/3	3/4	1	cups
All-purpose flour	1	2	3	teaspoons
Salt	1/4	1/2	1/2	teaspoons
Vanilla extract	1/2	1	1 1/2	teaspoons
Cinnamon	1/2	1 1/2	2	teaspoons
Ginger	1/4	1/2	3/4	teaspoons
Cloves	1/8	1/4	1/4	teaspoons
Topping				
Chopped nuts	1/4	1/2	2/3	cups
All-purpose flour	1	2	3	teaspoons
Brown Sugar	1/4	1/2	2/3	cups
Butter	2	3	4	table spoons

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

1. For the crust, cut the butter into the sugar, oats, and flour until crumbly. Press the ingredients into an ungreased baking pan, across the bottom and up the sides. Bake the crust for 15 minutes.
2. For the topping, cut the butter into the nuts, flour, and brown sugar. Set aside.
3. For the filling, combine all ingredients in and whisk until smooth and all ingredients are evenly distributed. Pour into the baked crust.
4. Bake for twenty minutes and remove from the oven. Immediately, spoon the topping over the filling and bake for another 15 to 20 minutes or until a knife stuck in the center comes out almost clean. Cool on a wire rack. Garnish with whipped cream.

Impossible Pumpkin Pie

What makes this pumpkin pie impossible? It has no crust. Instead it uses Bisquick® baking mix and the crust forms in the oven.

This recipe can be mixed with a food blender or a stand-type mixer.

This is a tested recipe of Nancy Rogers, www.nancys-kitchen.com.

16 ounce can pureed pumpkin
12 ounce can evaporated milk
2 tablespoons butter
2 large eggs
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup Bisquick®
2 1/2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
2 teaspoons vanilla

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350. Grease a deep-dish pie pan.

1. Beat all ingredients in blender on high speed 1 minute or until smooth. If your blender doesn't hold 5 cups, beat the mixture with a stand-type mixer on medium speed about 2 minutes or until smooth.
2. Pour the ingredients into the prepared pie plate.
3. Bake for 50 to 55 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. Serves 8.

Recipe courtesy of Nancy Rogers, www.nancys-kitchen.com.

Orange Walnut Coffeecake

This is a very good coffeecake. The cream cheese makes it very moist and delicious. The topping is reminiscent of the caramel topping on a German Chocolate Cake and the melted topping glazes the sides. Scrumptious. Even with the topping, it is not quite as sweet as a dessert cake.

This recipe is sized for a seven inch springform pan. Double this recipe for a ten-inch springform pan, a nine-inch square springform pan, or a 9 x 9-inch baking pan.



Ingredients

1/2 cup sugar
4 ounces cream cheese
zest from one orange
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 large egg

1 cup flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup buttermilk
1/4 cup orange juice

1/2 cup walnut pieces

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

1. Cream the sugar and cream cheese together. Add the zest, vanilla, and egg and beat until soft and fluffy.
2. In another bowl, stir the flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, and salt together. Add the dry mixture to the creamed mixture. Add the buttermilk and orange juice. Beat until combined.
3. Pour the batter into a greased pan. Bake for 35 minutes or until the cake tests down with a toothpick.

Baker's Note: While 35 minutes is the right baking time for the 7-inch pan, baking times will vary with different pans. Test for doneness with a toothpick.

For the topping:

In a small bowl, mix the following ingredients:

2 tablespoons butter, melted
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup flaked or shredded coconut
2 tablespoons orange juice

Spread the topping over hot cake. Set the oven to broil. Place the cake within five inches of the element and broil for just a few minutes until lightly browned. Serve warm.

Baker's Note: *The topping will melt and run down the sides of the cake, glazing the sides. A springform pan is the perfect vehicle for this cake making a nice presentation with glazed sides.*

Pumpkin Cheesecake in a Gingersnap Crust

Looking for something different for the holidays? This pumpkin cheesecake is absolutely phenomenal. It has a pumpkin cheesecake filling with a vanilla cheesecake top layer. The crust is made with gingersnaps which complements the spicy pumpkin filling perfectly. If you are not in love with gingersnaps, substitute vanilla wafers for the crumbs.

This scrumptious cheesecake is best made the night before so that it can thoroughly chill in the refrigerator. (Of course, that is one less thing you have to do on the day of the dinner.)



You will need a nine or ten-inch springform pan for this recipe. (The nine-inch size is perfect.) The cake pictured was baked and served in a nine-inch glass-base springform pan.

For the crust

1 1/2 cups crushed gingersnaps
1/2 cup finely chopped nuts
1/4 cup brown sugar
4 tablespoons butter, melted

For the filling

3 8-ounce packages of cream cheese
3 large eggs
3/4 cup granulated sugar

1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla

1 1/3 cup pumpkin puree
1/4 cup whipping cream or yogurt
1/2 teaspoon allspice
1/2 tablespoon cinnamon

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

1. Crush the gingersnaps. Mix the crumbs with the nuts, brown sugar, and melted butter in a nine or ten-inch springform pan. Press the mixture into a crust across the bottom of the pan and up the sides. Put the crust in the refrigerator to set up while you prepare the filling.
2. Mix the cream cheese, eggs, granulated sugar, salt, and vanilla together with your stand-type mixer using the whisk attachment. Beat until smooth and fluffy, six to eight minutes. Set about 1 1/2 cups of the mixture aside for the topping.
3. To the remaining filling, add the pumpkin, whipping cream or yogurt, and spices. Beat until well-mixed. Pour the filling into the prepared crust. Carefully spoon the set-aside topping over the top of the pumpkin-cheesecake filling.
4. Bake for 70 to 80 minutes or until the top starts to brown and the center of the cake is just barely jiggly.
5. Let the cake cool in the pan on a wire rack for ten minutes. Run a knife around the edge of the pan to loosen. Remove the ring and let the cheesecake cool completely. Refrigerate for several hours before serving.

Cranberry Nut Cheesecake

This is a great holiday cheesecake made with canned cranberry sauce. The sweet-tart cranberries contrast nicely with the smooth cream cheese. The nuts in the cranberry filling add richness and crunch.

If there is a secret ingredient in this cheesecake, it's the orange zest in the cranberry filling. When we tested this cheesecake, it was all "thumbs up"—everyone liked it.

This is an easy cheesecake to make. The cranberry filling is mixed into the cream cheese filling with a spatula. You can use the cranberry filling as a sauce on the finished cheesecake or as a layer within the cheesecake. (See the Baker's Notes at the end of the recipe.)



Ingredients

1 2/3 cups graham cracker crumbs
1/3 cup chopped walnuts
3 tablespoons granulated sugar
6 tablespoons butter, melted

3 8-ounce packages cream cheese
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup granulated sugar

4 large eggs
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 pinch nutmeg

1 16-ounce can whole berry cranberry sauce (about 1 3/4 cups)
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
zest from one orange

Directions

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.

1. For the crust, combine graham cracker crumbs, walnuts, sugar, and butter. Press mixture into the bottom of a ten-inch springform pan.
2. For the cheesecake, in the bowl of your stand-type mixer, beat the cream cheese, salt, and granulated sugar together. Beat in the eggs, cornstarch, and nutmeg.
3. Chop the cranberry sauce in the blender. Add the 1/2-cup walnuts and zest. Set aside..
4. Pour cream cheese batter into the prepared crust. Spoon the cranberry sauce on top. Use a straightedge spatula and vertically cut through the batters to create a cranberry swirl in the cheesecake.
5. Bake for 60 minutes or until the cheesecake tests done. Cool completely and then chill in the refrigerator before serving.

Baker's notes: *In the picture above, we got a little too aggressive with our swirling. It was still a great cheesecake.*

Try baking it as a layered cheesecake putting half of the cheesecake filling in the crust, spooning the cranberry filing into the shell, and then the second half of the filling.

White Chocolate Cheesecake

This is a great cheesecake recipe. The white chocolate makes this cake particularly rich. Use a good quality [white chocolate](#) with high cocoa butter content.

Serve this cheesecake plain or with a topping. You can use pie filling for a topping or mix one cup fresh strawberries, raspberries, or blackberries with 3/4 cup sugar. Mix the berries and sugar together to let the sugar dissolve in the juice.

You will need a ten-inch springform pan. Our [glass-base springform pans](#) are perfect.



Ingredients

For the crust:

1 2/3 cup graham cracker crumbs
1/2 cup butter, melted
2 tablespoons granulated sugar

For the filling:

4 8-ounce packages of cream cheese
1 1/3 cups granulated sugar
4 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/3 cups [white chocolate wafers](#) or 8 ounces of white chocolate baking bars

Directions

Preheat the oven 350 degrees.

1. In a [10-inch springform pan](#), mix the graham cracker crumbs, melted butter, and sugar together. Press the mixture across the bottom of the pan and up the sides to form the crust. Put the crust in refrigerator while you mix the filling.
2. With the paddle attachment of your stand-type mixer, beat the cream cheese and sugar together. Add the eggs and vanilla and beat until smooth. Drizzle in the melted chocolate while the beaters are running. Pour into the crust.
3. Bake for 50 minutes or until the cake is done. Let cool on a wire rack. After ten minutes, loosen the sides with a spatula and remove the ring. Refrigerate the cheesecake to cool completely.

Baker's note: Drizzle in the chocolate while it is still warm. If the chocolate cools too rapidly, you will have clumps in the cheesecake.

German Chocolate Cheesecake

Everyone loves cheesecake and chocolate and cheesecake seems like the perfect combination.

This is an easy recipe to put together and the German chocolate and caramel makes for a scrumptious and very attractive cheesecake dessert. You can make the caramel topping from melted caramels but caramel ice cream topping works just as well and saves a little time. This recipe can be made a day or two in advance of the dinner.



Ingredients

For the crust:

2 cups chocolate graham cracker crumbs (about two inner packages of graham crackers).
Chocolate cookie crumbs may be substituted.
6 tablespoons butter, melted.

For the filling:

2 1/2 eight-ounce packages of cream cheese
1 cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 tablespoons milk

For the toppings:

1 cup chopped pecans or walnuts

For the chocolate topping, combine four ounces of sweet German chocolate with two tablespoons whipping cream and one tablespoon butter. Melt in a small saucepan and stir until smooth.

For the caramel topping, melt 12 caramels with 1/3 cup cream in a small saucepan, stirring until smooth. Or use ice cream topping.

Directions

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees.

1. In a nine-inch spring form pan, mix the cracker crumbs and the melted butter. Press the crumb mixture into a crust across the bottom and about one inch up the sides. Bake the crust for eight minutes.
2. In a large bowl, cream the cream cheese with the sugar. Add the flour and salt. Add the eggs, vanilla, and milk all at once. Mix until just combined, scraping down the sides of the bowl. Pour the filling mix into the crust.
3. Bake for ten minutes at 450 degrees. Lower the temperature to 200 degrees and bake for an additional 35 to 40 minutes or until the cheesecake filling is set.
4. After the cheesecake has cooled for ten minutes, with a sharp knife, loosen the edges of the cheesecake from the pan so that the cake will pull away from the pan as it cools. Remove the rim of the pan after it has cooled for about forty-five minutes.
5. Drizzle the cheesecake with caramel and then with chocolate. Sprinkle nuts on the cake. Refrigerate until completely cool before serving.