

A COPYCAT CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS COLLECTION

# THE COPYCAT CHRISTMAS COOKBOOK

Your favorite restaurant dishes, made in your own kitchen — hand-picked, researched and fact-checked by the Copycat team.

82 RECIPES

COPYCAT SPICES

*A Copycat Christmas & Holidays Collection*

# The Copycat Christmas Cookbook

CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS EDITION · 82 RECIPES

*November 20, 2026*

Compiled, fact-checked, and typeset by Copycat Spices Editorial. Set in Playfair Display, Source Serif 4, and Source Sans 3.

Restaurant and brand names are trademarks of their respective owners, and chef names identify only the dish that inspired a recipe. These recipes are independent re-creations written in our own words — not affiliated with, authorized by, or endorsed by any restaurant, brand or chef.

*copycatspices.com*

FOREWORD

# A Note From Our Kitchen

*There's a particular kind of magic in recreating a dish you love. The first bite of something homemade that tastes right. The moment your kitchen fills with a smell that makes everyone wander in to ask what's cooking.*

That feeling is why Copycat Spices exists. We spend our days reverse-engineering the dishes people crave most — studying brines, chasing the exact ratio in a signature sauce, and figuring out how a restaurant gets that crust, that pull, that color — so you can make them at home for a fraction of the price, exactly how you like them.

This cookbook gathers 82 of our best Christmas & Holidays recipes, hand-picked and put together to live on the counter, not lost in a browser tab. Each recipe here was researched and fact-checked by the Copycat team and written to be genuinely easy to follow on a busy weeknight. No mystery steps, no restaurant secrets held back — just the real technique that makes each dish work.

We picked every page for the season — the restaurant favorites and viral hits people make most this time of year, together in one book. Want one that's entirely yours? Pick any recipes free at copycatspices.com/cookbook.

Thank you for cooking with us. We can't wait to see what you put on your table.

---

*Warmly, the Copycat Spices team*

COPYCATSPICES.COM

CONTENTS

# What's Inside

## Drinks

10 RECIPES


01 Baileys Irish Cream — 17
BAILEYS IRISH CREAM

02 Stoli Doli Pineapple Martini — 19
THE CAPITAL GRILLE

03 Peppermint Chip Milkshake — 21
CHICK-FIL-A

04 Kahlúa-Style Coffee Liqueur — 23
KAHLÚA

05 Old-Fashioned Eggnog — 25
SOUTHERN COMFORT

06 Iced Gingerbread Chai — 28
STARBUCKS

07 Irish Cream Cold Brew — 30
STARBUCKS

08 Hot Cocoa Mix — 32
SWISS MISS

09 Homemade Eggnog — 34
VIRAL HIT

10 Sugar Cookie Martini — 37
VIRAL HIT


## Appetizers

10 RECIPES


11 Clams Casino — 40
ITALIAN

12 Moose Munch — 43
HARRY & DAVID

13 Summer Sausage and Port Wine Cheese Ball 46
HICKORY FARMS

14 Hot Crab Dip 49
JOE'S CRAB SHACK

15 Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese Fondue 52
THE MELTING POT

16 Shrimp Cocktail 54
ST. ELMO STEAK HOUSE

17 Baccalà Salad 57
VIRAL HIT

18 Christmas Tree Charcuterie Board 60
VIRAL HIT

19 Pigs in a Blanket Wreath 63
VIRAL HIT

20 Stuffed Crescent Wreath 66
VIRAL HIT

## Entrées

10 RECIPES

21 Rack of Lamb 70
THE BEATRICE INN

22 HoneyBaked Ham 73
THE HONEYBAKED HAM COMPANY

23 HoneyBaked Ham Co. Smoked Turkey Breast 76
THE HONEYBAKED HAM COMPANY

24 Ham in Cola 79
CHEF-INSPIRED

25 Christmas Morning Breakfast Casserole 82
VIRAL HIT

26 Herb-Butter Cornish Hens 85
VIRAL HIT

27 French-Canadian Tourtière 88
VIRAL HIT

28 Honey-Garlic Ham 91
VIRAL HIT

29 Christmas Eve Pork Tamales 94
VIRAL HIT

30 Salmon Wellington 97
VIRAL HIT

## Sides & Breads

10 RECIPES

31 Fleming's Potatoes au Gratin 101
FLEMING'S PRIME STEAKHOUSE & WINE BAR

32 HoneyBaked Ham Double Cheddar Macaroni and Cheese 104
THE HONEYBAKED HAM COMPANY

33 Sweet Rolls 107
KING'S HAWAIIAN

34 Lawry's Yorkshire Pudding 110
LAWRY'S THE PRIME RIB

35 Lobster Mashed Potatoes 112
MASTRO'S

36 Crescent Rolls 115
PILLSBURY

37 Rhodes-Style Freezer Dinner Rolls 118
RHODES BAKE-N-SERV

38 Ruth's Chris Corn Pudding 121
RUTH'S CHRIS STEAK HOUSE

39 Stouffer's-Style Spinach Soufflé 123
STOUFFER'S

40 Cinnamon Roll Christmas Tree 125
VIRAL HIT

## Vegetarian

10 RECIPES

41 Mushroom Bourguignon 129
CHEF-INSPIRED

42 Beet Wellington 132
CHEF-INSPIRED

43 Miso Eggplant 135
NOBU

44 Eggplant Parmigiana 138
RAO'S

45 Grinch Spaghetti 141
VIRAL HIT

46 Hasselback Butternut Squash 144
VIRAL HIT

47 Mushroom Wellington 147
VIRAL HIT

48 Sour Cream Coffee Cake 150
VIRAL HIT

49 Wild Rice & Cranberry Stuffed Butternut Squash 153
VIRAL HIT

50 Whole Roasted Cauliflower 156
VIRAL HIT

## More Favorites

10 RECIPES

51 Czech Kolaches 160
CZECH

52 Lobster Mac and Cheese 163
CHEF-INSPIRED

53 Crumb Coffee Cake 166
ENTENMANN'S

54 Gingerbread Pancakes 169
IHOP

55 Cheese Rolls 172
PORTO'S BAKERY

56 Racine Danish Kringle 175
O&H DANISH BAKERY

57 Crème Brûlée French Toast Casserole 178
VIRAL HIT

58 Famous Christmas Potatoes 181
VIRAL HIT

59 French Toast Roll-Ups 184
VIRAL HIT

60 Fried Smelts 186
VIRAL HIT

## Cookies

8 RECIPES

61 Cheryl's Frosted Cutout Cookies 190
CHERYL'S COOKIES

62 Dutch Stroopwafels 193
DAELMANS

63 Chocolate Chip Cookie 196
DOUBLETREE BY HILTON

64 Florentine Lace Cookies 199
ITALIAN

65 Peanut Butter Blossoms 202
HERSHEY'S

66 Moravian Spice Cookies 205
SOUTHERN

67 Pfeffernüsse 208
GERMAN

68 Cathedral Window Cookies 211
VIRAL HIT

## Candy & Fudge

10 RECIPES

69 Almond Roca 215
BROWN & HALEY

70 Cherry Mash-Style Candy Bars 218
CHASE CANDY COMPANY

71 Dark Chocolate Truffles 221
GODIVA

72 Kentucky Bourbon Balls 224
AMERICAN

73 Fantasy Fudge 227
KRAFT

74 Martha Washington Candy 230
SOUTHERN

75 New Orleans Pecan Pralines 232
SOUTHERN

76 Peanut Butter Trees 234
REESE'S

77 See's Candies Bordeaux 237
SEE'S CANDIES

78 Old-Fashioned Divinity Candy 240
VIRAL HIT

## Cakes & Bars

4 RECIPES

79 Bauducco Panettone 244
BAUDUCCO

80 Peppermint Bark Cheesecake 247
THE CHEESECAKE FACTORY

81 Dresden-Style Christmas Stollen 251
GERMAN

82 Christmas Tree Cakes 254
LITTLE DEBBIE

PLAN AHEAD

# Your Bake-Ahead Countdown

Pick the day you'll serve or give, then count back. Every recipe in this book is placed below; where a recipe has its own storage advice, it's quoted in italics. Times are conservative "up to" guides, not guarantees.

1 3–4 WEEKS OUT

## Mix, shape & freeze the doughs

Cookie doughs go in the freezer first. Wrapped and chilled, dough keeps up to about 5 days; double-wrapped and frozen, up to 3 months. Bake straight from frozen later.


**Cheryl's Frosted Cutout Cookies** ..... 190

*Frosted cookies keep at room temperature in an airtight container, layers separated by parchment or wax paper, for 5–7 days.*

**Chocolate Chip Cookie** ..... 196

**Florentine Lace Cookies** ..... 199

*They keep 5–7 days at peak crispness and up to 2 weeks before they noticeably soften.*

**Peanut Butter Blossoms** ..... 202

*Transfer to a zip-lock bag and freeze for up to 3 months.*

**Moravian Spice Cookies** ..... 205

**Pfeffernüsse** ..... 208


2 ABOUT 2 WEEKS OUT

## Candy, bark & fudge

Low-moisture sweets hold best. Make them now, store airtight somewhere cool, and they're ready to go straight into tins.


**Moose Munch** ..... 43

*Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.*

**Cathedral Window Cookies** ..... 211

*Stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator, the log keeps for up to 2 weeks.*

**Almond Roca** ..... 215

*Stored in an airtight container at room temperature, homemade Almond Roca keeps for up to 2 weeks.*

**Cherry Mash-Style Candy Bars** ..... 218

**Dark Chocolate Truffles** ..... 221

*Stored in an airtight container at cool room temperature (under 68°F), homemade dark chocolate truffles keep well for up to 1 week.*

**Kentucky Bourbon Balls** ..... 224

*Stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator: 2 to 3 weeks.*

**Fantasy Fudge** ..... 227

*Stored in an airtight container at room temperature, Fantasy Fudge keeps for 2–3 weeks.*

**Martha Washington Candy** ..... 230

*In an airtight container in the refrigerator: up to 3 weeks.*

**New Orleans Pecan Pralines** ..... 232

**See's Candies Bordeaux** 237
*After beating in the powdered sugar, press plastic wrap directly onto the surface of the filling and refrigerate up to 5 days before rolling and dipping.*

**Old-Fashioned Divinity Candy** 240
*Store in a single layer or with waxed paper between layers in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.*

**Peppermint Bark Cheesecake** 247
*Refrigerated, the cheesecake keeps well for up to 5 days covered.*

3 2–3 DAYS OUT

## Bake, frost & fill the tins

Bake the frozen dough, then the cakes, bars and brownies. Decorate and pack gift tins last, so everything reaches the table at its best.

**Dutch Stroopwafels** 193
*Store assembled stroopwafels in a single layer (or separated by parchment) in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.*

**Peanut Butter Trees** 234
*Stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator, these keep well for up to 2 weeks.*

**Bauducco Panettone** 244
*It stays at peak quality for 3–4 days and remains good for up to a week.*

**Dresden-Style Christmas Stollen** 251

**Christmas Tree Cakes** 254
*Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.*

4 THE DAY BEFORE

## Assemble & chill

Dips, cheese balls, casseroles and braises that hold overnight. Assemble, cover and refrigerate, then bake or reheat on the day.

**Summer Sausage and Port Wine Cheese Ball** 46
*It also freezes well — up to 3 months, wrapped tightly and placed in a zip-top bag.*

**Baccalà Salad** 57
*Make it up to 2 days ahead of serving.*

**Stuffed Crescent Wreath** 66
*Up to 3 days refrigerated in an airtight container or wrapped tightly in foil.*

**Christmas Morning Breakfast Casserole** 82

**French-Canadian Tourtière** 88
*Three options: (1) Freeze the filling alone for up to 3 months.*

**Honey-Garlic Ham** 91
*Fully baked ham holds refrigerated for up to 4 days, and the glaze reapplied and re-crisped at 350°F for 20 minutes gives you almost the same caramel crust as fresh.*

**Christmas Eve Pork Tamales** 94
*The red chile pork filling keeps refrigerated for up to 3 days and freezes well for up to 3 months.*

**Salmon Wellington** 97
*Up to 24 hours.*

**Rhodes-Style Freezer Dinner Rolls** 118
*Properly wrapped in a zip-top freezer bag with as much air removed as possible, homemade frozen dinner roll dough keeps well for up to 4 weeks.*

Mushroom Bourguignon 129
*Make it up to 2 days ahead, let it cool completely, and refrigerate.*

Eggplant Parmigiana 138
*Fully assembled and baked, it keeps refrigerated for up to 4 days.*

Mushroom Wellington 147
*Assemble the Wellington fully (up through the egg wash and scoring), wrap loosely in plastic wrap, and refrigerate up to 24 hours.*

Sour Cream Coffee Cake 150

Cheese Rolls 172
*After step 6 (rolling and wrapping the logs), place the wrapped logs directly in the freezer — they keep for up to 2 months.*

Crème Brûlée French Toast Casserole 178
*At 24 hours, the bread begins to break down from extended soaking.*

5 ON THE DAY

# Roast, bake & pour

Baileys Irish Cream p. 17 · Stoli Doli Pineapple Martini p. 19 · Peppermint Chip Milkshake p. 21 · Kahlúa-Style Coffee Liqueur p. 23 · Old-Fashioned Eggnog p. 25 · Iced Gingerbread Chai p. 28 · Irish Cream Cold Brew p. 30 · Hot Cocoa Mix p. 32 · Homemade Eggnog p. 34 · Sugar Cookie Martini p. 37 · Clams Casino p. 40 · Hot Crab Dip p. 49 · Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese Fondue p. 52 · Shrimp Cocktail p. 54 · Christmas Tree Charcuterie Board p. 60 · Pigs in a Blanket Wreath p. 63 · Rack of Lamb p. 70 · HoneyBaked Ham p. 73 · HoneyBaked Ham Co. Smoked Turkey Breast p. 76 · Ham in Cola p. 79 · Herb-Butter Cornish Hens p. 85 · Fleming's Potatoes au Gratin p. 101 · HoneyBaked Ham Double Cheddar Macaroni and Cheese p. 104 · Sweet Rolls p. 107 · Lawry's Yorkshire Pudding p. 110 · Lobster Mashed Potatoes p. 112 · Crescent Rolls p. 115 · Ruth's Chris Corn Pudding p. 121 · Stouffer's-Style Spinach Soufflé p. 123 · Cinnamon Roll Christmas Tree p. 125 · Beet Wellington p. 132 · Miso Eggplant p. 135 · Grinch Spaghetti p. 141 · Hasselback Butternut Squash p. 144 · Wild Rice & Cranberry Stuffed Butternut Squash p. 153 · Whole Roasted Cauliflower p. 156 · Czech Kolaches p. 160 · Lobster Mac and Cheese p. 163 · Crumb Coffee Cake p. 166 · Gingerbread Pancakes p. 169 · Racine Danish Kringle p. 175 · Famous Christmas Potatoes p. 181 · French Toast Roll-Ups p. 184 · Fried Smelts p. 186

GIVE IT AWAY

# Packing the Cookie Tins

1. Pack only once everything is completely cool. Warm cookies steam, and the whole tin goes soft.
2. Heaviest and sturdiest on the bottom, the most delicate on top, with a sheet of parchment between every layer.
3. Keep crisp and soft cookies in separate tins. Crisp ones pick up moisture and lose their snap.
4. Fill the gaps with crinkled parchment or tissue so nothing slides. Don't overpack: snug, not squashed.
5. Wrap anything iced, filled or chocolate-dipped on its own, or give it a layer to itself.

## Tin-ready

Sturdy enough to stack. Heaviest on the bottom, a sheet of parchment between layers.


Moose Munch 43
Dutch Stroopwafels 193
Chocolate Chip Cookie 196
Florentine Lace Cookies 199
Peanut Butter Blossoms 202
Moravian Spice Cookies 205
Pfeffernüsse 208
Cathedral Window Cookies 211
Almond Roca 215
Cherry Mash-Style Candy Bars 218
Kentucky Bourbon Balls 224
Fantasy Fudge 227
Martha Washington Candy 230
New Orleans Pecan Pralines 232
Peanut Butter Trees 234
See's Candies Bordeaux 237
Old-Fashioned Divinity Candy 240
Bauducco Panettone 244
Dresden-Style Christmas Stollen 251


## Pack with care

Wrap singly or give them their own top layer. Keep them away from crisp cookies, which go soft beside them.


Cheryl's Frosted Cutout Cookies 190
Dark Chocolate Truffles 221
Christmas Tree Cakes 254


## Hand-deliver

Not a tin gift. Box it, keep it chilled, and carry it flat.


Peppermint Bark Cheesecake 247

CUT & TIE

# Gift Tags

Print just this page at Actual Size (100%, not “Fit to page”) on bright-white card stock, or on sticker paper to skip the ribbon. Cut along the dashed lines, punch the circle and tie one to every tin.

HOMEMADE FOR YOU

## Moose Munch

TO _____

FROM _____

HOMEMADE FOR YOU

## Cheryl's Frosted Cutout Cookies

TO _____

FROM _____

HOMEMADE FOR YOU

## Dutch Stroopwafels

TO _____

FROM _____

HOMEMADE FOR YOU

## Chocolate Chip Cookie

TO _____

FROM _____

HOMEMADE FOR YOU

## Florentine Lace Cookies

TO _____

FROM _____

HOMEMADE FOR YOU

## Peanut Butter Blossoms

TO _____

FROM _____

HOMEMADE FOR YOU

## Moravian Spice Cookies

TO _____

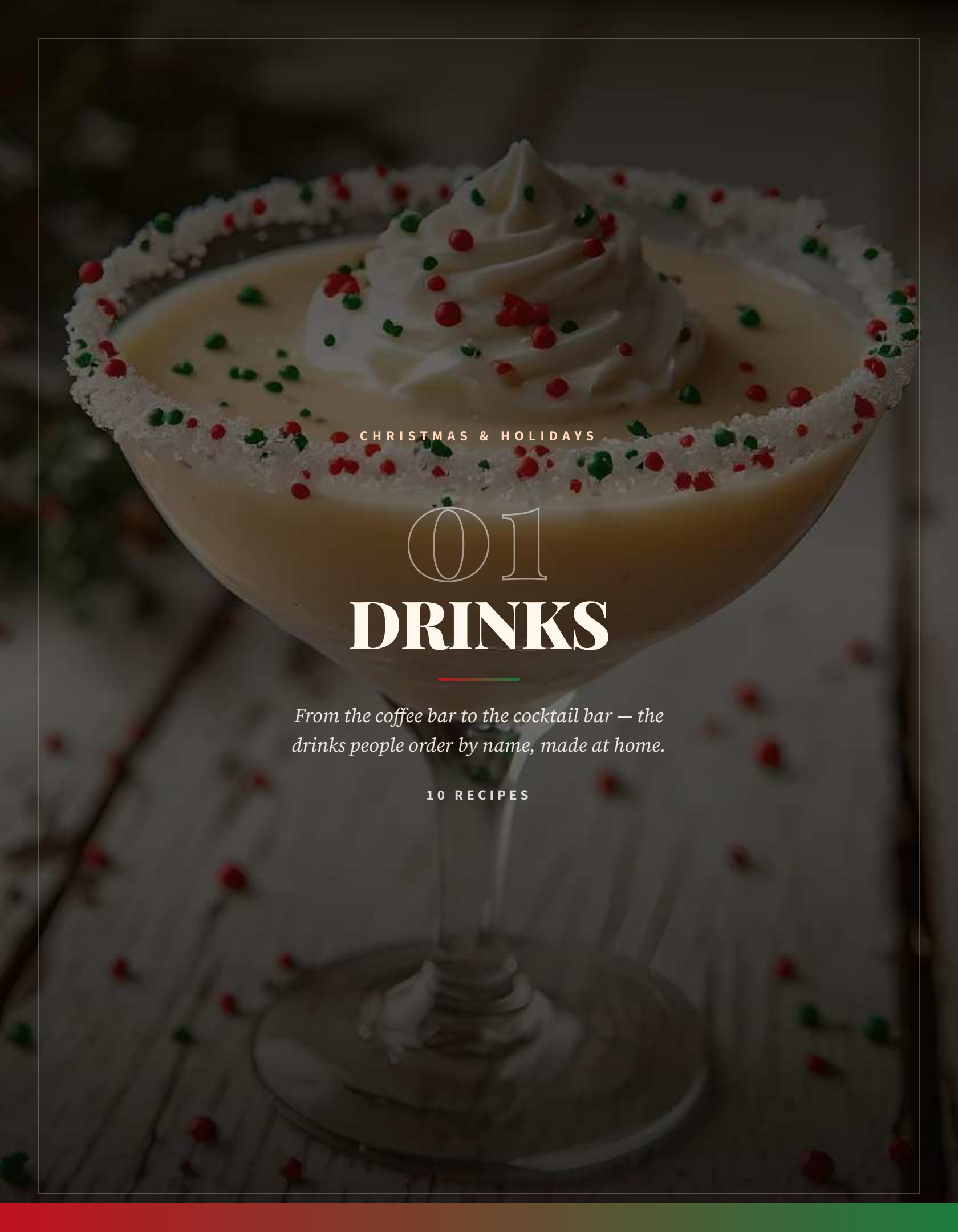
FROM _____

HOMEMADE FOR YOU

## Pfeffernüsse

TO _____

FROM _____



CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS

# 01 DRINKS

*From the coffee bar to the cocktail bar — the drinks people order by name, made at home.*

10 RECIPES



№ 01

BAILEYS IRISH CREAM

# Baileys Irish Cream

*Make a spot-on copycat Baileys Irish cream at home — Irish whiskey, cold heavy cream, sweetened condensed milk, chocolate syrup, espresso powder, and vanilla blended in under two minutes.*

BAILEYS IRISH CREAM · COPYCAT

# Baileys Irish Cream

*Make a spot-on copycat Baileys Irish cream at home — Irish whiskey, cold heavy cream, sweetened condensed milk, chocolate syrup, espresso powder, and vanilla blended in under two minutes.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 min | 0 min | About 21 | Easy | 140 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 1 cup (240 ml) cold heavy cream (36% fat or higher)
- 1 can (14 oz / 397 g) sweetened condensed milk
- 1 cup (240 ml) Irish whiskey (Jameson, Tullamore D.E.W., or Bushmills)
- 2 tablespoons (30 g) chocolate syrup
- 1 teaspoon instant espresso powder (or 2 teaspoons instant coffee powder)
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Any blended Irish whiskey works well — Jameson, Tullamore D.E.W., and Bushmills are the three most commonly used and all run $20–25 for a 750ml bottle, which provides enough for one generous batch.*

## 02 Method

1. Keep the heavy cream refrigerated until the last moment before blending — cold cream is significantly less prone to curdling when it meets the acidity of whiskey. If your kitchen is warm, pre-chill the blender jar in the freezer for 5 minutes before you start.
2. Measure all six ingredients directly into the blender jar: heavy cream, sweetened condensed milk, Irish whiskey, chocolate syrup, espresso powder, and vanilla extract. Do not pre-mix anything or warm the cream.
3. Blend on LOW speed (the lowest setting on your blender) for exactly 20–30 seconds. The goal is to combine everything and dissolve the espresso powder, not to aerate or froth aggressively. High speed heats the cream, creates excess foam, and shortens shelf life.
4. Taste immediately: adjust with a few drops more vanilla for warmth, an extra teaspoon of chocolate syrup for a richer chocolate note, or a splash more whiskey for more alcohol presence. Blend briefly again on low if you add anything.
5. Set a fine-mesh strainer over a large measuring cup or pitcher and pour the blended mixture through it. This catches any undissolved espresso granules that could look like sediment after refrigeration.
6. Transfer to a clean glass bottle or wide-mouth mason jar with a tight-fitting lid. Seal immediately and refrigerate. The flavors continue to meld and round out over the first 24 hours — the batch tastes noticeably better on day 2 than day 1.
7. Before each serving, shake or stir well: a small amount of natural separation is normal and does not indicate spoilage. Pour 1½–2 oz over a large ice cube, stir into hot coffee, or use in any cocktail that calls for Irish cream. Keeps refrigerated for up to 2 weeks.



№ 02

THE CAPITAL GRILLE

# Stoli Doli Pineapple Martini

*Capital Grille's famous Stoli Doli pineapple martini at home: one fresh pineapple steeped in a liter of Stolichnaya for 10–14 days, then shaken cold and served straight up. About $20 per glass at the restaurant; under $3 at home.*

# Stoli Doli Pineapple Martini

*Capital Grille's famous Stoli Doli pineapple martini at home: one fresh pineapple steeped in a liter of Stolichnaya for 10–14 days, then shaken cold and served straight up. About $20 per glass at the restaurant; under $3 at home.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 min | 10–14 days | 13 | Easy | 165 |

## 01 Ingredients

### THE INFUSION (MAKES 13 COCKTAILS)

- 1 fresh pineapple (about 2 lbs of flesh after prep)
- 1 liter Stolichnaya vodka (or other clean premium vodka)

### TO SERVE EACH COCKTAIL

- 2½ oz (5 tablespoons) strained pineapple-infused vodka
- Ice (for shaking)

### GARNISH (OPTIONAL)

- 1 fresh pineapple spear or chunk per glass

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Stolichnaya is the standard here — the drink is named after it — but a clean, neutral premium vodka works well. Look for a vodka that is smooth enough to drink straight with limited burn, since there are no mixers to soften a harsh spirit.*

## 02 Method

1. **Prep the pineapple.** Slice off the crown and base of the pineapple. Stand it upright and cut the skin off in vertical strips, following the curve of the fruit. Quarter the pineapple lengthwise, remove the fibrous core from each quarter, and cut the flesh into rough 1-inch chunks. You don't need uniformity — the goal is maximum surface area in contact with the vodka.

2. **Combine and seal.** Place the pineapple chunks in a clean 2-liter glass jar, large mason jar, or glass pitcher with a tight-fitting lid. Pour the entire liter of vodka over the fruit. The pineapple should be fully submerged; if any chunks float above the liquid, press them down or weigh them with a small clean weight. Seal the container.

3. **Refrigerate for 10 to 14 days.** Store the covered jar in the refrigerator. The vodka will begin to take on a faint golden color within 48 hours. Taste on day 10: it should smell and taste clearly of fresh pineapple with a clean vodka backbone. Continue infusing until day 14 if you want a more concentrated flavor — stop when the infusion smells tropical and sweet but not overripe. Do not leave the fruit in longer than 14 days.

4. **Strain and store.** When the infusion is ready, pour the vodka through a fine-mesh strainer into a clean bottle or jar, pressing lightly on the fruit to extract the liquid. Discard the spent pineapple. Store the strained infused vodka in the refrigerator, sealed; it keeps well for up to 3 weeks.

5. **Chill your glass.** Before serving, place a martini glass in the freezer for 10 minutes, or fill it with ice water while you build the cocktail. A chilled glass keeps a shaken martini cold far longer.

6. **Shake and serve.** Fill a cocktail shaker two-thirds full with ice. Add 2½ oz of the strained pineapple vodka. Shake hard for a full 10 seconds — the shaker should become frosty and uncomfortable to hold. Empty the ice water from your martini glass, then strain the shaken vodka into it through the shaker's strainer. Garnish with a pineapple spear and serve immediately.



№ 03

CHICK-FIL-A

# Peppermint Chip Milkshake

*Make the Chick-fil-A Peppermint Chip Milkshake at home — vanilla Icedream-style base, pure peppermint extract, and chocolate chips blended throughout, topped with whipped cream.*

CHICK-FIL-A · COPYCAT

# Peppermint Chip Milkshake

*Make the Chick-fil-A Peppermint Chip Milkshake at home — vanilla Icedream-style base, pure peppermint extract, and chocolate chips blended throughout, topped with whipped cream.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 min | 0 min | 2 milkshakes | Easy | 370 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 2 cups reduced-fat vanilla ice cream — Edy's Slow Churned or Breyers Natural Vanilla
- ¼ cup whole milk, plus extra if needed to loosen
- ¾ teaspoon pure peppermint extract (not 'mint extract')
- 3 tablespoons mini semi-sweet chocolate chips, divided (or chopped peppermint bark / a mix of white and dark chocolate for a closer match to Chick-fil-A's peppermint bark chips)
- Whipped cream, for serving
- 2 maraschino cherries, for garnish

**WHY IT WORKS**

*This matters more than most recipes acknowledge. Pure peppermint extract is made from peppermint (Mentha × piperita), which is high in menthol — the compound that gives the clean, sharp, cooling sensation of candy canes.*

## 02 Method

1. **Soften the ice cream.** Scoop 2 cups of ice cream into the blender and let it sit at room temperature for 3–4 minutes. It should dent easily when pressed but not be melting or pooling. Over-softened ice cream makes the shake thin and warm; too-hard ice cream strains the blender and turns the chips to powder.

2. **Blend the base.** Pour the whole milk over the ice cream, add the peppermint extract, and blend on medium for 20–25 seconds until completely smooth and thick. Stop and scrape the sides if needed. The shake should be thick enough that it barely moves when you tilt the blender. If it runs freely, add ¼ cup more ice cream and blend again.

3. **Taste and adjust peppermint.** Before adding the chips, taste the shake. It should read clearly cooling and bright without crossing into toothpaste territory. If too mild, add another ¼ teaspoon extract and pulse once. Peppermint fades slightly as the shake warms, so aim slightly bolder than you ultimately want.

4. **Pulse in the chips.** Add 2 tablespoons of the mini chips to the blender. Pulse 4–5 times — one-second bursts — so the chips chop into irregular pieces but don't disappear entirely. You want visible dark pieces in every sip, not a chocolate-flecked uniform shake.

5. **Pour and garnish.** Divide between two pre-chilled glasses (5 minutes in the freezer). Scatter the remaining 1 tablespoon of whole chips over the whipped cream on each glass. Top with whipped cream and a maraschino cherry. Serve immediately with a wide straw.



№ 04

KAHLÚA

# Kahlúa-Style Coffee Liqueur

*Make a spot-on copycat Kahlúa-style coffee liqueur at home — dark rum, strong arabica coffee, sugar, and a split vanilla bean simmered into a coffee syrup and rested for two weeks.*

KAHLÚA · COPYCAT

# Kahlúa-Style Coffee Liqueur

*Make a spot-on copycat Kahlúa-style coffee liqueur at home — dark rum, strong arabica coffee, sugar, and a split vanilla bean simmered into a coffee syrup and rested for two weeks.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 15 min | About 18 | Easy | 120 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 2 cups (480 ml) water
- 4 tablespoons (28 g) instant espresso powder (or 6 tablespoons dark-roast instant coffee)
- 1½ cups (300 g) granulated white sugar
- 1½ cups (360 ml) dark rum, 40% ABV (Myers's, Bacardi Gold, Gosling's, or Plantation Original Dark)
- 1 whole vanilla bean, split lengthwise and seeds scraped (or 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract)

## 02 Method

1. Bring 2 cups of water to a near-boil (around 190–200°F / 88–93°C — not a full rolling boil, which can scorch the coffee solids). Remove from heat, add the instant espresso powder, and whisk until completely dissolved. The water will turn a deep, dark brown; there should be no undissolved granules.
2. Return the coffee to medium heat. Add the granulated sugar and stir constantly until every granule has dissolved, 2–3 minutes. Once dissolved, raise heat to medium-high and bring to a gentle simmer.
3. Simmer uncovered for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. The syrup should reduce by about 10–15% and thicken slightly — it will coat the back of a spoon noticeably more than it did before simmering. This step concentrates the coffee flavor and gives the finished liqueur its characteristic viscosity.
4. Remove from heat and let the coffee syrup cool at room temperature for at least 30 minutes. It must be completely cool (below 75°F / 24°C) before you add the rum and vanilla; adding alcohol to hot liquid accelerates evaporation and may crack a glass bottle. Speeding this up in an ice-water bath is fine.
5. Add the vanilla bean seeds (and the scraped pod itself — it continues releasing flavor during the rest period) and stir to distribute. If using vanilla extract rather than a bean, hold it back until the syrup is fully cool, then stir it in now.
6. Pour the cooled coffee syrup into a large measuring cup or pitcher. Add the dark rum and stir well to combine — there is no need for a blender or whisk; the liquids combine easily. Taste: the rum should be noticeable but not sharp, the coffee strong but not bitter, the sweetness clearly present but not cloying. This is what it will taste like before resting; the flavor will improve significantly over 2 weeks.
7. Using a funnel, pour the liqueur into a clean, dry 1-liter (or two 500ml) glass bottle(s) with an airtight seal. Add the vanilla bean pod(s) directly into the bottle for continued infusion during the rest period.
8. Seal the bottle and refrigerate for a minimum of 2 weeks before tasting. The vanilla infuses progressively: on day 1 it is barely detectable; by day 14 it integrates with the coffee and rum to produce the round, complex flavor that makes Kahlúa distinctive. The batch can rest up to 4 weeks for even deeper vanilla development.
9. To serve: pour 1½ oz over a large ice cube, stir into hot or iced coffee, mix into an espresso martini, pour over vanilla ice cream for an affogato, or use in any recipe calling for coffee liqueur. Keeps refrigerated for up to 3 months. Remove the vanilla bean pod after 4 weeks — beyond that it can impart an overly tannic, slightly bitter edge.



№ 05

SOUTHERN COMFORT

# Old-Fashioned Eggnog

*Homemade eggnog recipe in the style of Southern Comfort's iconic holiday carton — a cooked custard base of egg yolks, whole milk, and heavy cream, loaded with freshly grated nutmeg. Rich, thick, and ready in 30 minutes of active time.*

SOUTHERN COMFORT · COPYCAT

# Old-Fashioned Eggnog

*Homemade eggnog recipe in the style of Southern Comfort's iconic holiday carton — a cooked custard base of egg yolks, whole milk, and heavy cream, loaded with freshly grated nutmeg. Rich, thick, and ready in 30 minutes of active time.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 20 min | 4 | Medium | 340 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 4 large egg yolks
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ¾ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg (plus more for serving — this is the most important spice)
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Pinch of ground cloves (optional, but adds depth)

**FOR SERVING (OPTIONAL, ADULTS ONLY)**

- 2 tablespoons bourbon, dark rum, or brandy per glass

## 02 Method

1. **Whisk the yolks and sugar.** In a medium bowl, whisk the 4 egg yolks and ⅓ cup sugar together vigorously until the mixture turns pale yellow and thick enough to fall off the whisk in a slow ribbon — about 2 minutes by hand. This step is not optional: the sugar and mechanical action denature some of the proteins, which helps the yolks temper without curdling.

2. **Heat the milk.** Pour 2 cups whole milk into a medium saucepan over medium heat. Heat until the milk reaches about 180°F on an instant-read thermometer — it will be steaming steadily with tiny bubbles forming around the edges, but not boiling. If you don't have a thermometer, watch for the point just before a full simmer. Remove from heat.

3. **Temper the yolks.** The tempering step is what prevents scrambled eggs. Add the hot milk to the yolk mixture very slowly: pour about ¼ cup of hot milk into the yolks in a thin stream while whisking constantly. Then pour in another ¼ cup, whisking. Once roughly half the milk is incorporated, you can pour the rest in a steadier stream. Whisk constantly throughout — never stop whisking.

4. **Cook to 160°F.** Pour the tempered mixture back into the saucepan. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a silicone spatula (reach the corners and bottom of the pan), until

the mixture registers 160°F on an instant-read thermometer, about 5–8 minutes. The custard will coat the back of the spatula and a line drawn through it will hold. Do not go above 165°F — above that temperature, the eggs can scramble and the texture turns grainy.

5. **Add the cream and spices.** Remove the pan from heat immediately when you hit 160°F. Stir in the 1 cup heavy cream — this brings the temperature down quickly and stops the cooking. Add the vanilla extract, ¾ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg, the cinnamon, and the pinch of cloves if using. Stir until fully combined.

6. **Strain.** Pour the eggnog through a fine-mesh sieve into a large measuring cup or storage container. This step removes any cooked egg bits, giving you a perfectly smooth, silky custard. Don't skip it.

7. **Refrigerate.** Cover the container and refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Overnight is ideal. The eggnog thickens considerably as it cools — what looks thin from the saucepan becomes noticeably spoonable after chilling. This is the texture Southern Comfort carton eggnog is known for.

8. **Serve.** Pour into chilled glasses. Grate fresh nutmeg directly over each glass — 3 or 4 strokes on a Microplane right over the surface. If adding spirits, pour 2 tablespoons of bourbon, dark rum, or brandy into each glass first, then pour the cold eggnog over the top. Stir once gently.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The cooked custard method. Many homemade eggnog recipes use raw eggs or only lightly temper the yolks, which produces a thin, frothy texture.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 06

STARBUCKS

# Iced Gingerbread Chai

*Make the Starbucks Iced Gingerbread Chai at home: chai over 2% milk and ice, topped with a gingerbread cold foam made from homemade brown sugar and molasses syrup, plus a cinnamon-ginger spice dusting.*

STARBUCKS · COPYCAT

# Iced Gingerbread Chai

*Make the Starbucks Iced Gingerbread Chai at home: chai over 2% milk and ice, topped with a gingerbread cold foam made from homemade brown sugar and molasses syrup, plus a cinnamon-ginger spice dusting.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 10 min | 1 drink | Easy | 300 |

## 01 Ingredients

### GINGERBREAD SYRUP (MAKES ABOUT 1 1/4 CUPS, ENOUGH FOR 25 TO 30 DRINKS' WORTH OF FOAM)

- 1 cup water
- 1 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons unsulphured molasses (regular, not blackstrap)
- 1½ teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 pinch ground nutmeg
- 1 pinch fine salt
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

### GINGERBREAD COLD FOAM

- 3 tablespoons heavy cream, very cold
- 2 tablespoons 2% milk, very cold
- 1 teaspoon vanilla syrup
- 2 teaspoons gingerbread syrup (from above)

### ICED CHAI BASE (GRANDE)

- 4 oz (½ cup) chai concentrate: Tazo Classic Chai Latte Concentrate, or the homemade chai syrup from our Chaider recipe
- 6 oz (¾ cup) 2% milk, cold
- 1½ cups ice

### SPICE TOPPING

- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 small pinch ground nutmeg

## 02 Method

1. **Make the gingerbread syrup.** In a small saucepan, combine the water, brown sugar, molasses, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, and salt. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Simmer 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. It will thicken slightly but should still pour easily. Take it off the heat and stir in the vanilla. Let it cool 10 minutes, then strain through a fine-mesh strainer lined with a coffee filter or paper towel to catch the ground-spice sediment. Store in a sealed jar in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

2. **Mix the spice topping.** In a small bowl, stir together the cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg. Set aside. You only need a pinch per drink, so a larger batch keeps in a spice jar all season.

3. **Build the iced chai.** Fill a 16 to 20 oz glass with ice. Pour in the chai concentrate, then the cold 2% milk. Stir a few times to combine. Leave about an inch of room at the top for the foam.

4. **Froth the gingerbread cold foam.** In a tall, narrow cup or a frothing pitcher, combine the cold heavy cream, 2% milk, vanilla syrup, and gingerbread syrup. Froth with a handheld milk frother for 15 to 20 seconds, keeping the head just under the surface, until the mixture thickens to a soft, pourable foam that looks like melted ice cream. Stop before it holds peaks. Stiff foam sits on top in a clump instead of spreading.

5. **Float the foam.** Pour the foam slowly over the back of a spoon held just above the drink so it settles in an even layer on top of the chai. It should sit about ½ inch thick and slowly cascade a little into the tea.

6. **Dust and serve.** Sprinkle a light pinch of the spice topping over the foam. Serve right away with a straw, or sip from the rim to get foam and chai together.



№ 07

STARBUCKS

# Irish Cream Cold Brew

*Cold brew over ice, stirred with a homemade Irish cream syrup, topped with vanilla sweet cream cold foam and a cocoa dust. The almond extract in the syrup is the detail that makes it taste like the Starbucks holiday version.*

STARBUCKS · COPYCAT

# Irish Cream Cold Brew

*Cold brew over ice, stirred with a homemade Irish cream syrup, topped with vanilla sweet cream cold foam and a cocoa dust. The almond extract in the syrup is the detail that makes it taste like the Starbucks holiday version.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 0 min | 1 drink | Easy | 250 |

## 01 Ingredients

### IRISH CREAM SYRUP (MAKES 10–12 SERVINGS, KEEPS 2 WEEKS REFRIGERATED)

- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup water
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder (Dutch-process preferred)
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon pure almond extract

### VANILLA SWEET CREAM COLD FOAM (PER DRINK)

- 3 tablespoons heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon whole milk or 2% milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla syrup (Torani or homemade: 1 tsp simple syrup + ¼ tsp vanilla extract)

### TO ASSEMBLE (PER DRINK)

- 1½ cups ice
- 8 oz cold brew coffee (store-bought concentrate diluted 1:1 with cold water, or homemade)
- 2 tablespoons Irish cream syrup (from above)
- Pinch of unsweetened cocoa powder for dusting

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The Vanilla Sweet Cream Cold Brew has only vanilla syrup in the base and the same vanilla sweet cream cold foam on top — it is simpler, cleaner, and less sweet.*

## 02 Method

1. **Make the Irish cream syrup.** Combine water, sugar, and cocoa powder in a small saucepan. Heat over medium, whisking constantly, until the sugar and cocoa are fully dissolved and the mixture is smooth — about 3 to 4 minutes. Do not boil. Remove from heat, cool for 5 minutes, then stir in vanilla extract and almond extract. Let cool completely before using. Transfer to a small jar and refrigerate; it keeps up to 2 weeks. The syrup will thicken slightly as it chills.

2. **Make the vanilla sweet cream cold foam.** Combine heavy cream, milk, and vanilla syrup in a small jar or cup. Use a handheld milk frother (single-coil wand) for 20–25 seconds, or whisk vigorously for 60 seconds, until the mixture thickens and increases in volume by about a third. The target texture is pourable and silky — it should flow slowly when tilted, not hold stiff peaks. If it looks too thick, stir gently to loosen it. Make this just before assembling so the foam is fresh.

3. **Build the base.** Pour 2 tablespoons of Irish cream syrup into a large glass (16 oz or bigger). Add ice. Pour the cold brew over the ice and stir once or twice to distribute the syrup through the base — you want it mixed in, not settled at the bottom.

4. **Float the foam.** Hold a spoon face-down just above the surface of the cold brew. Pour the vanilla sweet cream cold foam slowly over the back of the spoon. The spoon breaks the stream so the foam disperses across the top and layers on the drink rather than sinking through. Pour slowly and steadily — rushing causes the foam to punch through the cold brew.

5. **Dust with cocoa.** Lightly sift a small pinch of unsweetened cocoa powder over the foam surface. A fine-mesh strainer or a small tea strainer gives the best control. Starbucks uses a light dusting — just enough to tint the foam surface, not a thick layer.

6. **Serve immediately.** Drink through a straw, pulling cold brew and cream together from the bottom up. The foam gradually mixes into the drink as you go.



№ 08

SWISS MISS

# Hot Cocoa Mix

*Homemade Swiss Miss hot cocoa mix: Dutch-process cocoa, powdered sugar, nonfat dry milk, and a pinch of salt in one bowl. Two tablespoons in hot water or milk = a richer, less-sweet mug than the packet.*

SWISS MISS · COPYCAT

# Hot Cocoa Mix

*Homemade Swiss Miss hot cocoa mix: Dutch-process cocoa, powdered sugar, nonfat dry milk, and a pinch of salt in one bowl. Two tablespoons in hot water or milk = a richer, less-sweet mug than the packet.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 0 min | 20 servings | Easy | 130 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 1 cup (100g) Dutch-process cocoa powder (Droste, Cacao Barry, King Arthur, or similar)
- 1½ cups (180g) powdered sugar (sifted if lumpy)
- 2 cups (200g) nonfat dry milk powder
- 2 tablespoons (16g) cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon fine salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla powder (optional — adds depth without clumping the mix)
- **For serving:** 8 oz (240ml) hot water or hot milk per serving
- **For gift jars:** 2 cups mini marshmallows

## 02 Method

1. **Measure and sift.** Measure all six dry ingredients into a large mixing bowl. Sift the cocoa powder first if it has any lumps — clumpy cocoa won't distribute evenly in the mix and will produce streaky mugs. The cornstarch often carries fine lumps too; run it through the sieve along with the cocoa.

2. **Whisk thoroughly.** Whisk everything together for a full 2 minutes, scraping the sides and bottom of the bowl. The goal is complete homogeneity — no streaks of white milk powder, no pockets of dark cocoa. Cocoa powder is lighter and tends to float to the top during mixing; lift from the bottom to fold it in. If you have a sifter or fine-mesh strainer large enough, pour the blended mix through it once more and stir any solids back in.

3. **Taste and adjust.** Mix 2 tablespoons into a small amount of hot water (2–3 oz) and taste. If it's too intense, add an extra ¼ cup (30g) of powdered sugar to the batch and re-whisk. If it needs more cocoa depth, add 2 tablespoons (12g) more Dutch-process cocoa. The mix should taste like a rich chocolate drink — slightly more intense than you want in the final mug, since it will be diluted with 8 oz of liquid.

4. **Transfer to storage.** Pour the finished mix into a 1-quart (32 oz) wide-mouth Mason jar or an airtight container. The batch fills about two-thirds of a quart jar, leaving room for the marshmallows. Seal tightly. Label with the date and use-by (6 months from today).

5. **Gift-jar assembly (optional).** Once the cocoa mix is in the jar, spoon 2 cups of mini marshmallows on top to fill the remaining space — the contrast of brown mix and white marshmallows is visible through the glass. Seal with the lid and ring. Write serving instructions on a gift tag: '3 tablespoons + 8 oz hot water or milk. Stir 20 seconds. Makes about 20 mugs.' Tie the tag around the neck of the jar with a piece of ribbon or twine.

6. **To make a mug.** Measure 3 tablespoons (about 25g) of mix into a mug. Heat 8 oz of water or whole milk to just below a boil (around 180°F / 82°C) — a kettle or microwave both work. Pour the hot liquid over the mix and stir vigorously for 20 seconds until completely smooth. Top with marshmallows, a dusting of cocoa, or a candy cane if you like. If you prepared it with hot water and want it creamier, stir in a tablespoon of heavy cream.



№ 09

VIRAL HIT

# Homemade Eggnog

*The viral TikTok homemade eggnog recipe: six egg yolks tempered with warm cream, real nutmeg, and enough bourbon to taste. Richer and smoother than any carton version — and the one technique that keeps the eggs from scrambling.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Homemade Eggnog

*The viral TikTok homemade eggnog recipe: six egg yolks tempered with warm cream, real nutmeg, and enough bourbon to taste. Richer and smoother than any carton version — and the one technique that keeps the eggs from scrambling.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 min | 15 min | 8 | Easy | 290 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE EGGNOG BASE

- 6 large egg yolks (save the whites for another use, or fold them in for a frothier result)
- ¾ cup (150g) granulated sugar
- 2 cups (480ml) whole milk
- 1 cup (240ml) heavy whipping cream
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- ½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg (from a whole nutmeg; pre-ground works but the flavor is noticeably flatter)
- Pinch of fine sea salt

### TO SERVE

- ½ to ¾ cup bourbon, dark rum, or brandy (optional; add to taste after chilling)
- Additional freshly grated nutmeg for serving
- Ice for serving (optional; traditional eggnog is served chilled but not over ice)

## 02 Method

1. **Beat the yolks and sugar.** In a medium bowl, whisk the 6 egg yolks with the ¾ cup sugar until the mixture is pale yellow and thick — about 2 minutes by hand or 1 minute with a hand mixer. The yolks should fall from the whisk in a ribbon and hold on the surface for a moment. This is the base custard before any liquid is added.

2. **Warm the cream mixture.** In a medium saucepan, combine the whole milk and heavy cream. Set over medium heat and warm until the mixture reaches about 150°F — steaming, with small bubbles appearing at the edges, but not simmering or boiling. Remove from heat the moment you see steam rising steadily. If you don't have a thermometer, the milk should be hot to the touch but you should be able to hold your hand 2 inches above the surface for 3 seconds.

3. **Temper the egg yolks — the critical step.** Position the bowl of beaten yolks next to the saucepan and have a ladle or large spoon ready. Slowly ladle one tablespoon of the hot cream mixture into the yolks while whisking constantly. Add another tablespoon, then another, whisking after each addition. After you've added 4 to 5 tablespoons (about ¼ cup), you can add the rest in a thin, steady stream while whisking continuously. Do not stop whisking and do not rush the first few additions — those first tablespoons are the

ones most likely to scramble the yolks. Once all the cream mixture has been added, the yolk mixture should be warm and thin.

4. **Cook to 160°F.** Pour the tempered mixture back into the saucepan. Cook over low to medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon or spatula and scraping the bottom of the pan, until the mixture thickens enough to coat the back of the spoon and holds a clear line when you run your finger through it — about 3 to 5 minutes. Do not let it boil. At this point the mixture has reached approximately 160°F, which pasteurizes the egg yolks.

5. **Strain and season.** Remove from heat and pour the cooked custard through a fine-mesh strainer into a clean bowl or pitcher. This removes any small bits of cooked egg. Stir in the vanilla extract, freshly grated nutmeg, and salt. Taste — it should be rich, sweet, and warmly nutmeg-forward.

6. **Cool and refrigerate.** Set the bowl over an ice bath (a larger bowl filled with ice and a little water) and stir for 5 minutes to cool quickly, or simply let it cool to room temperature uncovered. Transfer to the refrigerator, cover, and chill for at least 2 hours (and up to 4 days). The eggnog thickens as it chills.

7. **Add spirits and serve.** When ready to serve, stir the chilled eggnog well — the cream settles slightly and needs to be reincorporated. Add bourbon, rum, or brandy to taste if using (start with ½ cup per full batch, adjust). Pour into glasses over ice if desired, or serve chilled in small cups. Grate fresh nutmeg directly over each glass immediately before serving.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Tempering is the process of gradually raising the temperature of egg yolks by slowly adding a hot liquid to them before they go near heat. If you pour hot cream directly into egg yolks, the yolks scramble instantly — you get sweet scrambled eggs in cream.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 10

VIRAL HIT

# Sugar Cookie Martini

*The viral TikTok sugar cookie martini: vanilla vodka, amaretto, and Baileys shaken with half-and-half into a creamy, Christmas-cookie cocktail.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Sugar Cookie Martini

*The viral TikTok sugar cookie martini: vanilla vodka, amaretto, and Baileys shaken with half-and-half into a creamy, Christmas-cookie cocktail.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 min | 0 min | 1 | Easy | 348 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 1½ oz vanilla vodka (or plain vodka + ¼ tsp vanilla extract)
- 1 oz Disaronno amaretto
- 1 oz Baileys Irish Cream
- 1 oz half-and-half
- Ice cubes

### FOR THE SUGAR RIM

- 1 tsp Baileys Irish Cream (for wetting the rim)
- 2 tbsp white granulated sugar
- 1 tbsp holiday sprinkles (red and green nonpareils or jimmies)

### OPTIONAL GARNISH

- Whipped cream
- A pinch of holiday sprinkles

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The creaminess comes from the half-and-half and the Baileys — underpour either and the drink goes thin. Check your measurements: 1 oz of half-and-half is roughly 2 tablespoons; 1 oz of Baileys is the same.*

## 02 Method

1. **Chill the glass.** Place a coupe or martini glass in the freezer for at least 5 minutes. A cold glass holds the sugar rim better and keeps the drink colder longer.
2. **Make the sugar rim mix.** In a shallow dish wider than the glass rim, mix 2 tablespoons of white granulated sugar with 1 tablespoon of holiday sprinkles. Spread them into a thin, even layer.
3. **Rim the glass.** Pour a small amount of Baileys into a second shallow dish. Dip the outer edge of the chilled glass straight down into the Baileys — just enough to wet the outer rim without wetting the inside. Immediately press the wet rim gently into the sugar-sprinkle mix and rotate slowly, a quarter-turn at a time, until the entire rim is coated. Set the glass upright for 30 seconds so the sugar sets.
4. **Fill the shaker.** Add the vanilla vodka, amaretto, Baileys, half-and-half, and a generous handful of ice to a cocktail shaker. The order doesn't matter — the shaking blends everything.
5. **Shake for 10 to 12 seconds.** Shake firmly until the outside of the shaker frosts over. Don't shake longer than 15 seconds — excessive agitation over-aerates the cream and produces an unpleasant foamy texture rather than a smooth, creamy one.
6. **Double strain into the glass.** Hold the rimmed glass steady and strain the drink through both the shaker strainer and a fine mesh strainer. The double strain removes ice chips that would dilute and cloud the surface. Pour slowly near the center of the glass to avoid disturbing the sugar rim.
7. **Garnish and serve immediately.** Add a small cloud of whipped cream to the top if desired, and a pinch of extra sprinkles. Serve right away — the drink is best ice-cold, and the sugar rim softens as the glass warms.



CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS

# 02 APPETIZERS

*Shareable starters and dips — the first plates to reach the table and the first to disappear.*

10 RECIPES

№ 11

ITALIAN

# Clams Casino

*The classic Rhode Island Clams Casino made at home — cherrystone or littleneck clams on the half shell, topped with a compound of diced green and red bell pepper, shallots, garlic butter, and Worcestershire.*

ITALIAN · COPYCAT

# Clams Casino

*The classic Rhode Island Clams Casino made at home — cherrystone or littleneck clams on the half shell, topped with a compound of diced green and red bell pepper, shallots, garlic butter, and Worcestershire.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 10 min | 4 | Medium | 220 |

## 01 Ingredients

### CLAMS

- 24 littleneck clams, well-scrubbed under cold running water (or 12 topneck clams for larger servings)

### CASINO FILLING

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 medium shallots, finely minced (about 3 tablespoons)
- ½ medium green bell pepper, finely diced (about ⅓ cup)
- ¼ medium red bell pepper, finely diced (about ¼ cup)
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon dry white wine
- ¼ cup plain fine dry breadcrumbs
- 2 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley, finely minced
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt (adjust after tasting — clam liquor is salty)
- Fresh black pepper to taste
- Pinch of cayenne (optional)

### BACON

- 6 strips thin-cut bacon, cut crosswise into 1½-inch pieces (24 pieces total)

### TO SERVE

- Lemon wedges

## 02 Method

1. **Preheat the broiler and prep the baking sheet.** Set the oven to broil with a rack positioned 4 to 5 inches from the broiler element (or the second slot from the top). Line a large rimmed baking sheet with foil. Crumple pieces of foil loosely over the surface to form an uneven bed that will cradle the clam shells and keep them level — a shell that tips will spill both the topping and the natural clam liquor.

2. **Partially cook the bacon.** Lay the bacon pieces in a single layer in a cold dry skillet. Set over medium heat and cook for 2 minutes, until the bacon just starts to render fat and loses its raw color but has not curled, browned, or crisped. Transfer to a plate lined with a paper towel. The bacon will finish cooking under the broiler — this par-cook puts the timing in sync with the clam meat.

3. **Make the filling.** In the same skillet with the rendered bacon fat, reduce the heat to medium-low and add the butter. When the butter melts, add the minced shallots and cook until they are soft and translucent, about 3 minutes. Add the green and red bell pepper and cook 2 minutes more until just tender. Add the garlic and stir 30 seconds until fragrant. Add the Worcestershire sauce and white wine, stir to combine, and let it

cook for 30 seconds. Remove from the heat. Stir in the breadcrumbs and parsley until evenly combined — the mixture should feel moist and hold together loosely, not dry. Add any clam liquor you collected when opening the clams. Taste carefully before salting; the liquor and Worcestershire are both salty.

4. **Open the clams.** Rinse each clam and discard any that stay open when tapped (they are dead). Working one at a time over a bowl to catch the liquor, insert the tip of a clam knife into the rear hinge, twist firmly to pop the shell open, run the blade along the top shell to sever the adductor muscle, and discard the top shell. Use the blade to free the meat from the bottom shell as well so it sits loose. Arrange the bottom shells on the prepared baking sheet, nesting each into the crumpled foil so it stays flat. Pour any reserved clam liquor into the filling and stir.

5. **Assemble.** Spoon a heaping teaspoon of the pepper filling onto each clam, covering the meat and filling the natural cup of the shell. Lay one piece of partially cooked bacon across the top of each clam, pressing it lightly into the filling.

6. **Broil.** Slide the tray under the broiler and cook for 5 to 7 minutes, watching closely after the 4-minute mark, until the bacon is fully rendered and crisp and the edges are browned, the filling is golden, and the clam meat at the edges has just curled and turned opaque. The bacon is your timing cue — once it goes properly crisp, the clams are done.

7. **Serve immediately.** Transfer to a serving platter. Squeeze fresh lemon over the top. Clams Casino must be served the moment it comes from the broiler — the bacon softens as it cools and the shells lose their heat fast. Set out extra lemon wedges and have crusty bread nearby; the clam liquor and bacon fat pooled in the shells is worth soaking up.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Timing: Clams Casino goes under the broiler for 5 to 7 minutes total, and you need the bacon to be crisp and the filling to be golden at the same moment the clam meat just finishes cooking.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 12

HARRY & DAVID

# Moose Munch

*Copycat Harry and David Moose Munch: buttery hard-crack toffee popcorn with whole almonds, baked until crisp, then coated in melted milk chocolate.*

HARRY & DAVID · COPYCAT

# Moose Munch

*Copycat Harry and David Moose Munch: buttery hard-crack toffee popcorn with whole almonds, baked until crisp, then coated in melted milk chocolate.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 min | 1 hr 20 min | 20 | Medium | 348 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE TOFFEE POPCORN

- ½ cup popcorn kernels (yields about 12 cups popped) — OR 12 cups pre-popped plain or lightly salted popcorn, unpopped kernels removed
- 1½ cups whole roasted salted almonds
- 1 cup (2 sticks / 226g) unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 2 cups (400g) granulated sugar
- ¼ cup (60ml) light corn syrup — keeps the toffee from crystallizing
- ½ teaspoon fine sea salt or kosher salt (use ¼ teaspoon if your almonds are heavily salted)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda — aerates the toffee so it coats the popcorn more evenly

### FOR THE CHOCOLATE COATING

- 12 oz (340g) good-quality milk chocolate chips or finely chopped milk chocolate bar — Ghirardelli or Guittard recommended
- ½ teaspoon refined coconut oil or vegetable shortening — helps the chocolate set firmly

## 02 Method

1. **Pop and prep the popcorn.** If using kernels: heat 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the kernels in a single layer, cover with a lid, and shake the pot back and forth every 10 seconds. When popping slows to 2 to 3 seconds between pops, remove from heat immediately. Transfer to a very large heat-safe bowl (at least 8-quart capacity — the toffee doubles in volume when baking soda is added, so you need room to toss). Remove any unpopped kernels. Add the almonds to the bowl and toss to combine.

2. **Preheat the oven and prep the pans.** Set the oven to 250°F. Line two large rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone mats. Do this before starting the toffee so you're ready to move fast once it's done.

3. **Make the toffee.** In a heavy-bottomed 3-quart saucepan (medium-heavy gauge — thin pans create hot spots that scorch the toffee), melt the butter over medium heat. Add the sugar, corn syrup, and salt. Stir once to combine, then cook WITHOUT stirring, swirling the pan occasionally to distribute heat evenly. Clip a candy thermometer to the side of the pan. The mixture will bubble vigorously and gradually turn golden — it typically passes through a light amber stage around 280°F before reaching the target. Remove from heat at exactly 300°F (hard crack stage). The toffee will look a deep amber, similar to a dark honey. Do not walk away during the final 5 minutes; the temperature climbs quickly past 275°F.

4. **Add the baking soda.** Working off-heat, quickly stir in the baking soda with a wooden spoon or heat-safe spatula. The toffee will foam up dramatically and lighten in color —

this is correct. The baking soda creates $CO_2$ bubbles that make the coating airier and help it adhere to the popcorn. Stir only until just combined — about 5 seconds. Do not over-stir, which collapses the bubbles.

5. **Coat the popcorn.** Immediately pour the hot toffee over the popcorn and almonds in the bowl. Using two silicone spatulas, fold and toss the mixture quickly to coat as evenly as possible. The toffee seizes and stiffens within 2 to 3 minutes, so move with purpose. Spread the coated popcorn and almonds across both prepared baking sheets in a roughly single layer — thin enough that the toffee bakes dry evenly. It will be clumped at this stage; that's fine.

6. **Bake.** Place both baking sheets in the oven and bake at 250°F for 1 hour total, removing the sheets every 20 minutes to stir the toffee corn, breaking up large clumps and redistributing from the edges (which dry faster) to the center. After 1 hour the coating should look dry and matte rather than sticky and glossy. If it still looks tacky, bake an additional 10 to 15 minutes. This bake step is not optional — it drives off residual moisture and is what separates a shelf-stable crunchy Moose Munch from a short-lived sticky caramel corn.

7. **Cool completely.** Remove from the oven and let the toffee corn cool on the baking sheets to room temperature — about 25 to 30 minutes.

Do not add the chocolate while the popcorn is still warm; it will pool instead of coating evenly and may cause the chocolate to seize.

8. **Melt the chocolate.** Combine the chocolate chips and coconut oil in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave in 30-second bursts on 50% power, stirring between each burst, until just melted and smooth — typically 2 to 3 bursts total. (Alternatively, melt in a double boiler over barely simmering water, stirring constantly.) Do not overheat: milk chocolate scorches at lower temperatures than dark chocolate. The finished chocolate should be fluid and glossy, about 88–90°F.

9. **Coat with chocolate.** Pour the melted chocolate over the cooled toffee corn spread on the baking sheets. Using a spatula, fold and toss to coat most of the surface — you want enrobing, not just a drizzle. Spread back into a thin layer. The chocolate will look glossy and wet at this stage.

10. **Set the chocolate.** Refrigerate the baking sheets for 15 to 20 minutes until the chocolate is fully set and the clusters are firm. Once set, break into clusters of varying sizes — irregular pieces are part of the charm. Transfer to an airtight container. The Moose Munch is ready to eat immediately and keeps at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Pop 12 cups of popcorn and spread in a large bowl with 1½ cups roasted salted whole almonds. In a heavy saucepan, melt 1 cup unsalted butter over medium heat, add 2 cups granulated sugar, ¼ cup light corn syrup, and ½ teaspoon salt.*



№ 13

HICKORY FARMS

# Summer Sausage and Port Wine Cheese Ball

*The Hickory Farms Summer Sausage copycat: ground beef, Morton Tender Quick, hickory liquid smoke, mustard seeds, and garlic — cured 24 hours, then baked low and slow until firm and snappy.*

HICKORY FARMS · COPYCAT

# Summer Sausage and Port Wine Cheese Ball

*The Hickory Farms Summer Sausage copycat: ground beef, Morton Tender Quick, hickory liquid smoke, mustard seeds, and garlic — cured 24 hours, then baked low and slow until firm and snappy.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 min | 3 hr 30 min | 12 | Medium | 265 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE SUMMER SAUSAGE (MAKES 2 LOGS, ~2 LBS)

- 2 lbs ground beef, 80/20 fat ratio
- 2 tablespoons Morton Tender Quick curing salt (do not substitute regular salt)
- 2 teaspoons hickory-flavored liquid smoke (such as Wright's or Colgin Hickory)
- 1 teaspoon whole black mustard seeds (or yellow mustard seeds)
- 1 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon dextrose (or regular white granulated sugar)
- ½ teaspoon onion powder

### FOR THE PORT WINE CHEESE BALL

- 16 oz (2 blocks) full-fat cream cheese, softened to room temperature
- 2 cups extra-sharp cheddar, freshly shredded from a block (NOT pre-shredded)
- 3 tablespoons Ruby Port wine (or dry sherry)
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon dry mustard (Colman's or equivalent)
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika (plus 1 teaspoon more for the coating)

### FOR THE CHEESE BALL COATING

- 1 cup smoked almonds, finely chopped (or toasted pecans)
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika

### FOR SERVING

- Butter crackers (Ritz, Club, or table water crackers)
- Stone-ground or Dijon mustard, for dipping the sausage

## 02 Method

1. **Mix and cure the summer sausage.** In a large bowl, combine the ground beef, Morton Tender Quick, liquid smoke, mustard seeds, black pepper, garlic powder, dextrose, and onion powder. Mix thoroughly with your hands for 2 to 3 minutes — the mixture needs to be uniformly combined, with the curing salt distributed throughout. Do not undermix; the cure must reach every part of the meat. Divide the mixture into two equal portions.

2. **Form the logs.** Tear two sheets of aluminum foil, each about 18 inches long. Place one portion of meat in the center of a foil sheet and shape it into a log approximately 8 inches long and 2 inches in diameter. Roll the foil tightly around the log, twisting the ends firmly closed. Repeat with the second portion. Place both foil-wrapped logs on a plate or sheet pan.

3. **Cure in the refrigerator.** Refrigerate the logs for a minimum of 24 hours, or up to 48 hours. This cure period is the most important step: the Morton Tender Quick penetrates the meat evenly, sets the cured pink color and savory flavor, and dissolves the proteins so they bind — which produces the firm, sliceable texture. Do not skip or shorten this step. (The fridge cure gives a mild, clean cured flavor, not the sharp sour tang of a factory stick — for that, see the FAQ on adding Fermento or encapsulated citric acid with the cure.)

4. **Bake the sausage.** Preheat the oven to 225°F. Place the foil-wrapped logs directly on the oven rack (or on a rimmed baking sheet to catch any drips). Bake for 3 hours. After 3 hours, carefully open the foil (the logs will be hot and there will be rendered fat inside — drain it off). Return the logs to the oven, now with the foil open at the top to expose the surface. Raise the temperature to 250°F and bake for an additional 30 minutes to firm and dry the exterior.

5. **Check the internal temperature.** Insert a probe thermometer into the center of a log — it must read 160°F for safe consumption. If the logs haven't reached 160°F after 3½ hours total, continue baking in 15-minute increments. At 225°F–250°F, the logs should reach temperature by the 3½-hour mark.

6. **Cool and refrigerate.** Remove the logs from the oven and let them cool completely — at least 1 hour at room temperature — before refrigerating. The exterior will firm further as it cools. Once cooled, wrap the logs tightly in butcher paper or plastic wrap and refrigerate. The sausage can be eaten after 4 hours of refrigeration; flavor and texture improve further after an overnight rest. Slice to ¼-inch rounds when serving.

7. **Make the cheese ball — soften the cream cheese.** Leave both cream cheese blocks at room temperature for at least 2 hours until very soft and easily indented. Cold cream cheese will not mix smoothly with the other ingredients and produces a lumpy ball that doesn't hold its shape. If short on time, cut the blocks into quarters and microwave on 30% power in 15-second intervals until soft but not melted.

8. **Mix the cheese ball.** Beat the softened cream cheese, freshly shredded extra-sharp cheddar, port wine, Worcestershire, garlic powder, dry mustard, cayenne, and ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika together with a hand mixer or stiff spatula until thoroughly combined and uniform. The mixture will be soft. Cover the bowl and refrigerate for 30 minutes until the mixture is firm enough to shape into a ball without sticking to your hands.

9. **Shape and coat the cheese ball.** Stir together the chopped smoked almonds and 1 teaspoon smoked paprika on a flat plate. Scoop the chilled cheese mixture onto a large sheet of plastic wrap, gather the edges, and press the mixture into a rough ball shape; twist the plastic tight to compact it. Unwrap the ball and roll it across the almond-paprika coating, pressing firmly so the nuts adhere to every surface. Rewrap loosely in the plastic and refrigerate for at least 2 hours (or overnight) before serving. The ball needs this chill time to set firmly — a rushed ball that hasn't fully chilled will smear and flatten when guests spread it.

10. **Assemble and serve.** Slice the summer sausage into ¼-inch rounds. Arrange the cheese ball at the center of a large board or platter. Surround it with the sliced summer sausage, a bowl of stone-ground mustard, butter crackers, and any accompaniments (sliced pickles, cornichons, or fresh grapes pair well). The mustard is not optional — Hickory Farms always includes a stone-ground or spicy mustard because the fermented tang of the sausage and the creamy richness of the cheese ball both need the sharp, acidic counterpoint the mustard provides.



№ 14

JOE'S CRAB SHACK

# Hot Crab Dip

*Joe's Crab Shack's baked hot crab dip, made at home: lump crab meat, cream cheese, Parmesan, and Old Bay seasoning baked until golden and bubbly. About $14 to make at home vs. $14–16 at the restaurant — same dish, no waiting for a table.*

JOE'S CRAB SHACK · COPYCAT

# Hot Crab Dip

*Joe's Crab Shack's baked hot crab dip, made at home: lump crab meat, cream cheese, Parmesan, and Old Bay seasoning baked until golden and bubbly. About $14 to make at home vs. $14–16 at the restaurant — same dish, no waiting for a table.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 25 min | 8 | Easy | 220 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 8 oz lump crab meat, drained and picked through for shell
- 8 oz cream cheese, softened to room temperature
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup sour cream
- ½ cup shredded mozzarella, divided (⅓ cup in dip, rest on top)
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan, plus 2 tablespoons for the top
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1½ teaspoons Old Bay seasoning
- 3 green onions, thinly sliced, divided (reserve 1 tablespoon for garnish)
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- Pinch of kosher salt (taste before adding — Parmesan is salty)
- **For serving:** pita chips, toasted baguette slices, or tortilla chips

## 02 Method

1. **Preheat the oven to 375°F.** Lightly grease a 1-quart baking dish or a 9-inch oven-safe skillet. Set aside.
2. **Beat the cream cheese smooth — this is the most important step.** In a large bowl, beat the room-temperature cream cheese with a hand mixer or sturdy spatula until it is completely smooth and fluffy with zero lumps. Cold cream cheese straight from the fridge will leave white lumps that never fully melt during baking. Take the extra 30 seconds to get it smooth.
3. **Add the cream base.** Mix the mayonnaise, sour cream, lemon juice, and Worcestershire sauce into the cream cheese until the base is uniform and silky.
4. **Season the base.** Add the Old Bay seasoning, minced garlic, and black pepper. Stir to combine. Taste a small amount — the base should have a forward, savory kick from the Old Bay. If you want more heat, add a few dashes of hot sauce now.

5. **Fold in the crab and cheese.** Add the drained lump crab meat, ⅓ cup of the mozzarella, ¼ cup of the Parmesan, and two-thirds of the sliced green onions. Fold gently — you want to mix without breaking up all the crab pieces. Some visible lumps of crab are ideal. Taste and add a pinch of kosher salt if needed (often none is required; the Parmesan and Old Bay carry enough salt).

6. **Transfer to the baking dish.** Spread the crab mixture evenly into the prepared baking dish. Top with the remaining mozzarella and the 2 tablespoons of Parmesan.

7. **Bake for 20–25 minutes.** Bake until the edges are actively bubbling and the cheese on top has fully melted. The center should be hot all the way through.

8. **Optional broil for a golden top.** For a lightly golden, restaurant-style top, switch the oven to broil for the last 2–3 minutes of cooking. Watch closely — Parmesan goes from golden to burnt in under a minute under a hot broiler.

9. **Rest briefly and garnish.** Let the dip rest for 5 minutes before serving — it is molten directly out of the oven and needs a moment to set so it doesn't run. Scatter the reserved green onions on top. Serve immediately with pita chips or baguette slices.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Lump crab meat gives the best texture — the larger pieces hold together and give you visible chunks of crab throughout the dip instead of shredded strands.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 15

THE MELTING POT

# Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese Fondue

*The Melting Pot's signature Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese Fondue, made at home: sharp cheddar and Emmentaler melted in lager beer with garlic, dry mustard, and Worcestershire.*

# Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese Fondue

*The Melting Pot's signature Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese Fondue, made at home: sharp cheddar and Emmentaler melted in lager beer with garlic, dry mustard, and Worcestershire.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 15 min | 4 | Easy | 290 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FONDUE BASE

- 6 oz sharp cheddar, freshly grated
- 2 oz Emmentaler Swiss, freshly grated (or Gruyère)
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 garlic clove, halved
- ½ cup light lager beer (Coors Light, Budweiser, or Miller Lite — or dry white wine)
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard powder
- Pinch of white pepper (optional)

### CLASSIC DIPPERS (CHOOSE 3–4)

- ½ French baguette, day-old, cut into ¾-inch cubes
- 1 Granny Smith apple, cored and sliced into wedges
- 1 cup broccoli florets, raw or briefly blanched and dried
- Soft pretzel bites or pretzel rods
- Mushroom caps, wiped clean and dried
- Baby potatoes, roasted or boiled until just tender

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Three culprits, in order of likelihood. First and most common: the heat was too high. Cheese fondue breaks the moment it boils — the proteins seize and the fat separates, leaving a grainy curd floating in liquid.*

## 02 Method

1. **Prep the cheese.** Grate both cheeses on the coarse holes of a box grater — do not use pre-shredded cheese, which is coated in potato starch or cellulose and prevents smooth melting. Combine the cheddar and Emmentaler in a medium bowl, add the cornstarch, and toss until every strand is lightly coated. The cornstarch is what keeps the fondue smooth; don't skip it.

2. **Rub the pot with garlic.** Cut a garlic clove in half and rub the cut faces firmly over the inside of your fondue pot or a small heavy saucepan (enameled cast iron or stainless steel work best). Discard the garlic — this gives a faint garlic background without overpowering the cheese.

3. **Heat the beer.** Add the lager to the garlic-rubbed pot and set over medium heat. Warm until the beer is steaming and tiny bubbles form at the bottom of the pot — it should be hot but not boiling. Add the Worcestershire sauce and dry mustard, then whisk to combine.

4. **Add the cheese in batches.** Drop in the first handful of cheese and stir constantly in a figure-8 pattern (not circular — the figure-8 motion shears the proteins more gently and reduces the risk of stringiness). Wait until that addition is fully melted and smooth before adding the next. Continue in three or four additions, stirring each one until completely incorporated.

5. **Adjust seasoning and heat.** Once all the cheese is in, taste and add white pepper if you like. If the fondue seems thicker than you want, stir in a tablespoon more beer. Reduce the heat to the absolute lowest setting — the fondue should stay barely fluid and warm, not bubble.

6. **Transfer to the table.** Move the pot to a fondue stand with a tealight or small fuel burner, or bring the saucepan directly to the table. Serve immediately with your chosen dippers arranged around the pot.

7. **Dipping technique.** Spear bread cubes through the crust to hold them securely. For apple slices, use a long fork to push through the skin side. Stir the fondue gently between dips if it starts to thicken — stirring reincorporates any cheese that has settled. If it tightens up noticeably, add a splash of beer and stir over low heat for 30 seconds.



№ 16

ST. ELMO STEAK HOUSE

# Shrimp Cocktail

*The legendary St. Elmo Steak House shrimp cocktail from Indianapolis, made at home: perfectly poached jumbo shrimp, ice cold, with the fiery sinus-clearing horseradish cocktail sauce that made the restaurant famous.*

ST. ELMO STEAK HOUSE · COPYCAT

# Shrimp Cocktail

*The legendary St. Elmo Steak House shrimp cocktail from Indianapolis, made at home: perfectly poached jumbo shrimp, ice cold, with the fiery sinus-clearing horseradish cocktail sauce that made the restaurant famous.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 min | 8 min | 6 | Easy | 130 |

## 01 Ingredients

### SHRIMP

- 1½ lbs raw jumbo shrimp, shell-on and deveined (21/25 count — about 30–35 shrimp)
- 2 quarts cold water
- 3 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 lemon, halved
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns

### ICE BATH

- Large bowl of ice water (at least 2 lbs of ice)

### ST. ELMO-STYLE COCKTAIL SAUCE

- 1 cup ketchup (Heinz recommended)
- ½ cup prepared horseradish, well-drained — start here, add more for the full St. Elmo experience (up to ¾ cup)
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (about 1 large lemon)
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon Tabasco or other hot sauce
- ¼ teaspoon fine kosher salt
- Fresh black pepper to taste

## 02 Method

1. **Make the cocktail sauce first.** Combine the ketchup, drained prepared horseradish, lemon juice, Worcestershire sauce, Tabasco, salt, and a few cracks of black pepper in a medium bowl. Stir until fully combined. Taste: the heat should be pronounced and sinus-forward — the kind that makes your eyes water slightly. If it just tastes like ketchup with a little kick, add another tablespoon of horseradish and stir again. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes while you prepare the shrimp; the flavors sharpen as it chills.

2. **Set up the ice bath.** Fill a large bowl with ice and cold water. Have it ready next to the stove before you start poaching — the timing matters and you don't want to scramble for ice while your shrimp overcook.

3. **Make the poaching liquid.** Combine the water, kosher salt, lemon halves (squeeze the juice in first, then drop in the rinds), bay leaf, and peppercorns in a large saucepan or pot. Bring to a full boil over high heat, then reduce to a bare simmer

— the water should have just a few lazy bubbles breaking the surface, not a rolling boil.

4. **Poach the shrimp.** Add the shrimp directly to the simmering water in a single layer (work in two batches if your pot isn't wide enough). Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, watching closely: the shrimp are done the moment they are uniformly pink and curled into a loose C-shape. An overcooked shrimp curls tightly into an O-shape — pull them right before that happens. Undercooked shrimp will be translucent in the center; a perfect shrimp is opaque all the way through.

5. **Shock immediately in the ice bath.** Using a slotted spoon or spider, transfer the shrimp directly into the ice water as soon as they are done. Let them sit in the ice bath for 5 full minutes — this stops the cooking instantly and chills the shrimp through. Do not skip the ice bath; shrimp left to cool at room temperature continue cooking from residual heat.

6. **Peel and devein.** Remove the shrimp from the ice bath and peel off the shells. If any veins remain visible, rinse them off under cold water. Pat the shrimp dry. Refrigerate in a covered container until completely cold, at least 20 minutes. They should be served ice cold — that is half the experience.

7. **Serve.** Arrange the chilled shrimp over a bed of crushed ice on a serving platter or in individual glasses. Spoon the cocktail sauce into a ramekin or small cup alongside. Garnish with a lemon wedge. The sauce to shrimp ratio is part of St. Elmo's experience — dip each shrimp generously.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Prepared horseradish (the glass jars in the condiment aisle, brands like Boar's Head or Gold's) is freshly grated horseradish root preserved in vinegar — sharp, clean, and hot, with the heat hitting the sinuses rather than the throat.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 17

VIRAL HIT

# Baccalà Salad

*Baccalà salad: tender desalted salt cod flaked with crisp celery, briny olives, fresh parsley, and a bright lemon-olive oil dressing. The essential Feast of the Seven Fishes cold antipasto — made at home in two days.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Baccalà Salad

*Baccalà salad: tender desalted salt cod flaked with crisp celery, briny olives, fresh parsley, and a bright lemon-olive oil dressing. The essential Feast of the Seven Fishes cold antipasto — made at home in two days.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 min | 15 min | 6 | Easy | 220 |

## 01 Ingredients

### SALT COD (THE WHOLE RECIPE STARTS HERE)

- 1 lb (450g) dried salt cod (baccalà), skin-on or skinless
- Cold water for soaking (changed 2–3x per day, 48–72 hrs)

### POACHING

- Fresh cold water to cover the fish
- 1 bay leaf (optional)
- 3–4 black peppercorns (optional)

### SALAD

- 3 stalks celery, very thinly sliced (about 1 cup)
- ½ cup pitted green olives, halved — Castelvetrano or Gaeta recommended
- ¼ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped (packed)
- 2 tbsp capers, drained and rinsed (optional but traditional in Sicilian versions)

### DRESSING

- ⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil (use a good one — it shows here)
- 3 tbsp fresh lemon juice (about 1 large lemon), plus more to taste
- 1 small clove garlic, minced (optional; or crush a whole clove, toss in, remove before serving)
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Pinch of red pepper flakes (optional)
- Salt only as needed after tasting — the cod retains salinity

## 02 Method

1. **Day 1 (or 2–3 days before serving): Begin the soak.** Rinse the salt cod under cold running water for 2–3 minutes to wash off the surface salt. Cut the fish into 3–4 large pieces if it's a full slab (this helps desalting reach the interior faster). Place the pieces in a large bowl or baking dish, cover completely with cold water, and refrigerate. The fish must stay submerged — weight it down with a small plate if the pieces float.

2. **Change the water 2–3 times per day for 48–72 hours.** Set a phone reminder. Each time: pour off the old water, rinse the fish briefly under cold water, and cover again with fresh cold water. Thick pieces (over 1½ inches) need the full 72 hours. To test readiness, tear off a small piece and taste it raw — it should be pleasantly mild with moderate saltiness, not like biting into the ocean.

3. **Poach the fish gently.** When the cod is sufficiently desalted, drain and rinse it. Place the pieces in a wide saucepan in a single layer. Cover with fresh cold water (add the bay leaf and peppercorns if using). Bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat — small bubbles only, never a rolling boil (which toughens the fish). Simmer for 10–15 minutes until the fish flakes easily when prodded with a fork but still holds together in large pieces. It should look opaque and ivory-white all the way through.

4. **Drain and cool.** Lift the fish pieces out of the poaching water with a slotted spoon or tongs and place on a clean cutting board. Let cool for 15–20 minutes until easy to handle. Remove any skin (it peels off easily) and pick out any small bones — run your fingers along the flesh, feeling for hard spots. Discard the skin and bones.

5. **Flake the cod into large pieces.** Use your hands or two forks to break the fish into generous 1–2 inch chunks. Avoid shredding it too finely — the salad reads best with large, clearly identifiable pieces of fish. Place in a large bowl.

6. **Add the vegetables.** Add the sliced celery, halved olives, chopped parsley, and capers (if using) to the bowl with the cod. Toss gently with a spatula or your hands to distribute — be careful not to break the fish pieces.

7. **Dress the salad.** Drizzle the olive oil and lemon juice over the salad. Add the garlic if using. Season with black pepper and red pepper flakes. Toss gently one more time. Now taste for salt — given the natural salinity of the cod, you may need none, or just a pinch. Adjust lemon if the salad needs brightness.

8. **Refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving — overnight is better.** Cover the bowl tightly and refrigerate. The fish absorbs the dressing as it sits, the celery softens slightly, and the flavors knit together. If you made it a day ahead, hold the parsley and add it in the last hour for color. Remove from the refrigerator 20–30 minutes before serving and taste again — cold dulls flavor. A squeeze of fresh lemon and a drizzle of fresh olive oil right before plating brightens everything.

9. **Serve cold or at room temperature as an antipasto.** Plate on a serving platter. Some families garnish with lemon wedges and an extra scatter of parsley. Serve with crusty Italian bread (pane di casa) for scooping, or with roasted peppers and other antipasti alongside.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Italian-American family food traditions have become one of the most reliable categories of #FoodTok content because they combine nostalgia, specificity, and the kind of home-cook authority that viewers trust.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 18

VIRAL HIT

# Christmas Tree Charcuterie Board

*The viral TikTok Christmas tree charcuterie board that turns salami, cheese, grapes, and rosemary into a stunning holiday centerpiece — a full triangle-tree layout with a star on top, assembled in 25 minutes, no cooking required.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Christmas Tree Charcuterie Board

*The viral TikTok Christmas tree charcuterie board that turns salami, cheese, grapes, and rosemary into a stunning holiday centerpiece — a full triangle-tree layout with a star on top, assembled in 25 minutes, no cooking required.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 min | 0 min | 10 | Easy | 460 |

## 01 Ingredients

### ROSEMARY BRANCHES (THE TREE FRAME)

- 2 large bunches fresh rosemary (about 15–20 medium sprigs)

### STAR TOPPER

- 2 oz aged cheddar or Gouda, sliced ¼-inch thick (to cut a star shape)

### MEATS

- 4 oz thinly sliced prosciutto (fold into roses)
- 4 oz genoa salami, thin round slices (fold into roses)
- 3 oz soppressata or pepperoni, sliced

### CHEESE

- 4 oz aged cheddar or Manchego, cubed into ¾-inch pieces
- 4 oz Havarti or Gouda, cubed into ¾-inch pieces
- 1 small wedge of Brie (3–4 oz), placed whole in the lower center

### FRUIT AND PRODUCE

- 1 cup green seedless grapes (on the stem if possible)
- 1 cup red seedless grapes
- ½ cup fresh raspberries or strawberries, halved
- ¼ cup pomegranate arils (optional — the red jewel-like ornament effect)
- 1 small apple, thinly sliced (brush with lemon juice to prevent browning)

### NUTS AND ACCENTS

- ¼ cup pistachios, shelled (adds green and texture)
- ¼ cup whole almonds or candied walnuts
- ¼ cup dried cranberries

### CRACKERS AND DIPPERS

- 1 sleeve (about 24) butter crackers or Ritz
- 1 sleeve water crackers or multigrain crisps

### CONDIMENTS

- 2 tablespoons honey (drizzled directly or in a small jar)
- 2 tablespoons fig jam or pepper jelly, in a small ramekin

### GARNISH

- Fresh thyme sprigs (optional, for filling gaps inside the tree)
- 12–15 pitted Castelvetrano olives (as dark green ornament accents)

## 02 Method

1. **Cut the star topper first.** Slice the aged cheddar or Gouda ¼-inch thick. Use a small star-shaped cookie cutter (1½–2 inches) to press out one or two star shapes. If you don't have a cookie cutter, use a paring knife to freehand a five-pointed star. Set aside. This is the most precise element — doing it now means you can refrigerate it briefly if the cheese gets too soft.

2. **Make the salami and prosciutto roses.** For salami: fold a thin round slice in half, then fold in half again into a quarter-wedge. Press

3–4 wedges together at the base with the rounded arcs fanning outward, and press the flat bottom onto the board or into a small ramekin to hold the shape. Make 6–8 roses. For prosciutto: drape a slice over the rounded end of a wooden spoon, add 2–3 more slices overlapping, and gently press the base together. Prosciutto roses are looser and more delicate — handle them carefully when placing. Refrigerate all roses while you build the board frame.

3. **Build the rosemary tree frame.** On a large rectangular board (18–24 inches), place one long rosemary sprig vertically in the lower center as the spine of the trunk. Working from the bottom up, lay rosemary sprigs fanning diagonally outward on each side — the longest sprigs at the bottom corners, progressively shorter as you move up. Fan the branch ends outward and slightly downward, overlapping sprigs slightly. Leave the top 2 inches of the board as a small stub where the star will go. The completed outline should be a clear triangle shape. Step back and assess: the frame should read as a tree silhouette before you add anything inside.

4. **Place the Brie and large anchoring elements.** Set the Brie wedge slightly left or right of center in the lower half of the tree. This is the largest single item and will anchor the lower section. Set the fig jam or pepper jelly ramekin just outside or just below the tree base. These items are the structural anchors — everything else fills in around them.

5. **Add the meat roses in clusters.** Place 2–3 salami roses in the lower right section of the tree and 2–3 prosciutto roses in the upper left, or distribute them diagonally so the two types don't sit directly adjacent. Clusters of same-type items photograph better than a scattered distribution — your eye finds each grouping instead of scanning randomly.

6. **Fill in with cheese cubes.** Arrange the cheddar cubes in a cluster in one section and the Havarti in another. Stagger them slightly (some flat, some standing on a corner) for height variation. The two cheese types should anchor different quadrants of the tree so the color variety is distributed across the whole board.

7. **Add green grapes and red grapes.** Place green grapes in clusters along the left side of the tree and red grapes along the right side, or alternate clusters throughout. If you kept them on the stem, the vine naturally gives a curved, sprawling shape that fills gaps beautifully. Loose grapes are easier to place precisely. Either works; stems are more visual.

8. **Scatter the small-item ornaments.** Add raspberries or halved strawberries as bright red accent pops — 3–4 clusters spread across the board. Add pomegranate arils by pinching small clusters directly into gaps; they scatter naturally like jewels. Add pistachios filling in crevices throughout — their green and their small size fills visual gaps without blocking anything larger. Scatter dried cranberries in the remaining open spaces.

9. **Add crackers and apple slices.** Fan crackers along the bottom of the tree, inside or just outside the rosemary frame, so the base looks substantial. This is also where guests reach first. Tuck apple slices in a fan on one side of the Brie — they're a natural pairing and add a fresh visual contrast. Add Castelvetrano olives in 2–3 small clusters as dark green accents.

10. **Place the star and final touches.** Set the cheddar or Gouda star at the very top of the tree where the rosemary trunk ends. If needed, use a small piece of rosemary underneath it to prop it slightly. Drizzle honey over the Brie or directly onto the board in a thin line — it pools slightly and looks intentional. Tuck any remaining fresh thyme sprigs into visible gaps in the lower half of the tree. Take the board out of the fridge 15 minutes before serving.



№ 19

VIRAL HIT

# Pigs in a Blanket Wreath

*The viral TikTok pigs in a blanket wreath: cocktail sausages rolled in crescent dough, arranged into a holiday ring, baked golden and served with a honey mustard dip in the center.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Pigs in a Blanket Wreath

*The viral TikTok pigs in a blanket wreath: cocktail sausages rolled in crescent dough, arranged into a holiday ring, baked golden and served with a honey mustard dip in the center.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 18 min | 16 pieces | Easy | 148 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 2 cans (8 oz each) refrigerated crescent roll dough (such as Pillsbury Original — 8 triangles per can, 16 total)
- 1 package (14 oz) cocktail sausages (such as Hillshire Farm Lit'l Smokies or Bryan Li'l Sausages — beef, pork, or smoked varieties all work)
- 2 tablespoons everything bagel seasoning
- 1 egg, beaten (optional egg wash for extra shine)

### FOR THE HONEY MUSTARD DIP

- ⅓ cup honey mustard (store-bought works fine)
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon honey

## 02 Method

1. **Preheat and prep.** Heat the oven to 375°F and line a large baking sheet (at least 13×18 inches) with parchment paper. Set a small oven-safe ramekin or dipping bowl in the center of the parchment to mark where the center of the ring will be — this helps you gauge the size of the opening to leave. The ramekin can go in cold; you'll add the dip after baking.

2. **Open the dough.** Pop open both cans of crescent roll dough and separate carefully along the perforated seams into 16 individual triangles. If any triangles tear, press the dough back together firmly — it seals easily.

3. **Roll each pig in a blanket.** Place one cocktail sausage horizontally across the wide end of a triangle, lining it up close to the edge. Roll the dough from wide end toward the pointed tip, keeping the sausage centered as you roll. The pointed tip should end up underneath as the seam. Repeat with all 16 triangles.

4. **Build the ring.** Remove the ramekin for now. Starting at the top of the parchment and working clockwise, place the rolled pigs in a circle — seam side down, all curving in the same direction, with the sausage end pointing outward and the rolled tip end pointing toward the center of the ring. Push each one close enough to touch its neighbor. By the time you place all 16, you should have a complete ring with a 4-to-5-inch opening in the center and roughly 1 to 2 inches of parchment around the outside. Place the ramekin back in the center opening.

5. **Season the tops.** If using egg wash, brush the top of each piece lightly — this gives the finished wreath a glossy, bakery-style shine. Whether or not you use egg wash, sprinkle the everything bagel seasoning evenly over the entire ring, letting the seasoning settle into the creases between pieces.

6. **Bake.** Slide the baking sheet into the oven and bake for 15 to 20 minutes, until the crescent dough is deep golden brown on top and cooked through. Rotate the pan at the 10-minute mark if some pieces are browning faster than others. The bottoms should be golden, not pale — a pale bottom means the dough is underdone at the center. Note: wrapped pigs in blankets take longer than a flat crescent sheet because the dough is thicker at the overlap. 18 minutes is the typical sweet spot.

7. **Add the dip and serve.** Remove from the oven and let the wreath cool on the pan for 3 minutes — this helps it firm up enough to slide cleanly onto a platter. Remove the ramekin, fill it with the honey mustard dip, and place it back in the center of the wreath on the serving platter. For a holiday presentation, tuck a small sprig of fresh rosemary between two pieces on the outer edge. Serve directly from the platter; pull individual pieces apart to eat.

8. **Make the dip.** While the wreath bakes, stir together the honey mustard, mayonnaise, and honey in the ramekin until smooth. Taste and adjust — more honey for sweetness, more mustard for tang. The dip keeps refrigerated for up to 5 days.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The honey mustard in the center is the most-pinned pairing, but the opening is big enough for any dipping sauce in a 3-to-4-inch ramekin. Dijon mustard alone works well for adults.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 20

VIRAL HIT

# Stuffed Crescent Wreath

*The viral TikTok stuffed crescent wreath: Pillsbury crescent roll triangles arranged in a holiday ring, filled with ham, Swiss cheese, and honey mustard, baked golden in 35 minutes.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Stuffed Crescent Wreath

*The viral TikTok stuffed crescent wreath: Pillsbury crescent roll triangles arranged in a holiday ring, filled with ham, Swiss cheese, and honey mustard, baked golden in 35 minutes.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 min | 22 min | 16 pieces | Easy | 185 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 2 cans (8 oz each) refrigerated crescent roll dough (such as Pillsbury Original — 8 triangles per can, 16 total)
- 6 oz thinly sliced deli ham (about 8 to 10 slices)
- 6 oz Swiss cheese slices (about 8 slices; provolone or Havarti also work well)
- 2 tablespoons honey mustard
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon dried Italian seasoning
- Fresh rosemary sprigs, for garnish (optional)

### SWEET CREAM CHEESE VARIATION (BRUNCH VERSION)

- 8 oz cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup powdered sugar
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 tablespoons strawberry or raspberry jam

## 02 Method

1. **Preheat and prep.** Heat the oven to 375°F and line a large baking sheet (at least 13×18 inches) with parchment paper.

2. **Build the ring.** Open both cans of crescent dough and separate into 16 individual triangles. On the parchment, lay the triangles out in a ring roughly 12 inches in diameter: position each triangle with its wide end toward the center, overlapping the adjacent wide ends by about 1 inch. The pointed tips should radiate outward like a starburst. Work your way around, pressing wide ends together gently, until all 16 triangles form a complete ring. The inner circle of overlapping wide ends forms the base that will hold the filling — make sure there are no gaps.

3. **Add the mustard.** Brush the honey mustard evenly over the inner ring of dough — the overlapping wide-end base area — leaving the pointed tips plain.

4. **Layer the filling.** Place the ham slices across the mustard-coated ring, overlapping them slightly to form a continuous band all the way around. Add the Swiss cheese slices on top of the ham in an even layer.

5. **Fold the tips.** One triangle at a time, fold the pointed tip up and over the filling toward the center of the ring. The tip

does not need to reach the far edge — just fold it over the filling and press it lightly onto the dough underneath to seal. Work your way around the full circle, keeping even tension on each fold. The wreath seam will be in the center of the ring.

6. **Brush with garlic butter.** Stir the garlic powder and Italian seasoning into the melted butter. Use a pastry brush to coat the entire surface of the folded wreath. This is what gives the top its golden, savory crust.

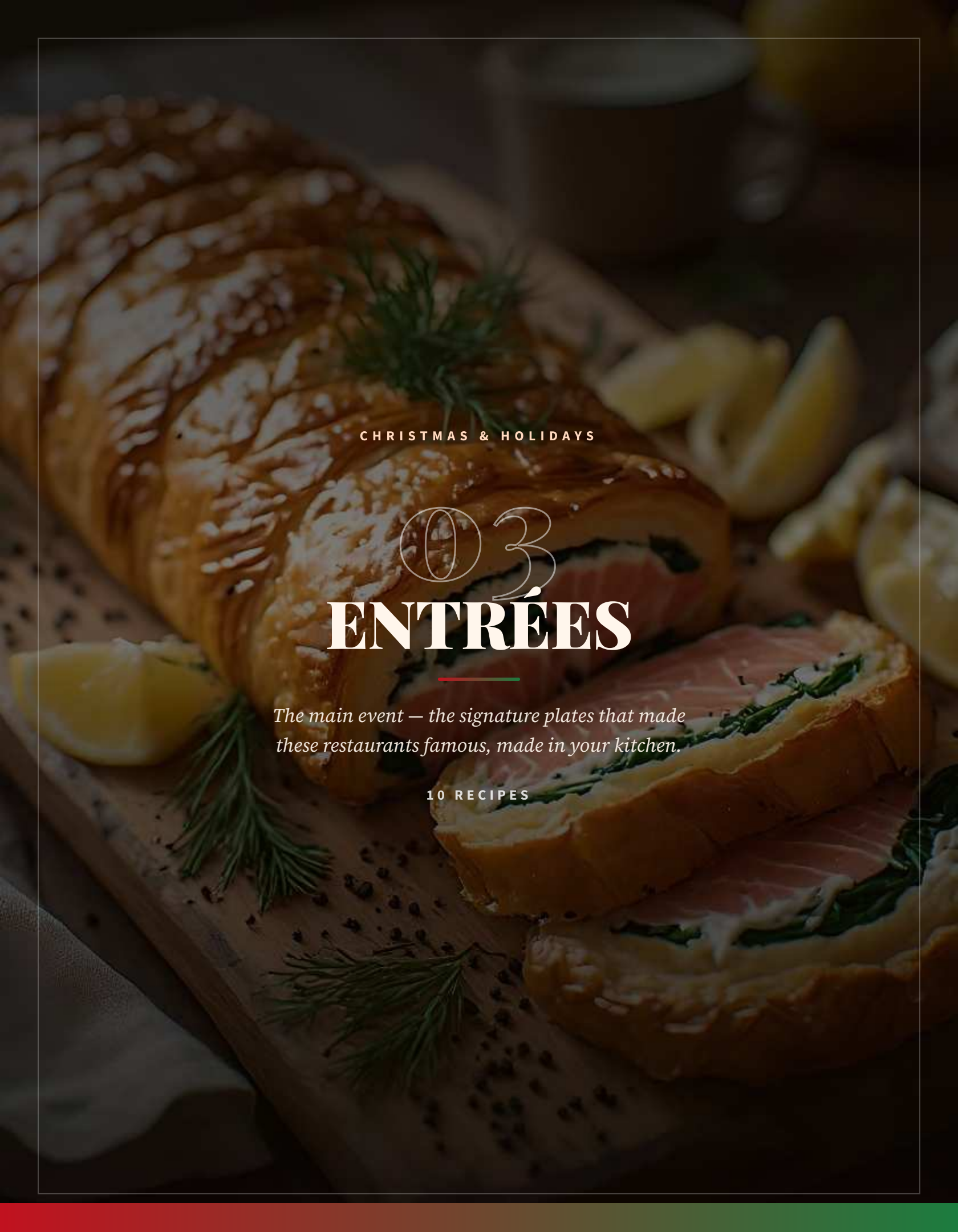
7. **Bake.** Bake for 20 to 23 minutes, until the crescent dough is deep golden brown on top and cooked through. If the top is browning faster than the bottom (common on darker pans), tent loosely with aluminum foil for the final 5 minutes. The underside should also be golden — if it still looks pale at 20 minutes, add 2 to 3 extra minutes.

8. **Rest and serve.** Let the wreath cool on the pan for 5 minutes — this sets the shape and makes it easier to slide intact onto a serving platter. For the classic holiday presentation, tuck a few fresh rosemary sprigs around the outer edge. Pull individual pieces apart to serve; a small bowl of extra honey mustard for dipping alongside makes a good addition.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The ham-and-Swiss version is the most pinned savory filling, but the wreath shape works with almost any combination you can pile onto a crescent base.*

KITCHEN NOTES



CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS

# 03 ENTRÉES

*The main event — the signature plates that made these restaurants famous, made in your kitchen.*

10 RECIPES



№ 21

THE BEATRICE INN

# Rack of Lamb

*Angie Mar's famous orange-glazed rack of lamb from the Beatrice Inn — the West Village meat restaurant she ran until it closed at the end of 2020 — made at home.*

THE BEATRICE INN · COPYCAT

# Rack of Lamb

*Angie Mar's famous orange-glazed rack of lamb from the Beatrice Inn — the West Village meat restaurant she ran until it closed at the end of 2020 — made at home.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 25 min | 4 | Medium | 375 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE RACKS

- 2 frenched racks of lamb, about 1½ lbs each (8 ribs per rack) — at room temperature for 30 minutes before cooking
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon neutral oil (grapeseed or vegetable) for searing

### FOR THE ORANGE-APRICOT GLAZE

- 3 tablespoons orange marmalade (thin-cut or rough-cut — not jelly)
- 3 tablespoons apricot jam
- 1½ tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar (red wine vinegar works)
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves

### FOR SERVING

- Fresh mint leaves, torn (about 2 tablespoons)
- Flaky sea salt (Maldon or fleur de sel)

## 02 Method

1. **Rest the lamb.** Set the racks out at room temperature for 30 minutes before cooking. Season all surfaces — meat, fat cap, and the short ends between the ribs — generously with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. Press the seasoning in firmly.

2. **Make the glaze.** Combine the orange marmalade, apricot jam, Dijon mustard, and sherry vinegar in a small saucepan over medium heat. Stir continuously until the jams melt and the mixture is smooth and unified, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in the fresh thyme leaves. The glaze should be thick enough to coat a spoon but pourable. Set aside.

3. **Preheat the oven.** Set the oven to 425°F. Position a roasting rack over a rimmed sheet pan.

4. **Sear the racks.** Heat the oil in a large cast-iron skillet or heavy oven-safe pan over high heat until the oil is shimmering and just beginning to smoke. Place both racks fat-side down in the pan — they should fit side by side, or work in batches if needed. Sear undisturbed for 3 to 4 minutes until the fat cap is deeply golden and rendered; you will hear the fat actively sizzling and see it shrink as it

renders. Flip to the meat side and sear for 1 minute. Stand each rack on its short ends briefly, 30 seconds each side, to color the exposed meat there.

5. **Roast — first stage.** Transfer the racks fat-side up to the prepared roasting rack. Roast at 425°F for 12 minutes. The fat cap will continue rendering and the meat will begin to cook through.

6. **Glaze and finish.** Pull the racks from the oven. Using a pastry brush, paint a generous layer of the glaze over the fat cap and the tops of the exposed rib bones. Return to the oven for 5 to 8 minutes more, checking at 5. The glaze is done when it has caramelized to a deep amber — sticky and jammy, with darker patches at the ridges and edges of the fat. Check the internal temperature: 125°F at the thickest part of the loin for medium-rare, 130°F for medium. Do not probe near the bone.

7. **Rest.** Transfer the racks to the roasting rack off the sheet pan (or a clean cutting board with a channel to catch the juices). Rest for 10 minutes uncovered — the temperature will rise 3 to 5 degrees and the juices will redistribute. Do not tent with foil, which traps steam and softens the glaze.

8. **Carve and serve.** Stand each rack upright and slice downward between the ribs to produce individual chops. Arrange on a warmed platter or individual plates. Scatter torn fresh mint leaves over the top and finish with a pinch of flaky salt. Serve immediately.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*A frenched rack has had the meat and fat scraped away from the exposed rib bones, leaving clean, bare bones that extend above the loin.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 22

THE HONEYBAKED HAM COMPANY

# HoneyBaked Ham

*Make the full HoneyBaked Ham at home: a bone-in spiral smoked ham warmed low and slow, then finished with a spiced-sugar crust torched into a hard candy shell. About $30–35 to make at home versus $80–100 at the store.*

THE HONEYBAKED HAM COMPANY · COPYCAT

# HoneyBaked Ham

*Make the full HoneyBaked Ham at home: a bone-in spiral smoked ham warmed low and slow, then finished with a spiced-sugar crust torched into a hard candy shell. About $30–35 to make at home versus $80–100 at the store.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 min | 2 hrs 20 min | 14 | Easy | 265 |

## 01 Ingredients

### HAM

- 1 bone-in spiral-sliced pre-cooked smoked half ham, 7–9 lbs

### HONEY-BUTTER WASH

- 3 tablespoons honey
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard (optional — adds depth)

### SPICED SUGAR CRUST

- 1 cup granulated white sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon sweet paprika
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon dry mustard (Colman's or equivalent)

## 02 Method

1. **Rest the ham and preheat.** Remove the ham from the refrigerator 30 to 45 minutes before cooking. Preheat the oven to 275°F.
2. **Warm the ham low and slow.** Place the ham cut-side down in a large roasting pan. Seal tightly with foil — no gaps, or moisture escapes. Bake for 15 to 18 minutes per pound until a thermometer in the thickest section (not touching bone) reads 130°F. A 7-lb ham takes about 1 hour 45 minutes; a 9-lb ham, about 2 hours 15 minutes.
3. **Mix the crust components.** While the ham warms, combine the white sugar, cinnamon, paprika, cloves, nutmeg, ginger, and dry mustard in a small bowl and stir until the spices are evenly distributed. In a separate small bowl, stir together the honey, melted butter, and Dijon mustard.
4. **Dry the surface.** Remove the ham from the oven and carefully lift the foil. Rest the ham uncovered for 10 minutes. The surface needs to dry slightly — a drier, warm surface grips the sugar better than a wet one.

5. **Apply the honey-butter wash.** Brush the honey-butter mixture evenly over the entire exposed surface, working it into the spiral cuts with a pastry brush. The surface should be uniformly coated and sticky to the touch.

6. **First sugar layer.** Using a fine-mesh sieve or your fingers, sift a thin, even layer of spiced sugar over the entire surface. Thin is the operative word — you should almost see the ham through the sugar. Press lightly into the spiral cuts to get coverage there.

7. **Torch (or broil) the first layer.** Kitchen torch: working in sections 2 to 3 inches from the surface, move the flame in slow, steady circles until the sugar melts clear, then bubbles, then turns deep golden amber. Stop before brown. Broiler method: position the ham 8 inches from the element on HIGH, broil 3 to 4 minutes, rotate the pan once, watch constantly.

8. **Harden, then repeat.** Let the first layer cool and harden for 2 minutes — it will visibly set firm. Apply a second thin layer of spiced sugar over the first hardened crust. Torch or broil again to the same amber color. The two stacked layers produce the signature thick candy shell.

9. **Final rest.** Transfer to a serving platter and rest uncovered 10 minutes. The crust finishes hardening completely as it cools. Do not cover — steam softens it. The spiral slices pull apart easily from the bone. That snap when each slice breaks free is what you are after.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*A bone-in half ham is exactly half a whole ham, cut along the center, and typically weighs 7 to 10 lbs — enough for 12 to 16 people. A whole bone-in ham weighs 14 to 18 lbs and feeds 25 to 30 people generously.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 23

THE HONEYBAKED HAM COMPANY

# HoneyBaked Ham Co. Smoked Turkey Breast

*The HoneyBaked Ham Smoked Turkey Breast copycat recipe: an overnight honey brine, apple-wood smoke at 275°F, and a spiced honey glaze applied in stages at the end.*

THE HONEYBAKED HAM COMPANY · COPYCAT

# HoneyBaked Ham Co. Smoked Turkey Breast

*The HoneyBaked Ham Smoked Turkey Breast copycat recipe: an overnight honey brine, apple-wood smoke at 275°F, and a spiced honey glaze applied in stages at the end.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 2 hrs 30 min | 8 | Medium | 210 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE BRINE

- 1 gallon (16 cups) cold water
- ½ cup Diamond Crystal kosher salt (or ⅓ cup Morton kosher salt)
- ¼ cup light brown sugar, packed
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 3 garlic cloves, smashed
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns

### FOR THE TURKEY

- 1 bone-in, skin-on turkey breast half, 4–6 lbs

### FOR THE SPICED HONEY GLAZE

- 3 tablespoons honey
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon light brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- Pinch of ground cinnamon
- Pinch of dry mustard (Colman's or equivalent)

### FOR THE SMOKER

- Apple wood chunks or chips (2–3 chunks or 1½ cups chips, soaked 30 minutes if using chips)

## 02 Method

1. **Brine the turkey breast.** Whisk together the cold water, kosher salt, brown sugar, and honey in a large pot or container until the salt and sugar fully dissolve — this takes about 2 minutes. Add the garlic, bay leaf, and peppercorns. Submerge the turkey breast in the brine (it needs to be fully covered — weigh it down with a small plate if needed). Refrigerate for 8 to 12 hours. Do not brine longer than 12 hours.

2. **Dry and rest the breast.** Remove the breast from the brine and discard the brine. Pat the breast thoroughly dry with paper towels — pay special attention to the skin and around the bone cavity. Place it on a wire rack over a sheet pan and refrigerate uncovered for 1 hour to air-dry the surface further, or let it sit at room temperature for 45 minutes. A dry surface is essential for smoke adhesion and a cleanly set glaze.

3. **Set up the smoker.** Preheat your smoker (or kettle grill set up for indirect heat) to 275°F. Add the apple wood: for a dedicated smoker, place 2–3 chunks in the firebox; for a kettle grill, place the chunks directly on the coals on one side. For a gas grill, place soaked chips in a foil pouch with small holes poked on top, directly over a lit burner. If you have a water pan, fill it — it keeps the chamber humid and helps the breast stay moist over the long cook.

4. **Smoke the breast.** Place the turkey breast skin-side up on the grate, away from direct heat. Close the lid and maintain 275°F. Insert a probe thermometer into the thickest part of the breast, not touching the bone. Smoke for approximately 2½ to 3 hours for a 4–5 lb bone-in breast. Resist opening the lid frequently — temperature swings lengthen the cook and reduce smoke adhesion.

5. **Make the glaze.** While the breast smokes, stir together the honey, melted butter, brown sugar, smoked paprika, garlic powder, cinnamon, and dry mustard in a small bowl until fully combined. Set aside at room temperature — the glaze should be fluid; if your honey is thick, set the bowl in warm water for a few minutes.

6. **Glaze in stages.** When the internal temperature reaches 130°F (approximately 90 minutes in), brush a light coat of the spiced honey glaze over the entire skin surface. Close the lid. Brush a second coat at 145°F, and a third coat at 155°F. Each layer caramelizes against the heat before the next is added, building the glistening amber exterior layer by layer. Don't rush this step by applying all the glaze at once — individual thin coats set properly; a thick application just runs off.

7. **Pull and rest.** When the internal temperature reads 160°F, remove the breast from the smoker and place it on a cutting board. Tent loosely with foil (don't seal tightly — you don't want steam to soften the glaze) and rest for 20 minutes. Carry-over heat will bring the breast to 165°F.

8. **Carve and serve.** Slice across the grain in ¼-inch to ½-inch slices, working alongside the bone. The exterior will show a visible smoke ring — a pinkish layer just beneath the skin. This is correct and not undercooked meat; it's nitric oxide in the smoke binding to the meat's myoglobin and fixing its color, a reaction that occurs in properly smoked meat. Serve warm or at room temperature.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The company doesn't disclose its wood. But the flavor profile — mild, sweet, with a light smoke that doesn't overpower the honey glaze — is consistent with apple or pecan wood, both of which produce a gentle, slightly sweet smoke that is standard for poultry.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 24

CHEF-INSPIRED

# Ham in Cola

*The recipe that made Britain rethink Christmas ham: Nigella Lawson's iconic gammon simmered in full-fat Coca-Cola, finished with a black treacle and demerara glaze that crackles like candy.*

CHEF-INSPIRED · COPYCAT

# Ham in Cola

*The recipe that made Britain rethink Christmas ham: Nigella Lawson's iconic gammon simmered in full-fat Coca-Cola, finished with a black treacle and demerara glaze that crackles like candy.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 2 hr 30 min | 10 | Easy | 240 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE HAM

- 1 mild-cure bone-in gammon joint or pork leg roast, about 4½ lb (2 kg)
- 2 quarts (2 litres) full-fat Coca-Cola — not diet (top up with water if the ham is not fully submerged)
- 1 medium onion, halved through the root (no need to peel)

### FOR THE GLAZE

- 1 heaped tablespoon black treacle or unsulfured dark molasses
- 2 teaspoons English mustard powder (or 1½ tsp dry mustard)
- 2 tablespoons demerara sugar or turbinado sugar
- 20–25 whole cloves, for studding (optional — one per diamond intersection)

## 02 Method

1. **Simmer the ham.** Place the gammon joint in a large, deep pot — it should fit with room to spare. Pour in the full-fat Coca-Cola and add the halved onion. If the ham is not fully submerged, top up with cold water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, skimming off any foam that rises in the first few minutes. Reduce to a low, steady simmer (small bubbles breaking the surface, not a rolling boil). Cook uncovered for about 30 minutes per pound (an hour per kilo) — roughly 2 hours 15 to 30 minutes for a 4½ lb joint. Top up with additional cola or water if the liquid level drops below the top of the meat. The ham is done when a meat thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the joint — away from any bone — reads 160°F (71°C).

2. **Rest and preheat.** Lift the ham out of the braising liquid and transfer it to a rack set over a roasting tin. Leave it to rest and cool for 15 minutes — it will be much easier to handle. Preheat your oven to 450°F (230°C). If you want to use the braising liquid for red cabbage later, strain it into a heatproof container and set aside.

3. **Strip the rind.** When the ham is cool enough to handle, use your fingers and a small sharp knife to peel back the outer rind (the tough skin). Work carefully — you want to keep the layer of pale fat underneath entirely intact. The rind should peel away reasonably easily while the ham is still warm; it becomes harder to remove once cold.

4. **Score the fat.** Using a sharp knife, score the exposed fat cap in a diagonal crosshatch pattern to create diamond shapes roughly 1 inch across. Make each cut about ½ inch deep — you want to reach into the fat but not through it into the meat below. The scoring allows the glaze to sink into the cuts and helps the fat render and crisp in the oven.

5. **Apply the glaze.** Paint the black treacle (or molasses) all over the scored fat using a pastry brush — work it into the score marks as well as over the surface. In a small bowl, mix the mustard powder and demerara sugar together, then press this mixture firmly over the entire treacle-covered surface with your hand, packing it into the cuts. If you are using cloves, press one into the center of each diamond intersection — they add a faint spice note and look traditional.

6. **Roast.** Place the roasting tin in the hot oven and roast for about 10 to 15 minutes, checking at 10. The glaze is done when it is darkly lacquered — deep amber to mahogany — with the sugar beginning to caramelize and char lightly at the edges of the score marks. If the glaze is coloring faster on one side, rotate the tin. Do not walk away during this step; at 450°F the line between perfectly caramelized and burnt is narrow.

7. **Rest and carve.** Remove from the oven and rest on the rack for 15 minutes before carving — the crust will harden slightly as it cools, which is correct. To carve, use a sharp knife to slice across the grain of the meat. Each slice should show the pale pink interior framed by the dark, caramelized crust. Serve with mustard, roasted potatoes, and braised red cabbage.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The 450°F temperature is necessary to caramelize the treacle-and-sugar glaze quickly, without overcooking the ham underneath. At lower temperatures the sugar melts and runs off the scored fat rather than setting into a crackled crust.*

**KITCHEN NOTES**



№ 25

VIRAL HIT

# Christmas Morning Breakfast Casserole

*The viral TikTok Christmas morning casserole you assemble Christmas Eve and bake while presents are opened — sausage, eggs, bread, and two cheeses in a golden, puffed overnight casserole that feeds 10 with zero morning effort.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Christmas Morning Breakfast Casserole

*The viral TikTok Christmas morning casserole you assemble Christmas Eve and bake while presents are opened — sausage, eggs, bread, and two cheeses in a golden, puffed overnight casserole that feeds 10 with zero morning effort.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 55 min | 10 | Easy | 580 |

## 01 Ingredients

### BREAD BASE

- 1 lb (450g) brioche, French bread, or day-old sourdough, cut into 1-inch cubes — about 10 loosely packed cups (a standard 1-lb loaf)

### SAUSAGE LAYER

- 1 lb (450g) bulk pork breakfast sausage (or Italian sausage, casings removed)
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely diced
- 1 medium green bell pepper, finely diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced

### EGG CUSTARD

- 8 large eggs
- 2 cups (475ml) whole milk
- 1 cup (240ml) heavy cream
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard powder
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

### CHEESE TOPPING

- 1½ cups (6oz / 170g) sharp cheddar, freshly shredded (divided)
- ½ cup (2oz / 57g) Gruyère or Swiss cheese, freshly shredded

### FOR THE PAN

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter or cooking spray (to grease the dish)

## 02 Method

1. **Cook the sausage. Christmas Eve, start here.** In a large skillet over medium-high heat, add the sausage and break it into small crumbles with a spoon or spatula. Cook until the sausage is fully browned with no pink remaining, about 7 to 8 minutes. If the sausage released a lot of fat, carefully tip the pan and spoon off all but about 1 tablespoon — leaving a little fat in the pan is intentional, as it will sauté the vegetables. Add the diced onion and bell pepper to the pan with the sausage and cook over medium heat until the onion is translucent and soft, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook 1 minute more until fragrant. Remove from the heat. The mixture should smell savory and deeply browned — this is the foundational flavor of the casserole. Set it aside to cool for 10 minutes before assembling.

2. **Layer the casserole dish.** Grease a 9×13-inch baking dish generously with butter or cooking spray, covering the bottom and sides. Spread the bread cubes in an even layer across the bottom — it is fine if they mound slightly; they will compress during the soak. Scatter the cooled sausage mixture evenly over the bread. Sprinkle 1 cup of the shredded cheddar and all the Gruyère over the top in an even layer. Reserve the remaining ½ cup of cheddar for topping after the overnight soak (it goes on right before baking, not now — cheese added at this stage tends to sink and disappear into the custard overnight rather than forming the golden top layer you want).

3. **Make the custard.** In a large bowl or large measuring cup, crack all 8 eggs and whisk them until fully combined with no visible streaks of

yolk or white. Add the whole milk, heavy cream, dry mustard, Worcestershire sauce, salt, and pepper, and whisk until completely smooth and uniformly pale yellow. The dry mustard will not be visually obvious at this point but it's essential — it provides a subtle sharpness that counterbalances the richness of the cream and cheese and lifts the flavor of the finished casserole. Taste the custard at this point: it should be aggressively seasoned, slightly sharp from the mustard, and savory from the Worcestershire. If it tastes flat, add a small pinch more salt. The custard flavor dilutes significantly once distributed over 10 cups of bread and will be much milder in the finished casserole.

4 **Pour and soak.** Pour the custard slowly and evenly over the layered bread and sausage, moving the pouring spout across the entire surface of the dish rather than dumping it in one corner. After pouring, press the bread pieces down firmly with the back of a large spoon or your clean hands, pressing until every piece of bread is submerged in the custard. Any pieces still floating above the custard surface will dry out in the refrigerator and bake up hard rather than custardy. Cover the dish tightly with aluminum foil — pressing the foil down at the edges so no gaps remain — and refrigerate for a minimum of 8 hours and up to 24 hours. The overnight soak is not just convenient: it is what makes this casserole exceptional. Eight hours of saturation allows the custard to fully penetrate every bread cube, eliminating dry pockets and creating the even, uniform custard texture that makes this dish so satisfying.

5 **Christmas morning: remove from the fridge and preheat.** Pull the dish out of the refrigerator about 30 minutes before baking. Cold ceramic or glass baking dishes placed directly into a hot oven can crack from thermal shock; this rest also allows the casserole to begin warming from the edges, which helps it bake more evenly. While the casserole rests, preheat the oven to 350°F. Remove the foil from the dish and scatter the reserved ½ cup of shredded cheddar evenly across the top. Replace the foil loosely (or use a fresh piece) — the cheese goes on now so it has a chance to melt during the first bake stage, but the foil still needs to cover the dish to trap steam that sets the interior.

6 **First bake: covered, 30 minutes.** Slide the covered dish into the preheated 350°F oven. Bake for 30 minutes without opening the oven. The trapped steam gently cooks the egg custard from the outside in, setting the interior of the casserole into a cohesive, firm structure that holds together when sliced. After 30 minutes, the casserole will look pale and puffy through the foil edges — that's correct. The interior should be mostly set when you press the foil from above; if the center still feels very liquid and jiggly, give it 5 more minutes covered.

7 **Second bake: uncovered, 25 to 30 minutes.** Remove the foil and return the dish to the oven. The top should look pale and cheese-covered at this point. Bake uncovered 25 to 30 minutes until the top is deep golden brown, the cheese is melted and lightly caramelized at the edges, and the casserole has puffed slightly above the rim of the dish. Test for doneness by inserting an instant-read thermometer into the center — the casserole is done when it reads 165°F. Alternatively, insert a knife into the center: it should come out clean, with no raw egg on the blade. The edges will brown faster than the center; the edge pieces will be slightly more cooked and crisp, which many people prefer.

8 **Rest and serve.** Remove the casserole from the oven and let it rest uncovered for 10 minutes before cutting. Resting allows the custard to fully firm up and the structure to settle — sliced immediately from the oven, it will fall apart in the spoon; sliced after 10 minutes, it cuts into clean squares. Cut into 10 portions (a 2-row by 5-column grid for a 9×13 pan works evenly). Serve directly from the pan with a wide, flat spatula.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*A minimum of 8 hours is what gives this dish its defining texture.*



№ 26

VIRAL HIT

# Herb-Butter Cornish Hens

*The viral TikTok Cornish hens recipe that makes holiday dinner look Michelin-star: herb-compound-butter worked under the skin, stuffed with lemon and aromatics, roasted at 425°F until the skin crackles. Each guest gets their own whole bird.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Herb-Butter Cornish Hens

*The viral TikTok Cornish hens recipe that makes holiday dinner look Michelin-star: herb-compound-butter worked under the skin, stuffed with lemon and aromatics, roasted at 425°F until the skin crackles. Each guest gets their own whole bird.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 50 min | 2 | Medium | 650 |

## 01 Ingredients

### THE HENS

- 2 Cornish game hens (1¼–1½ lb / 570–680g each), thawed completely if frozen, patted dry inside and out

### COMPOUND BUTTER

- 4 tablespoons (57g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 2 garlic cloves, finely minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves, chopped
- Zest of 1 lemon (about 1 teaspoon)
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

### CAVITY AROMATICS (PER HEN)

- 2 lemon quarters (from the lemon you zested)
- 1 garlic clove, smashed with the flat of a knife
- 1 fresh rosemary sprig
- 1 fresh thyme sprig

### SEASONING

- 1 teaspoon kosher salt (for the outside skin)
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

### FOR THE PAN

- 1 tablespoon olive oil (to coat the pan or use a rack)
- ½ cup chicken broth or dry white wine (optional, adds moisture and prevents drippings from burning)

## 02 Method

1. **Bring hens to room temperature — 30 minutes before roasting.** Remove both hens from the refrigerator and set them on a cutting board or plate uncovered. Cold poultry placed directly into a hot oven cooks unevenly: the outer layers overcook before the interior reaches temperature, resulting in dry breast meat. Thirty minutes at room temperature closes most of that gap. While the hens rest, pat them completely dry inside and out with paper towels. Moisture on the skin steams rather than roasts — a dry surface is the first requirement for crackling golden skin. Preheat the oven to 425°F (220°C).

2. **Make the compound butter.** In a small bowl, combine the softened butter with the minced garlic, chopped rosemary, thyme, lemon zest, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Mix with a fork until fully incorporated and the herbs are evenly distributed throughout the butter — it should smell intensely aromatic. The butter needs to be genuinely soft (not melted): if it is still firm, microwave it in 5-second bursts until it yields easily to the fork but holds its shape. Divide the mixture mentally in half — 2 tablespoons for under the skin of each bird, 2 tablespoons total for the outside of both birds combined.

3. **Season the cavities.** Sprinkle the inside of each hen's cavity with a small pinch of salt. Stuff each cavity with 2 lemon quarters, 1 smashed garlic clove, 1 rosemary sprig, and 1 thyme sprig, pressing them in until they fit snugly. These aromatics do not dramatically change the flavor of the meat — there is not enough surface contact — but they create a fragrant steam environment

inside the bird and infuse the juices that accumulate in the cavity during roasting, which you will drizzle over the finished hens.

4. **Work the compound butter under the skin.** Starting at the neck end of one hen's breast, slide your fingers carefully between the skin and the breast meat, loosening the skin over both breast halves and working down toward the thighs as far as your fingers reach without tearing. The skin is delicate but forgiving — if a small tear occurs, the butter will still stay in place. Take half the compound butter (about 2 tablespoons) and push it under the skin in small pieces, spreading it across both breast halves and as far toward the thighs as it will go, then press the skin flat from the outside to distribute the butter into an even layer. The breast skin should look evenly yellow-green where the herbed butter sits beneath it. Repeat with the second hen. Use the remaining butter (about 1 tablespoon per bird) to coat the outside — brush or rub it over the breasts, thighs, legs, and drumsticks until every surface is covered.

5. **Season the outside generously.** Sprinkle the outside of both hens with the remaining 1 teaspoon of kosher salt and ½ teaspoon of pepper, distributing it evenly over all surfaces including the underside. Cornish hens are small birds — do not under-season, or the finished dish will taste flat. Season firmly, as you would season a steak.

6. **Optional: truss the legs.** Cut two pieces of kitchen twine about 10 inches long. Cross the drumsticks of each hen and tie them together snugly, then tuck the wing tips under the body by bending them behind the back. Trussing is not required — the hens will cook perfectly without it — but it creates a more compact, uniform shape that browns evenly and looks more polished when plated. If you do not have kitchen twine, skip this step entirely.

7. **Set up the pan and roast.** Lightly oil a roasting pan, cast-iron skillet, or large oven-safe skillet. Place the hens breast-side up with at least 1 inch of space between them so hot air can circulate around both birds. If using the optional broth or wine, pour it into the bottom of the pan now (not over the hens). Slide the pan into the preheated 425°F oven. Roast for 45 to 55 minutes without opening the oven door during the first 35 minutes — the high heat is building the crust, and opening the door drops the temperature significantly. At 45 minutes, check the skin color: it should be a deep, even golden-brown, not pale yellow. Insert an instant-read thermometer into the thickest part of the thigh without touching the bone — the target is 165°F. If the skin is browning too fast before that temperature is reached, tent the hens loosely with a piece of foil for the remaining time.

8. **Rest for 10 minutes.** Transfer the hens to a cutting board or serving platter and let them rest uncovered for a full 10 minutes before serving. This is not optional. During roasting, the muscle fibers contract from heat and push the juices toward the center of the bird. Resting allows those fibers to relax and the juices to redistribute evenly through the meat — a hen carved immediately after roasting loses most of its juices onto the cutting board; a hen that rests keeps them inside the meat where they belong.

9. **Serve and drizzle.** Pour any accumulated pan drippings through a small strainer into a bowl or saucepan — these drippings are intensely concentrated and deeply flavored and should not be discarded. Serve one whole hen per person, drizzling the pan drippings over the top. For easier eating, hens can be split in half lengthwise with kitchen shears (cut along both sides of the spine, then press the breast to flatten): this gives each person a half-bird that is easy to eat without knife-wrestling a whole carcass. The whole presentation is more impressive; the split is more practical.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*A Cornish game hen is a small broiler chicken weighing under 2 pounds, almost always sold at 1.25 to 1.5 pounds. It is a cross between a Cornish chicken (bred for broad, meaty breasts) and a White Plymouth Rock chicken, developed commercially in the 1950s.*



№ 27

VIRAL HIT

# French-Canadian Tourtière

*The French-Canadian tourtière flooding TikTok every holiday season: a double-crust meat pie spiced with cinnamon, cloves, and savory that Quebec families have made for the réveillon feast after Christmas Eve midnight Mass.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# French-Canadian Tourtière

*The French-Canadian tourtière flooding TikTok every holiday season: a double-crust meat pie spiced with cinnamon, cloves, and savory that Quebec families have made for the réveillon feast after Christmas Eve midnight Mass.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 45 min active + 1 hr chill | 1 hr | 8 slices | Intermediate | 490 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE ALL-BUTTER PIE CRUST

- 2½ cups (315g) all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling
- 1 teaspoon fine salt
- 1 cup (227g / 2 sticks) cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes and refrigerated until needed
- 6–8 tablespoons ice water (put a glass of water in the freezer for 5 minutes)
- 1 large egg + 1 tablespoon cold water, beaten together (egg wash)

### FOR THE FILLING

- 1 tablespoon neutral oil or unsalted butter
- 1 large yellow onion, finely diced (about 1½ cups)
- 2 stalks celery, finely diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- ¾ lb (340g) ground pork, 80/20
- ¾ lb (340g) ground beef, 85/15
- ¼ cup (60ml) low-sodium beef broth or water
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- ¼ teaspoon ground allspice
- ¼ teaspoon dried savory (summer savory is traditional; substitute dried thyme if unavailable)
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1½ teaspoons fine salt (adjust to taste after adding potato)
- 1 large Yukon Gold or Russet potato (about 10 oz / 280g), peeled, boiled until fully tender, and roughly mashed — not smooth, just broken down

## 02 Method

1. **Make the pie crust.** Whisk together the flour and salt in a large bowl. Scatter the cold butter cubes over the flour. Using a pastry cutter or your fingertips, work the butter into the flour until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs with some flat, pea-sized butter pieces still visible — those uneven flakes create the flaky layers in the baked crust. Add ice water one tablespoon at a time, stirring with a fork after each addition, until the dough just begins to hold together when you press a bit between your fingers. It should still look slightly shaggy — do not knead it smooth. Divide the dough into two equal pieces. Press each into a flat disc about 1 inch thick, wrap tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour (up to 2 days). Cold dough rolls out more easily and bakes flakier.

2. **Cook the aromatics.** Heat the oil in a large, heavy skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add the diced onion and celery and cook, stirring occasionally, for 7–8 minutes until the onion is translucent and just beginning to soften at the edges. Add the minced garlic and cook for 1 minute more,

stirring constantly, until fragrant. The aromatics should smell sweet and savory but not browned.

3. **Brown the meat and build the filling.** Add both the ground pork and ground beef to the skillet. Using a wooden spoon or spatula, break the meat into small pieces as it cooks. Cook over medium-high heat for 8–10 minutes, stirring and pressing, until no pink remains and the meat has taken on some color. If the pan produces a large amount of fat, carefully tip the skillet and spoon off most of it, leaving about 1 tablespoon behind for flavor. Add the cinnamon, cloves, allspice, savory, black pepper, and salt directly to the meat. Stir for 30 seconds until the spices are fragrant. Pour in the beef broth, stir to combine, and simmer for 4–5 minutes until the liquid is almost fully absorbed and the filling smells deeply savory and spiced.

4. **Stir in the potato and cool the filling.** Remove the skillet from the heat. Add the roughly mashed potato and stir it into the meat until evenly distributed throughout the filling — it absorbs the remaining fat and any loose juices, binding the mixture together so it will slice cleanly once baked. Taste the filling for salt and adjust. Spread the filling in an even layer on a large rimmed baking sheet or into a wide shallow bowl to cool quickly. Let it cool to room temperature (about 30 minutes), then transfer to the refrigerator and chill until completely cold, at least 1 more hour. This step is not optional: a warm filling will steam and soften the bottom pie crust from underneath.

5. **Assemble the pie.** When you are ready to bake, preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Remove the dough discs from the refrigerator. On a lightly floured surface, roll one disc into a rough 12-inch circle about ⅛ inch thick. Gently fold the circle in half, then in half again, and lay it in a 9-inch pie dish. Unfold it and press it into the bottom and sides, letting the excess dough hang over the edge. Spoon the cold filling into the crust, spreading it into an even, compact layer — press it gently with the back of the spoon. Roll out the second dough disc into a 12-inch circle the same way. Lay it over the filling. Trim both crusts to leave a ½-inch overhang all around the edge of the dish. Fold the top and bottom edges under together and crimp them into a fluted or rope pattern to seal. Brush the top crust with the egg wash. Cut 4–6 small slits through the top crust with the tip of a paring knife to vent the steam.

6. **Bake until golden.** Place the assembled pie on a rimmed baking sheet (the filling can bubble slightly and drip). Bake for 55–65 minutes until the top crust is a deep, even golden brown and the filling is visibly steaming when you peer through a vent slit. If the crust edges begin to darken before the top is fully browned — usually around the 35-minute mark — lay a few strips of aluminum foil loosely over the edge to slow them down. The pie is done when the bottom crust (visible through a glass dish) has also turned golden, not pale.

7. **Rest and serve.** Transfer the pie to a wire rack and let it rest for at least 20 minutes before cutting — the filling contracts and firms as it cools slightly, making clean slices possible. A pie cut straight from the oven will collapse at the wedge. Slice into 8 wedges and serve with Heinz ketchup (the unashamed Quebecois shortcut), ketchup maison (a spiced tomato-and-fruit relish, sold at some Canadian grocery stores or easy to make at home), or a jar of pickled beets alongside.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Tourtière is a double-crust savory pie made with ground or cubed meat — most commonly a mix of pork and beef — seasoned with warm baking spices like cinnamon and cloves, and bound with mashed potato.*



№ 28

VIRAL HIT

# Honey-Garlic Ham

*The viral TikTok honey-garlic ham: a bone-in half ham scored in a diamond pattern, glazed every 20 minutes with honey, garlic, dijon, and soy sauce, and finished at 400°F for a caramelized crust that photographs better than a turkey.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Honey-Garlic Ham

*The viral TikTok honey-garlic ham: a bone-in half ham scored in a diamond pattern, glazed every 20 minutes with honey, garlic, dijon, and soy sauce, and finished at 400°F for a caramelized crust that photographs better than a turkey.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 min | 2 hr 30 min | 10–12 | Medium | 245 |

## 01 Ingredients

### THE HAM

- 1 bone-in half ham, 7–9 lbs, fully cooked and smoked (not spiral-sliced)
- 1 cup water or low-sodium chicken broth (for the roasting pan)

### HONEY-GARLIC GLAZE

- ⅓ cup honey
- ¼ cup packed light brown sugar
- 4 cloves garlic, minced (about 2 teaspoons; fresh garlic only — garlic powder flattens)
- 2 tablespoons dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- Pinch of crushed red pepper flakes (optional — adds background heat)

### OPTIONAL AROMATICS

- 1 orange, halved (squeeze over scored ham before the foil tent for fragrance)
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary or thyme (tuck into the roasting pan)

## 02 Method

1. **Rest the ham at room temperature.** Take the ham out of the refrigerator 1 hour before it goes into the oven. Cold ham bakes unevenly — a 7-pound ham pulled straight from the fridge can sit at a safe temperature on the outside while the center is still cold, leading to a dry exterior and underdone center.

2. **Preheat to 325°F.** Place a rack in the lower third of the oven. Add the water or broth to the bottom of the roasting pan — it creates steam and prevents the drippings from burning.

3. **Score the fat cap.** Using a sharp knife, cut a 1-inch diamond pattern into the fat, cutting about ¼ inch deep. You're scoring the fat, not the meat — if you feel resistance after the first half-inch, you've hit the meat and can stop. The score marks are where the glaze will pool and penetrate during basting.

4. **Start the first bake.** Set the ham cut-side down on the rack. If using the orange, squeeze both halves over the top. Tent loosely with foil. Roast at 325°F for half the

total estimated cook time — 50 minutes for a 7-lb ham, about 1 hour 10 minutes for a 9-lb ham.

5. **Make the glaze.** While the ham bakes, combine the honey, brown sugar, garlic, dijon, soy sauce, vinegar, pepper, and red pepper flakes in a small saucepan over medium heat. Stir and simmer 3–4 minutes, until the brown sugar dissolves and the glaze coats a spoon. Divide it: set aside ¼ of the glaze in a small bowl for finishing at the end, and use the rest for the basting coats.

6. **Begin glazing.** At the halfway point, remove the foil. Brush a generous coat of glaze all over the top and sides, pressing it into the score marks. Return to the oven uncovered.

7. **Glaze every 20 minutes.** Brush two more layers of glaze at 20-minute intervals. Each coat sets slightly before the next goes on — that's what builds the layered, lacquered crust. After three glaze applications your ham will have a deep amber color.

8. **Check the internal temperature.** When the ham reaches 135–137°F internally, it's close. At this point, raise the oven temperature to 400°F and brush on the reserved finishing glaze.

9. **Caramelize the crust.** At 400°F, the high heat rapidly caramelizes the final coat. Watch closely — 10–15 minutes is usually enough. Pull the ham when it hits 140°F internally and the crust is deeply browned and sticky. If the glaze starts to smoke or darken too fast, tent it loosely with foil.

10. **Rest before carving.** Transfer to a cutting board and tent loosely with foil for 15 minutes. The juices redistribute and the internal temperature finishes rising. Carve by slicing parallel to the bone, rotating the ham as you work.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Soy sauce adds umami and salt, which balances the sweetness of the honey and brown sugar and keeps the glaze from reading as candy. It also contains glutamates that enhance the savory depth of the ham's natural smokiness.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 29

VIRAL HIT

# Christmas Eve Pork Tamales

*The viral TikTok Christmas Eve pork tamales: tender red-chile braised pork wrapped in light, fluffy masa and steamed in corn husks. The tamalada — the family tamale-making party on Noche Buena — has become a TikTok staple every December.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Christmas Eve Pork Tamales

*The viral TikTok Christmas Eve pork tamales: tender red-chile braised pork wrapped in light, fluffy masa and steamed in corn husks. The tamalada — the family tamale-making party on Noche Buena — has become a TikTok staple every December.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 45 min active | 1 hr 30 min | 24 tamales | Intermediate | 285 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR SOAKING

- 30 dried corn husks (from a Mexican grocery store or the Latin aisle of most supermarkets; Mexifoods brand is widely available)

### FOR THE PORK

- 2 lbs boneless pork shoulder, cut into 3–4 large pieces
- 1 medium white onion, halved
- 5 garlic cloves, peeled
- 2 bay leaves
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- Enough cold water to cover (about 6 cups)

### FOR THE RED CHILE SAUCE

- 5 dried guajillo chiles (stems and seeds removed)
- 3 dried ancho chiles (stems and seeds removed)
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled
- 1½ teaspoons ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon dried Mexican oregano
- 2 cups hot water, for soaking the chiles (or, if the pork is already braised, substitute 2 cups reserved pork broth for a richer sauce)
- ½ teaspoon salt (adjust to taste)
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil (for the sauce)

### FOR THE MASA

- 1 cup lard (or vegetable shortening; lard gives the most traditional flavor and texture)
- 4 cups masa harina, tamale-grind (Maseca Para Tamales or Bob's Red Mill Masa Harina)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1½ teaspoons fine salt
- 2½ to 3 cups warm pork broth (from braising — use more if the masa feels stiff)

## 02 Method

1. **Soak the corn husks.** Place 30 corn husks in a large pot or sink and cover with hot water. Weight them down with a heavy plate or pot lid — they float. Soak for at least 1 hour (up to overnight) until fully pliable and flexible without cracking. While the husks soak, begin the pork.

2. **Braise the pork.** Place the pork shoulder pieces in a large pot with the halved onion, garlic cloves, bay leaves, and salt. Add cold water to cover by about 2 inches. Bring to a boil over high heat, skim off any foam that rises, then reduce to a low simmer. Cover and cook for 1½ to 2 hours until the pork is tender enough to shred easily with two forks. Remove the pork to a cutting board and let it cool slightly. Reserve the braising liquid — this is your pork broth for both the masa and the chile sauce. Discard the onion and bay leaves.

3. **Make the red chile sauce.** While the pork braises, tear the dried guajillo and ancho chiles into large pieces and place them in a dry skillet over medium heat. Toast, turning occasionally, for 1 to 2 minutes per side until fragrant (the chiles should deepen in color and smell slightly smoky — do not let them burn, as a burned chile makes the sauce bitter). Transfer to a bowl, cover with 2 cups of hot water, and soak for 20 minutes until softened. Transfer the soaked chiles and their soaking liquid to a blender (if the pork has already finished

braising, use 2 cups of warm pork broth in place of the soaking liquid for a richer sauce). Add the 4 garlic cloves, cumin, oregano, and salt. Blend on high for 1 to 2 minutes until completely smooth. Heat the vegetable oil in the same skillet over medium heat. Pour the chile sauce through a fine-mesh strainer into the skillet (pressing on the solids), and cook for 5 minutes, stirring, until the sauce darkens slightly and no longer smells raw.

4. **Shred the pork and combine with sauce.** Shred the cooled pork by hand or with two forks into medium-thin pieces. Add the shredded pork to the chile sauce in the skillet and stir to coat. The filling should be saucy but not wet — if it looks dry, add a few tablespoons of pork broth. Taste and adjust salt. The filling is done when every strand of pork is coated in deep red chile sauce. Set aside to cool.

5. **Make the masa.** Beat the lard in a stand mixer (or with a hand mixer in a large bowl) on medium-high speed for 3 to 4 minutes until it looks pale, fluffy and significantly increased in volume — it should resemble thick whipped cream. In a separate bowl, whisk together the masa harina, baking powder, and salt. With the mixer running on low, add the masa harina mixture in 3 additions, alternating with the warm pork broth (start with 2½ cups; add more by the tablespoon if the dough feels stiff). The finished masa should be soft, smooth, and spreadable — similar in consistency to thick hummus. Test: pinch off a small ball, drop it in a glass of cold water. If it floats, the masa has enough air and fat. If it sinks, beat the dough for 2 more minutes and test again.

6. **Set up the assembly station.** Lay out a clean kitchen towel and drain the soaked corn husks, blotting them dry. Have the masa, the pork filling, and a small bowl of warm pork broth nearby (for rewetting your spreading hand). Tear a few husks into thin strips — these are your ties for folding. Keep a clean damp towel within reach to wipe your hands between tamales.

7. **Fill and fold the tamales.** Hold a corn husk in your non-dominant hand with the wide end at the top. Using a large spoon or silicone spatula, spread about 2 tablespoons of masa in a thin, even layer (roughly ¼ inch thick) across the lower two-thirds of the husk, leaving a 1-inch border on each side and a 2-inch bare strip at the bottom tip. Keep the top quarter of the husk bare — this overlap closes the tamale. Spoon about 2 tablespoons of the pork filling in a line down the center of the masa. To fold: bring the two long edges of the husk together so the masa wraps around the filling and seals into a cylinder. Fold the bare bottom tip up against the outside of the tamale and hold it flat. If needed, tie a thin strip of husk loosely around the middle to keep the fold in place. The top of the tamale stays open. Repeat with remaining husks, masa, and filling.

8. **Steam the tamales.** Pour 2 to 3 inches of water into the bottom of your steamer pot. Arrange the tamales standing upright in the steamer insert or colander with the open end facing up — pack them close together so they support each other (a tightly packed steamer helps keep them upright). If you have leftover corn husks, lay them loosely over the top of the tamales to trap steam. Bring the water to a boil, then reduce to a steady medium simmer. Cover and steam for 1 hour and 20 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes. Check the water level every 30 minutes and add boiling water from a kettle as needed to prevent the pot from going dry. The tamales are done when the masa pulls away cleanly from the corn husk without sticking — unwrap one test tamale at the 80-minute mark to check.

9. **Rest and serve.** Remove the steamer from the heat and let the tamales rest in the pot, lid on, for 10 minutes. This rest helps the masa firm up so the tamales hold their shape when unwrapped. Serve the tamales still wrapped in their husks — each person unwraps their own. Serve with crema, salsa verde, or a simple red salsa alongside.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*A tamalada is a communal tamale-making party, traditionally held around Christmas.*



№ 30

VIRAL HIT

# Salmon Wellington

*Two salmon fillets sandwiched around a cream cheese, dill, and spinach filling, wrapped in golden puff pastry — the pescatarian Christmas centerpiece taking over TikTok.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Salmon Wellington

*Two salmon fillets sandwiched around a cream cheese, dill, and spinach filling, wrapped in golden puff pastry — the pescatarian Christmas centerpiece taking over TikTok.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 min | 28 min | 6 | Medium | 445 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 2 center-cut salmon fillets, 6–7 oz each (about 1 inch thick), skin removed, pin bones out
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 6 oz (170g) full-fat cream cheese, at room temperature
- 2 tbsp fresh dill, finely chopped (about ½ oz)
- 1 tbsp fresh chives, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, finely grated or minced
- Finely grated zest of 1 lemon
- 3 cups (85g) baby spinach
- 1 sheet (about 14 oz / 400g) all-butter puff pastry, thawed overnight in the refrigerator
- 1 large egg, beaten with 1 tbsp water (for egg wash)
- All-purpose flour for dusting

## 02 Method

1. **Prep the spinach filling.** Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat with no oil. Add the baby spinach and toss constantly for 30–45 seconds until just wilted. Transfer to a clean kitchen towel. Fold the towel around the spinach, roll it into a bundle, and squeeze firmly over the sink until no more liquid comes out — twist and squeeze harder than seems necessary. Open the towel, rearrange the spinach, and squeeze once more. You should have a small, dense, dry clump. Roughly chop it and set aside to cool completely.

2. **Make the cream cheese filling.** In a medium bowl, beat the cream cheese until smooth. Add the dill, chives, garlic, and lemon zest. Fold together until evenly combined. Fold in the cooled chopped spinach. Taste and season with salt and pepper. The filling should taste well-seasoned — it needs to flavor the salmon through the pastry. Refrigerate while you prep the salmon.

3. **Prep the salmon.** Pat both salmon fillets completely dry on all sides with paper towels — moisture on the surface is the enemy of a good sear and a crispy pastry. Season both fillets on all sides with a generous pinch of salt and pepper. Brush the top of ONE fillet generously with the Dijon mustard. Leave the other fillet un-mustarded.

4. **Roll the pastry.** Lightly flour your work surface. Unroll the thawed puff pastry and roll it out to a rectangle roughly 12 inches by 14 inches — just a bit larger than the package dimensions. Lay the parchment paper from the package on a rimmed baking sheet, and transfer the rolled pastry onto it.

5. **Assemble the Wellington.** Place the un-mustarded salmon fillet in the center of the pastry, flat/skinned side down. Spoon all the cream cheese filling on top of this fillet, spreading it to the edges in an even layer about ¾ inch thick — it doesn't need to be perfect. Set the second fillet mustard-side

DOWN on top of the filling, pressing gently to create a tidy salmon sandwich. The Dijon mustard layer faces inward, between the filling and the top salmon fillet.

6. **Wrap and seal.** Fold the long sides of the pastry up and over the top salmon fillet, overlapping the pastry on top by at least 1 inch. Press the seam firmly to seal. Fold the short ends under the Wellington like wrapping a gift, pressing to seal. Flip the whole Wellington seam-side down on the parchment-lined baking sheet. The seam should be flat underneath — if it looks like it might open, press again or fold the ends under more firmly.

7. **Egg wash, score, and chill.** Brush the top and sides of the Wellington thoroughly with the egg wash — get into the scored lines. Use a sharp paring knife to score a shallow diagonal pattern across the top, cutting only ⅛ inch deep (decorative, not through to the filling). Brush once more with egg wash, making sure the score lines are coated. Refrigerate the assembled Wellington uncovered for at least 20 minutes, and up to 24 hours. While it chills, preheat the oven to 425°F (220°C) with a rack in the center.

8. **Bake.** Bake at 425°F for 25–28 minutes until the pastry is deeply amber-golden all over. Check at 20 minutes — if it's browning unevenly, rotate the pan. The pastry should be the color of a well-baked croissant, not pale gold. A deeply colored crust means properly cooked, flaky layers. Insert an instant-read thermometer through the end to check the salmon: 125–130°F for medium (slightly pink center), 140°F for fully cooked. The pastry is done before the salmon needs to go further, so the timing usually aligns around 26–27 minutes.

9. **Rest and slice.** Let the Wellington rest on the baking sheet for 5–8 minutes — the cream cheese filling sets slightly, making slices hold their shape. Use a sharp serrated knife to cut with a gentle back-and-forth sawing motion rather than pressing straight down. Each slice reveals: shatteringly flaky golden pastry, a creamy green-flecked filling layer, and a center of salmon that's moist, pink, and just cooked through.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*It's the pescatarian answer to beef Wellington, arriving at Christmas every year as people search for an impressive centerpiece that's not red meat.*

KITCHEN NOTES



CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS

# 04 SIDES & BREADS

*The dishes that fill out the table — the casseroles, potatoes and warm rolls everyone goes back for.*

10 RECIPES



№ 31

FLEMING'S PRIME STEAKHOUSE & WINE BAR

# Fleming's Potatoes au Gratin

*Make Fleming's jalapeño-and-leek potatoes au gratin at home — the famous steakhouse side with ultra-thin russet slices, a cheddar-Monterey Jack crust, and just enough heat to cut through the cream.*

FLEMING'S PRIME STEAKHOUSE & WINE BAR · COPYCAT

# Fleming's Potatoes au Gratin

*Make Fleming's jalapeño-and-leek potatoes au gratin at home — the famous steakhouse side with ultra-thin russet slices, a cheddar-Monterey Jack crust, and just enough heat to cut through the cream.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 min | 55 min | 6 servings | Easy | 420 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE GRATIN

- 4 lbs (1.8 kg) russet potatoes, peeled
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 small leek (white and light-green part only), halved lengthwise and thinly sliced (about ¾ cup)
- 1 medium jalapeño, seeds and ribs removed, finely diced (about 2 tablespoons)
- 1½ cups (360 ml) heavy cream
- 1 cup (240 ml) half-and-half
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1½ cups (170g) sharp cheddar cheese, freshly grated
- 1 cup (115g) Monterey Jack cheese, freshly grated

## 02 Method

1. **Slice the potatoes.** Peel the potatoes and cut them into 1/16-inch-thick rounds — a mandoline set to its thinnest setting is the right tool here. Uniform, paper-thin slices are what allow the layers to compact and become tender at the same time. If you're cutting by hand, aim for coins no thicker than a credit card. As you slice, drop the rounds into a bowl of cold water to keep them from oxidizing while you prep everything else; drain and pat dry just before assembling.

2. **Sauté the leeks and jalapeño.** In a small skillet over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the sliced leeks, diced jalapeño, ½ teaspoon of the salt, and a few grinds of black pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 4–5 minutes until the leeks are softened and translucent but not browned. Remove from heat.

3. **Make the cream mixture.** In a medium bowl (or a 4-cup measuring cup), whisk together the heavy cream, half-and-half, remaining 1 teaspoon salt, remaining pepper, and garlic powder. Stir in the sautéed leeks and jalapeño.

4. **Prep the pan and preheat.** Heat the oven to 400°F. Butter a 9×13-inch baking dish generously, or use six individual 8-oz oven-safe crocks for the restaurant-style presentation. (Fleming's serves the gratin in individual crocks — if you have them, this is worth doing.)

5. **Layer the potatoes.** Drain and thoroughly dry the potato slices. Layer them in the baking dish in overlapping shingles, like roof tiles, filling the dish to about 1½ inches deep. Pour the cream-leek mixture evenly over the potatoes; it should come about three-quarters up the sides. Press the potato layers down gently so they begin to absorb the cream. Scatter the cheddar and Monterey Jack evenly over the top.

6. **Bake covered.** Cover the dish tightly with aluminum foil. Bake at 400°F for 45 minutes. At this point, a knife inserted in the center should slide through the potatoes with almost no resistance — the cream should have been mostly absorbed or thickened. If the potatoes still feel firm, recover and bake for 10 more minutes.

7. **Brown the top.** Remove the foil and bake uncovered for 10–15 minutes more, until the cheese is deeply golden and the edges are bubbling. Let the gratin rest for 10 minutes before serving — this allows the layers to firm up enough to hold together when you scoop them.

8. **Make-ahead option.** Assemble the gratin through Step 5 (layers poured, cheese on top) and refrigerate, covered, for up to 24 hours before baking. Add 10–15 minutes to the covered bake time when going from cold.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*A mandoline is strongly recommended. The key to a gratin that cooks evenly — tender from center to edge, with layers that compact into a single sliceable mass — is uniform thickness.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 32

THE HONEYBAKED HAM COMPANY

# HoneyBaked Ham Double Cheddar Macaroni and Cheese

*Make HoneyBaked Ham's Double Cheddar Macaroni and Cheese at home: cavatappi corkscrew pasta in a creamy extra-sharp white cheddar béchamel, topped with sharp yellow cheddar and baked golden. The ultimate holiday side.*

THE HONEYBAKED HAM COMPANY · COPYCAT

# HoneyBaked Ham Double Cheddar Macaroni and Cheese

*Make HoneyBaked Ham's Double Cheddar Macaroni and Cheese at home: cavatappi corkscrew pasta in a creamy extra-sharp white cheddar béchamel, topped with sharp yellow cheddar and baked golden. The ultimate holiday side.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 35 min | 8 | Medium | 480 |

## 01 Ingredients

### PASTA

- 1 lb cavatappi (corkscrew tube pasta) — cellentani or rotini work as substitutes
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt (for the pasta water)

### BÉCHAMEL-CHEDDAR SAUCE

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 4 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt (Diamond Crystal; ⅜ teaspoon if using Morton)
- ¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 cups extra-sharp white cheddar, freshly grated from a block — do not use pre-shredded

### TOPPING

- 1 cup sharp yellow cheddar, freshly grated from a block

### FOR THE PAN

- 1 tablespoon softened butter (to grease the dish)

## 02 Method

1. **Heat the oven and prep the dish.** Preheat oven to 375°F. Butter a 9×13-inch baking dish and set it aside.

2. **Cook pasta to very al dente.** Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Season it generously with kosher salt — the water should taste pleasantly salty, not faint. Cook the cavatappi for 2 minutes less than the minimum time on the package. It should be tender on the outside but still have a chalky raw center when you bite into it. Drain immediately and toss with a small splash of olive oil to prevent sticking. Set aside.

3. **Build the roux.** Melt 4 tablespoons butter in a wide, heavy-bottomed saucepan (3- to 4-quart) over medium heat. Add the flour all at once and whisk continuously for 1 full minute. The roux should look paste-like and turn faintly golden while smelling slightly nutty. This step cooks out the raw flour taste.

4. **Add the liquid in stages.** Pour in about one-third of the whole milk and whisk until completely smooth before adding the rest. Add the remaining milk, then the heavy cream, whisking constantly. Increase heat

slightly to medium-high and whisk until the sauce thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon and a line drawn through it holds cleanly, about 5 to 6 minutes. Adjust heat as needed — the sauce should bubble gently, not aggressively.

5. **Season and melt in the cheese.** Remove the pan from the heat completely. Whisk in the Dijon mustard, salt, white pepper, and cayenne. Add the grated white cheddar in two or three handfuls, stirring after each addition until fully melted before adding the next. The residual heat of the sauce melts the cheese; keeping the pan off the burner prevents the protein in the cheddar from seizing into a grainy texture.

6. **Fold in the pasta and taste.** Add the drained cavatappi to the sauce and fold gently with a rubber spatula until every piece is coated. Taste and adjust salt — the final dish needs a bit more salt than the sauce alone because the pasta absorbs some as it bakes.

7. **Assemble and top.** Pour the pasta and sauce into the buttered baking dish and spread into an even layer. Scatter the grated sharp yellow cheddar in an even layer over the entire surface. No breadcrumbs — the HoneyBaked version is a clean double-cheese top, not a panko crust.

8. **Bake and rest.** Bake uncovered at 375°F for 20 to 25 minutes, until the top is golden in spots, the edges are bubbling, and the interior is set rather than soupy when you tilt the pan slightly. If the top colors too fast before the center sets, lay a loose piece of foil over it without pressing down. Rest uncovered 5 minutes before scooping — this lets the sauce tighten slightly so it portions cleanly rather than running off the spoon.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*HoneyBaked Ham uses cavatappi — the double-walled corkscrew tube — in their Double Cheddar Macaroni and Cheese. The corkscrew shape is deliberate: the ridges and hollow center trap the cheese sauce inside each piece, so the dish stays saucy even after baking.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 33

KING'S HAWAIIAN

# Sweet Rolls

*Copycat King's Hawaiian sweet rolls — the pillowy, pull-apart dinner rolls with their signature subtle sweetness. Made with pineapple juice, honey, and an enriched dough that bakes up cloud-soft.*

KING'S HAWAIIAN · COPYCAT

# Sweet Rolls

*Copycat King's Hawaiian sweet rolls — the pillowy, pull-apart dinner rolls with their signature subtle sweetness. Made with pineapple juice, honey, and an enriched dough that bakes up cloud-soft.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 min | 18 min | 12 rolls | Medium | 220 |

## 01 Ingredients

- ½ cup pineapple juice, warmed to 110F
- ½ cup whole milk, warmed to 110F
- 2¼ teaspoons active dry yeast (1 packet)
- ⅓ cup honey
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and slightly cooled
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3½ to 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted (for brushing)

## 02 Method

1. **Bloom the yeast.** Combine the warm pineapple juice and warm milk in a large bowl or stand mixer bowl. Sprinkle the yeast over the top and let sit 5–7 minutes until foamy. If the mixture doesn't foam, your yeast is dead or your liquid was too hot — start over. This check is worth the few minutes.

2. **Add the wet ingredients.** Whisk the honey, eggs, and melted butter into the yeast mixture until well combined.

3. **Add flour gradually.** Add 3 cups of flour and the salt, mixing on low with a dough hook (or stirring by hand). Add flour ¼ cup at a time until the dough is soft and slightly tacky but clears the sides of the bowl. Stop at 3½ cups — the dough should feel almost-too-soft. Adding more flour here makes dense, dry rolls.

4. **Knead for 7 minutes on medium speed or 10–12 minutes by hand.** The dough is ready when it's smooth, elastic, and stretches without tearing when you pull a small piece. King's Hawaiian's signature softness comes from this fully-developed gluten structure, not just the ingredients.

5. **First rise.** Transfer the dough to a lightly greased bowl, turning once to coat. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm spot for 1 to 1½ hours, until doubled. To create a warm spot: turn your oven to 200F for 2 minutes, then turn it off and put the covered bowl inside with the door cracked.

6. **Shape the rolls.** Lightly grease a 9x13-inch baking pan. Punch the dough down and divide into 12 equal pieces (about 2 oz each by weight for uniformity). To shape each roll: flatten the piece slightly,

pull the edges toward the center, flip it over, and roll it against an unfloured surface in a tight circular motion until it forms a smooth ball. Arrange all 12 rolls in the pan, 3 across and 4 down — they should just touch.

7. **Second rise.** Cover loosely with plastic wrap or a kitchen towel and let rise 30–40 minutes until the rolls look puffy and fill the pan. They'll merge into pull-apart sections, which is the right look.

8. **Bake at 350F for 16–18 minutes.** The tops should be deep golden brown, not pale — King's Hawaiian rolls have more color than typical dinner rolls. Rotate the pan halfway through for even browning. The rolls are done when the internal temperature of the center roll hits 190F.

9. **Brush immediately with melted butter** the moment the pan comes out of the oven, then let the rolls rest 10 minutes before pulling apart. The butter brush seals in moisture and gives the top that glossy, slightly-sticky finish you expect from the original.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The ingredient list on commercial King's Hawaiian rolls does not include pineapple juice — the sweetness comes from sugar and liquid sugar (a high-ratio corn-syrup-based sugar solution used in commercial baking).*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 34

LAWRY'S THE PRIME RIB

# Lawry's Yorkshire Pudding

*Lawry's The Prime Rib Yorkshire pudding at home: golden, puffed individual puddings made with beef drippings, rested batter, and a screaming-hot muffin tin.*

LAWRY'S THE PRIME RIB · COPYCAT

# Lawry's Yorkshire Pudding

*Lawry's The Prime Rib Yorkshire pudding at home: golden, puffed individual puddings made with beef drippings, rested batter, and a screaming-hot muffin tin.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 20 min | 6 | Medium | 170 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 1 cup (125g) all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon fine salt
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 cup whole milk, at room temperature
- 2 to 3 tablespoons beef drippings from a standing rib roast (about ½ teaspoon per muffin cup) — see the substitutes FAQ below if you don't have drippings

## 02 Method

1. **Make the batter.** Measure the flour and salt into a medium bowl and whisk briefly to combine. Make a well in the center and crack in all 3 eggs. Using a balloon whisk, beat the eggs into the flour from the center outward, working slowly at first to avoid lumps, then more vigorously as the mixture comes together into a thick paste. Once the eggs are incorporated and the paste is smooth, switch to pouring in the milk: add it in a slow, steady stream while whisking constantly. The final batter should be thin (thinner than pancake batter), completely lump-free, and smooth enough to coat a spoon lightly. If there are any lumps, strain the batter through a fine-mesh sieve.

2. **Rest the batter.** Cover the bowl with a clean kitchen towel or plastic wrap and leave at room temperature for at least 45 minutes, or refrigerate for up to 24 hours. The resting relaxes the gluten strands in the flour, which allows the pudding to expand more freely in the oven. Do not skip this step — the difference in height between a rested and an un-rested batter is visible and consistent.

3. **Preheat the tin.** Place a standard 12-cup metal muffin tin in the oven and preheat to 450°F. The tin must be fully hot — this takes a full 15 to 20 minutes after the oven signals it has reached temperature. A cold tin is the most common reason puddings fail to rise.

4. **Heat the fat.** Carefully remove the hot tin from the oven and working quickly, add exactly ½ teaspoon beef drippings (or vegetable oil) to each of the 12 cups. The fat should immediately begin to shimmer and move in the cup. Return the tin to the oven and heat for another 8 to 10 minutes, until the fat is visibly shimmering and just beginning to show the first signs of smoking. This step is non-negotiable: if the fat is not hot enough to audibly sizzle when the batter hits it, the puddings will not rise.

5. **Pour and bake.** Remove the tin from the oven and, working as quickly as possible, pour the rested batter into each cup until about two-thirds full — do not overfill, or the puddings will overflow as they expand rather than rising upward. Immediately close the oven door and do not open it again for at least 18 minutes. The puddings need a consistent, uninterrupted blast of heat to generate the steam that inflates them. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes total, until the puddings are tall, deeply golden brown on top, and the walls are firm enough to hold their shape.

6. **Serve immediately.** Yorkshire puddings deflate within 5 minutes of coming out of the oven — this is normal and not a failure, but it means they should go straight from the tin to the table. Run a small offset spatula or butter knife around the edge of each pudding to release it from the tin. Serve alongside Lawry's-style prime rib — tear open the hollow pudding and let the beef juices fill the cavity.



№ 35

MASTRO'S

# Lobster Mashed Potatoes

*Mastro's famous Lobster Mashed Potatoes at home: creamy roasted-garlic Idaho mash topped with chunks of Maine lobster warmed in Old Bay butter and charred scallions, finished with a drizzle of lobster butter.*

MASTRO'S · COPYCAT

# Lobster Mashed Potatoes

*Mastro's famous Lobster Mashed Potatoes at home: creamy roasted-garlic Idaho mash topped with chunks of Maine lobster warmed in Old Bay butter and charred scallions, finished with a drizzle of lobster butter.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 35 min | 6 | Medium | 380 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE ROASTED GARLIC

- 1 whole head of garlic (yields about 2 tablespoons of paste)
- 1 teaspoon olive oil

### FOR THE MASHED POTATOES

- 2 pounds Idaho russet potatoes (about 3 large), peeled and cut into 1½-inch chunks
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt (for the boiling water), plus 1 teaspoon fine salt for seasoning
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- ¾ cup heavy cream
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper (or black pepper)

### FOR THE LOBSTER TOPPING

- 2 large lobster tails, 6–8 oz each (thawed if frozen)
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced (whites and greens kept separate)
- ¼ teaspoon Old Bay seasoning

### FOR SERVING

- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped

## 02 Method

1. **Roast the garlic (do this first, or up to 3 days ahead).** Heat the oven to 400°F. Slice ¼ inch off the top of the garlic head to expose the cloves, drizzle with the olive oil, wrap in foil, and roast for 40 minutes until the cloves are soft and golden. Let cool, then squeeze the cloves out and mash to a smooth paste. Shortcut: skip the oven and instead simmer 4 smashed raw cloves in the cream-and-butter in the next steps, then mash them in.

2. **Boil the lobster tails.** Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil and add 2 teaspoons of kosher salt. Submerge the lobster tails and cook 6 minutes for 6-ounce tails or 8 minutes for 8-ounce tails, until the shells are bright red and the meat is just opaque. Remove with tongs, cool 5 minutes, then cut along the underside of each shell with kitchen shears, pull the meat out whole, and cut into generous ¾-inch chunks. Set aside.

3. **Boil the potatoes.** Place the peeled, cubed russets in a large pot of cold water with 1 teaspoon of kosher salt. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce to a steady boil, and cook 18 to 22 minutes, until a fork slides through without resistance and the chunks break apart easily.

4. **Steam-dry the potatoes.** Drain completely in a colander. Return the empty pot to the burner over medium heat for 30 seconds to dry it, then add the potatoes back and let them sit uncovered, stirring once, for 2 minutes until

the surface looks dry and slightly chalky. Russets hold a lot of water — driving it off now keeps the mash from going soupy.

5. **Warm the cream and butter.** While the potatoes dry, combine the 4 tablespoons of butter and ¾ cup of heavy cream in a small saucepan. (If using the shortcut, add the smashed garlic cloves now.) Heat over medium-low, stirring, until the butter is melted and the mixture is steaming but not boiling. Keep warm over the lowest heat.

6. **Rice the potatoes.** Pass the still-hot, dry potatoes through a potato ricer directly back into the large pot. No ricer? Mash firmly with a hand masher — never an electric mixer or food processor, which whip russet starch into a gluey paste in seconds.

7. **Finish the mash.** Pour the warm cream-butter over the riced potatoes in three additions, folding gently with a rubber spatula after each — not stirring hard. Fold in the roasted-garlic paste (or the mashed shortcut cloves). Season with 1 teaspoon fine salt and ¼ teaspoon white pepper. The mash should be smooth, loose, and glossy. Taste and adjust, then transfer to a warm serving bowl and keep warm.

8. **Warm the lobster in butter.** Melt 3 tablespoons of butter in a small skillet over medium-low heat. Add the scallion whites and cook 30 seconds, then add the lobster chunks and Old Bay. Warm for about 90 seconds, turning once — just long enough to coat the lobster and heat it through. The lobster is already cooked; this step only flavors and warms it. Do not let it simmer or it will turn rubbery.

9. **Assemble.** Spoon the lobster chunks over the top of the garlic mash, then drizzle all of the Old Bay–scallion butter from the skillet over everything.

10. **Serve immediately.** Scatter the scallion greens and chopped parsley over the top. Serve at once — lobster mashed potatoes do not hold well and are best straight from the kitchen.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Mastro's does not publish an official recipe, but the widely circulated version attributed to the restaurant — and the fact that the dish is marketed as 'lobster mashed Idaho potatoes' — points to Idaho russet potatoes, not Yukon Gold.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 36

PILLSBURY

# Crescent Rolls

*Copycat Pillsbury crescent rolls made from scratch — the buttery, flaky, pull-apart dinner rolls from the iconic pop-open tube.*

PILLSBURY · COPYCAT

# Crescent Rolls

*Copycat Pillsbury crescent rolls made from scratch — the buttery, flaky, pull-apart dinner rolls from the iconic pop-open tube.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 min | 13 min | 8 rolls | Medium | 190 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 2¼ teaspoons active dry yeast (1 packet)
- ⅓ cup warm whole milk (105–110F)
- 2 tablespoons sugar, divided
- 1 large egg, room temperature
- ½ teaspoon fine salt
- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cold and cut into ½-inch cubes (for folding)
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, softened (for the dough)
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted (for brushing)

## 02 Method

1. **Bloom the yeast.** Combine the warm milk and 1 teaspoon of the sugar in a medium bowl. Sprinkle the yeast over the top and let sit 5–7 minutes until foamy. If it doesn't foam, the yeast is dead or the milk was too hot — discard and start over.

2. **Build the dough.** Whisk the egg into the yeast mixture. In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, salt, and remaining sugar. Add the flour mixture to the yeast mixture along with the 1 tablespoon of softened butter. Mix until a shaggy dough forms, then knead by hand 4–5 minutes until the dough is smooth and slightly tacky but doesn't stick to your hand. It should feel like soft Play-Doh. Don't over-flour — the dough needs to stay soft.

3. **First rise.** Shape the dough into a ball, place in a lightly greased bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and let rise in a warm spot for 45–60 minutes until nearly doubled. (Warm spot trick: turn your oven to 200F for 2 minutes, switch it off, then proof the covered bowl inside with the door cracked.)

4. **Fold in the cold butter — first pass.** On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough into a 10x7-inch rectangle. Scatter half the cold butter cubes (3 tablespoons) evenly over the bottom two-thirds of the rectangle. Fold the unbuttered top third down over the middle, then fold the bottom third up — like folding a letter. This is one book fold. Press the edges lightly to seal. Wrap in plastic and refrigerate 20 minutes.

5. **Second butter fold.** Unwrap the dough and roll it again to a 10x7-inch rectangle, working quickly to keep the butter cold. Scatter the remaining cold butter cubes

over the bottom two-thirds, and perform the same letter fold. Wrap and refrigerate 15 minutes. This double fold creates multiple butter layers that separate in the oven into the characteristic flaky-outside, soft-inside Pillsbury texture.

6. **Shape the crescents.** On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough into a 12-inch circle about ¼ inch thick. Use a pizza cutter or sharp knife to cut the circle into 8 equal wedges (like a pie). Starting at the wide outer edge of each wedge, roll the dough toward the narrow point, stretching the dough very slightly as you roll to encourage the spiral. Place on a parchment-lined baking sheet, point-side down and slightly curved — that's the crescent shape. Space them 2 inches apart.

7. **Second rise.** Cover the shaped crescents loosely with plastic wrap and let proof at room temperature 25–35 minutes until noticeably puffy. Don't rush this — the second rise determines how airy and pull-apart they bake up.

8. **Bake at 375F for 11–13 minutes.** Bake until deep golden brown on top and the bottoms are set with no pale, doughy spots. Rotate the pan at the 7-minute mark for even browning. While the rolls are still hot, brush immediately with the melted butter. Serve warm.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The lamination: cold butter folded into the dough creates distinct fat layers that steam and separate in the oven's heat, forming the flaky, slightly crispy exterior. Inside, the yeast dough stays soft and pillowy.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 37

RHODES BAKE-N-SERV

# Rhodes-Style Freezer Dinner Rolls

*Make-ahead freezer dinner rolls that proof overnight on the pan — no Thanksgiving-morning rush. Shaped from scratch, frozen raw, then pulled out the night before: they thaw and rise on their own and bake up soft and golden in 18 minutes.*

RHODES BAKE-N-SERV · COPYCAT

# Rhodes-Style Freezer Dinner Rolls

*Make-ahead freezer dinner rolls that proof overnight on the pan — no Thanksgiving-morning rush. Shaped from scratch, frozen raw, then pulled out the night before: they thaw and rise on their own and bake up soft and golden in 18 minutes.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 min | 18 min | 24 rolls | Medium | 140 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE DOUGH

- 4½ cups all-purpose flour, plus a little more for kneading
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 2¼ teaspoons instant yeast (1 standard packet)
- 1½ teaspoons fine salt
- ¾ cup whole milk, warmed to 105–110°F
- ¼ cup warm water (105–110°F)
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 1 teaspoon neutral oil (for the bowl)

### FOR BAKING

- Cooking spray (for the pan and plastic wrap)
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted (for brushing baked rolls)

## 02 Method

1. **Mix the dough.** Whisk the flour, sugar, yeast, and salt together in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk the warm milk, warm water, and egg until combined. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry and stir with a wooden spoon until a shaggy dough forms with no dry flour remaining. Add the softened butter a tablespoon at a time, pressing each piece in until absorbed. The dough will look rough and slightly greasy at this stage.

2. **Knead.** Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead by hand for 8–10 minutes, dusting with flour only if the dough sticks aggressively (a little tackiness is correct). Alternatively, use a stand mixer with a dough hook on medium for 7–8 minutes. The dough is ready when it is smooth, slightly tacky, and passes the windowpane test: stretch a small piece thin enough to see light through without tearing.

3. **First rise.** Shape the dough into a ball and place in a lightly oiled bowl, turning once to coat. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise at warm room temperature (70–75°F) until doubled, about 1 to 1½ hours. This first rise is the critical step in the freeze-then-bake method — it activates the yeast and builds gluten structure so the rolls can complete their proof overnight from frozen.

4. **Shape the rolls.** Punch down the risen dough and turn it out onto a clean, lightly floured surface. Divide into 24 equal pieces — cut in half, each half into thirds (6

pieces), each piece into quarters (24 total). Each piece should weigh about 1½ ounces. Roll each piece into a smooth, tight ball by cupping your hand over it and rolling against the surface in a tight circular motion. The surface should be smooth and taut with no seams on top.

5. **Freeze.** Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper and arrange the dough balls in a single layer, spaced at least 1 inch apart. Freeze uncovered until solid, about 3–4 hours. Once frozen, transfer to a labeled zip-top freezer bag, press out as much air as possible, and store for up to 4 weeks.

6. **Night before: thaw and proof.** The evening before serving, coat a 9×13-inch baking pan with cooking spray. Place 12 frozen dough balls in the pan, spacing them about 1 inch apart — they will expand to touch during proofing. (A full batch of 24 fills two 9×13 pans; the freezer bag lets you bake only as many as you need.) Spray a piece of plastic wrap with cooking spray and lay it sprayed-side-down loosely over the rolls. Leave at room temperature for 8–12 hours. The rolls are ready when they have roughly doubled, are touching each other, and pass the finger-dent test: press gently and the indent fills in slowly over 2–3 seconds.

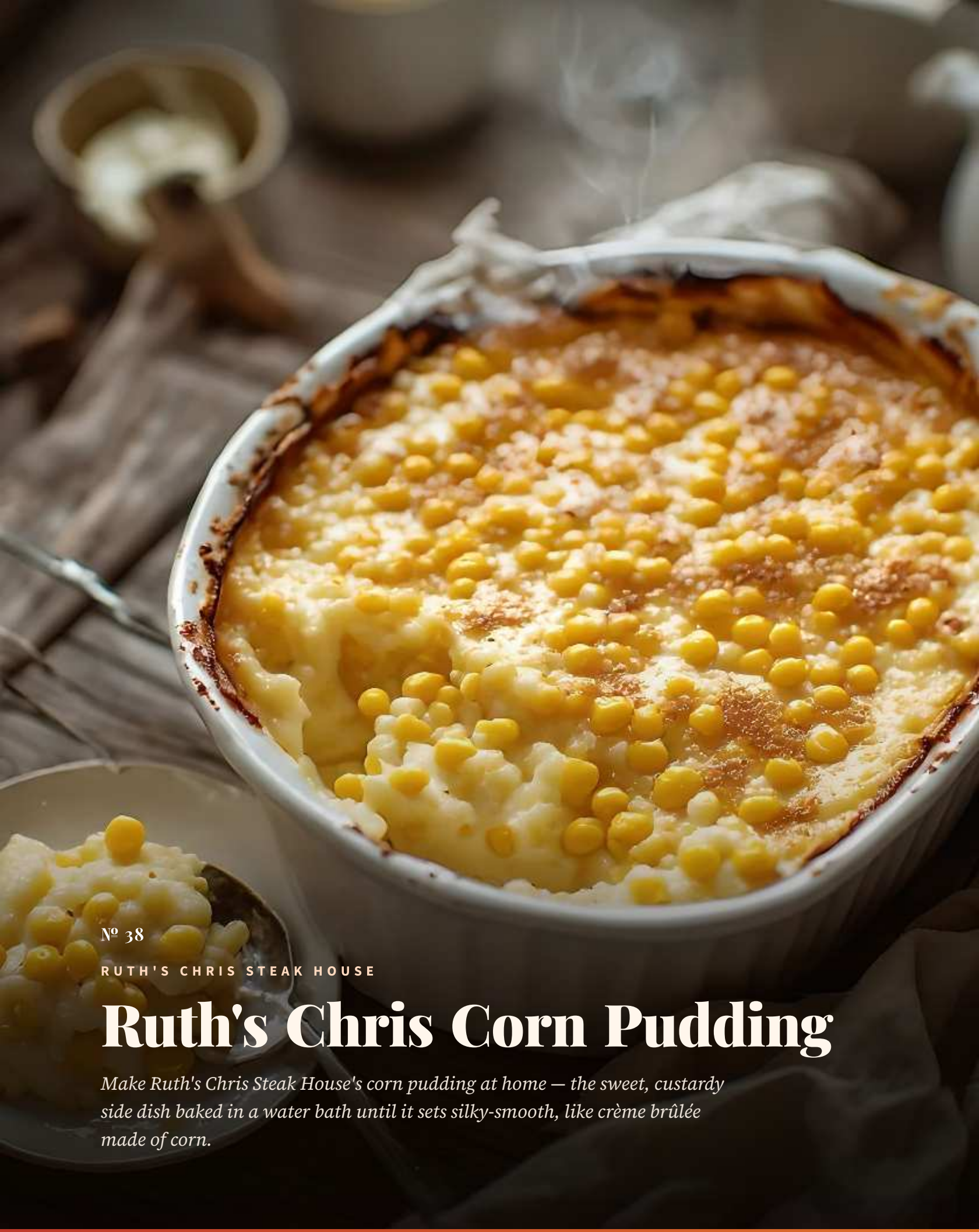
7. **Bake.** Preheat the oven to 350°F. Carefully remove the plastic wrap without deflating the rolls. Bake 15–18 minutes until the tops are deep golden brown. An instant-read thermometer in the center of a middle roll should read 190–195°F.

8. **Brush and serve.** Immediately brush the hot rolls with the melted butter. Serve from the pan — the rolls tear cleanly along the contact lines. Best within 30 minutes of baking.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The overnight proof is slow by design. Frozen yeast dough needs time to fully thaw before the yeast activates and begins producing gas; a slow room-temperature thaw (8–12 hours) gives the rolls a gradual, even rise that produces a soft, tight crumb.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 38

RUTH'S CHRIS STEAK HOUSE

# Ruth's Chris Corn Pudding

*Make Ruth's Chris Steak House's corn pudding at home — the sweet, custardy side dish baked in a water bath until it sets silky-smooth, like crème brûlée made of corn.*

RUTH'S CHRIS STEAK HOUSE · COPYCAT

# Ruth's Chris Corn Pudding

*Make Ruth's Chris Steak House's corn pudding at home — the sweet, custardy side dish baked in a water bath until it sets silky-smooth, like crème brûlée made of corn.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 40 min | 12 | Easy | 400 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 2 cans (15 oz each) whole kernel corn, drained
- 4 cans (14¾ oz each) creamed corn
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1¼ tsp kosher salt
- 1¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 1 dash dry mustard powder
- 2 tbsp Tabasco sauce
- 4 large eggs
- Softened butter, for the baking dish

## 02 Method

1. **Preheat and prepare.** Heat the oven to 350°F. Generously butter a 9×13-inch baking dish (or a 3-quart casserole dish of similar area). Set a larger roasting pan nearby — you will need it for the water bath.
2. **Combine the corn.** In a large bowl, stir together both cans of drained whole kernel corn and all four cans of creamed corn until evenly mixed.
3. **Add the dry ingredients.** Sprinkle the flour, sugar, salt, pepper, and dry mustard over the corn mixture. Stir well until no flour streaks remain — the batter should look thick and uniform.
4. **Add the wet ingredients.** Pour in the heavy cream and Tabasco sauce. Stir to combine.
5. **Add the eggs.** In a separate small bowl, whisk the 4 eggs until blended and uniform. Pour them into the corn batter and mix thoroughly with a whisk until everything is fully incorporated. The batter will be thin — this is correct.
6. **Fill the baking dish.** Pour the batter into the prepared baking dish and smooth the top gently.
7. **Set up the water bath.** Place the filled baking dish inside the larger roasting pan. Set the roasting pan on the oven rack, then carefully pour enough hot tap water into the outer pan to reach roughly halfway up the sides of the baking dish. The water keeps the custard baking at an even, gentle temperature.
8. **Bake.** Bake at 350°F for 35 to 40 minutes. The pudding is done when the edges are fully set and the center has a slight wobble — it should move as one piece when you gently shake the pan, not ripple like liquid. The top will be pale gold, not browned. Do not overbake: a wobble at the center is correct and the pudding will continue to firm as it rests.
9. **Rest before serving.** Carefully lift the baking dish out of the water bath using oven mitts (the outer pan will be full of hot water — take care). Let the pudding rest 10 minutes at room temperature before scooping. This resting time allows the custard to fully set and makes it easier to serve cleanly with a large spoon.



№ 39

STOUFFER'S

# Stouffer's-Style Spinach Soufflé

*Make a spot-on copycat Stouffer's spinach soufflé from scratch — frozen spinach, eggs, whole milk, butter, flour, and nutmeg baked until set and lightly golden.*

STOUFFER'S · COPYCAT

# Stouffer's-Style Spinach Soufflé

*Make a spot-on copycat Stouffer's spinach soufflé from scratch — frozen spinach, eggs, whole milk, butter, flour, and nutmeg baked until set and lightly golden.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 min | 40 min | 6–8 | Easy | 155 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 2 packages (10 oz each) frozen chopped spinach, thawed
- 4 large eggs
- 2 cups whole milk
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ¾ teaspoon fine salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg (or ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg)
- ½ teaspoon granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon neutral oil or butter (for greasing the baking dish)

## 02 Method

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F and grease a 2-quart baking dish (an 8×8-inch square pan or a 9-inch round casserole dish both work) with butter or neutral oil.
2. Squeeze the spinach dry — this is the most important step. Place each thawed block in the center of a clean kitchen towel, gather the corners, and twist firmly over the sink. Keep squeezing and twisting in rounds until no more liquid comes out. The spinach should feel dense and almost pasty, not damp. If you skip this or stop too early, the custard will not set.
3. Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Whisk in the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 60 to 90 seconds until the mixture smells nutty and turns a pale straw color. This cooks out the raw flour taste.
4. Pour in the milk in a slow, steady stream, whisking constantly as you go to prevent lumps. Continue whisking over medium heat for 3 to 4 minutes until the sauce thickens to a texture that coats the back of a spoon — think a loose pudding. Remove the pan from the heat.
5. Crack the eggs into a small bowl and beat them briefly with a fork. Whisk them into the thickened milk sauce one at a time, making sure each egg is fully incorporated before adding the next. Work quickly so the residual heat does not scramble them — the sauce should be warm, not steaming hot, when you add the eggs.
6. Add the salt, black pepper, nutmeg, and sugar. Taste the custard base and adjust salt if needed — it should taste well-seasoned before the spinach goes in, since the spinach dilutes everything slightly.
7. Break the squeezed spinach into small pieces and fold it into the custard base until evenly distributed. There should be no large clumps.
8. Pour the mixture into the prepared baking dish and spread it into an even layer with a spatula. It will fill the dish about two-thirds of the way up.
9. Bake uncovered for 35 to 40 minutes, until the top is lightly golden and the center is set — when you shake the dish gently, the center should move only slightly, like Jell-O, not like liquid. If the top starts to brown before the center is set, lay a loose piece of foil over the dish for the last 10 minutes.
10. Let the soufflé rest at room temperature for 5 minutes before serving. Spoon it directly from the dish — it holds its shape cleanly. Leftovers reheat well covered in a 325°F oven for 15 minutes.



№ 40

VIRAL HIT

# Cinnamon Roll Christmas Tree

*The viral TikTok cinnamon roll Christmas tree: refrigerated rolls arranged in a pull-apart triangle, baked until they merge together, then covered in green-tinted cream cheese icing with M&M ornaments and a candy star on top.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Cinnamon Roll Christmas Tree

*The viral TikTok cinnamon roll Christmas tree: refrigerated rolls arranged in a pull-apart triangle, baked until they merge together, then covered in green-tinted cream cheese icing with M&M ornaments and a candy star on top.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 min | 20 min | 16 rolls | Easy | 155 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 2 cans (8-count each) refrigerated cinnamon rolls with included cream cheese icing
- 10–12 drops leaf-green gel food coloring (or 20–25 drops green liquid food coloring)
- 24–32 M&M candies, red and green only or mixed
- 2 tablespoons Christmas sprinkle mix or red hot cinnamon candies
- 1 star-shaped candy, yellow M&M, or yellow sprinkle cluster for the tree top
- Nonstick cooking spray (for the parchment)

## 02 Method

1. **Preheat oven to 350°F.** Line a half-sheet pan (18×13 inches) with parchment paper and spray the parchment lightly with nonstick spray. The spray is worth the step — icing that drips to the pan during baking can stick to ungreased parchment and tear the tree apart when you try to remove it.

2. **Open the cans and collect the icing.** Pop both cans of cinnamon rolls open and set aside the foil icing packets — these get used at the end. Separate the individual rolls from each other; they typically come pressed together in a log shape and need to be gently pulled apart.

3. **Arrange the tree.** Starting from the top center of the prepared pan, place 1 roll. Directly below it, place 2 rolls side by side. Continue down: 3 rolls in the next row, then 4, then 5 (this is the bottom row of the tree). Offset each row so rolls sit in the natural gaps of the row above — like bricklaying — rather than stacking directly on top of each other. This creates the even triangular silhouette. Leave ½-inch gaps between every roll; they will puff and merge during baking and the gaps will close. Place the remaining roll below the bottom row, centered, as the trunk. The finished arrangement should be 15 rolls in a triangle plus 1 trunk roll (16 total). If you have extra rolls, set them aside for a small separate batch.

4. **Bake 18 to 22 minutes.** The tree is done when the tops of the rolls are deep golden brown and the exposed sides where rolls touch each other look set and baked rather than doughy. The center rolls (surrounded on all sides by other rolls) take the longest to cook through; they are done when the visible top surface springs back to a light touch. Do not underbake: a doughy center is the most common problem with this recipe, and the tree will collapse at the seams when torn apart.

5. **Cool 5 minutes — the icing timing window.** Remove from the oven and let the tree sit exactly 5 minutes. This is the icing window: warm enough that the cream cheese icing

spreads and ornaments press in and hold, cool enough that the icing doesn't run off in thin rivulets.

6. **Make the green icing.** Empty both foil icing packets into a small bowl. Add 10 drops of leaf-green gel food coloring and stir until uniform. Check the color in natural light and add more coloring 2 drops at a time if you want a more vivid green. It should be the color of a Granny Smith apple or a fresh Christmas tree.

7. **Frost the tree.** Use a spoon or small offset spatula to spread the green icing over the top surface of the tree, working from the top roll down. You don't need a perfectly smooth coat — irregular drizzles and small pools of icing in the valleys between rolls look natural and festive. Leave the trunk roll at the bottom lighter than the main tree body if you want a visual 'wood' trunk effect (or ice it brown with a drop of cocoa mixed into leftover icing).

8. **Add the ornaments.** While the icing is still soft and tacky, press M&Ms and sprinkles into it across the tree. Distribute them visually like tree ornaments — a few per roll, spread unevenly rather than in a grid. Work from top to bottom so the icing stays workable as you go. Press each piece gently but firmly so it sets into the icing rather than sitting on top.

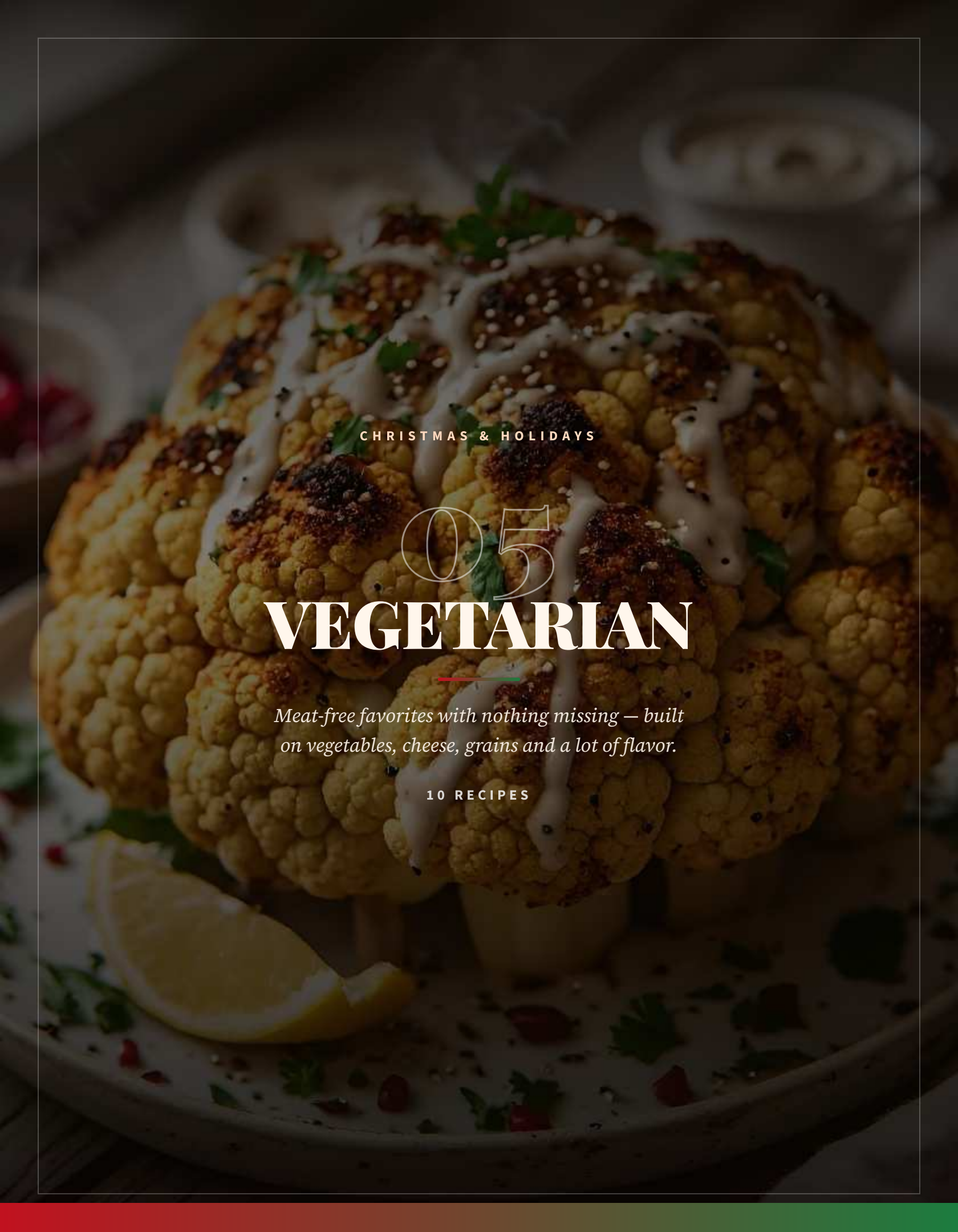
9. **Add the star.** Place a star-shaped candy, yellow M&M, or small cluster of yellow sprinkles at the very top of the topmost roll as the tree topper. Press it in gently.

10. **Serve pull-apart.** Transfer the tree to a serving board or bring the sheet pan to the table. Serve directly from the pan — guests tear individual rolls off the tree. The seams between rolls should break cleanly. Each roll has its own patch of green icing and candy decoration.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Pillsbury Grands (5 per can) produce a dramatic, large-format tree where each roll is visibly oversized and impressive — but you need 3 cans (15 rolls) to fill a triangle large enough to read as a tree.*

## KITCHEN NOTES



CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS

# 05 VEGETARIAN

*Meat-free favorites with nothing missing — built on vegetables, cheese, grains and a lot of flavor.*

10 RECIPES



№ 41

CHEF-INSPIRED

# Mushroom Bourguignon

*The Smitten Kitchen mushroom bourguignon that convinced a generation of home cooks that vegetarian could hold the table at Christmas: deeply wine-braised portobellos and creminis with pearl onions, carrots, and fresh thyme.*

CHEF-INSPIRED · COPYCAT

# Mushroom Bourguignon

*The Smitten Kitchen mushroom bourguignon that convinced a generation of home cooks that vegetarian could hold the table at Christmas: deeply wine-braised portobellos and creminis with pearl onions, carrots, and fresh thyme.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 45 min | 4 | Easy | 280 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE STEW

- 1 lb portobello mushrooms, stems removed, caps sliced ½ inch thick
- 1 lb cremini (baby bella) mushrooms, halved or quartered depending on size
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 cup (about 6 oz) pearl onions, fresh or frozen (thawed if frozen)
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced ¼ inch thick on the bias
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 cup full-bodied red wine (Côtes du Rhône, Merlot, or Pinot Noir)
- 1 cup vegetable broth (low-sodium)
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme (or ½ tsp dried)
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour (optional, for a slightly thicker sauce)
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce or vegan Worcestershire sauce (standard Worcestershire contains anchovies — use one of these to keep the dish vegetarian or vegan)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

### TO SERVE

- 8 oz wide egg noodles, cooked per package directions (or creamy polenta)
- 2 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped
- Flaky sea salt for finishing
- Sour cream for serving (optional)

## 02 Method

1. **Prep the mushrooms.** Remove the stems from the portobellos and wipe the caps with a damp paper towel. Slice into roughly ½-inch thick strips. Halve or quarter the cremini mushrooms depending on size — aim for pieces roughly uniform so they cook evenly. Pat everything dry with paper towels; dry mushrooms brown, wet ones steam.

2. **First mushroom batch.** Heat a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add 1 tablespoon of butter and 1 tablespoon of olive oil and let the foam subside. Add half the mushrooms in a single layer — do not crowd the pan. Cook undisturbed for 3 minutes until the bottom is dark. Toss and cook another 2 to 3 minutes. The mushrooms should be dark golden-brown at the edges and smell caramelized, not steamy. Transfer to a bowl with a slotted spoon.

3. **Second mushroom batch.** Add the remaining butter and olive oil to the pot. Add the second half of the mushrooms in a single layer. Brown the same way, 4 to 5 minutes total. Transfer to

the bowl with the first batch. (The bottom of the pot will have some dark fond — this is the flavor base. Don't clean it.)

4. **Cook the aromatics.** Reduce heat to medium. Add the pearl onions and carrots to the pot. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 to 6 minutes until the onions are lightly golden and the carrots begin to soften. Add the garlic and cook 1 more minute until fragrant. Stir in the tomato paste and cook, pressing it against the bottom of the pot, for about 2 minutes until it darkens slightly and smells toasty.

5. **Deglaze with wine.** Pour in the red wine. Use a wooden spoon to scrape up all the browned bits from the bottom of the pot — that fond is the backbone of the sauce. Increase heat to medium-high and let the wine reduce by roughly half, about 4 minutes.

6. **Build the braise.** Return the browned mushrooms and any accumulated juices to the pot. Add the vegetable broth, thyme sprigs, bay leaf, and Worcestershire sauce. If you want a slightly thicker sauce, stir the flour into 2 tablespoons of cold water until smooth and add it now. Stir to combine everything.

7. **Simmer.** Bring to a gentle simmer, then reduce heat to medium-low. Cook uncovered for 20 to 25 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the sauce has reduced and thickened enough to coat a spoon. Taste and season with kosher salt and pepper. Remove and discard the thyme sprigs and bay leaf.

8. **Serve.** Spoon generously over cooked egg noodles or creamy polenta. Scatter chopped parsley over the top. Finish with a pinch of flaky salt. Serve with sour cream on the side if you like — a small dollop stirred in at the table adds a tangy richness that works beautifully with the wine sauce.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Mushrooms are about 90% water. When you put too many in a pan at once, they release steam faster than it can evaporate, and they braise in their own liquid instead of browning.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 42

CHEF-INSPIRED

# Beet Wellington

*Gordon Ramsay's vegan spin on his most famous dish: whole roasted beets wrapped in chestnut-mushroom duxelles and golden puff pastry.*

CHEF-INSPIRED · COPYCAT

# Beet Wellington

*Gordon Ramsay's vegan spin on his most famous dish: whole roasted beets wrapped in chestnut-mushroom duxelles and golden puff pastry.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 40 min | 1 hr 10 min | 4 | Medium | 590 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE BEETS

- 4 medium beets, about 600g (1.3 lb) total — choose beets that are similar in diameter (2 to 2½ inches)
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- Kosher salt

### FOR THE CHESTNUT DUXELLES

- 8 oz (225g) cremini mushrooms
- 3 oz (85g) cooked peeled chestnuts (vacuum-packed or jarred; not canned in syrup)
- 2 medium shallots, roughly chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves (or ½ tsp dried)
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce or tamari (adds umami and a deep savory note)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

### FOR ASSEMBLY

- 1 sheet (about 8½ oz / 245g — one Pepperidge Farm sheet) vegan puff pastry, thawed
- 2 tablespoons oat milk or other unsweetened plant milk, for brushing
- Flaky sea salt, for topping

### FOR THE VEGAN RED WINE JUS (OPTIONAL)

- 1 large shallot, finely diced
- 2 cloves garlic, finely sliced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 200ml (¾ cup) dry red wine
- 200ml (¾ cup) vegetable stock
- 1 sprig fresh thyme
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- Salt and black pepper

## 02 Method

1. **Roast the beets.** Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Scrub the beets clean, then place each one on a square of foil, drizzle with ½ teaspoon olive oil, and sprinkle with salt. Wrap tightly. Roast for 50 to 60 minutes until completely tender — a skewer or sharp knife should meet zero resistance at the center. Open the foil and let the beets sit at room temperature for 15 minutes to release steam. Rub the skins off under cool running water or with a piece of foil (the skins slip off easily when hot; use rubber gloves as beet juice stains). Pat every surface of each beet completely dry with paper towels. Leave the beets on a wire rack uncovered for 20 minutes — the surface must be bone dry before assembly.

2. **Make the chestnut duxelles.** Pulse the cremini mushrooms and chestnuts together in a food processor until very finely chopped — not smooth, but with no piece larger than a lentil. Heat a wide, heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add the olive oil, then the mushroom-

chestnut mixture, shallots, and garlic. Cook, stirring almost constantly, for 12 to 15 minutes. The mixture will release a lot of moisture in the first few minutes — keep cooking until all of that moisture has evaporated and the mixture is dark, cohesive, and starting to stick lightly to the pan. Add the thyme, soy sauce, and generous seasoning of salt and pepper. Cook 1 more minute, then transfer to a plate and spread thin to cool. The duxelles must be completely cool (not just warm) before assembly.

3. **Prepare the vegan jus (if using).** Sauté the shallot and garlic in 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium heat until soft and golden, about 5 minutes. Add the thyme and red wine, turn the heat to high, and reduce by two-thirds (about 4 minutes). Add the vegetable stock and soy sauce, reduce again until the sauce coats the back of a spoon, about 6 minutes. Strain through a fine sieve, season with salt and pepper, and set aside. Reheat gently to serve.

4. **Roll the pastry.** Raise the oven to 425°F (220°C). Lightly flour a work surface and roll the thawed puff pastry into a rectangle roughly 10 × 14 inches (the long side should be at least twice the length of your beet line-up, and the short side wide enough to wrap over the top with overlap). Trim any rough edges to keep the rectangle neat.

5. **Assemble the wellington.** Transfer the pastry to a parchment-lined baking sheet. Spread the cooled chestnut duxelles across the center third of the pastry in an even layer (a roughly 4-inch-wide strip), leaving 2 inches clear at each short end. Arrange the beets end-to-end in a tight single line on top of the duxelles — the beets should sit side by side with no gaps. Fold the long sides of the pastry up and over the beets, overlapping at the seam on top (you will then invert it). Pinch the seam firmly, then tuck the short ends under the log and press to seal. Carefully roll the wellington seam-side down on the baking sheet. Press the ends closed firmly.

6. **Brush, score, and chill.** Brush the entire surface with oat milk — this is the vegan wash that gives the crust a golden color. Using a sharp knife, score the top of the pastry with 5 or 6 diagonal lines about ⅛ inch deep (do not cut all the way through — these allow steam to escape and give the pastry its visual pattern). Sprinkle lightly with flaky sea salt. Refrigerate the assembled wellington on the baking sheet for at least 30 minutes. This cold-to-hot transition is what gives the pastry lift and crispness.

7. **Bake.** Bake at 425°F for 25 to 30 minutes until the pastry is a deep golden brown and feels firm when tapped on the top. If the top is browning faster than the sides, tent loosely with foil for the last 5 minutes. Rest on the baking sheet for 10 minutes before transferring to a board.

8. **Slice and serve.** Use a serrated knife for the cleanest cut — a straight chef's knife will compress the pastry. Each portion should reveal the deep magenta beet cross-section, ringed by the dark chestnut duxelles, inside the flaky pastry. Serve immediately with the vegan jus drizzled over or alongside.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The centerpiece: this wellington is built around whole roasted beets, which cook to a dense, tender, sliceable interior unlike anything a mushroom cap produces.*



№ 43

NOBU

# Miso Eggplant

*The famous Nobu miso eggplant (nasu dengaku), made at home: Japanese eggplant scored and broiled until silky, then lacquered with the same sweet den miso used on the legendary black cod.*

NOBU · COPYCAT

# Miso Eggplant

*The famous Nobu miso eggplant (nasu dengaku), made at home: Japanese eggplant scored and broiled until silky, then lacquered with the same sweet den miso used on the legendary black cod.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 20 min | 4 | Easy | 175 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE DEN MISO GLAZE

- ⅓ cup white miso (shiro miso) — mild and sweet; do not substitute red miso, hatcho miso, or dark miso, which produce a noticeably different result
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons dry sake (junmai style preferred)
- 2 tablespoons mirin

### FOR THE EGGPLANT

- 4 Japanese eggplants, about 5 to 6 oz each — slender, thin-skinned variety; Chinese eggplant is a reliable substitute
- 2 tablespoons neutral oil (grapeseed, vegetable, or light olive oil)
- Pinch of fine sea salt

### FOR SERVING

- 2 cups dry short-grain Japanese rice, cooked according to package directions (about ½ cup dry per person)
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame seeds
- 1 scallion, trimmed and sliced very thin on a diagonal

## 02 Method

1. **Make the den miso glaze.** Combine the sake and mirin in a small saucepan over medium heat. Bring to a simmer and cook for 1 minute, stirring occasionally, to drive off most of the alcohol — the bubbling will quiet as the alcohol cooks off. Add the granulated sugar and whisk until it dissolves completely, about 30 seconds. Remove the pan from heat. Add the white miso and whisk vigorously until the mixture is completely smooth with no lumps. The finished glaze should be spreadable — slightly looser than peanut butter, thicker than a sauce. Transfer to a small bowl. The glaze can be made up to 2 weeks ahead and refrigerated in a sealed jar; this recipe makes more than needed for 4 eggplants.

2. **Preheat the oven** to 425°F with a rack positioned in the upper third. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

3. **Prepare the eggplant.** Halve each eggplant lengthwise from stem to tip. Using a sharp paring knife, score the cut surface of each half in a cross-hatch pattern: parallel cuts about ½ inch apart and ½ inch deep, then repeat at a 45-degree angle in the other direction. Cut down to the skin but do not pierce through it. Brush the scored surfaces

generously with the neutral oil, working the oil into the cuts. Season lightly with a pinch of fine salt. Arrange the eggplant halves cut-side down on the prepared baking sheet.

4. **Roast cut-side down.** Roast in the upper third of the oven for 15 to 18 minutes, until the flesh is completely tender when pressed firmly through the skin with a finger — no resistance at all, the way ripe fruit gives. The cut side will be lightly browned from caramelizing against the parchment. Do not rush or skip this step; the eggplant must be fully cooked through before the glaze is applied or the center will be chalky under the caramelized exterior.

5. **Flip and apply the glaze.** Remove the baking sheet from the oven. Using a wide spatula, carefully flip each eggplant half cut-side up — the cooked flesh is fragile. Working quickly, spread 1 to 2 tablespoons of den miso glaze over the scored surface of each half, covering the entire cut surface in an even layer roughly ¼ inch thick, extending to the edges.

6. **Caramelize under the broiler.** Switch the oven to high broil. Return the baking sheet to the top rack and broil for 3 to 5 minutes, watching closely from the 2-minute mark. The miso will bubble and then darken: the target color is deep amber to mahogany with slightly charred edges — the color of deeply caramelized sugar. Pull the pan the moment the edges begin to char. There is roughly a 90-second window between ideal caramelization and scorched bitterness; don't leave the kitchen during this step.

7. **Serve immediately.** Transfer the eggplant halves to plates and garnish with toasted sesame seeds and thinly sliced scallion. Serve alongside steamed short-grain rice. The glaze tightens as it cools and the eggplant loses its silky texture — serve within 5 minutes of pulling from the oven.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Both are historically correct, and the choice produces noticeably different dishes.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 44

RAO'S

# Eggplant Parmigiana

*Rao's eggplant parmigiana, made at home: salted eggplant slices, lightly breaded and fried in olive oil until golden, then layered with the restaurant's famous marinara, fresh mozzarella.*

RAO'S · COPYCAT

# Eggplant Parmigiana

*Rao's eggplant parmigiana, made at home: salted eggplant slices, lightly breaded and fried in olive oil until golden, then layered with the restaurant's famous marinara, fresh mozzarella.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 min | 35 min | 6 | Medium | 395 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE EGGPLANT

- 2 large Italian eggplants (about 2¼ lbs total), cut into ¼-inch rounds
- Kosher salt (for salting — use about 2 teaspoons total)
- 1 cup all-purpose flour (for dredging)
- 3 large eggs, beaten with 1 tablespoon of water
- 1½ cups fine Italian-style breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup Parmigiano-Reggiano, finely grated (mixed into the breadcrumbs)
- Good extra-virgin olive oil, for shallow frying (about 1½ cups total across all batches)

### FOR THE LAYERS

- 3 cups marinara sauce (Rao's jarred, or homemade from San Marzano canned tomatoes)
- 12 oz fresh mozzarella, torn into rough pieces
- ½ cup Parmigiano-Reggiano, finely grated (plus more for the top)
- 8 to 10 fresh basil leaves, for the layers (optional but traditional)

## 02 Method

1. **Salt and drain the eggplant.** Arrange the eggplant rounds on a wire rack set over a sheet pan, or directly in a large colander. Sprinkle generously with kosher salt on both sides — aim for an even but not excessive coat. Let the slices rest for 1 hour; they will release a surprising amount of darkened, bitter liquid. Rinse each slice under cold running water to remove the salt and drawn-out liquid, then press firmly between several layers of paper towels until each slice feels nearly dry to the touch. Do not skip the pressing step — damp eggplant means soggy parmigiana.

2. **Set up the breading station.** Arrange three shallow dishes in a line: flour in the first, beaten egg in the second, and the breadcrumbs mixed with the ¼ cup of Parmigiano in the third. Season the flour lightly with salt and pepper. Working one slice at a time, dredge the eggplant in flour and shake off any excess — you want a thin, even dusting, not a clump. Dip in the beaten egg, letting any drips fall back into the dish. Press both sides into the Parmigiano breadcrumbs firmly, coating completely. Set the breaded slices on a clean rack as you go.

3. **Fry the eggplant.** Pour olive oil into a large heavy skillet (cast iron or stainless) to a depth of about ¼ inch — roughly ½ cup to start, replenished as needed. Heat over medium-high heat until the oil shimmers and a pinch of breadcrumbs dropped in sizzles immediately. Working in batches without crowding the pan, fry the breaded eggplant slices for 2 to 3 minutes per side until the crust is deep golden — nearly chestnut-colored — and the eggplant has softened completely. A properly fried slice should feel yielding when pressed, not firm. Drain on a paper-towel-lined rack. Repeat with the remaining slices,

adding oil between batches to maintain the depth. Let the oil return to temperature between each batch.

4. **Preheat the oven.** Set the oven to 375°F. Bring a 9×13-inch baking dish to the counter.

5. **Assemble the layers.** Spread a thin, even layer of marinara sauce across the bottom of the baking dish — just enough to cover it, about ½ cup. Lay down a single layer of fried eggplant slices, slightly overlapping if needed to fit. Spoon another ½ cup of marinara over the eggplant and spread it to cover. Scatter roughly a third of the torn mozzarella pieces over the marinara, then sprinkle with some of the Parmigiano. Tuck in a few basil leaves if using. Repeat the layers — eggplant, marinara, mozzarella, Parmigiano, basil — until the eggplant is used. The final layer should be eggplant topped with the remaining marinara and a generous grating of Parmigiano, but no mozzarella on the very top (mozzarella on the surface tends to form a rubbery skin rather than melting cleanly — the Parmigiano crust looks better and crisps nicely).

6. **Bake.** Transfer the baking dish to the oven. Bake at 375°F for 25 to 30 minutes, until the sauce is visibly bubbling around all four edges and the Parmigiano topping has turned golden. The dish is done when it smells deeply of roasted tomato and cheese.

7. **Rest before serving.** Remove from the oven and let the dish rest, uncovered, for at least 10 minutes. This rest is not optional: the layers are loose and wet right out of the oven and will collapse when cut. After 10 minutes the dish firms up enough to cut clean squares and serve with a spatula. Finish with torn fresh basil leaves scattered over the top.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Eggplant has a high water content — enough that if you skip the salting step, the moisture releases into the hot oil during frying and the slices steam rather than fry.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 45

VIRAL HIT

# Grinch Spaghetti

*The viral TikTok Grinch Spaghetti that makes Christmas dinner look like a movie scene: spaghetti tossed in a vibrant green spinach-pesto sauce, topped with red cherry tomatoes and a yellow heart in the center.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Grinch Spaghetti

*The viral TikTok Grinch Spaghetti that makes Christmas dinner look like a movie scene: spaghetti tossed in a vibrant green spinach-pesto sauce, topped with red cherry tomatoes and a yellow heart in the center.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 15 min | 4 servings | Easy | 480 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE GREEN SAUCE

- 3 cups fresh baby spinach, packed — the volume reduces dramatically once blended; don't substitute frozen spinach, which adds excess water and dulls the green
- ⅓ cup basil pesto — store-bought works well; Trader Joe's Genoa pesto and Costco's fresh pesto both blend into an intensely green sauce
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice (about half a lemon)
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan, plus more to serve
- ½ tsp kosher salt, plus more to taste
- ¼ tsp black pepper
- ½ cup reserved pasta water (set it aside before draining)

### FOR THE PASTA

- 12 oz spaghetti (or linguine or bucatini — any long pasta works)
- 1 tbsp kosher salt (for the pasta water)

### FOR THE GRINCH TOPPING

- 1 cup red cherry tomatoes, halved — the smaller the better for even distribution; red grape tomatoes work too
- 4 to 6 yellow cherry tomatoes (for the heart detail) OR a 1-inch piece of yellow bell pepper cut into a simple heart shape with a paring knife — one per serving

### OPTIONAL FINISHES

- Flaky sea salt for finishing
- Fresh basil leaves for garnish
- Crushed red pepper flakes for heat
- A drizzle of good olive oil over the finished bowl

## 02 Method

1. **Salt the pasta water generously.** Fill a large pot with water, add 1 tbsp kosher salt, and bring to a boil. The water should taste pleasantly salty — this is the only chance to season the pasta itself.

2. **Cook the spaghetti.** Add spaghetti and cook to al dente according to package directions, usually 8 to 10 minutes. Al dente matters here: the pasta will continue to cook slightly when tossed with the warm sauce, so pull it 30 seconds before you'd normally drain it.

3. **Reserve the pasta water before draining.** Before you drain the pasta, scoop out at least ½ cup of the starchy cooking water and set it aside. This step is non-optional — it's what makes the sauce coat evenly. Drain the pasta and set aside.

4. **Blend the green sauce.** Add the baby spinach, pesto, minced garlic, olive oil, lemon juice, Parmesan, salt, and pepper to a blender or food processor. Blend on high for 30 to 45 seconds until completely smooth and vividly green. If the blender struggles, add 2 tbsp of the reserved pasta water to get it moving. The sauce should look electric green — if it's dull or grayish, the spinach wasn't fresh enough.

5. **Toss pasta with sauce.** Add the hot drained pasta back to the pot (off heat) or to a large bowl. Pour the green sauce over the pasta and toss vigorously with tongs. Add pasta water a splash at a time, tossing between additions, until the sauce coats every strand evenly and slides smoothly rather than clumping. You may use all ½ cup or just 2 tbsp — it depends on how thick your pesto was.

6. **Plate and top with red cherry tomatoes.** Divide the spaghetti into four bowls, twisting each portion with tongs for a neat nest. Scatter the halved red cherry tomatoes over the green pasta. The red-on-green contrast is the main visual — be generous with the tomatoes.

7. **Add the yellow heart.** Press one small yellow cherry tomato (cut in half if large) or a small heart cut from yellow bell pepper into the center of each bowl. This is the detail that completes the Grinch reference. If using a bell pepper heart, a simple V-notch at the top of a small oval makes a clean heart shape — it takes about 10 seconds per piece.

8. **Finish and serve.** Add a final grating of Parmesan, a small handful of fresh basil if using, and a drizzle of olive oil. Serve immediately — the green sauce is at its brightest and freshest right after tossing.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Fresh baby spinach blended with basil pesto produces the vivid green color — no food dye needed. The key is using fresh (not frozen) spinach and blending at high speed until completely smooth. Fresh spinach has a bright, almost luminescent green when blended.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 46

VIRAL HIT

# Hasselback Butternut Squash

*The TikTok vegetarian showstopper: butternut squash fanned accordion-style with dozens of thin cuts, basted in a nutty maple-sage brown butter until every slit is caramelized and glazed.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Hasselback Butternut Squash

*The TikTok vegetarian showstopper: butternut squash fanned accordion-style with dozens of thin cuts, basted in a nutty maple-sage brown butter until every slit is caramelized and glazed.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 55 min | 4 | Easy | 300 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE SQUASH

- 2 medium butternut squashes (about 2–2½ lbs each), halved lengthwise and seeds scooped out
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

### FOR THE MAPLE-SAGE BROWN BUTTER GLAZE

- 4 tablespoons (½ stick / 57g) unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons pure maple syrup (Grade A dark, for stronger maple flavor)
- 8 fresh sage leaves, plus extra for garnish
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves (or ½ tsp dried)
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional, for sweet heat)
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt

### OPTIONAL TOPPINGS

- ¼ cup (30g) toasted pecan halves, roughly chopped
- 3 tablespoons fresh pomegranate seeds (or dried cranberries)
- Flaky sea salt for finishing

## 02 Method

1. **Preheat and prep.** Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 400°F (200°C). Line a rimmed half-sheet pan with parchment paper. Halve each squash lengthwise from top to bottom. Use a large spoon to scoop the seeds and fibrous strings from the round bulb end of each half — scrape clean. Brush the cut surfaces and the flesh of the round cavity with olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

2. **First roast (softening stage).** Place the squash halves cut-side DOWN on the prepared baking sheet. Roast for 20 minutes until the flesh has softened slightly but the squash is still firm — a paring knife inserted should meet some resistance. Remove from the oven and let the halves cool on the pan for 5 to 10 minutes, until they're cool enough to handle safely. Flip them cut-side UP.

3. **Make the hasselback cuts.** Place one chopstick flat along each long side of a squash half, running parallel to the length of the squash. These are your depth guides. Using a sharp chef's knife, make crosswise cuts straight down through the squash at ¼-inch (6mm) intervals along the entire length, stopping when the blade contacts the chopsticks — the squash must stay connected at the bottom. Space the cuts as evenly as you can; they don't need to be perfect. The squash will begin to fan open slightly. Repeat for all four halves.

4. **Make the brown butter glaze.** In a small light-colored saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter. Continue cooking, stirring every 30 seconds, as the butter foams, subsides, and then begins to turn golden. Watch closely — once it turns golden, it reaches amber quickly. After 4 to 5 minutes total (from when the butter was solid), the foam will have subsided, the milk solids on the bottom will be amber, and the butter will smell nutty and toasted. Remove from heat immediately. Add the sage leaves directly into the hot butter — they'll sizzle and crisp within 30 seconds. Stir in the maple syrup, thyme, cinnamon, nutmeg, red pepper flakes (if using), and salt. The glaze is ready.

5. **Glaze and second roast.** Brush the glaze liberally over all four squash halves, pressing the brush into the cuts to work the glaze deep into each slit. Use most of the glaze; reserve a few tablespoons for basting. Return the squash to the oven, cut-side UP, at 400°F.

6. **Baste and finish.** Roast for 30 to 35 minutes total in this second stage. Every 10 minutes, open the oven and brush the reserved glaze into the cuts — each basting builds another layer of caramelized sweetness. At the 30-minute mark, test for doneness: a fork or paring knife should slide into the thickest part of the squash with no resistance. The cut edges should be deeply amber, slightly crisped, and caramelized. If they're browning faster than the squash is cooking through, lay a sheet of foil loosely over the top for the final 10 minutes.

7. **Finish and serve.** Remove from the oven. Scatter toasted pecans and pomegranate seeds over the squash while it's still hot. Finish with a pinch of flaky sea salt. Serve directly from the pan, or transfer to a platter. This is best served immediately — the cut edges lose their caramelized texture as the squash cools. For the TikTok feta variation: spread 3–4 oz of whipped baked feta on each serving plate and place a squash half on top, then drizzle with honey.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Raw butternut squash is very dense and firm, which makes the hasselback cuts difficult and dangerous to execute — the knife can slip on the hard surface.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 47

VIRAL HIT

# Mushroom Wellington

*Portobello mushrooms nestled in a savory duxelles, wrapped in golden puff pastry — the vegetarian Christmas main that's exploded on TikTok.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Mushroom Wellington

*Portobello mushrooms nestled in a savory duxelles, wrapped in golden puff pastry — the vegetarian Christmas main that's exploded on TikTok.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 35 min | 30 min | 6 | Medium | 390 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 1 lb (454g) cremini or chestnut mushrooms
- 4 large portobello mushroom caps (about 4 inches diameter)
- 2 medium shallots, finely minced
- 3 garlic cloves, finely minced or grated
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp fresh thyme leaves (or ½ tsp dried thyme)
- 2 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 2 cups (60g) baby spinach
- 1 sheet (about 14 oz / 400g) all-butter puff pastry, thawed
- 1 large egg, beaten with 1 tbsp water (for egg wash)
- Kosher salt and black pepper
- Flour for dusting

## 02 Method

1. **Prep the portobello caps.** Use a spoon to scrape out the dark gills on the underside of each portobello cap — the gills release black liquid when cooked that will bleed into everything and turn your pastry gray. Discard the stems. Pat the caps completely dry with paper towels. Season lightly with salt and pepper on both sides.

2. **Sear the portobellos.** Heat a wide skillet over high heat with 1 tbsp olive oil until shimmering. Sear the portobello caps flat-side down for 2 minutes, flip, and sear another 2 minutes. You're building color and driving out initial moisture — the caps should be slightly shrunk and browned, not soft. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate to drain and cool completely. Once cooled (10 minutes), brush the rounded top of each cap generously with Dijon mustard.

3. **Make the duxelles.** Pulse the cremini mushrooms in a food processor until very finely chopped (small pea-sized pieces) — or mince by hand. In the same skillet over medium heat, melt 2 tbsp butter. Add the shallots and cook 3 minutes until softened. Add the garlic and thyme, cook 1 minute. Add all the chopped mushrooms and a pinch of salt. Cook, stirring every 2–3 minutes, for 18–22 FULL minutes until the mushrooms have released all their liquid and the mixture is a dark, dry paste that pulls away from the pan. This is the most important step. Wet duxelles = soggy pastry. Season with black pepper and more salt if needed. Spread on a plate and refrigerate until fully cool, at least 15 minutes.

4. **Wilt the spinach.** In the same skillet over medium-high heat, add the baby spinach and toss 30 seconds until just wilted. Transfer to a clean towel or paper towels and squeeze

firmly to remove every drop of liquid. The squeezed spinach should be a compact dry clump. Chop roughly and let cool.

5. **Roll the pastry.** On a lightly floured surface, roll the thawed puff pastry sheet into a roughly 12x14-inch rectangle (slightly larger than package dimensions). Lay it on a sheet of parchment paper on a baking sheet so you can transfer it easily.

6. **Assemble.** Spread the duxelles across the center of the pastry in a strip roughly 4 inches wide and the length of your portobello caps laid end to end. Scatter the squeezed spinach over the duxelles. Lay the Dijon-coated portobello caps end-to-end, Dijon side down, on top of the filling — the portobellos are the 'fillet.' Fold the long sides of the pastry up and over the mushrooms, overlapping the seam tightly on the underside. Press gently to seal. Fold the short ends under like wrapping a gift. Transfer the Wellington seam-side down on the parchment-lined baking sheet.

7. **Chill.** Brush the top and sides generously with egg wash. Use a sharp knife to score a shallow diagonal pattern or parallel lines across the top (decorative only — don't cut through to the filling). Refrigerate, uncovered, for at least 20 minutes. This firms up the butter in the pastry so it puffs dramatically rather than spreading. Preheat your oven to 425°F (220°C) while it chills.

8. **Bake.** Bake at 425°F for 25–30 minutes until the pastry is deeply golden all over — you want an amber, almost-brown crust, not pale gold. A deeply colored crust means fully cooked, flaky layers and no soggy bottom. If it's browning unevenly, rotate the pan once at the 15-minute mark.

9. **Rest before slicing.** Let the Wellington rest on the pan for 10 minutes before cutting. The filling needs time to set so the slices hold their shape. Use a sharp serrated knife and cut with a gentle back-and-forth sawing motion rather than pressing straight down. Each slice should reveal a cross-section of flaky pastry, dark duxelles, green spinach, and meaty portobello.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*A simple red wine reduction or a mushroom gravy made from the portobello stems and scraps.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 48

VIRAL HIT

# Sour Cream Coffee Cake

*The viral TikTok sour cream coffee cake — a buttery Bundt with a hidden cinnamon walnut streusel swirled through the center. Bake it Christmas Eve, reheat Christmas morning, and watch the first slice reveal do its thing.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Sour Cream Coffee Cake

*The viral TikTok sour cream coffee cake — a buttery Bundt with a hidden cinnamon walnut streusel swirled through the center. Bake it Christmas Eve, reheat Christmas morning, and watch the first slice reveal do its thing.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 60 min | 12 | Easy | 485 |

## 01 Ingredients

### CAKE BATTER

- ¾ cup (170g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 1½ cups (300g) granulated sugar
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 2 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 1½ cups (360g) full-fat sour cream
- 3 cups (360g) all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp fine salt

### CINNAMON WALNUT STREUSEL

- 1 cup (100g) walnuts, roughly chopped
- ½ cup (100g) light brown sugar, packed
- ¼ cup (50g) granulated sugar
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- pinch of fine salt

### FOR THE PAN

- Softened butter and flour (or baking spray with flour) for greasing

## 02 Method

1. **Prep the pan and oven.** Set the oven to 350°F (175°C). Butter a 10-inch tube pan or 12-cup Bundt pan generously with softened butter, working a pastry brush into every groove. Dust with flour, tilt and tap to coat evenly, then knock out the excess. If using baking spray with flour (such as Baker's Joy), spray every surface thoroughly — decorative Bundt grooves need extra attention, as stuck batter is the most common sour cream coffee cake failure.

2. **Make the streusel.** In a small bowl, stir together the chopped walnuts, brown sugar, granulated sugar, cinnamon, and pinch of salt until everything is evenly combined. Set aside.

3. **Cream butter and sugar.** In a large bowl or in a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the softened butter and granulated sugar on medium-high speed for 3 to 4 minutes, scraping down the sides twice, until the mixture is pale, fluffy, and significantly increased in volume. This step creates the air pockets that lift the cake — don't rush it.

4. **Add eggs and vanilla.** Add the eggs one at a time, beating on medium speed for about 30 seconds after each. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl, then beat in the vanilla extract. The batter should look lush and creamy. If it looks curdled, the eggs were too cold — it will still bake correctly, but next time bring eggs to room temperature.

5. **Whisk the dry ingredients.** In a separate medium bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together until evenly mixed.

6. **Alternate dry ingredients and sour cream.** With the mixer on low, add the flour mixture in three additions, alternating with the sour cream in two additions: flour → sour cream → flour → sour cream → flour. Mix just until each addition disappears before adding the next — you're looking for a smooth, thick batter with no dry streaks. Overmixing develops gluten and makes the crumb tight rather than tender.

7. **Layer the batter.** Spoon roughly half the batter (about 2½ cups) into the prepared pan and spread it level with an offset spatula or the back of a large spoon. Scatter the cinnamon walnut streusel evenly over the surface, keeping it about ½ inch from the edges of the pan so the filling stays inside the cake once it rises. Spoon the remaining batter over the streusel and spread it smooth — the batter is thick and may not fully cover the streusel in every spot, which is fine.

8. **Bake.** Bake at 350°F for 55 to 65 minutes, until a thin skewer or cake tester inserted in the thickest part comes out clean (or with just a few moist crumbs, not wet batter) and the top is a deep golden brown. If the top darkens noticeably before the 40-minute mark, tent loosely with foil. The long bake is correct — a tube pan is thick and needs time to cook through.

9. **Cool 15 minutes in the pan.** Let the cake rest in the pan on a wire rack for exactly 15 minutes. Too short and the cake will break when you unmold it; too long and steam condenses at the bottom and makes it gummy. Set a timer.

10. **Unmold and cool completely.** Run a thin offset spatula around the outer and inner edges of the cake to free any stuck spots. Place a wire rack or large plate over the pan, invert together in one confident motion, and lift the pan straight up. Let the cake cool on the rack for at least 30 minutes before slicing. Dust with powdered sugar if you like.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The inside, primarily. A crumb cake — like Entenmann's — puts the streusel entirely on top and uses a thinner, less-enriched base batter.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 49

VIRAL HIT

# Wild Rice & Cranberry Stuffed Butternut Squash

*The viral TikTok stuffed butternut squash Thanksgiving main — roasted squash halves filled with a savory wild rice stuffing, dried cranberries, toasted pecans, fresh sage, and crumbled goat cheese.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Wild Rice & Cranberry Stuffed Butternut Squash

*The viral TikTok stuffed butternut squash Thanksgiving main — roasted squash halves filled with a savory wild rice stuffing, dried cranberries, toasted pecans, fresh sage, and crumbled goat cheese.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 55 min | 4 | Medium | 480 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 2 medium butternut squash (about 2–2½ lbs each), halved lengthwise and seeds scooped out
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- Kosher salt and black pepper
- 1 cup wild rice blend (not pure wild rice)
- 2 cups vegetable broth, plus a splash for sautéing
- 1 medium yellow onion, small dice
- 3 stalks celery, small dice
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup pecans, roughly chopped and toasted
- 3 tablespoons fresh sage leaves, thinly sliced (or 1 teaspoon dried, crumbled)
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves (or ¼ teaspoon dried)
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 3 oz goat cheese, crumbled
- 2 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped, for serving

## 02 Method

1. **Heat the oven to 400°F.** Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Brush the cut sides of each butternut squash half with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil and season generously with salt and pepper. Place cut-side DOWN on the baking sheet — this is important. The cut side resting on the hot pan caramelizes the flesh and concentrates the squash's natural sugars in a way that roasting cut-side up never achieves.

2. **Roast the squash.** Slide the pan into the oven and roast for 40–50 minutes, until a fork slides into the thickest part of the neck with zero resistance and the underside is deep golden-brown. Start checking at 35 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside. Leave the oven on.

3. **Cook the wild rice blend.** While the squash roasts, combine the wild rice blend and 2 cups of vegetable broth in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, stir once, then reduce to a low simmer, cover, and cook for 30–35 minutes until the liquid is absorbed and the grains are

tender but still have a slight chew. Remove from heat and let steam, covered, for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork.

4. **Build the stuffing base.** Heat the remaining tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the diced onion and celery and cook, stirring occasionally, for 6–8 minutes until softened and translucent. Add the garlic and cook 1 minute more until fragrant. If the pan looks dry, add a splash of vegetable broth rather than more oil — the skillet will pick up flavor from the fond.

5. **Combine the stuffing.** Add the cooked wild rice blend to the skillet. Stir in the dried cranberries, toasted pecans, sliced sage, and thyme. Pour in the maple syrup and apple cider vinegar. Toss everything together over medium heat for 2 minutes so the maple syrup and vinegar glaze the rice lightly. Taste and season with salt and pepper — the filling should be savory-sweet, with a clear cranberry tartness.

6. **Fill the squash.** Use a large spoon to press the filling into each squash cavity, mounding it slightly above the rim. Don't be shy — pack it in. Scatter the crumbled goat cheese evenly over the tops of all four halves.

7. **Final bake.** Return the stuffed squash to the oven (still at 400°F) and bake for 10–12 minutes until the goat cheese is warm and slightly softened, and the tops of the filling start to show a little color.

8. **Serve.** Transfer each squash half to a plate or a platter. Scatter fresh parsley over the top. Serve immediately — the squash holds heat well and can sit for 5–10 minutes without cooling off significantly.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*A wild rice blend (usually wild rice + long-grain brown or white rice) is the better choice over pure wild rice for this recipe. Pure wild rice takes 50–60 minutes to cook and ends up with a very chewy, earthy texture that can overwhelm the squash.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 50

VIRAL HIT

# Whole Roasted Cauliflower

*The TikTok vegetarian showstopper: a whole head of cauliflower poached, coated in a Moroccan spice rub, and roasted until deeply caramelized gold, then drizzled with lemon tahini and served tableside like a roast.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Whole Roasted Cauliflower

*The TikTok vegetarian showstopper: a whole head of cauliflower poached, coated in a Moroccan spice rub, and roasted until deeply caramelized gold, then drizzled with lemon tahini and served tableside like a roast.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 min | 45 min | 4 | Easy | 240 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE CAULIFLOWER

- 1 large head cauliflower (about 2 lbs / 900g), outer leaves removed, stem trimmed flat
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt (for the poaching water — use more than you think)

### FOR THE MOROCCAN SPICE PASTE

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 3 cloves garlic, finely minced or grated
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional, for gentle heat)

### FOR THE LEMON TAHINI DRIZZLE

- ¼ cup (60g) tahini (stir well before measuring)
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (about 1 large lemon)
- 2 tablespoons cold water, plus more if needed
- 1 small clove garlic, grated
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt

### TO FINISH

- 3 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped
- 3 tablespoons pomegranate seeds (or substitute chopped toasted almonds)
- Flaky sea salt

## 02 Method

1. **Prep the cauliflower.** Remove the outer leaves from the cauliflower. Trim the stem with a flat cut so the head sits level on a flat surface without rocking — this matters for roasting. Keep the stem itself intact; it helps hold the head together and adds to the centerpiece look. Pat the head dry if it's been stored in a bag.

2. **Poach the cauliflower.** Fill a large pot (at least 6 quarts) with water, add 1 tablespoon of kosher salt, and bring to a rolling boil. Lower the cauliflower stem-side down into the water — it should be fully submerged; weigh it down with a heat-proof plate or lid if it bobs. Cook at a steady boil for 12 minutes. Test at the 12-minute mark: insert a thin skewer or paring knife into the center of the head through the stem. It should meet moderate resistance — tender but not soft. Add 2 to 3 more minutes if needed.

3. **Rest and dry.** Lift the cauliflower out of the water using two large spoons or a spider strainer, holding it stem-side up briefly so water drains from the cavity. Place it right-side-up on a wire rack set over a rimmed baking sheet. Let it rest for at least 10 minutes

— the surface needs to be fully dry before you apply the spice paste, or the paste won't adhere and will slide off. You'll see steam escaping as it rests; that's exactly what you want.

4. **Make the spice paste.** While the cauliflower rests, preheat the oven to 425°F (220°C). Stir together the olive oil, smoked paprika, cumin, coriander, turmeric, minced garlic, salt, pepper, and cayenne (if using) in a small bowl until uniform. It should be a thick, fragrant paste.

5. **Coat the cauliflower.** Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Place the dried cauliflower on it stem-side down. Using a pastry brush or your hands (hands work better — they let you push paste into crevices), coat the entire surface of the cauliflower with the spice paste. Work it between the florets, into the crevices at the top, and over the stem. Don't be shy — you want a complete, even coating with no pale patches.

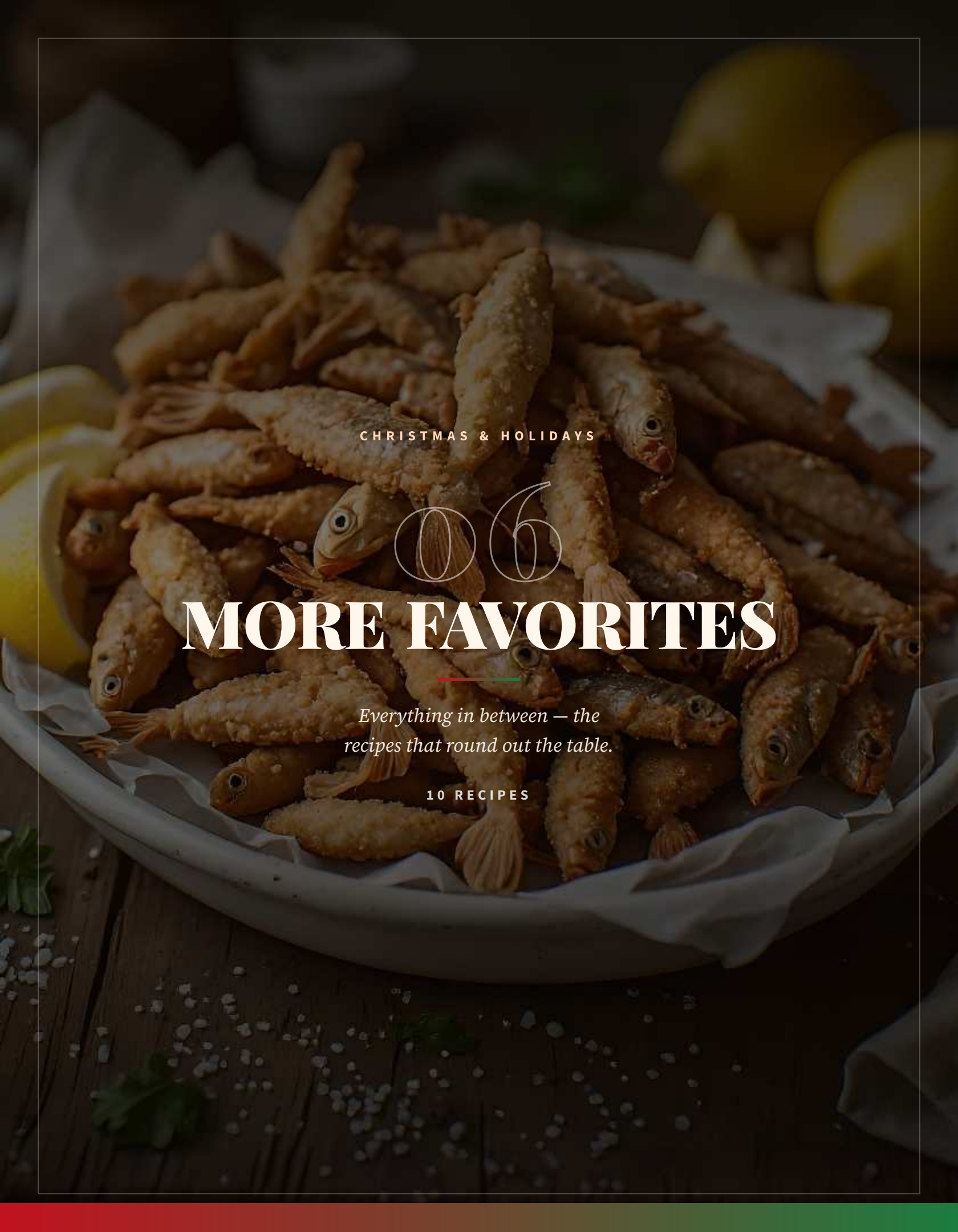
6. **Roast.** Transfer the baking sheet to the oven. Roast for 30 to 35 minutes, checking at the 25-minute mark. The cauliflower is done when the floret tips and the upper surface are deeply golden to dark amber — the highest parts should be approaching char without being burnt, and the interior, probed with a skewer, should offer no resistance at all. The caramelization is the point: don't pull it too early.

7. **Make the tahini drizzle.** While the cauliflower roasts, whisk together the tahini, lemon juice, water, grated garlic, and salt in a bowl. It will seize initially — keep whisking and it will smooth out to a pourable, creamy consistency. Adjust with additional water (one teaspoon at a time) until it drizzles easily. Taste and adjust salt and lemon.

8. **Serve.** Transfer the whole roasted cauliflower to a serving plate or wooden board — use two large spatulas or spoons and handle it gently, as the stem connection point is the weakest part. Drizzle the tahini sauce generously over the top so it runs down the sides. Scatter fresh parsley and pomegranate seeds over everything. Finish with a pinch of flaky sea salt. Bring it to the table whole, then slice it from the top like a cake, cutting through into wedges or slabs. Serve each wedge on a plate with extra tahini alongside.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Cauliflower is dense. In a 425°F oven, the outside would blister and char before the core ever reached the internal temperature needed to become tender — you'd get a burnt shell around a raw center.*



CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS

06

# MORE FAVORITES

*Everything in between — the recipes that round out the table.*

10 RECIPES



№ 51

CZECH

# Czech Kolaches

*Make authentic Czech kolaches at home — the soft, yeasted pastries filled with poppy seed, sweet cheese, or apricot, finished with a buttery crumble.*

CZECH · COPYCAT

# Czech Kolaches

*Make authentic Czech kolaches at home — the soft, yeasted pastries filled with poppy seed, sweet cheese, or apricot, finished with a buttery crumble.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 45 min | 14–16 min per batch | 18 kolaches | Intermediate | 192 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE ENRICHED DOUGH

- 4 cups (480g) all-purpose flour, plus extra for the work surface
- 2¼ tsp (1 packet) active dry yeast
- 1¼ cups (300ml) whole milk, warmed to 110°F
- ⅓ cup (67g) granulated sugar, divided
- 2 large eggs + 1 large egg yolk, room temperature
- ½ cup (113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature, cut into tablespoons
- ½ tsp fine sea salt
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract

### FOR THE POPPY SEED FILLING (MAKOVÝ NÁPLŇ)

- 1½ cups (180g) whole poppy seeds, finely ground in a spice or coffee grinder
- ¾ cup (180ml) whole milk
- ½ cup (100g) granulated sugar
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- Pinch of ground cloves
- Pinch of fine sea salt

### FOR THE SWEET CHEESE FILLING (TVAROHOVÝ NÁPLŇ)

- 8 oz (225g) farmer's cheese, dry-curd cottage cheese, or well-drained dry ricotta
- 3 tbsp granulated sugar
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 1 tsp finely grated lemon zest
- Pinch of fine sea salt

### FOR THE APRICOT FILLING (OVOCNÝ NÁPLŇ)

- ½ cup (160g) thick apricot preserves or jam (or prune lekvar)

### FOR THE CRUMBLE TOPPING / DROBENKA (FOR CHEESE-FILLED KOLACHES; OPTIONAL ON FRUIT-FILLED)

- 3 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp powdered sugar
- 2 tbsp cold unsalted butter, cut into small cubes
- Pinch of ground cinnamon

### FOR FINISHING (OPTIONAL)

- 2 tbsp unsalted butter, melted

## 02 Method

1. **Proof the yeast.** Combine the warm milk, 1 tsp of the sugar, and the yeast in a small bowl. Stir gently and let stand for 10 minutes. It should become foamy and smell yeasty. If nothing happens, the yeast is dead or the milk was too hot or too cold — start over with fresh yeast and milk at exactly 110°F.

2. **Make the dough base.** In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook, combine the flour, remaining sugar, and salt. Add the yeast

mixture, the whole eggs, the egg yolk, and vanilla. Mix on low speed for 2 minutes to bring the dough together, then increase to medium and knead for 8 minutes. The dough will be shaggy at first, then smooth; at this point it should clear the sides of the bowl but stick slightly to the bottom.

3. **Add the butter.** With the mixer running on medium-low, add the softened butter one tablespoon at a time, waiting for each piece to fully incorporate before adding the next — about 20 seconds per piece. After all the butter is in, increase speed to medium and knead for 5 more minutes until the dough is smooth, elastic, and slightly tacky. It passes the windowpane test: a small piece stretched gently should become thin and translucent without tearing.

4. **First rise.** Form the dough into a ball, place it in a lightly oiled bowl, and cover with a damp kitchen towel or plastic wrap. Let rise in a warm, draft-free spot for 1 to 1½ hours until doubled in volume.

5. **Make the poppy seed filling.** Combine the ground poppy seeds, milk, sugar, and butter in a small saucepan. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat, stirring constantly, and cook for 5–7 minutes until the mixture thickens to a dense paste — when you drag a spatula through it, the line should hold for a full second before closing. Remove from heat, stir in the vanilla, cloves, and salt. Let cool completely. (The filling thickens further as it cools.) Poppy seed kolaches do not get the crumble topping.

6. **Make the sweet cheese filling.** In a bowl, combine the farmer's cheese, sugar, egg yolk, vanilla, lemon zest, and salt. Mix until completely smooth; a few presses with the back of a fork breaks up any lumps. The filling should be thick and scoopable. If it seems wet, stir in 1 tsp of flour.

7. **Make the drobenka crumble (cheese-filled only; skip for poppy seed).** Combine the flour, powdered sugar, cold butter cubes, and cinnamon in a small bowl. Using your fingertips, rub the butter into the dry ingredients until the mixture resembles coarse, damp sand with pea-sized clumps. Refrigerate until needed.

8. **Shape the kolaches.** Punch down the risen dough and turn it out onto a lightly floured surface. Divide into 18 equal pieces (about 55g each on a kitchen scale). Roll each piece into a smooth, tight ball by cupping your hand over it and rolling against the work surface. Place the balls 2 inches apart on two parchment-lined baking sheets. Lightly flatten each ball with your palm. Cover loosely with a kitchen towel and let rise for 30–40 minutes until noticeably puffy.

9. **Make the wells.** Use two fingers or the floured handle of a wooden spoon to press a deep well in the center of each ball. Press nearly to the pan — the base of the well should be about ⅛ inch thick, with ½-inch-thick sides. The well should hold about 1 tablespoon of filling without overflowing.

10. **Fill and top.** Add 1 heaping teaspoon of your chosen filling to each well. For cheese-filled and fruit-filled kolaches, sprinkle drobenka crumble over the filling and onto the edges. For poppy seed kolaches, leave untopped.

11. **Bake.** Position oven racks in the upper and lower thirds. Preheat to 375°F (190°C). Bake for 14–16 minutes, rotating the sheets top-to-bottom and front-to-back halfway through, until the dough is pale golden — not deeply browned, as kolaches are lighter in color than American dinner rolls. The cheese filling will look slightly puffed and barely set at the center; it firms as it cools.

12. **Finish and cool.** Immediately brush the warm kolaches with melted butter (this is optional but traditional — it keeps the dough soft and adds a subtle richness). Let cool on the pans for 10 minutes before transferring to a wire rack. The cheese filling sets fully after 20 minutes of cooling.



№ 52

CHEF-INSPIRED

# Lobster Mac and Cheese

*Emeril Lagasse's signature lobster mac and cheese from his Table 10 restaurant at The Palazzo in Las Vegas — a silky white cheddar béchamel kicked up with Creole seasoning, loaded with chunks of lobster.*

CHEF-INSPIRED · COPYCAT

# Lobster Mac and Cheese

*Emeril Lagasse's signature lobster mac and cheese from his Table 10 restaurant at The Palazzo in Las Vegas — a silky white cheddar béchamel kicked up with Creole seasoning, loaded with chunks of lobster.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 35 min | 6 | Intermediate | 850 |

## 01 Ingredients

### CHEESE SAUCE

- 4 tablespoons (57g) unsalted butter
- 4 tablespoons (30g) all-purpose flour
- 2 cups (480ml) whole milk
- 1½ cups (360ml) heavy cream
- 12 oz (340g) sharp white cheddar, freshly grated on the large holes — divided: 8 oz for the sauce, 4 oz for mixing in
- 1 teaspoon Emeril's Creole Essence (see our recipe), or ½ tsp smoked paprika + ¼ tsp cayenne + ¼ tsp garlic powder
- Kosher salt and white pepper, to taste

### FOR THE MAC

- 12 oz (340g) elbow macaroni
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter (for the pasta)
- 1 lb (450g) cooked cold-water lobster meat, roughly chopped into ¾-inch pieces (from about 4 five-oz tails, or 2 live 1½-lb lobsters)

### BREADCRUMB TOPPING

- ½ cup (40g) panko breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup (25g) freshly grated Parmesan
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

## 02 Method

1. **Prep the oven and baking dish.** Preheat your oven to 400°F (205°C). Lightly butter the inside of a 9×13-inch baking dish and set it on the counter. Bring a large pot of heavily salted water to a rolling boil.

2. **Undercook the pasta.** Cook the elbow macaroni 2 minutes short of the package's al dente time — the pasta should still have a chalky, firm center; it finishes cooking in the sauce in the oven. Drain well and immediately toss with 1 tablespoon of butter to prevent clumping. Set aside.

3. **Build the roux.** Melt 4 tablespoons of butter in a heavy 3-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the flour all at once and whisk constantly for 2 full minutes. The roux should smell faintly nutty and turn just barely golden at the edges — this cooks out the raw flour flavor.

4. **Make the béchamel.** Stream in the whole milk in a slow, thin pour while whisking constantly to prevent lumps. Once the milk is fully incorporated, add the heavy cream the same way. Continue whisking over medium heat for 5–7 minutes until

the sauce thickens and coats the back of a spoon — a line drawn across the spoon's back should hold its shape.

5. **Add the cheese and seasoning.** Remove the saucepan from heat. Stir in 8 oz of the grated white cheddar in three separate additions, waiting until each addition is fully melted before adding the next. Add the Creole Essence (or the paprika-cayenne-garlic substitute), kosher salt, and white pepper. Taste the sauce and adjust seasoning — it should be well seasoned, since the pasta and lobster dilute it once combined.

6. **Combine and transfer.** Add the drained pasta and chopped lobster to the saucepan (or pour the sauce over them in a large bowl). Fold gently until every piece of pasta is coated. Stir in the remaining 4 oz of white cheddar. The mixture should look loose and saucy — it stiffens in the oven. Transfer to the prepared baking dish and spread into an even layer.

7. **Make and add the topping.** In a small bowl, toss the panko with the melted butter until every crumb is coated. Stir in the Parmesan. Scatter the topping evenly over the casserole, covering the surface completely.

8. **Bake and rest.** Bake at 400°F for 20–25 minutes, until the sauce is visibly bubbling around the edges and the breadcrumb topping is deep golden brown. Remove from the oven and rest for 5 minutes before serving — the sauce continues to set slightly as it cools, and the lobster retains heat for several minutes.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*A béchamel built on a roux tolerates temperature swings better than a straight cream reduction.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 53

ENTENMANN'S

# Crumb Coffee Cake

*Homemade Entenmann's crumb coffee cake: sour cream batter, thick sandy crumb topping, and the cold-butter trick that makes it. Makes 12 pieces for about $7 vs. an $8.49 box.*

ENTENMANN'S · COPYCAT

# Crumb Coffee Cake

*Homemade Entenmann's crumb coffee cake: sour cream batter, thick sandy crumb topping, and the cold-butter trick that makes it. Makes 12 pieces for about $7 vs. an $8.49 box.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 38 min | 12 pieces | Easy | 490 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE CRUMB TOPPING

- 2 cups (240g) all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup (165g) light brown sugar, firmly packed
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon fine salt
- ¾ cup (170g) cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes

### FOR THE CAKE BATTER

- 2¼ cups (270g) all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon fine salt
- ¾ cup (170g) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1 cup (200g) granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup (240g) full-fat sour cream

## 02 Method

1. **Make the crumb topping.** In a medium bowl, whisk together the 2 cups flour, brown sugar, cinnamon, and ¼ teaspoon salt until the sugar is evenly distributed through the flour. Add the cold butter cubes. Working quickly with your fingertips or a pastry cutter, press the butter into the dry ingredients using a pinching and squeezing motion — not rubbing. Stop when the mixture forms large, sandy clumps: it should resemble damp sand with pea-sized and larger butter chunks still visible. If the butter has started to feel greasy or warm, the topping will bake flat — set the bowl in the refrigerator for 10 minutes to re-firm, then proceed. Place the finished crumb mixture in the refrigerator while you make the batter.

2. **Prep the pan and oven.** Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Butter the bottom and sides of a 9×13-inch baking pan, then lay a strip of parchment across the bottom and up two short ends, with enough overhang to lift the finished cake out cleanly. Butter the parchment.

3. **Mix the dry ingredients.** In a medium bowl, whisk together the 2¼ cups flour, baking powder, baking soda, and ½ teaspoon salt. Set aside.

4. **Cream butter and sugar.** In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or in a large bowl with a hand mixer), beat the room-temperature butter and granulated sugar together on medium speed for about 3 minutes, until the mixture looks pale yellow and fluffy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl once during mixing.

5. **Add eggs and vanilla.** Add the eggs one at a time on medium speed, waiting until each egg is fully incorporated before adding the next.

Add the vanilla extract and mix for 30 seconds. The mixture should look smooth and thick; a curdled appearance usually means the eggs were too cold — keep beating and it will come together.

6. **Add flour and sour cream alternately.** With the mixer on low, add the flour mixture in three additions, alternating with the sour cream in two additions: flour → sour cream → flour → sour cream → flour. Add each addition just before the previous one is fully incorporated; mix only until each addition disappears — 10–15 seconds of low mixing is usually enough. Over-mixing after the flour is added develops gluten and can make the cake dense in an unpleasant way. The final batter should be thick and smooth, like a stiff muffin batter.

7. **Fill the pan.** Scrape the batter into the prepared pan. It will be thick. Use an offset spatula or the back of a large spoon to spread it into an even layer, nudging it into the corners.

8. **Add the crumb topping.** Remove the crumb mixture from the refrigerator. Scatter it in an even layer over the entire surface of the batter — work from the center outward and cover all the way to the edges. Use your hands to break up any very large clumps, but deliberately leave behind a mix of small sandy crumbs and larger clumps the size of peas or hazelnuts. Do not press the crumb topping down into the batter.

9. **Bake.** Bake at 350°F for 35–40 minutes. At the 30-minute mark, check the top: if the crumb layer is browning faster than you'd like, tent loosely with a piece of foil. The cake is done when a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake (finding a gap between crumbs) comes out with a few moist crumbs — not wet batter, not bone dry. The crumb topping should look set and dry rather than shiny, and the cake edges should begin pulling gently away from the pan sides.

10. **Cool before cutting.** Remove from the oven and set the pan on a wire rack. Cool in the pan for at least 20 minutes before cutting. For the cleanest slices and a crumb topping that holds its shape rather than avalanching, let the cake cool to room temperature (about 1 hour). Use the parchment overhang to lift the whole cake onto a cutting board, then cut into 12 squares with a sharp knife. Serve at room temperature; to rewarm individual pieces, place them in a 300°F oven for 8 minutes rather than microwaving, which softens the crumb.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Temperature is everything for the crumb. When butter is cold, it stays in separate pieces as you work it into the flour-sugar-cinnamon mixture. Those separate pieces are what bake into distinct, slightly crispy crumb clusters.*



№ 54

IHOP

# Gingerbread Pancakes

*IHOP's holiday Gingerbread Pancakes at home for under $4 a batch. Dark-brown-sugar, molasses-spiked buttermilk batter with four warm spices — identical to the $14–16 seasonal stack, with real gingerbread depth in every bite.*

IHOP · COPYCAT

# Gingerbread Pancakes

*IHOP's holiday Gingerbread Pancakes at home for under $4 a batch. Dark-brown-sugar, molasses-spiked buttermilk batter with four warm spices — identical to the $14–16 seasonal stack, with real gingerbread depth in every bite.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 25 min | 4 | Easy | 490 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE GINGERBREAD PANCAKE BATTER

- 2 cups (240g) all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons dark brown sugar, packed — dark brown has more molasses depth than light; it's the right choice here
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1½ teaspoons ground ginger — this is the dominant spice; don't reduce it
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1¼ cups (300ml) full-fat buttermilk
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and slightly cooled
- 2 tablespoons unsulfured molasses — Grandma's Original or similar; not blackstrap, which is too bitter
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- Butter for greasing the griddle

### FOR SERVING

- Whipped cream (store-bought or homemade)
- Warm maple syrup
- Optional: powdered sugar for dusting

### OPTIONAL GINGERBREAD SPICE SYRUP

- ¼ cup dark brown sugar, packed
- ¼ cup water
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- ⅛ teaspoon cinnamon
- Pinch of nutmeg

## 02 Method

1. **Make the gingerbread spice syrup (optional).** Combine the brown sugar, water, ginger, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a small saucepan over medium heat. Stir until the sugar dissolves, then bring to a gentle simmer for 2 minutes until slightly thickened. Remove from heat and keep warm. This syrup is optional — plain maple syrup is the classic IHOP presentation — but it intensifies the gingerbread flavor if you want an all-in version.
2. **Mix the dry ingredients.** In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, dark brown sugar, granulated sugar, baking powder, baking soda, ground ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and salt until evenly combined.
3. **Mix the wet ingredients.** In a medium bowl or large measuring cup, whisk together the buttermilk, eggs, melted butter, molasses, and

vanilla extract until the molasses is fully incorporated. The mixture will be a deep golden-brown color — that is correct.

4. **Combine — gently.** Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients. Fold together with a rubber spatula using 10–12 strokes. Stop the moment no dry flour streaks are visible, even if the batter still has lumps. Lumpy batter is correct; overmixing develops the gluten and produces dense, rubbery pancakes. Let the batter rest undisturbed for 5 minutes to activate the leavening and relax the gluten.

5. **Heat the griddle.** Set an electric griddle to 375°F (190°C), or warm a cast iron skillet or nonstick pan over medium heat for 2 minutes. Test by flicking a few drops of water onto the surface — they should skitter and evaporate in about 2 seconds. Brush lightly with melted butter.

6. **Pour the pancakes.** Use a ⅓-cup measure to portion the batter onto the griddle, leaving about 2 inches between each pancake. You should hear a steady, low sizzle immediately. The batter will be a shade darker than standard buttermilk batter — this is the molasses; it doesn't mean the pancakes are burning.

7. **Flip once.** Cook the first side for 2–3 minutes, until bubbles form across most of the surface and the edges look set and matte (not glossy or wet-looking). Flip in one confident motion. Cook the second side for 1–2 minutes, until the pancake feels set when you press the center lightly with the back of a spatula. Do not press down on the pancakes — pressing deflates the air bubbles that make them fluffy.

8. **Keep warm.** Transfer cooked pancakes to a wire rack set on a sheet pan in a 200°F (93°C) oven. Never stack pancakes on a plate to keep warm — the trapped steam softens the undersides in minutes.

9. **Serve.** Stack 3–4 pancakes per plate. Add a generous crown of whipped cream on top. Drizzle with warm maple syrup (or the optional gingerbread spice syrup) at the table. A light dusting of powdered sugar over the whole stack is the extra five-second detail that makes the presentation feel restaurant-quality.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*IHOP's standard buttermilk pancakes use white sugar and no spices beyond vanilla. The gingerbread version swaps in dark brown sugar, adds two tablespoons of unsulfured molasses, and incorporates a full spice blend — ground ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves.*

KITCHEN NOTES

№ 55

PORTO'S BAKERY

# Cheese Rolls

*Make Porto's Bakery Cheese Rolls at home — flaky all-butter puff pastry wrapped around a lightly sweetened cream cheese filling, sprinkled with sugar and baked until deeply golden.*

PORTO'S BAKERY · COPYCAT

# Cheese Rolls

*Make Porto's Bakery Cheese Rolls at home — flaky all-butter puff pastry wrapped around a lightly sweetened cream cheese filling, sprinkled with sugar and baked until deeply golden.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 min | 20 min | 24 rolls | Easy | 110 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE FILLING

- 8 oz (225g) full-fat cream cheese, softened to room temperature
- ¼ cup (50g) granulated sugar
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- Pinch of fine salt

### FOR ASSEMBLY

- 1 package (17.3 oz/490g) all-butter puff pastry, 2 sheets, thawed but still cold
- All-purpose flour, for dusting
- 1 large egg + 1 tablespoon water (egg wash)
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar (for topping)

## 02 Method

1. **Preheat the oven.** Set to 400°F (205°C). Line two baking sheets with parchment paper and place them in the refrigerator or freezer to stay cold while you work — a cold pan helps the pastry puff instead of spread.
2. **Make the filling.** Beat the softened cream cheese and sugar together until completely smooth and lump-free. Add the egg yolk, vanilla extract, and salt; mix until uniform. The filling should be spreadable but not runny — if it looks at all loose, refrigerate for 10 minutes before using.
3. **Roll the first sheet.** On a lightly floured surface, unfold one puff pastry sheet. Lightly roll it once or twice with a rolling pin to seal any fold creases and even the thickness — do not thin it significantly. You want all the laminated layers intact.
4. **Spread the filling.** Using an offset spatula, spread half the cream cheese filling evenly over the pastry in a thin layer, leaving a ½-inch bare border along one of the long edges. Keep the layer thin — no more than ¼ inch. Overfilling causes the cream cheese to squeeze out during baking.
5. **Roll and seal.** Starting from the long edge opposite the bare border, roll the pastry up tightly into a log, keeping steady tension as you go. When you reach the bare border, press it lightly against the roll to seal. The log should feel firm and tight.

6. **Chill the log.** Wrap the log tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes (up to overnight). Repeat with the second pastry sheet and remaining filling. Cold dough slices cleanly and bakes into tighter spirals — do not skip this step.

7. **Slice the first log.** Remove one log from the refrigerator. Using a sharp knife, slice into rounds about ¾-inch thick — you should get roughly 11–13 rolls per log. Place cut-side up on one of the cold baking sheets, spacing about 2 inches apart.

8. **Egg wash and sugar.** Beat the egg with 1 tablespoon of water. Brush the top of each roll lightly with egg wash, taking care not to let it drip down the cut sides (this can glue the layers together and prevent the pastry from puffing). Sprinkle with granulated sugar.

9. **Bake.** Bake at 400°F for 18–22 minutes, until the pastry is puffed, deeply golden, and the filling has set and may be lightly browned at the edges. The filling will bubble slightly — that is normal and caramelizes into a sweet, crisp rim.

10. **Cool.** Let the rolls cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack. The filling firms as it cools — do not judge doneness while they are hot.

11. **Bake the second batch.** Slice and bake the second log while the first batch cools. If the second log has warmed slightly during the first bake, chill it in the freezer for 10 minutes before slicing.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The dough is the entire difference. Porto's cheese rolls use puff pastry — a purely fat-laminated dough with no yeast, whose layers are created mechanically by folding butter into the dough dozens of times.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 56

O&H DANISH BAKERY

# Racine Danish Kringle

*Make a copycat Racine Danish Kringle at home — the flaky, oval, laminated pastry filled with pecan brown sugar and finished with vanilla glaze that is Wisconsin's official state pastry.*

O&H DANISH BAKERY · COPYCAT

# Racine Danish Kringle

*Make a copycat Racine Danish Kringle at home — the flaky, oval, laminated pastry filled with pecan brown sugar and finished with vanilla glaze that is Wisconsin's official state pastry.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 45 min | 25 min | 10 slices | Intermediate | 620 |

## 01 Ingredients

### LAMINATED DOUGH

- 2¼ tsp (1 packet / 7g) active dry yeast
- ¼ cup (60ml) warm water (105–110°F)
- 1 cup (240ml) whole milk, warmed to 105°F
- ¼ cup (50g) granulated sugar
- 1 tsp fine sea salt
- 2 large egg yolks
- 3 cups (360g) all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling
- 1 cup (225g) cold unsalted European-style butter (or best-quality American butter), for laminating

### PECAN FILLING

- 1½ cups (165g) finely chopped pecans, plus 2 tbsp extra for topping
- 1 cup (200g) packed light brown sugar
- ½ cup (113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp fine sea salt

### VANILLA ICING

- 1 cup (120g) powdered sugar, sifted
- 4–5 tsp warm water
- ½ tsp pure vanilla extract

## 02 Method

1. **Make the dough.** In the bowl of a stand mixer (or a large mixing bowl), sprinkle the yeast over the warm water and let it sit for 5 minutes until it looks slightly foamy and smells yeasty — this confirms the yeast is active. Add the warm milk, granulated sugar, salt, and egg yolks, and whisk briefly to combine. Add the flour and mix with the dough hook on low speed (or stir with a wooden spoon) until a shaggy, slightly sticky dough comes together — about 2 minutes. The dough should not be smooth like a bread dough; a rough, shaggy texture is correct at this stage. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 2–3 minutes until the dough just comes together into a smooth ball. It will be softer than bread dough. Flatten into a rough rectangle, wrap tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

2. **Prepare the butter slab.** Take the cold butter from the fridge and place it between two sheets of plastic wrap or parchment paper. Using a rolling pin, beat the butter firmly, working across its surface, until it forms a flat, even slab about 7×5 inches and ¼ inch thick. The butter should be cold but just pliable — it should bend without cracking when you flex it. If it cracks and crumbles, it's too cold: let it sit for 5 minutes and try again. If it smears and sticks, it's too warm: return it to the fridge for 10 minutes. This 'cold and pliable' window is the most important thing to get right for successful lamination. Set aside at room temperature while you roll the dough.

3. **First fold (fold 1 of 3).** On a lightly floured surface, roll the chilled dough into a rectangle roughly 15 inches wide by 10 inches tall. Place the butter slab on the center third of the dough, leaving about ½ inch of dough border around the butter. Fold the

left third of the dough over the butter to cover it, then fold the right third on top — like folding a business letter into thirds. You should have a rough 7×10 inch package of dough with the butter completely enclosed inside. Pinch the edges closed where you can. This is the first 'letter fold.' Rotate the package 90° so the open end faces you. Roll it out again to 15×10 inches, using firm but gentle pressure and moving from the center outward. If butter tries to burst through, dust that spot with a little flour and keep going. Fold into thirds again (second fold). Wrap tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

4. **Second and third folds.** Remove the dough from the fridge. On a lightly floured surface, roll out again to 15×10 inches and fold into thirds a third time. Wrap again and chill another 30 minutes. After this third chill, the dough has had three letter folds and is fully laminated with approximately 27 layers. The dough is now ready to fill and shape. If you're making this ahead, the dough can stay refrigerated at this point for up to overnight — just remove it 15 minutes before rolling.

5. **Make the filling.** In a medium bowl, stir together the finely chopped pecans (reserving 2 tablespoons for the topping), light brown sugar, softened butter, cinnamon, and salt until well combined. The mixture should hold together loosely — it will look like a paste with visible nut pieces. Set aside at room temperature.

6. **Roll and fill.** Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. On a lightly floured surface, roll the laminated dough into a long rectangle measuring 24 inches long by 6 inches wide, working quickly so the butter stays cold. If the dough springs back and resists rolling, let it rest 5 minutes and try again — the gluten needs to relax. Spread the pecan filling in an even layer down the center third of the dough strip, leaving about ¾ inch bare at the two short ends. Using a bench scraper or spatula, carefully fold the left long edge over the filling to the center; then fold the right long edge on top to meet it, overlapping slightly. Pinch the two long edges together firmly to seal (press and crimp like a pie crust). Pinch and tuck in both short ends securely.

7. **Shape into an oval.** Transfer the filled log to the prepared baking sheet, seam side down. Bend the two ends toward each other to form a wide, flat oval — the classic Racine kringle shape, roughly 14 inches wide by 10 inches tall, like a large wreath with a hole in the center. The hole only needs to be a couple of inches; the oval shouldn't be too open. Gently press the ends together where they meet and pinch to seal. Flatten the whole oval slightly with your palms so it's about ¾ inch thick. Loosely drape plastic wrap over the top and let the shaped kringle proof at room temperature for 30–45 minutes, until it looks slightly puffed and no longer feels completely firm when poked.

8. **Bake.** Preheat the oven to 375°F while the kringle proofs. Uncover the kringle and bake in the center rack for 22–26 minutes, until it is a deep, even golden brown across the top and the oven smells of toasted pecans and caramelized sugar. The filling will bubble slightly at the seams — this is correct. Remove from the oven and let the kringle cool on the baking sheet for 10 minutes. It is fragile when hot.

9. **Make the icing and finish.** In a small bowl, whisk together the sifted powdered sugar, 4 teaspoons of warm water, and vanilla extract until smooth and thick but pourable — it should fall from a spoon in a slow, wide ribbon. If too thick, add water ½ teaspoon at a time. Using a spoon or a small squeeze bottle, drizzle the icing in a back-and-forth motion across the top of the warm kringle (the warmth of the pastry helps the icing set into a slightly glossy finish). Immediately scatter the reserved 2 tablespoons of chopped pecans over the icing before it sets. Let the kringle rest for at least 15 minutes before slicing so the filling firms enough to slice cleanly.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*A Racine Danish Kringle is a large, flat oval pastry made from laminated yeast dough — the same butter-folded technique behind croissants — filled with sweetened nuts or fruit paste and glazed with icing.*



№ 57

VIRAL HIT

# Crème Brûlée French Toast Casserole

*The viral TikTok crème brûlée french toast casserole — brown sugar caramel goes on the bottom of the dish, thick brioche soaks overnight in vanilla custard, and when you bake and flip it, the caramel cascades over every slice.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Crème Brûlée French Toast Casserole

*The viral TikTok crème brûlée french toast casserole — brown sugar caramel goes on the bottom of the dish, thick brioche soaks overnight in vanilla custard, and when you bake and flip it, the caramel cascades over every slice.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 min | 45 min | 8 | Easy | 390 |

## 01 Ingredients

### CARAMEL BASE

- 6 tablespoons (85g) unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 1 cup (220g) packed dark brown sugar — dark gives deeper caramel flavor than light; either works
- 2 tablespoons light corn syrup — keeps the caramel smooth and prevents crystallization

### BREAD

- 1 loaf (about 450g / 1 lb) brioche, sliced 1 inch thick — day-old brioche is ideal; challah is a great substitute

### CUSTARD

- 6 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1½ cups whole milk
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons pure maple syrup (or 2 tbsp granulated sugar)
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt

### TO SERVE

- Powdered sugar, for dusting
- Fresh berries or sliced bananas (optional)

## 02 Method

1. **Make the caramel base.** Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Place the butter pieces in a 9×13-inch baking dish and set it in the oven for 3–4 minutes until the butter is fully melted. Remove the dish from the oven (carefully — it's hot). Add the brown sugar and corn syrup directly to the melted butter and stir with a spatula until combined into a thick, grainy paste. It won't look smooth — that's correct. Spread the mixture evenly across the bottom of the dish in a single layer.

2. **Lay in the bread.** Arrange the brioche slices in a single layer directly on top of the caramel base, overlapping slightly if needed to fit them all in. Press each slice down firmly so the bottom surface makes full contact with the caramel. If your slices are very thick, you can do a second layer — just make sure the bottom layer is fully in contact with the caramel.

3. **Make the custard.** In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, whole milk, heavy cream, maple syrup, vanilla extract, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt until fully combined and slightly frothy — about 60 seconds of active whisking. The custard should be uniformly yellow with no streaks of white egg.

4. **Pour and press.** Pour the custard slowly and evenly over the bread, working in a back-and-forth pattern to distribute it. After pouring, press each slice of bread down firmly with a spatula or your hands (clean hands work well

here) so it's submerged in the custard and in contact with the caramel below. Some caramel will ooze up the sides — that's normal and correct.

5. **Refrigerate overnight.** Cover the dish tightly with plastic wrap (or foil) and refrigerate for at least 8 hours, up to 12. The bread will absorb nearly all the custard by morning and the dish will look compact and custardy. Do not skip the overnight soak — 1 or 2 hours is not enough for the custard to fully penetrate thick brioche.

6. **Bring to room temperature.** Remove the dish from the refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. This prevents the cold glass from cracking in the hot oven and helps the casserole cook more evenly in the center.

7. **Bake uncovered.** Bake at 350°F for 40–45 minutes. The bread will puff up significantly and turn deep golden on top. The edges should be visibly bubbling with caramel. The center is done when it feels set — a gentle jiggle should show only a slight wobble, not a liquid slosh. If the top is browning too fast after 30 minutes, tent loosely with foil for the last 10–15 minutes.

8. **Rest for 5 minutes.** This is essential: if you flip the casserole immediately out of the oven, the caramel (which is molten hot) splashes and the bread falls apart. Five minutes of rest lets the caramel thicken slightly and the bread structure firm up.

9. **Flip onto a serving platter.** Run a thin spatula or butter knife around all four edges of the casserole to loosen it. Place a large rimmed serving platter — the rims matter, because caramel will run — face-down on top of the baking dish. Grip both the dish and platter firmly together (use oven mitts), and flip in one confident motion. Lift off the baking dish. The caramelized bottom is now on top, glistening amber, with the bread arranged below it. Dust generously with powdered sugar and add fresh fruit if using. Serve immediately while the caramel is warm and flowing.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Corn syrup prevents the caramel from crystallizing. During the overnight rest in the refrigerator, the brown sugar caramel base chills and solidifies — without corn syrup it can crystallize into a grainy, dry layer that never re-melts smoothly during baking.*

## KITCHEN NOTES



№ 58

VIRAL HIT

# Famous Christmas Potatoes

*The viral TikTok Christmas potato casserole with 1.7 million views — shredded hash brown potatoes layered with three cheeses, butter, half-and-half, and fresh rosemary, sage, and parsley, baked until golden and bubbling.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Famous Christmas Potatoes

*The viral TikTok Christmas potato casserole with 1.7 million views — shredded hash brown potatoes layered with three cheeses, butter, half-and-half, and fresh rosemary, sage, and parsley, baked until golden and bubbling.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 55 min | 10 | Easy | 310 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 1 bag (30 oz) frozen shredded hash brown potatoes, fully thawed (thaw in refrigerator overnight or at room temperature for 2 hours)

### CHEESE FILLING

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted (plus more for greasing the baking dish)
- 1 cup (about 4 oz) sharp cheddar, freshly grated (not pre-shredded — the anti-caking coating dulls the melt)
- 1 cup (about 4 oz) low-moisture whole-milk mozzarella, freshly grated
- ½ cup grated parmesan (the kind in a block, not the green can)
- 1 cup half-and-half
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

### FRESH HERBS

- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh sage
- 2 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped (divided — half into the mix, half for finishing)

### FOR THE TOP

- ½ cup shredded sharp cheddar (for the cheese crust)
- ¼ cup grated parmesan
- Optional: pinch of flaky sea salt for finishing

## 02 Method

1. **Dry the hash browns.** This step separates a golden, cohesive casserole from a wet, gray one. Dump the fully thawed shredded potatoes onto a clean, dry kitchen towel or several layers of paper towels. Gather the edges of the towel and twist to form a bundle, then squeeze firmly over the sink. Continue squeezing and pressing until no more liquid comes out — the potatoes should feel noticeably dryer and lighter. If the towel is soaked, transfer the potatoes to a fresh dry one and repeat. Well-dried potatoes release steam instead of water during baking, which produces the texture these are known for.

2. **Preheat and prep.** Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C). Generously butter a 9x13 baking dish and set it aside.

3. **Mix the filling.** In a large bowl, combine the dried hash browns with the melted butter, cheddar, mozzarella, parmesan, half-and-half, salt, pepper, rosemary, sage,

and half the chopped parsley. Stir thoroughly until every strand of potato is coated — the mixture will be thick and aromatic from the fresh herbs. Taste a small amount and adjust salt: the cheeses are salty, so it may need less than you'd expect.

4. **Fill and top the dish.** Transfer the mixture to the buttered baking dish and spread it evenly with a spatula. Press it flat so it fills the dish in an even layer with no air pockets (air pockets create spots that don't set). Scatter the additional ½ cup cheddar and ¼ cup parmesan evenly over the entire surface. The cheese on top forms the golden crust during the uncovered baking phase — press it gently so it doesn't slide off.

5. **Bake covered, then uncovered.** Cover the baking dish tightly with aluminum foil. Bake at 375°F for 35 minutes — the casserole steams in this phase, cooking the potatoes through and melting the interior cheese into a creamy layer. Remove the foil and return to the oven for an additional 20 minutes, until the cheese on top is deep golden-brown and the edges are visibly crispy and pulling away from the sides of the dish. The top should look set and golden all the way to the center, not wet or pale.

6. **Rest and finish.** Remove from the oven and let the casserole rest uncovered for at least 10 minutes before serving. This resting period lets the interior firm slightly so it cuts into clean portions rather than sliding apart. Just before serving, scatter the remaining fresh parsley over the top and add a pinch of flaky sea salt if desired. Serve directly from the baking dish.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Frozen shredded potatoes are packed at high moisture content. Even after thawing, they retain significant water that, if not removed, releases into the casserole during baking.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 59

VIRAL HIT

# French Toast Roll-Ups

*The viral TikTok French toast roll-ups — sandwich bread flattened thin, filled with cream cheese and strawberry jam, rolled up, dipped in egg custard, pan-fried in butter, and coated in cinnamon sugar. Ready in 20 minutes.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# French Toast Roll-Ups

*The viral TikTok French toast roll-ups — sandwich bread flattened thin, filled with cream cheese and strawberry jam, rolled up, dipped in egg custard, pan-fried in butter, and coated in cinnamon sugar. Ready in 20 minutes.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 10 min | 12 roll-ups | Easy | 420 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 12 slices white sandwich bread (thin-sliced), crusts removed
- 4 oz (½ block) cream cheese, softened
- ⅓ cup strawberry jam (or strawberry preserves)
- 3 large eggs
- 3 tbsp whole milk
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon (in custard)
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter, divided (more as needed)
- **Cinnamon sugar coating:** ½ cup granulated sugar + 1½ tsp ground cinnamon, mixed on a wide plate

**WHY IT WORKS**

*French toast roll-ups are sandwich bread slices that have been flattened thin, filled with cream cheese and jam (or other sweet fillings), rolled up tightly, dipped in egg-milk custard, pan-fried in butter, and coated in cinnamon sugar.*

## 02 Method

1. Remove crusts from all 12 bread slices. Place one slice on a clean cutting board and roll firmly with a rolling pin, pressing down with full weight, until the slice is about ⅛ inch thick — it should look slightly translucent and feel pliable. Repeat for all slices.
2. Spread a thin layer of softened cream cheese over each flattened slice, reaching almost to all edges. Spoon about 1 teaspoon of strawberry jam in a thin line along one short edge of each slice.
3. Starting from the jam edge, roll the bread tightly around the filling. Press the seam gently to seal. Set rolls seam-side down on a plate while you prepare the custard.
4. Whisk together the eggs, milk, vanilla, and 1 tsp cinnamon in a wide, shallow bowl until fully combined.
5. Have the cinnamon-sugar plate ready on the counter next to the stove before you start cooking.
6. Melt 1 tablespoon of butter in a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Working in batches, dip each roll in the egg custard, turning to coat all sides, letting the excess drip off for a few seconds.
7. Place rolls seam-side down in the skillet. Cook, turning every 1½–2 minutes to brown all 4 sides evenly, 6–8 minutes total. The rolls are done when all sides are deep golden brown and the custard is fully set (no wet wobble when you press gently).
8. Transfer rolls directly from the pan to the cinnamon-sugar plate while still hot. Roll to coat all sides. Serve immediately.



№ 60

VIRAL HIT

# Fried Smelts

*The classic Italian-American Christmas Eve fried smelts recipe — small whole fish dredged in seasoned flour and fried until golden and crisp. A Feast of the Seven Fishes staple done in under 20 minutes, served with nothing but lemon.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Fried Smelts

*The classic Italian-American Christmas Eve fried smelts recipe — small whole fish dredged in seasoned flour and fried until golden and crisp. A Feast of the Seven Fishes staple done in under 20 minutes, served with nothing but lemon.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 min | 15 min | 4 | Easy | 305 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 1½ lbs (680g) fresh or thawed rainbow smelts, cleaned (heads on or off)
- 1 cup (120g) all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp fine salt, plus more for finishing
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- ½ tsp sweet paprika
- Neutral oil for frying (canola, vegetable, or light olive oil — about 2 cups for a 10-inch skillet)

**TO SERVE**

- Lemon wedges
- Coarse sea salt or flaky salt
- Fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped (optional)
- Tartar sauce or lemon aioli (optional)

## 02 Method

1. **Prep the smelts.** If your smelts came whole and uncleaned, rinse them well under cold water and pat thoroughly dry with paper towels. Dryness is the single most important factor for a crisp fry — any surface moisture will steam the flour coating instead of crisping it. If they're already cleaned, still pat them well. Heads on or off is a matter of preference; most Italian-American preparations leave the head on.

2. **Make the seasoned flour.** In a shallow bowl or a rimmed plate, whisk together the flour, 1 tsp salt, black pepper, garlic powder, and paprika until evenly combined.

3. **Heat the oil.** Pour the oil into a heavy 10- or 12-inch skillet (cast iron or stainless) to a depth of about 1½ inches. Heat over medium-high heat until the oil reaches 360–370°F on an instant-read thermometer. If you don't have a thermometer, test with a pinch of flour — it should sizzle immediately and float, not sink and sit.

4. **Dredge the smelts.** Working in batches, toss a few smelts in the seasoned flour, turning to coat all sides. Hold each one above the bowl and shake firmly so only a thin, even dusting of flour remains — loose excess flour burns fast in hot oil and clouds the crust. Place the dredged fish on a plate or clean tray while you finish the batch.

5. **Fry the first batch.** Carefully lay the dredged smelts in the hot oil in a single, uncrowded layer — no more than 6–8 fish at a time in a 10-inch skillet. Crowding drops the oil temperature and results in steamed, soggy fish instead of a crisp fry. Fry for 1½ to 2 minutes on the first side until golden brown, then turn once with tongs or a fish spatula and fry for 1–1½ minutes more. The whole fish should be deep golden and the thinnest part of the tail should be properly crisp.

6. **Drain and season.** Transfer to a wire rack set over a baking sheet, or drain on a paper-towel-lined plate. While still hot, season with a pinch of coarse salt. Keep warm in a low oven (200°F) while you fry the remaining batches.

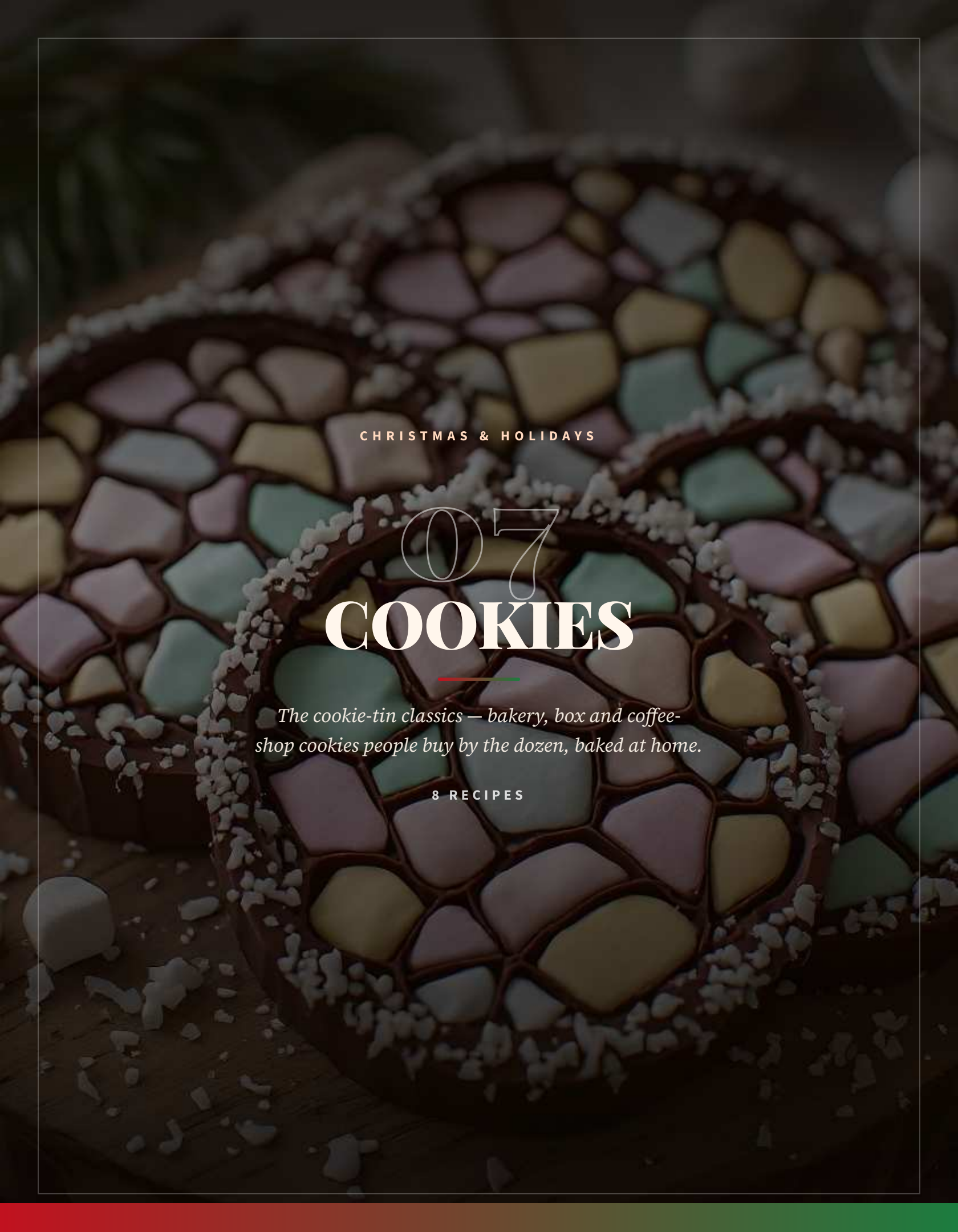
7. **Check the oil between batches.** Let the oil return to 360–370°F before adding the next batch — this takes about 1 minute between rounds. If any darkened flour bits accumulate in the pan, skim them off with a slotted spoon; they'll burn and turn bitter if left in.

8. **Serve immediately.** Pile the smelts on a platter and serve at once with lemon wedges and flaky salt. Fried smelts are at their peak in the first five minutes out of the oil and don't reheat well, so fry to order and serve directly from the pan.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The Feast of the Seven Fishes (La Vigilia di Natale) is an Italian-American Christmas Eve supper built entirely on seafood — no meat.*

KITCHEN NOTES



CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS

# 07 COOKIES

*The cookie-tin classics — bakery, box and coffee-shop cookies people buy by the dozen, baked at home.*

8 RECIPES



№ 61

CHERYL'S COOKIES

# Cheryl's Frosted Cutout Cookies

*The copycat Cheryl's Frosted Cutout Cookie — a thick, pillowy soft sugar cookie with a sky-high layer of silky buttercream.*

CHERYL'S COOKIES · COPYCAT

# Cheryl's Frosted Cutout Cookies

*The copycat Cheryl's Frosted Cutout Cookie — a thick, pillowy soft sugar cookie with a sky-high layer of silky buttercream.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 min | 9 min | 24 cookies | Easy | 190 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE COOKIE DOUGH

- ½ cup (1 stick / 113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 4 oz (113g) full-fat brick cream cheese, softened to room temperature (not whipped or low-fat)
- 1 cup (120g) powdered sugar, sifted
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon pure almond extract
- 2 cups (240g) all-purpose flour, plus extra for rolling
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon fine salt

### FOR THE BUTTERCREAM FROSTING

- ½ cup (1 stick / 113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 2 cups (240g) powdered sugar, sifted
- 2–3 tablespoons heavy cream or whole milk
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- Pinch of fine salt
- Gel food coloring in your choice of colors
- Seasonal sprinkles or nonpareils, for finishing

## 02 Method

1. **Make the dough.** Beat softened butter and cream cheese together with a hand or stand mixer on medium speed for 2–3 minutes until smooth and fluffy — there should be no visible lumps of either. Add the powdered sugar and beat on low until incorporated, then increase to medium-high and beat 1 minute more. Add the eggs one at a time, beating 30 seconds after each. Add the vanilla and almond extracts and beat until the mixture is smooth and slightly glossy, about 30 more seconds.

2. **Add the dry ingredients.** In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, cornstarch, baking powder, and salt. Add to the butter mixture in two additions, mixing on low speed just until the flour disappears after each — do not overmix. The dough will be soft and slightly tacky.

3. **Chill the dough.** Divide the dough in half and pat each piece into a flat disc. Wrap each disc tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or up to 3 days. Well-chilled dough is easier to roll, holds cutout shapes cleaner, and spreads less in the oven. Do not skip this step.

4. **Preheat and prepare.** Set oven to 375°F (190°C). Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Keep the second disc of dough in the refrigerator while you work the first one.

5. **Roll and cut.** Dust a work surface and rolling pin lightly with flour. Working with one disc at a time, roll the dough to a generous ¼-inch thickness — Cheryl's cookies are thick; rolling thinner than ¼ inch produces a crisper result. Cut with a 3-inch cookie cutter in your preferred shapes. If the dough sticks, loosen it gently with a thin offset spatula and re-flour the surface as needed. Transfer cut cookies to the prepared baking sheet, spacing them about 1 inch apart. Re-roll scraps once (over-worked dough toughens).

6. **Bake.** Bake one sheet at a time on the center rack for 8–10 minutes. The cookies are done when the edges look just barely set and the tops look matte and dry — not golden, not shiny. They will look underdone in the center; that's correct. Any hint of browning means they're overdone. Cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes (they firm up as they cool), then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely before frosting. Warm cookies will melt the frosting.

7. **Make the buttercream.** Beat softened butter alone on medium-high speed for 2 minutes until very light and fluffy. This step matters — skipping it produces a denser, grainier frosting. Add the sifted powdered sugar in two additions, beating on low after each until incorporated, then increasing to medium to smooth it out. Add 2 tablespoons of heavy cream and vanilla extract; beat on medium-high for 1 minute. The frosting should be thick enough to hold a stiff peak but soft enough to spread without tearing the cookie. If too thick, add cream a teaspoon at a time. If too thin, add 1–2 tablespoons more sifted powdered sugar. Add a pinch of salt and beat briefly to combine.

8. **Tint and frost.** Divide the frosting into separate bowls if using multiple colors. Add gel coloring on the tip of a toothpick, stir well, and add more a toothpick at a time until you reach the desired shade — gel colors are concentrated, so start less than you think you need. Spoon a generous dollop of frosting onto the center of each cooled cookie and spread outward with an offset spatula or the back of a spoon, leaving a slight raised dome in the middle. Apply sprinkles immediately while the frosting is still wet.

9. **Set and store.** Let frosted cookies stand at room temperature for 30–60 minutes until the frosting is set enough not to smudge. Store in an airtight container at room temperature, with parchment paper between layers, for up to 7 days.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The almond extract is not an optional accent — it is the flavor that makes the cookie taste distinctively like Cheryl's rather than a generic frosted sugar cookie.*



№ 62

DAELMANS

# Dutch Stroopwafels

*Make Daelmans-style Dutch stroopwafels at home — thin crispy waffles pressed on a pizzelle iron and sandwiched with warm cinnamon caramel-syrup filling. About $4 of ingredients for 20 cookies vs. $5–7 for a Daelmans 8-count box.*

DAELMANS · COPYCAT

# Dutch Stroopwafels

*Make Daelmans-style Dutch stroopwafels at home — thin crispy waffles pressed on a pizzelle iron and sandwiched with warm cinnamon caramel-syrup filling. About $4 of ingredients for 20 cookies vs. $5–7 for a Daelmans 8-count box.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 30 min | 18–20 stroopwafels | Medium | 148 |

## 01 Ingredients

### DOUGH

- 2 cups (240g) all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 2¼ teaspoons (1 standard packet) active dry yeast
- 3 tablespoons warm whole milk (110°F / 43°C)
- ½ cup (1 stick / 113g) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- ⅓ cup (67g) granulated sugar
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon fine salt

### CINNAMON CARAMEL FILLING

- 6 tablespoons (85g) unsalted butter
- ¾ cup (165g) packed dark brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons Dutch stroop, dark corn syrup, or 1½ Tbsp light corn syrup + 1½ Tbsp unsulphured molasses
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- Pinch of fine salt

## 02 Method

1. **Proof the yeast.** Stir the yeast and 1 teaspoon of the granulated sugar into the warm milk in a small bowl. Let stand 5–8 minutes until the mixture looks foamy and smells yeasty. If nothing happens after 10 minutes, your yeast is dead — the finished cookies will still bake but they won't have as much flavor; start with fresh yeast for best results.

2. **Make the dough.** Beat butter and remaining sugar together with a hand mixer or stand mixer on medium speed for 1–2 minutes until combined and slightly lightened. Add the egg and beat to incorporate, then add the proofed yeast mixture. Stir in the flour, cinnamon, and salt until a stiff, cohesive dough forms — it will be noticeably stiffer than cookie dough and won't look smooth at first. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead by hand for 1–2 minutes until the dough smooths out.

3. **Rest the dough.** Shape the dough into a ball, place it back in the bowl, and cover tightly with plastic wrap. Let rest at room temperature for 45–60 minutes. The dough won't double in size — the yeast is adding flavor and a slight chew, not making a bread rise.

4. **Make the filling.** In a small saucepan over medium heat, combine butter, brown sugar, stroop (or corn syrup-molasses mixture), cinnamon, and salt. Stir continuously until the butter melts and the sugar fully dissolves, about 3–4 minutes. The filling will be glossy and slightly thick, like warm caramel sauce. Remove from heat. Keep warm (you can reheat over low heat for 1 minute if it firms up during the cooking session).

5. **Heat the iron.** Preheat a pizzelle iron or stroopwafel iron to medium-high, following the manufacturer's instructions. Lightly brush the plates with a small amount of melted butter or non-stick spray before the first batch.

6. **Shape and cook.** Divide the rested dough into balls weighing about 25–30g each (roughly the size of a large marble or small golf ball — you should get 18–20 balls). Place one ball in the center of the preheated iron, close firmly, and cook for 60–90 seconds until the waffle is deep golden and the edges look dry and lacy. The exact time varies by iron; aim for a toasty golden color, not pale cream.

7. **Split immediately.** Remove the waffle with a spatula or fork and place flat on a cutting board. Working within 60 seconds of leaving the iron, hold the waffle's edge gently against the board and use a thin serrated knife to slice horizontally through the middle of the waffle in a single sawing motion, dividing it into two thin rounds. This step requires speed — the waffle snaps if it cools before you cut. If you're new to this, practice with the first waffle: start the knife at the edge and saw steadily around the circumference.

8. **Fill and assemble.** Spread about 1½ teaspoons of warm filling onto the bottom (cut side of the lower) half. Press the top half firmly over it, waffle-pattern side up. Hold for 10 seconds so the halves bond, then transfer to a wire rack. The cookie will be slightly soft when warm; it crisps fully as it cools.

9. **Repeat.** Continue cooking one or two waffles at a time, splitting and filling each while still hot. The filling may thicken as it cools; reheat briefly if it becomes too stiff to spread.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*They cooled too long. The dough has very little moisture and sets hard within about 60 seconds of leaving the iron — once set, it has no flexibility and breaks along the waffle grid lines under the pressure of a knife.*

## KITCHEN NOTES



№ 63

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON

# Chocolate Chip Cookie

*Make the DoubleTree by Hilton chocolate chip cookie at home: the official recipe Hilton released in April 2020, with rolled oats for chew, a quarter-teaspoon of fresh lemon juice (the secret ingredient that brightens everything).*

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON · COPYCAT

# Chocolate Chip Cookie

*Make the DoubleTree by Hilton chocolate chip cookie at home: the official recipe Hilton released in April 2020, with rolled oats for chew, a quarter-teaspoon of fresh lemon juice (the secret ingredient that brightens everything).*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 min | 22 min | 26 large cookies | Easy | 310 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR 26 LARGE COOKIES (THE OFFICIAL FULL BATCH)

- ½ lb (2 sticks / 227g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature — not melted; the butter should hold an indent when pressed but not be shiny or slick
- ¾ cup + 1 tablespoon (163g) granulated sugar
- ¾ cup (165g) packed light brown sugar
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 1¼ teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon fresh lemon juice — squeeze from the lemon directly; do not use bottled. This is the DoubleTree secret ingredient: a flavor brightener, not a flavoring. It sharpens the caramel in the brown sugar and lifts the chocolate without tasting citrusy in the finished cookie.
- 2¼ cups (280g) all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
- ½ cup (45g) old-fashioned rolled oats — not quick oats (which absorb too much moisture and make the cookie cakey) and not steel-cut (which stay crunchy). Rolled oats blend almost invisibly into the dough and add chew.
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon fine salt
- A pinch of ground cinnamon (about ⅛ teaspoon) — the official Hilton recipe just says 'a pinch.' It's a barely-detectable background warmth note, not a flavor you should taste; don't increase it
- 2⅔ cups (about 455g) Nestlé Toll House semi-sweet chocolate chips — the official recipe specifies this brand. The quantity looks like a lot; it is, intentionally.
- 1¾ cups (about 200g) roughly chopped walnuts — chop walnut halves to roughly pea-sized pieces. Omit if needed, but the walnuts are part of the DoubleTree cookie's texture.

## 02 Method

1. **Preheat the oven.** Set the oven to 300°F (150°C). Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. The 300°F temperature is critical — do not raise it to 350°F to speed things up. The low temperature is what keeps the center fudgy while setting the edges.
2. **Cream the butter and sugars.** Beat the softened butter, granulated sugar, and brown sugar together in a stand mixer or with a hand mixer on medium speed for 2 minutes, until the mixture is light, pale, and fluffy. Pale color indicates the sugars are fully incorporated; under-creaming produces dense cookies.
3. **Add eggs, vanilla, and lemon juice.** Start on low speed. Add the eggs one at a time, mixing well after each. Add the vanilla extract and lemon juice. Increase to medium and beat until the mixture is light and creamy, about 1 minute more. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.
4. **Whisk the dry ingredients.** In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, rolled oats, baking soda, salt, and cinnamon. Whisk thoroughly so the oats are evenly distributed and the baking soda isn't clumped.

5. **Combine wet and dry — do not overmix.** Add the dry ingredients to the butter mixture. Mix on low speed for 30–45 seconds, just until no dry flour streaks remain. Stop the mixer the moment the dough comes together. Overmixing develops gluten and produces tough cookies; this is the step most home bakers rush.

6. **Fold in the chocolate chips and walnuts.** Remove the bowl from the mixer. Add the chocolate chips and walnuts and fold them in by hand with a spatula or wooden spoon until evenly distributed. The dough will be thick and heavy from the large volume of chips and nuts.

7. **Scoop the cookies.** Use a 3-tablespoon cookie scoop (or two spoons) to portion the dough onto the prepared baking sheets, spacing the mounds about 2 inches apart. Each mound should be roughly golf-ball sized. Do not flatten them — the cookies will spread naturally. The official yield is 26 cookies.

8. **Bake for 20–23 minutes.** Bake at 300°F until the edges are golden brown and set, but the centers still look underdone, soft, and slightly glossy. This is correct. The centers will look raw and the tops will not brown much — that is what you want. Overbaked DoubleTree cookies are firm and crumbly rather than fudgy. If your oven runs hot, check at 18 minutes.

9. **Cool on the baking sheet for 1 full hour.** This is the most important step, and the one most often skipped. Leave the cookies on the hot baking sheet to cool for at least 60 minutes before moving them. The residual heat from the sheet continues to cook and firm the centers. Moving hot cookies to a wire rack — where air circulates under them and they cool faster — produces a less fudgy center and cookies that break apart when you pick them up. The sheet is the rack.

10. **Serve warm or store.** The cookies are at their best warm, between 15 and 60 minutes out of the oven — that's the DoubleTree experience. Once fully cooled, transfer to an airtight container. They keep at room temperature for up to 5 days, or freeze for up to 1 month.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The lemon juice — just ¼ teaspoon for 26 large cookies — acts as a flavor brightener. It does not make the cookie taste citrusy.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 64

ITALIAN

# Florentine Lace Cookies

*Make Italian Florentine lace cookies at home — thin, crispy almond wafers with candied orange and bittersweet chocolate, the staple of European Christmas tins and gourmet holiday shops.*

ITALIAN · COPYCAT

# Florentine Lace Cookies

*Make Italian Florentine lace cookies at home — thin, crispy almond wafers with candied orange and bittersweet chocolate, the staple of European Christmas tins and gourmet holiday shops.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 12 min per batch | 24 cookies | Medium | 140 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 2 cups (184g) slivered almonds
- ¾ cup (180ml) heavy cream
- 4 tablespoons (57g) unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- ½ cup (100g) granulated sugar
- ¼ cup (80g) orange marmalade
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

**FOR THE CHOCOLATE COATING**

- 4 oz (113g) bittersweet chocolate (60–70% cacao), finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon coconut oil or neutral vegetable oil (optional, for a glossier finish)

## 02 Method

1. **Prep and preheat.** Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Line two half-sheet pans with parchment paper. Have a thin offset spatula ready near the oven.

2. **Process the almonds.** Place the slivered almonds in a food processor and pulse in short 1-second bursts, about 10 times total, until the texture resembles coarse sand — irregular pieces mostly between ⅛ and ¼ inch, no large chunks, but not paste. Scrape down the sides once halfway through. This texture is critical: too coarse and the cookies stay thick and don't crisp through; too fine and they burn before the caramel sets. Set aside.

3. **Cook the caramel base.** Combine the heavy cream, butter pieces, sugar, orange marmalade, and salt in a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar and marmalade. Once boiling, reduce heat to medium and cook without stirring until the mixture visibly thickens, begins to pull from the edges of the pan, and large, slow bubbles form throughout, about 4–5 minutes. The color should deepen slightly toward light amber. Remove from heat immediately.

4. **Fold in the almonds.** Stir the processed almonds into the hot caramel base until every piece is coated. The mixture will be thick and sticky. Work quickly — it stiffens significantly as it cools. If it firms up too much to drop easily, return the pan to low heat for 30 seconds to loosen.

5. **Portion onto pans.** Drop level tablespoons of the almond mixture onto the prepared pans, spacing them at least 3 inches apart — each tablespoon spreads to a 3½- to 4-inch cookie in the oven, and crowded cookies will merge into one large sheet. Each pan holds 8–10 cookies. If you have more batter, hold it off the heat and do a third batch.

6. **Bake until deep amber.** Bake one or both pans at 350°F for 10–12 minutes, rotating pans from front to back halfway through. The cookies are done when the edges are deep amber-gold — noticeably darker than a standard cookie, almost mahogany at the thinnest edges — and the entire surface looks fully lacy with no pale, opaque spots in the center. Underbaked Florentines will be soft and sticky when cool; the deep color is not burning, it is correct.

7. **Cool and release.** Remove pans from the oven. Let the cookies sit on the hot pan for 2–3 minutes — they need this time to firm up enough to lift without tearing. While still warm (not hot), slide a thin offset spatula under each cookie to release it cleanly from the parchment, then transfer to a wire cooling rack. If any cookie sticks firmly, return the pan to a warm oven for 1 minute to re-melt the bottom slightly, then try again. Cool completely, at least 20 minutes, before adding the chocolate.

8. **Melt the chocolate.** Combine the chopped bittersweet chocolate and coconut oil (if using) in a small microwave-safe bowl. Microwave at 50% power in 20–30 second bursts, stirring thoroughly between each, until melted and smooth. Residual heat finishes the last of the melting — stop microwaving when a few small pieces remain and stir until fully smooth. Do not overheat or the chocolate will seize.

9. **Coat and set.** Flip each cooled cookie flat-side up. Using a small offset spatula or the back of a spoon, spread a thin, even layer of melted chocolate over the flat bottom of each cookie. Place chocolate-side-up on a fresh sheet of parchment. Let set at room temperature for 30–45 minutes until the chocolate is firm and no longer tacky, or refrigerate for 10 minutes to speed setting. Store in a single layer (or with parchment between layers) in an airtight tin at room temperature.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Both are thin, crispy almond cookies built on a caramel base, and they're closely related. The key difference is the orange and chocolate.*

## KITCHEN NOTES



№ 65

HERSHEY'S

# Peanut Butter Blossoms

*The classic Hershey's Peanut Butter Blossoms recipe — the original 1957 Pillsbury Bake-Off formula: peanut butter dough rolled in sugar, baked at 375°F, and topped with one unwrapped Hershey's Kiss the instant they come out of the oven.*

HERSHEY'S · COPYCAT

# Peanut Butter Blossoms

*The classic Hershey's Peanut Butter Blossoms recipe — the original 1957 Pillsbury Bake-Off formula: peanut butter dough rolled in sugar, baked at 375°F, and topped with one unwrapped Hershey's Kiss the instant they come out of the oven.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 10 min | 48 cookies | Easy | 95 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 48 Hershey's Milk Chocolate Kisses, unwrapped (about one 11–12 oz bag; unwrap them before you start baking — it's tedious to do mid-batch)

### COOKIE DOUGH

- 1½ cups (188g) all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup (96g) vegetable shortening such as Crisco, OR ½ cup (113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature (both work)
- ¾ cup (195g) creamy peanut butter — conventional brands (Jif, Skippy, Peter Pan) only, not natural; Jif is the most commonly recommended for baking
- ⅓ cup (67g) granulated sugar
- ⅓ cup (73g) packed light brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 2 tablespoons whole milk
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

### FOR ROLLING

- ½ cup (100g) granulated sugar (you won't use all of it; keep the rest for rolling as you go)

## 02 Method

1. **Before you start: unwrap the Kisses.** Unwrap all 48 Kisses and place them in a bowl near the oven. This step matters — you have about 10 seconds after each pan comes out of the oven to press in the Kisses, and unwrapping mid-batch breaks the timing. Set aside.
2. **Preheat and prep.** Heat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.
3. **Whisk the dry ingredients.** In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, and salt. Set aside.
4. **Cream the fat and sugars.** In a large bowl, beat the shortening (or softened butter) with the ⅓ cup granulated sugar and the brown sugar on medium speed for about 2 minutes, until well combined and slightly fluffy. Add the peanut butter and beat until evenly blended, another 1 minute. Scrape down the bowl.
5. **Add the wet ingredients.** Add the egg, milk, and vanilla extract. Beat on medium speed until fully incorporated and the mixture is smooth.
6. **Add the flour mixture.** Add the flour mixture all at once. Mix on low speed (or stir by hand) until just combined — no visible dry

flour. Do not overmix. The dough will be somewhat stiff and hold its shape when pressed; if it feels too soft to roll into balls, refrigerate for 15 minutes.

7. **Roll in sugar.** Place the ½ cup of rolling sugar in a shallow bowl. Scoop the dough by rounded tablespoons (about 1 inch balls, roughly 18g each). Roll each ball in your palms to smooth it, then roll it in the sugar until fully coated. Place 2 inches apart on the prepared baking sheets — they spread only modestly, so 12 cookies per sheet is comfortable.

8. **Bake.** Bake one sheet at a time on the center rack for 8–10 minutes, until the cookies are set on top and the edges look dry but the centers still look very slightly underdone. They should not be golden or darkened — if they're browning, pull them earlier. They will continue to cook briefly on the pan after you remove them.

9. **Press the Kisses — immediately.** The moment the pan comes out of the oven, press one unwrapped Kiss firmly and straight down into the center of each cookie. Press decisively — a single firm push is better than several tentative ones. The cookie will crack around the base of the Kiss; these radial cracks are the blossom shape the cookie is named for. If the cookies firm up before you press the last few, a quick 10-second return to the oven re-softens them. Work fast.

10. **Cool on the pan, then on a rack.** Leave the cookies on the baking sheet for 5 minutes after pressing — this gives the Kisses time to partially re-set and the cookies time to firm enough to move without breaking. Transfer to a wire rack with a thin spatula and cool completely. The Kisses will be soft for about 30 minutes; at room temperature they re-harden to their original firmness in about an hour. Don't stack cookies until the Kisses are fully firm.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Because you're pressing a hard object into a hot, freshly set cookie that still has enough residual heat to yield. The dough around the center is soft and pliable for about 20–30 seconds after it comes out of the oven.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 66

SOUTHERN

# Moravian Spice Cookies

*Make paper-thin Moravian spice cookies at home — the wafer-crisp Winston-Salem holiday classic since the 1700s. This recipe nails the overnight molasses dough, the essential 1/16-inch roll, and the warm ginger-cinnamon-clove spice blend.*

SOUTHERN · COPYCAT

# Moravian Spice Cookies

*Make paper-thin Moravian spice cookies at home — the wafer-crisp Winston-Salem holiday classic since the 1700s. This recipe nails the overnight molasses dough, the essential 1/16-inch roll, and the warm ginger-cinnamon-clove spice blend.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 8 min per batch | About 80 cookies | Intermediate | 118 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE DOUGH

- 2 cups (240g) all-purpose flour, plus extra for the work surface
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1½ tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground cloves
- ¼ tsp ground allspice
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp fine sea salt
- ½ cup (95g) vegetable shortening, cold (or ½ cup cold unsalted butter, cut into small cubes)
- ½ cup (100g) packed dark brown sugar
- ⅓ cup (110g) unsulfured dark molasses (not blackstrap)

## 02 Method

1. **Make the dough.** In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, allspice, nutmeg, black pepper, and salt. Add the cold shortening in small pieces. Using a pastry blender or your fingertips, work the fat into the flour until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs with no fat pieces larger than a small pea. This takes about 2 minutes by hand.

2. **Add brown sugar and molasses.** Stir in the dark brown sugar until evenly distributed in the flour mixture. Add the molasses and stir with a wooden spoon or flexible spatula until the dough comes together into a rough, stiff ball. It will be firm and not sticky — that's correct.

3. **Chill overnight (required).** Divide the dough into 4 equal portions and flatten each into a 1-inch-thick disc. Wrap each disc tightly in plastic wrap or wax paper. Refrigerate for at least 8 hours or overnight. The dough can be refrigerated up to 3 days or frozen for up to 1 month (thaw overnight in the refrigerator before rolling).

4. **Heat the oven and prepare the pans.** Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 350°F (175°C). Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

5. **Roll one disc very thin.** Working with one chilled disc at a time (keep the others refrigerated), place it on a lightly floured surface. Roll to 1/16 inch thick — roughly the thickness of two stacked sheets of copy paper. Roll from the center outward in all directions, turning the dough 90° every few strokes to keep it from sticking. If it sticks, lift it gently and add a small dusting of flour underneath. The thinner you roll, the crisper and more flavorful the cookie.

6. **Cut and transfer.** Cut out shapes using 1½ to 2½-inch cutters. Transfer each cutout to the prepared baking sheet using a thin offset spatula, leaving ½ inch between cookies (they don't spread). Gather the scraps, re-roll immediately, and cut again. Re-rolled scraps can get slightly tougher but still taste fine.

7. **Bake until set and lightly darkened.** Bake for 7–9 minutes, until the cookies are set and the edges show a slight deepening of color (they should not look pale). The cookies will feel soft when they come out of the oven — that's normal. They crisp fully as they cool. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and let the cookies cool on the pan for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

8. **Cool completely before storing.** The cookies need to cool entirely at room temperature — at least 20 minutes — to reach their final crisp texture. Store in an airtight metal tin with parchment paper between layers for up to 3 weeks.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Both are crisp, spiced, molasses cookies, but Moravian spice cookies are significantly thinner and more complex in spicing. A standard ginger snap is 1/4 to 3/8 inch thick, with ginger as the dominant flavor and usually some cinnamon.*

## KITCHEN NOTES



№ 67

GERMAN

# Pfeffernüsse

*Make German pfeffernüsse at home — the small, round, densely spiced Christmas cookies sold in Bahlsen tins every December.*

GERMAN · COPYCAT

# Pfeffernüsse

*Make German pfeffernüsse at home — the small, round, densely spiced Christmas cookies sold in Bahlsen tins every December.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 min | 14 min per batch | About 48 cookies | Easy | 195 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE DOUGH

- 2 cups (240g) all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ¼ tsp baking powder
- 1½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¾ tsp ground anise seed (reduce to ⅛ tsp or omit if you dislike anise)
- ½ tsp ground cloves
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- ¼ tsp ground cardamom
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp fine salt
- ½ cup (113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- ½ cup (100g) packed dark brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons (63g) honey
- 1 large egg, room temperature

### FOR THE POWDERED SUGAR COATING

- 1 cup (120g) powdered sugar, sifted

## 02 Method

1. **Mix the dry ingredients.** In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon, ground anise, cloves, ginger, cardamom, nutmeg, black pepper, and salt. Set aside.

2. **Cream the butter and sugar.** In a large bowl using a hand or stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the softened butter and dark brown sugar together on medium speed for about 3 minutes until the mixture is pale and fluffy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

3. **Add honey and egg.** Add the honey and beat for 30 seconds. Add the egg and beat on medium until fully combined, about 1 minute. The mixture may look slightly curdled at this point — that is fine and will resolve when the flour goes in.

4. **Combine to form a stiff dough.** Add all of the flour mixture at once and mix on low speed until a stiff dough forms with no dry streaks, about 1 minute. The dough will be firm and slightly tacky — stiffer than a drop cookie dough but not as stiff as a rolled cookie dough.

5. **Chill the dough.** Scrape the dough into a disc, wrap tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour and up to 3 days. Chilling firms the dough so it's easy to roll into smooth balls and allows the spice flavors to develop.

6. **Preheat the oven and prepare pans.** Set the oven to 325°F (165°C). Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Sift the powdered sugar into a shallow bowl and set it near the oven.

7. **Portion and roll into balls.** Using a tablespoon measure or a #60 cookie scoop (about 15g of dough per cookie), portion the dough. Roll each portion briskly between your palms into a smooth 1-inch ball. Place the balls 1½ inches apart on the prepared baking sheets. If the dough sticks to your palms, lightly dampen them with cold water between rolls.

8. **Bake until set with golden bottoms.** Bake one sheet at a time on the center rack for 12–14 minutes, until the cookies are firm to a light touch and the bottoms are lightly golden. The tops will look pale and underbaked — that is correct. Do not let the tops brown; the cookies set through the bottom, not the surface.

9. **Roll in powdered sugar while warm.** Remove the baking sheet from the oven and let the cookies cool for just 2 minutes. While still warm, transfer them in small batches to the bowl of sifted powdered sugar and roll until thoroughly coated. Set them on a wire rack and let them cool completely, about 30 minutes.

10. **Age in an airtight tin before serving.** Once fully cool, transfer the cookies to an airtight metal tin with parchment paper between layers. Leave the tin sealed at room temperature for at least 2 days — 3 is better. The cookies soften slightly during this rest as they absorb a small amount of ambient moisture through the powdered sugar coat, and the spices bloom and round out. They are noticeably better on day 3 than day 1.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Hard pfeffernüsse fresh from the oven is not a failure — it is the expected result. These cookies are low-moisture by design and emerge firm and dry.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 68

VIRAL HIT

# Cathedral Window Cookies

*Make cathedral window cookies at home — the viral TikTok no-bake Christmas candy that reveals a stained-glass pattern when sliced. The secret is letting the chocolate cool before you add the marshmallows.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Cathedral Window Cookies

*Make cathedral window cookies at home — the viral TikTok no-bake Christmas candy that reveals a stained-glass pattern when sliced. The secret is letting the chocolate cool before you add the marshmallows.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 10 min | 24 slices | Beginner | 158 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE LOG

- 2 cups (12 oz / 340g) semi-sweet chocolate chips
- ½ cup (1 stick / 113g) unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 bag (10–10½ oz / ~285g) mini colored marshmallows

### FOR THE EXTERIOR

- 1 cup (90g) sweetened shredded coconut

### OPTIONAL (CLASSIC VERSIONS)

- 1 large egg, beaten (adds structure)
- 1 cup (100g) chopped walnuts or pecans

## 02 Method

1. **Prepare your workspace.** Lay out a large sheet of plastic wrap (at least 18 inches long) on a flat surface. Have the coconut spread out on a separate sheet of waxed paper or on a plate. Keep the marshmallows nearby but do not add them yet.

2. **Melt the chocolate and butter.** Combine the chocolate chips and butter in a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Heat over the lowest possible setting, stirring constantly, until both are completely melted and the mixture is smooth. Do not rush this with higher heat — scorched chocolate is bitter and grainy and cannot be recovered. Alternatively, melt in a double boiler or in a microwave in 30-second bursts, stirring between each.

3. **Cool the chocolate — this step is non-negotiable.** Remove the pan from the heat. Stir continuously for about 1 minute to release heat, then set aside and let the chocolate cool for at least 5 minutes. If using an egg, stir in the beaten egg now while the chocolate is still warm but no longer hot (below 160°F). The chocolate should feel warm on your wrist but not hot.

4. **Fold in the marshmallows.** Stir the vanilla extract into the cooled chocolate. Add the marshmallows (and nuts if using) and fold gently with a spatula — do not stir aggressively. You want to coat the marshmallows without breaking them or melting their colors into the chocolate. Some streaking is fine; the goal is to keep most marshmallows visibly intact.

5. **Form the log.** Pour the mixture onto the center of the plastic wrap. Using the edges of the plastic, fold and press the mixture into a rough log shape, then roll it back and forth to form a cylinder about 2 inches in diameter and 10–12 inches long. Work quickly — the chocolate will begin to firm up as it cools.

6. **Coat in coconut.** Unroll the plastic wrap, roll the log over the coconut-covered surface to coat the outside completely, pressing gently so the coconut adheres. Re-wrap tightly in the plastic, twist the ends, and smooth the log's shape.

7. **Refrigerate.** Place the wrapped log on a baking sheet and refrigerate for at least 2–3 hours. Overnight chilling gives the cleanest slices — the chocolate needs to firm all the way through.

8. **Slice to reveal the windows.** Unwrap the log and place it on a cutting board. Using a sharp serrated knife, cut the log into ½-inch rounds with a gentle back-and-forth sawing motion. Wipe the knife clean between cuts — this is what keeps each cross-section's stained-glass colors crisp and distinct rather than smeared. Arrange on a plate or in a gift box.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The chocolate was too hot when you added them. Freshly melted chocolate can reach 130–150°F, which is more than enough to dissolve mini marshmallows completely — turning the whole mixture a dull brownish-gray smear with no visible colors.*

KITCHEN NOTES



CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS

# 08 CANDY & FUDGE

*Fudge, truffles, brittle and bark — the candy-shop boxes people give every December, made in your kitchen.*

10 RECIPES



№ 69

BROWN & HALEY

# Almond Roca

*Homemade Almond Roca — the iconic Brown & Haley butter toffee covered in milk chocolate and chopped almonds, made in a single saucepan. The key is a candy thermometer and constant stirring to 300°F; the whole batch sets in under an hour.*

BROWN & HALEY · COPYCAT

# Almond Roca

*Homemade Almond Roca — the iconic Brown & Haley butter toffee covered in milk chocolate and chopped almonds, made in a single saucepan. The key is a candy thermometer and constant stirring to 300°F; the whole batch sets in under an hour.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 20 min | 36 pieces | Medium | 230 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 1 cup (2 sticks / 227g) unsalted butter — do not substitute margarine or salted butter (margarine breaks the emulsion; salted butter makes the toffee taste slightly chemical)
- 1 cup (200g) granulated white sugar
- 3 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon light corn syrup — this is not optional: corn syrup inhibits sugar crystallization and stabilizes the butter-sugar emulsion; omitting it significantly increases the risk of a broken, grainy toffee
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1 cup (about 110g) slivered blanched almonds, divided — ½ cup for the base layer, ½ cup for the topping; blanched slivered almonds (not sliced or whole) give the closest texture to the original
- 1½ cups (255g) milk chocolate chips — Brown & Haley uses milk chocolate for the classic Almond Roca; semi-sweet works if you prefer less sweetness; use good chips (Guittard, Ghirardelli) rather than store brand for a cleaner melt

## 02 Method

1. **Toast the almonds.** Spread the 1 cup of slivered almonds in a single layer on a dry baking sheet. Toast in a 350°F oven for 6–8 minutes, stirring once halfway through, until they smell nutty and are lightly golden. Watch them carefully — they go from golden to burnt quickly. Remove and let cool completely. Set aside ½ cup for the base layer and ½ cup for the topping.

2. **Prepare the baking sheet.** Line a 10×15-inch rimmed baking sheet (a standard jelly roll pan) with parchment paper. Lightly spray the parchment with cooking spray. Scatter the first ½ cup of toasted almonds in an even layer over the prepared pan. Set the pan within arm's reach of your stove — you will need to pour the hot toffee immediately when it's ready, with no time to search for the pan.

3. **Cook the toffee.** Combine the butter, sugar, water, corn syrup, and salt in a heavy-bottomed 2- to 3-quart saucepan. Clip a candy thermometer to the side of the pan (the tip should be submerged in the mixture but not touching the pan bottom, or you'll get a false high reading). Heat over medium heat, stirring constantly with a heatproof silicone spatula, until the butter is fully melted and the sugar dissolves into a smooth, cohesive mixture — about 3–4 minutes. Continue to cook and stir constantly, running the spatula along the bottom and sides. Do not raise the heat: medium heat is the target throughout. The mixture will bubble vigorously and gradually darken from pale yellow to amber.

4. **Reach hard crack stage — 300°F.** Continue cooking and stirring until the thermometer reads 295–300°F and the toffee has turned a warm amber color (the shade of a lightly

tanned maple syrup). This typically takes 12–18 minutes from when you first turned on the heat. At 300°F, the toffee is at hard crack stage: a drop in cold water forms rigid, brittle threads that snap cleanly. If your thermometer reads 300°F but the mixture still looks pale gold, trust the thermometer and remove from heat. If you see signs the batch is breaking — pools of butter separating from grainy amber sugar — add 1 tablespoon of very hot water and stir vigorously for 30 seconds; this can sometimes rescue a breaking batch.

5. **Pour immediately.** Remove the saucepan from the heat and immediately pour the hot toffee in a thin, steady stream over the almond-lined baking sheet, starting from the center and working outward. Do not scrape the sides or bottom of the pan — any caramelized bits clinging there can cause crystallization in the finished candy. Tilt the baking sheet gently to help the toffee spread to the edges if needed, or use a heat-resistant spatula to nudge it. Work quickly — the toffee begins setting within seconds.

6. **Add the chocolate layer.** Immediately scatter the 1½ cups of milk chocolate chips in an even layer over the entire surface of the hot toffee. Let them sit undisturbed for 2–3 minutes until they are visibly melted (the chips will look shiny and soft). Using an offset spatula or the back of a spoon, spread the melted chocolate in a thin, even layer from edge to edge. If any chips haven't fully melted, the residual heat of the toffee should finish them — do not use a torch or put the pan back on heat.

7. **Top with the remaining almonds.** Immediately scatter the second ½ cup of toasted almonds evenly over the melted chocolate. Press them gently with clean fingertips or the flat bottom of a measuring cup so they adhere to the chocolate before it sets.

8. **Let it set completely.** Let the finished candy cool at room temperature for 1–2 hours, or refrigerate for 30–40 minutes, until the chocolate is completely firm and the toffee beneath it has hardened — you should be able to press the center firmly without any give. Do not rush this step: chocolate set in the refrigerator can develop a white bloom (fat bloom from condensation) and the toffee may not be fully hard in the center. Room temperature setting produces the cleanest result.

9. **Break and serve.** Once completely set, lift the parchment off the baking sheet and set the candy slab on a cutting board. Break it into irregular pieces with your hands — start at one corner, apply pressure, and it will crack naturally along the toffee and nut lines. You can also score it with a knife before it fully hardens (about 20 minutes in) to get more uniform pieces. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 weeks, or in the refrigerator for up to 1 month. Layer pieces between parchment if stacking.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Almond Roca is a butter almond toffee coated in chocolate and chopped almonds.*



№ 70

CHASE CANDY COMPANY

# Cherry Mash-Style Candy Bars

*Make Cherry Mash-style candy bars at home: a soft cream cheese-and-cherry fondant center with real maraschino cherries, coated in semisweet chocolate and crushed roasted peanuts.*

CHASE CANDY COMPANY · COPYCAT

# Cherry Mash-Style Candy Bars

*Make Cherry Mash-style candy bars at home: a soft cream cheese-and-cherry fondant center with real maraschino cherries, coated in semisweet chocolate and crushed roasted peanuts.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 min | 0 min | 30 pieces | Easy | 125 |

## 01 Ingredients

### CHERRY CENTER

- 4 oz (113g) block cream cheese, softened to room temperature
- 2 cups (240g) powdered sugar, sifted
- 3 tablespoons maraschino cherry juice (from the jar)
- ½ teaspoon almond extract
- 1 pinch kosher salt
- ¾ cup maraschino cherries (about 20 cherries), well-drained and finely chopped
- 2 drops red gel food coloring (optional — for a deeper pink center)

### CHOCOLATE PEANUT COATING

- 2 cups (340g) semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil or vegetable shortening (for a smooth, glossy coating)
- 1½ cups (200g) dry-roasted salted peanuts, coarsely chopped

## 02 Method

1. **Drain the cherries thoroughly.** Pour maraschino cherries into a strainer and drain for 5 minutes; reserve 3 tablespoons of the juice for the recipe. Spread the cherries in a single layer on two stacked paper towels, lay another paper towel on top, and press gently to blot away surface moisture. Finely chop the cherries — you want small pieces that distribute evenly through the center, not large chunks. Blot the chopped cherries again if they look wet. This step is not optional: excess moisture prevents the center from holding its shape.

2. **Make the cherry center.** In a large bowl, beat the softened cream cheese with a hand mixer (or sturdy spatula) until completely smooth and lump-free, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the sifted powdered sugar in two additions, mixing until fully incorporated after each — it will look dry at first, then come together. Add the cherry juice, almond extract, and salt; mix until smooth and uniform. The mixture should be firm, like stiff cookie dough — if it feels too soft or sticky to handle, mix in another 2 tablespoons of powdered sugar. Fold in the chopped cherries by hand with a spatula. Add food coloring if using. Taste and adjust: more juice for cherry flavor, more sugar for sweetness.

3. **Chill the center dough.** Cover the bowl and refrigerate for 1 hour (or 30 minutes in the freezer) until firm enough to scoop and roll cleanly. The mixture will stiffen noticeably. If pressed for time, flatten it into a rough disk on a parchment-lined plate and freeze 20 minutes.

4. **Shape into pucks.** Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Using a tablespoon measure or small cookie scoop, portion the cherry

mixture into about 30 mounds. Roll each between your palms into a smooth ball, then press gently to flatten into a puck about ½ inch thick and 1½ inches across. Place on parchment as you go. Once all pucks are shaped, place the trays in the freezer for 20 minutes — cold pucks are essential for successful chocolate dipping.

5. **Prep the peanut coating.** Spread the coarsely chopped peanuts in a shallow plate or baking dish wide enough to press the pucks into easily. Have it ready next to your dipping setup.

6. **Melt the chocolate.** Combine chocolate chips and coconut oil in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave in 30-second increments, stirring vigorously after each, until completely smooth — typically 60 to 90 seconds total. Stir well: the residual heat in the chips will melt the last few as long as you keep stirring. The chocolate should be fluid and glossy, not thick. If it seizes (turns grainy or dry), stir in ½ teaspoon of additional coconut oil and microwave 10 seconds.

7. **Dip and coat.** Working in groups of 5 or 6 (the pucks warm quickly at room temperature), dip each puck into the chocolate using a fork — submerge fully, lift, and tap the fork gently on the rim of the bowl to let excess drip off for 5 seconds. While the chocolate is still wet, press the puck flat-side down into the chopped peanuts, pressing firmly so peanuts adhere. Flip and press the other side into the peanuts. Return to parchment. Repeat. The chocolate-to-peanut window is about 20 to 30 seconds: work quickly or the chocolate starts to set and the peanuts won't adhere.

8. **Set and store.** Once all pucks are coated, refrigerate the trays for 15 to 20 minutes until the chocolate is fully set and firm. Store layered between parchment paper in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to 2 weeks, or freeze up to 2 months. Bring to room temperature for 10 minutes before serving for the best texture — cold from the refrigerator, the cream cheese center is very dense; at room temperature it softens to match the original bar's consistency.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Moisture is the main failure point in this recipe.*

## KITCHEN NOTES



№ 71

GODIVA

# Dark Chocolate Truffles

*Homemade Godiva-style dark chocolate truffles: a smooth, firm dark chocolate ganache center dipped in a thin dark chocolate shell — the Gold Collection truffle made at home for about 40 cents each instead of $2.25 a piece.*

GODIVA · COPYCAT

# Dark Chocolate Truffles

*Homemade Godiva-style dark chocolate truffles: a smooth, firm dark chocolate ganache center dipped in a thin dark chocolate shell — the Gold Collection truffle made at home for about 40 cents each instead of $2.25 a piece.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 10 min | 24 truffles | Medium | 150 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE GANACHE CENTER

- 8 oz (227g) dark chocolate (60–70% cacao), finely chopped — use a good quality bar or baking chocolate (Guittard, Ghirardelli baking bars, Valrhona, or Callebaut callets); chocolate chips have added stabilizers that resist melting smoothly and produce a grainier ganache
- ½ cup (120ml) heavy whipping cream
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small pieces — adds gloss and a slightly silkier mouthfeel
- 1 tablespoon cognac or dark rum (optional) — adds depth without detectable alcohol flavor; substitute 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract for an alcohol-free version
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

### FOR THE CHOCOLATE SHELL

- 10 oz (283g) dark chocolate (60–70% cacao), finely chopped — the same quality bar chocolate; a smooth shell needs good chocolate
- 1 teaspoon neutral oil (grapeseed, refined coconut, or vegetable) — prevents the coating from setting too thick

## 02 Method

1. **Make the ganache.** Place the finely chopped dark chocolate in a medium heatproof bowl. In a small saucepan over medium heat, bring the heavy cream to a simmer — small bubbles forming around the edges and steam rising, but not a full boil. Pour the hot cream over the chocolate and let it sit undisturbed for 2 minutes to melt. Then stir slowly from the center outward with a rubber spatula, gradually widening the strokes until the ganache is completely smooth and glossy with no visible chocolate pieces. Add the butter pieces and stir gently until fully incorporated. Add the cognac (or vanilla) and salt and stir once more.

2. **Chill until firm.** Pour the ganache into a shallow dish — an 8×8 baking pan works well; a wider, shallower container chills more evenly than a deep bowl. Press plastic wrap directly onto the surface to prevent a skin from forming. Refrigerate for 2–3 hours, or until the ganache is firm enough to scoop and hold a shape. At the 2:1 chocolate-to-cream ratio, a Godiva-style ganache sets considerably firmer than a Lindor-style (which is near 1:1) — it should feel like cold peanut butter, not pudding. If it over-firms, let it sit at room temperature for 10 minutes before scooping.

3. **Scoop and roll the centers.** Line a baking sheet with parchment. Using a small cookie scoop or two teaspoons, portion the ganache into roughly 1-inch balls — about 15g each (the size of a large grape). Roll each between your palms quickly to smooth, working fast so your body heat doesn't soften the ganache. If it warms up and starts sticking, rinse your hands with cold water, dry thoroughly, and continue. You should get about 24 centers.

4. **Refrigerate, then freeze.** Place the sheet of ganache balls in the refrigerator for 30 minutes to firm, then move to the freezer for another 30 minutes until completely solid. Fully frozen centers hold their shape during dipping; a ball that is even slightly soft will deform in the warm coating chocolate and produce an uneven shell.

5. **Melt the shell chocolate.** While the centers freeze, combine the 10 oz chopped dark chocolate with the teaspoon of oil in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave in 30-second intervals on medium power, stirring between each, until about 80% is melted. Remove and stir until the residual heat melts the rest. The chocolate should be smooth and barely warm to the touch — not hot. Hot chocolate melts the surface of the frozen centers and causes the shell to crack as it sets.

6. **Dip the truffles.** Working quickly, drop one frozen ganache ball into the melted chocolate. Use two forks (or a chocolate dipping fork) to roll it in the chocolate and lift it out, letting the excess drip off by tapping the fork gently on the bowl rim. Slide the coated truffle onto a clean parchment-lined baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining centers. If the melted chocolate starts to thicken in the bowl, microwave for 10 seconds and stir.

7. **Set at room temperature.** Leave the dipped truffles at room temperature — around 65–70°F — for 30–45 minutes until the shell is completely hardened. Setting in the refrigerator causes the chocolate shell to contract and develop a dull, slightly matte surface rather than the glossy finish of a premium truffle. If your kitchen is above 74°F, a 10-minute chill is fine, but remove the truffles before the shell has fully set in the cold.

8. **Finish and store.** Once fully set, the truffles can be placed in mini cupcake liners for serving or gifting. For the Gold Ballotin presentation, arrange them in rows in a gold or dark-colored gift box. Store at cool room temperature (under 68°F) for up to 1 week, or refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 3 weeks. Let refrigerated truffles come to room temperature for 15 minutes before serving.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The main difference is the ganache ratio and firmness. Godiva truffles use a roughly 2:1 chocolate-to-cream ratio, which produces a firm center that gives a clean snap when bitten.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 72

AMERICAN

# Kentucky Bourbon Balls

*Make Kentucky bourbon balls at home — the holiday candy that has been made in the Bluegrass State since 1938.*

AMERICAN · COPYCAT

# Kentucky Bourbon Balls

*Make Kentucky bourbon balls at home — the holiday candy that has been made in the Bluegrass State since 1938.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 30 min | About 40 pieces | Beginner | 160 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE BOURBON PECAN CENTER

- 1½ cups (150g) pecan halves, divided (1 cup for soaking and chopping; ½ cup set aside for 40 topping halves)
- ⅓ cup (80ml) Kentucky straight bourbon
- ½ cup (113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 3½ cups (420g) powdered sugar, sifted, plus more if needed
- 1 small pinch fine sea salt

### FOR THE CHOCOLATE COATING

- 12 oz (340g) dark chocolate chips or bittersweet chocolate (60–70% cacao)
- 1½ tbsp (21g) coconut oil or vegetable shortening

## 02 Method

1. **Soak the pecans.** Measure out 40 whole pecan halves and set them aside in a small bowl — these are for the tops. Roughly chop the remaining pecans (about 1 cup / 100g). Place the chopped pecans in a small bowl, pour the bourbon over them, and stir once. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and let soak at room temperature for at least 8 hours or overnight. When ready, drain through a fine-mesh strainer set over a small bowl, pressing lightly with a spoon to extract as much liquid as possible. Reserve every drop of the soaking bourbon.

2. **Make the fondant.** Using a hand mixer or stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the softened butter on medium speed until smooth and creamy, about 1 minute. Add the powdered sugar in three additions, mixing on low after each and scraping the bowl. After the last addition, add the reserved soaking bourbon one tablespoon at a time, mixing after each. The finished dough should be firm enough to roll into a smooth ball without sticking to your palms. If it is too soft or sticky, mix in more powdered sugar one tablespoon at a time; if it is too dry or crumbly, add a few drops of additional bourbon and mix until it comes together. Add the pinch of salt and mix once more.

3. **Fold in the pecans.** Add the drained soaked pecans and stir by hand with a spatula until evenly distributed throughout the fondant.

4. **Roll.** Using a level tablespoon measure (about 20–22g), portion the fondant. Roll each piece between your palms into a smooth sphere and place on a parchment-lined baking sheet. You should get about 40 balls. Work efficiently — the fondant softens slightly with the warmth of your hands, and working fast keeps them round.

5. **Chill.** Refrigerate the formed balls uncovered for at least 1 hour (or freeze for 20–30 minutes), until the centers are completely firm. This step is not optional — room-temperature fondant will sag and lose its shape during dipping.

6. **Melt the chocolate.** Set a heatproof bowl over a saucepan of barely simmering water, making sure the bowl does not touch the water. Add the dark chocolate and coconut oil. Stir continuously until fully melted and smooth. Remove from heat and let cool for 5 minutes — you want the chocolate fluid and around 90–95°F, not steaming hot.

7. **Dip.** Take 6–8 chilled centers out of the refrigerator at a time, leaving the rest cold. Drop one center into the chocolate, turn it once to coat completely, then lift with a fork. Tap the fork 4–5 times against the rim of the bowl so excess chocolate falls back in. Slide the ball off the fork onto a clean sheet of parchment, using a slight wrist-twist to detach it cleanly.

8. **Top.** Immediately press one of the reserved pecan halves firmly into the center of each dipped ball before the chocolate sets. Work quickly — once the chocolate cools, the pecan won't adhere without leaving a dent in the shell.

9. **Set.** Let the finished bourbon balls stand undisturbed at room temperature for 30–45 minutes until the chocolate coating is completely firm. If your kitchen is warm, transfer to the refrigerator for 15 minutes.

10. **Ripen.** Transfer the finished bourbon balls to an airtight container, layer with parchment, and refrigerate for 2–3 days before serving. The bourbon flavor mellows and deepens as it rests, and the fondant firms further. They are good on day one but significantly better — rounder and more integrated — by day three.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The center is completely different. A rum ball is a crumb-truffle — it binds ground nuts or crushed cookies with cocoa, corn syrup, and rum into a dense, fudgy ball, then coats the outside in powdered sugar or sprinkles.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 73

KRAFT

# Fantasy Fudge

*The copycat Kraft Fantasy Fudge recipe — the exact formula from the back of the Jet-Puffed Marshmallow Creme jar that's been making foolproof holiday fudge since the 1970s.*

KRAFT · COPYCAT

# Fantasy Fudge

*The copycat Kraft Fantasy Fudge recipe — the exact formula from the back of the Jet-Puffed Marshmallow Creme jar that's been making foolproof holiday fudge since the 1970s.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 min | 15 min | 48 pieces | Easy | 132 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 3 cups (600g) granulated sugar
- ¾ cup (170g / 1½ sticks) unsalted butter, cut into 1-tablespoon pieces (the original recipe uses 'butter or margarine'; unsalted is preferred for cleaner flavor)
- ⅔ cup (5 oz can / 160ml) evaporated milk — NOT sweetened condensed milk (Carnation 5-oz cans are exactly right)
- 1 bag (12 oz / 340g) semi-sweet chocolate chips (Nestlé Toll House or Ghirardelli work well; do not use chocolate wafers or baking bars — chips contain stabilizers that help them melt smoothly into fudge)
- 1 jar (7 oz / 198g) Kraft Jet-Puffed Marshmallow Creme — do not substitute marshmallow fluff by weight without measuring; it must be exactly 7 oz
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

### OPTIONAL ADD-INS (STIR IN WITH MARSHMALLOW CREME)

- 1 cup (100g) chopped walnuts or pecans, toasted

## 02 Method

1. **Prepare the pan.** Line a 13×9-inch metal baking pan with heavy-duty foil, pressing it into the corners and letting the excess hang over the sides as handles. Spray the foil lightly with nonstick spray or grease with butter. Set aside. Have all your remaining ingredients measured and within reach — once the sugar mixture reaches the boil, the recipe moves fast and you can't leave the stove.

2. **Melt the base.** Combine the sugar, butter, and evaporated milk in a heavy 3-quart saucepan (or a large, heavy Dutch oven). Place over medium-high heat. Stir constantly with a heat-resistant rubber spatula or wooden spoon as the butter melts and the sugar begins to dissolve, making sure to drag the spatula across the entire bottom of the pan to prevent any sugar from sticking.

3. **Boil to soft-ball stage.** Bring the mixture to a full rolling boil — a vigorous, active boil that continues bubbling even when you stir it, not just small surface bubbles. Once you've reached a full rolling boil, set a timer for 5 minutes and continue stirring the entire time, moving the spatula across the full bottom of the pan. The mixture will be extremely hot and may spatter. If using a candy thermometer, boil until the mixture registers 234°F (112°C) — the soft-ball stage is the reliable target no matter how the timing runs on your stove. Do not stop stirring and do not walk away.

4. **Remove from heat.** The moment the timer goes off (or the thermometer reads 234°F), remove the saucepan from the heat immediately. Place it on a heat-resistant surface or trivet.

5. **Add the chocolate chips.** Pour the entire bag of chocolate chips into the hot mixture. Stir vigorously and continuously — the chips will melt rapidly in the heat of the sugar syrup. Keep stirring until all the chocolate is completely melted and the mixture is smooth with no visible chip pieces, about 1–2 minutes.

6. **Add the marshmallow creme and vanilla.** Spoon the entire jar of marshmallow creme into the saucepan. Add the vanilla extract. Stir vigorously, folding the marshmallow creme into the chocolate mixture, until fully incorporated and the fudge is uniform, glossy, and no white streaks remain — about 2–3 minutes. Stir in nuts now if using. Work with purpose: the fudge begins to set as it cools, and if you stir too long it can start to pull and lose its gloss.

7. **Pour and spread.** Immediately pour the fudge into the prepared pan. Use a lightly greased spatula or the back of a spoon to spread it quickly into an even layer, all the way to the edges. Work fast — the fudge will start to stiffen within 2–3 minutes.

8. **Cool and cut.** Allow the fudge to cool completely at room temperature for at least 4 hours, or refrigerate for 2 hours, before cutting. Do not rush this step — cutting too early produces sticky, misshapen pieces. Once fully cooled and firm, use the foil handles to lift the fudge slab out of the pan onto a cutting board. Peel back the foil. Cut into a 6×8 grid for 48 pieces (about 1½×1 inches each) using a large, sharp knife. For cleaner cuts, wipe the blade with a damp cloth between cuts.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Fantasy Fudge is the name Kraft gave to the fudge recipe printed on the back of its Jet-Puffed Marshmallow Creme jars, which has appeared there since at least the early 1970s.*

## KITCHEN NOTES



№ 74

SOUTHERN

# Martha Washington Candy

*Make Martha Washington candy at home — the Southern holiday confection of coconut, pecans, and sweetened condensed milk, dipped in dark chocolate. A homemade batch of 60 pieces costs about $14; a comparable artisan gift box runs $90–180.*

SOUTHERN · COPYCAT

# Martha Washington Candy

*Make Martha Washington candy at home — the Southern holiday confection of coconut, pecans, and sweetened condensed milk, dipped in dark chocolate. A homemade batch of 60 pieces costs about $14; a comparable artisan gift box runs $90–180.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 min | 30 min | About 60 pieces | Beginner | 165 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE FILLING

- 1 can (14 oz / 397g) sweetened condensed milk
- ½ cup (113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 2 lbs (about 8 cups / 908g) powdered sugar, sifted
- 2 cups (180g) sweetened shredded coconut
- 2 cups (210g) pecans, toasted then finely chopped
- 1 small pinch fine sea salt

### FOR THE CHOCOLATE COATING

- 12 oz (340g) semi-sweet or dark chocolate chips (60–70% cacao)
- 1½ tbsp (20g) coconut oil

## 02 Method

1. **Toast the pecans.** Spread pecan halves on a dry skillet over medium heat (or on a sheet pan in a 350°F oven) and toast for 5–7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until they smell nutty and are lightly golden. Remove immediately and let cool completely. Chop finely — pieces should be no larger than a small pea.

2. **Make the filling.** In a large mixing bowl, beat the softened butter briefly with a wooden spoon or hand mixer until smooth. Add the sweetened condensed milk and stir to combine. Add the sifted powdered sugar in three or four additions, stirring well after each, until a stiff, uniform dough forms. Fold in the sweetened coconut and chopped toasted pecans, plus the pinch of salt. The mixture should feel like very firm cookie dough — it should hold its shape when pressed.

3. **First chill.** Cover the bowl and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, until the filling is cold, firm, and easy to handle without sticking to your hands. This step is not optional — the filling is too soft to roll properly at room temperature.

4. **Roll the balls.** Line two sheet pans with parchment paper. Working with chilled filling, roll the mixture into 1-inch balls (about 18–20g each, roughly the size of a large marble). Set them on the parchment-lined pans and refrigerate again for 30 minutes (or freeze for 15 minutes) until very firm and cold — this is the key step to getting a clean, even chocolate coat.

5. **Melt the chocolate.** Fill a medium saucepan with 1 inch of water and bring to a bare simmer. Set a heatproof bowl over the saucepan (the bottom should not touch the water). Add the chocolate chips and coconut oil to the bowl. Stir gently and continuously until melted and smooth. Remove from heat and let the chocolate cool for 5 minutes — it should be fluid but not steaming hot.

6. **Dip the balls.** Working in batches of 6–8 (keep the rest refrigerated), use a dipping fork or regular fork to lower each ball into the warm chocolate. Turn it once to coat completely. Lift it out, tap the fork against the bowl rim several times so excess chocolate falls back in, and slide the coated ball onto clean parchment. Quickly press a pecan half on top if desired, before the chocolate sets.

7. **Set and store.** Return the dipped trays to the refrigerator and let the chocolate coating set completely, about 1 hour. Transfer to an airtight container, separating layers with parchment paper. Store in the refrigerator. Bring to room temperature for 15–20 minutes before serving. Keeps up to 3 weeks in the refrigerator or 3 months in the freezer.



№ 75

SOUTHERN

# New Orleans Pecan Pralines

*Make classic New Orleans pecan pralines at home — the creamy, fudge-like candy that French Quarter shops like Aunt Sally's and Loretta's Authentic Pralines have sold for generations.*

SOUTHERN · COPYCAT

# New Orleans Pecan Pralines

*Make classic New Orleans pecan pralines at home — the creamy, fudge-like candy that French Quarter shops like Aunt Sally's and Loretta's Authentic Pralines have sold for generations.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 min | 20 min | About 24 pralines | Intermediate | 160 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 1 cup (220g) packed light brown sugar
- 1 cup (200g) granulated white sugar
- ½ cup (120ml) heavy cream
- 3 tbsp (42g) unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 1 pinch fine sea salt
- 2 cups (218g) pecan halves
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The texture is the main distinction. New Orleans pralines are creamy and fudge-like — made with heavy cream or evaporated milk, they're soft and melt readily on the tongue.*

## 02 Method

1. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper and place them on a flat, stable surface near the stove. Set out a large metal spoon or a 1-tablespoon cookie scoop.
2. Combine the brown sugar, white sugar, heavy cream, butter, and salt in a heavy 3-quart saucepan. Set over medium heat and stir constantly until the sugars have fully dissolved and the butter has melted — about 4–5 minutes.
3. Clip a candy thermometer to the side of the pan. Bring the mixture to a boil, then stop stirring. Cook undisturbed over medium heat until the thermometer reads 238°F (soft-ball stage), about 8–10 minutes. Keep a close eye as it approaches temperature — it can climb quickly.
4. Stir in the pecan halves and vanilla extract. Cook, stirring gently, for 1 more minute to coat the pecans, then remove the saucepan from the heat.
5. Stir vigorously with a wooden spoon or heatproof spatula for 1½–2 minutes. Watch the mixture closely: it will be glossy and fluid at first, then gradually thicken and begin to lose its sheen, turning from wet-looking to slightly matte and creamy. This change signals that the sugar is crystallizing — your window for dropping is now.
6. Working quickly, drop heaping tablespoons of the mixture onto the prepared parchment, spacing them about 2 inches apart. Each spoonful will spread into a flat round patty as it settles.
7. Let the pralines cool at room temperature, undisturbed, for 25–30 minutes. They will firm from soft and tacky to a set, creamy candy with a slightly sandy texture.
8. Once fully cooled, carefully lift the pralines from the parchment. If any stick, slide a thin spatula under the edge. Store layered between parchment sheets in an airtight container at room temperature.



№ 76

REESE'S

# Peanut Butter Trees

*Make copycat Reese's Peanut Butter Trees at home — the same creamy peanut butter filling and milk chocolate coating, shaped as Christmas trees, for about $0.20 each instead of $1.13 at retail.*

REESE'S · COPYCAT

# Peanut Butter Trees

*Make copycat Reese's Peanut Butter Trees at home — the same creamy peanut butter filling and milk chocolate coating, shaped as Christmas trees, for about $0.20 each instead of $1.13 at retail.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 0 min | 20 trees | Easy | 185 |

## 01 Ingredients

### PEANUT BUTTER FILLING

- 1 cup (250g) creamy peanut butter (Jif or Skippy — not natural peanut butter)
- 1½ cups (180g) powdered sugar, sifted
- 2 tablespoons (28g) unsalted butter, melted and slightly cooled
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

### CHOCOLATE COATING

- 12 oz (340g) milk chocolate chips or milk chocolate melting wafers
- 1 teaspoon (4g) refined coconut oil or vegetable shortening

### OPTIONAL DECORATIONS

- Green sanding sugar or jimmies
- White chocolate, melted (for drizzle)
- Holiday sprinkles

## 02 Method

1. **Make the filling.** Combine the peanut butter, sifted powdered sugar, melted butter, vanilla extract, and sea salt in a medium bowl. Stir with a silicone spatula or wooden spoon until the mixture comes together completely — it should look like stiff playdough, hold its shape when you press a piece between your fingers, and not feel greasy or crumbly. If it is too soft and sticky, add powdered sugar one tablespoon at a time. If it is too dry and crumbly, add a teaspoon of peanut butter. Cover the bowl and refrigerate for 15 to 20 minutes to firm it up slightly.

2. **Shape the filling.** Divide the chilled filling into approximately 20 equal pieces (about 1½ tablespoons each). Press each piece firmly into a silicone Christmas tree mold, filling each cavity to the top and pressing down hard to eliminate any air pockets. Alternatively, press each piece into a Christmas tree cookie cutter set on a parchment-lined baking sheet. If shaping freehand, roll each piece into a ball, then press into a tree shape — wide at the base, tapering to a point — about ½ inch thick. Place the filled molds or parchment sheet in the freezer for 20 to 30 minutes until the filling pieces are completely solid.

3. **Melt the chocolate.** Place the chocolate chips (or wafers) and coconut oil in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on 50% power in 30-second intervals, stirring

well after each one, until the chocolate is fully melted and smooth — about 2 to 3 total minutes. Do not overheat; the chocolate should feel barely warm to the touch, not hot. If using a double boiler, melt over barely simmering water, stirring constantly, until smooth, then remove from heat immediately.

4. **Dip the trees.** Remove the filling pieces from the molds (they should pop out cleanly when solid). Line a clean baking sheet with parchment paper. Working with one tree at a time, lay it in the melted chocolate, use a fork to flip and fully coat it, then lift with the fork and gently tap the fork against the edge of the bowl to let excess chocolate drip off. Set the coated tree on the parchment sheet. The coating should be thin and even — the peanut butter flavor should dominate, not the chocolate. If the chocolate starts to thicken as it cools, reheat it in 10-second microwave bursts.

5. **Add decorations (optional).** If decorating, do it immediately after placing each tree on the parchment — before the chocolate sets. Press green sanding sugar onto the surface, add sprinkles, or pipe a white chocolate drizzle. Work quickly; the coating starts to set within 2 to 3 minutes.

6. **Set and store.** Allow the dipped trees to set completely at room temperature for 20 to 30 minutes, or transfer the parchment sheet to the refrigerator for 10 minutes. Once fully set, the chocolate should be firm and glossy. Transfer to an airtight container, layering pieces between parchment to prevent sticking, and store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks or in the freezer for up to 3 months.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The seasonal shapes are molded rather than assembled in layers, and the mold geometry produces a different ratio.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 77

SEE'S CANDIES

# See's Candies Bordeaux

*The copycat See's Candies Bordeaux — a creamy brown-sugar buttercream center, dipped in milk chocolate and finished with chocolate sprinkles. See's most iconic piece.*

SEE'S CANDIES · COPYCAT

# See's Candies Bordeaux

*The copycat See's Candies Bordeaux — a creamy brown-sugar buttercream center, dipped in milk chocolate and finished with chocolate sprinkles. See's most iconic piece.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 min | 5 min | 40 pieces | Intermediate | 85 |

## 01 Ingredients

- 1 cup (200g) packed light brown sugar — C&H or Domino brands recommended for even texture
- ¼ cup (60ml) heavy cream
- ¼ cup (½ stick / 56g) unsalted butter
- Pinch of fine salt
- 1½ cups (180g) powdered sugar, sifted
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 12 oz (340g) good-quality milk chocolate chips or wafers — Ghirardelli or Guittard recommended
- 1 teaspoon refined coconut oil or vegetable shortening (for chocolate shine)
- 2–3 tablespoons small chocolate sprinkles or chocolate jimmies

## 02 Method

1. **Cook the filling.** In a small heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine the brown sugar, heavy cream, butter, and salt over medium-low heat. Stir continuously with a heat-resistant silicone spatula as the butter melts. Continue stirring until the sugar is completely dissolved and the mixture is smooth and glossy — 3–4 minutes. It should look like a uniform, lightly bubbling caramel-scented paste with no visible sugar granules. Do not let it reach a rolling boil or cook beyond this point. Remove from heat immediately.

2. **Cool the filling.** Pour the hot filling into a medium mixing bowl. Let it cool at room temperature, stirring occasionally, until it reaches room temperature — about 20–25 minutes. It will thicken noticeably as it cools. If you're in a rush, set the bowl in a larger bowl of ice water and stir every 2–3 minutes until cool to the touch.

3. **Beat in the powdered sugar.** Using a hand mixer on low speed (or a sturdy wooden spoon), beat the sifted powdered sugar and vanilla extract into the cooled brown-sugar mixture, one half at a time. Increase to medium speed once incorporated and beat until smooth and thick — the texture should resemble soft fondant or thick frosting that holds a shape. If it feels too soft or sticky, add 2 tablespoons more powdered sugar. If it cracks or crumbles, add 1 teaspoon of heavy cream.

4. **Chill the filling.** Cover the bowl with plastic wrap pressed directly onto the filling surface and refrigerate until firm enough to scoop cleanly — 1 to 2 hours. It should feel like refrigerator-cold butter: firm but pliable, not sticky.

5. **Shape the centers.** Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Using a teaspoon or a small cookie scoop, portion the filling into 1-inch pieces (about 1 teaspoon each — you want 35–40 pieces for uniform, bite-sized results). Roll

each portion between your palms into a smooth ball, or press and shape into small rounds about ½-inch thick (which gives a flatter, more square appearance after dipping, closer to the See's original). Set each shaped center on the prepared baking sheet, spacing them apart. Freeze the sheet for 20 minutes — this firms the centers so they don't deform when lifted from the chocolate.

6. **Melt the chocolate.** Set up a double boiler: a heatproof bowl set over a small saucepan of barely simmering water (the bowl should not touch the water). Add the milk chocolate and coconut oil. Stir gently and continuously until fully melted and smooth, then remove the bowl from the heat. Keep the bowl over the warm (not simmering) water between dips to hold the chocolate fluid — it should feel warm to a fingertip, not hot. If you don't have a double boiler, melt in 30-second microwave bursts, stirring after each, until smooth.

7. **Dip the centers.** Working quickly, drop one frozen center into the melted chocolate. Using a dipping fork (or a regular dinner fork), flip it once to coat all sides, then lift it out and hold it over the bowl, tapping the fork handle gently against the edge to let excess chocolate drip off. When the dripping stops, slide the piece onto the parchment paper. Immediately scatter a pinch of chocolate sprinkles over the top while the coating is still wet — they won't stick once the chocolate sets. Repeat with remaining centers, re-stirring the chocolate between every 2–3 pieces to keep it smooth.

8. **Set and serve.** Let the dipped candies stand at room temperature, undisturbed, until the chocolate is fully set — about 30 minutes in a cool kitchen (60°F–68°F / 16°C–20°C). If your kitchen is warm, refrigerate for 10 minutes to set, then remove — leaving them in the refrigerator too long can cause condensation on the shell. Store in an airtight container, layers separated by parchment or wax paper, at cool room temperature for up to 2 weeks.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The filling was cooked too long or at too high a heat. The goal is simply to melt the brown sugar, butter, and cream together until smooth — the mixture should become glossy and uniform after 3–4 minutes over medium-low heat without ever boiling.*

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 78

VIRAL HIT

# Old-Fashioned Divinity Candy

*Make old-fashioned divinity candy at home — the cloud-white Southern holiday confection that sets into glossy, pecan-studded peaks. The key is cooking the sugar syrup to exactly 260°F and pouring it into stiff egg whites on a dry day.*

VIRAL HIT · COPYCAT

# Old-Fashioned Divinity Candy

*Make old-fashioned divinity candy at home — the cloud-white Southern holiday confection that sets into glossy, pecan-studded peaks. The key is cooking the sugar syrup to exactly 260°F and pouring it into stiff egg whites on a dry day.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 min | 25 min | About 36 pieces | Intermediate | 92 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE CANDY

- 2½ cups (500g) granulated sugar
- ½ cup (160g) light corn syrup
- ½ cup (120ml) water
- 2 large egg whites, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1 cup (100g) pecan halves (or roughly chopped pecans)

### EQUIPMENT NOTE

- A candy thermometer or instant-read thermometer is required — there is no reliable substitute. A stand mixer makes the process manageable; a hand mixer works with a helper.

## 02 Method

1. **Check the weather first.** Look up the current relative humidity for your location. Below about 50% you are in the clear; from 50–60% it gets risky; above 60% the candy generally will not set — wait for a drier day. This is not optional. Divinity fails in humid conditions regardless of technique.

2. **Prepare your workspace.** Line two large baking sheets with waxed paper or parchment and set them next to your stand mixer. Have a teaspoon or tablespoon measure ready. Have the vanilla extract, salt, and pecans measured and within arm's reach — once the syrup is poured, everything moves fast.

3. **Cook the syrup.** Combine the sugar, corn syrup, and water in a heavy-bottomed 3-quart saucepan. Stir over medium heat until the sugar fully dissolves — you can stir freely at this stage. Once the mixture comes to a boil, stop stirring entirely and clip a candy thermometer to the side of the pan, making sure the tip is submerged but not touching the bottom. Continue cooking over medium to medium-high heat, without stirring, until the thermometer reads 260–265°F (hard-ball stage). This takes approximately 15–20 minutes depending on your burner. Watch carefully as the temperature climbs past 240°F — it accelerates quickly near the end.

4. **Beat the egg whites.** While the syrup cooks, beat the egg whites in the bowl of your stand mixer (or a large deep bowl for a hand mixer) with the whisk attachment on medium-high speed until they hold stiff, glossy peaks — the kind that stand straight up when you lift the whisk without drooping or falling over. This takes 3–5 minutes. Turn the mixer to low to maintain the peaks while you wait for the syrup to reach temperature.

5. **Pour the syrup.** The moment the syrup hits 260°F, remove the pan from the heat immediately. Turn the stand mixer to high speed. Pour the hot syrup into the egg whites in a thin, controlled stream down the inside edge of the mixer bowl — not onto the whisk itself, as this sprays syrup onto the sides and wastes it. Pour slowly and steadily; the whole pour should take 30 to 45 seconds. The mixture will swell and begin turning opaque as the syrup hits the egg whites.

6. **Beat until it sets.** Continue beating on high speed until the candy becomes very thick, loses most of its gloss, and holds stiff peaks that do not fall when you stop the mixer and lift the whisk. This typically takes 5 to 8 minutes. When a spoonful dropped onto waxed paper mounds up and holds its shape without spreading flat, the candy is ready. Add the vanilla extract and salt during the last 30 seconds of beating.

7. **Fold in the pecans.** Remove the bowl from the mixer. Quickly fold in the pecans with a sturdy spatula.

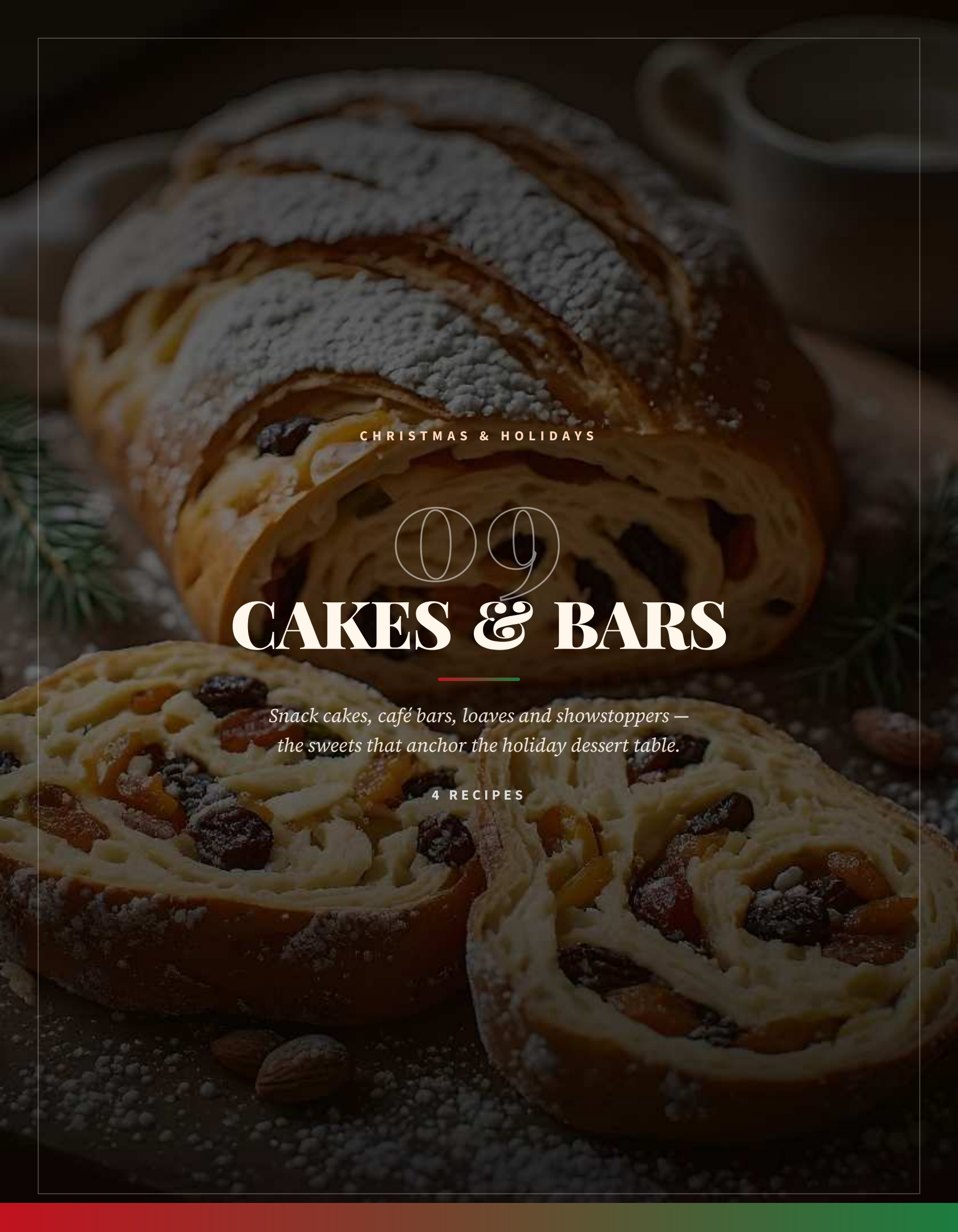
8. **Drop onto waxed paper.** Working quickly — divinity begins to set in the bowl as it cools — drop the candy by rounded tablespoon onto the prepared waxed-paper-lined baking sheets. Use two spoons: scoop with one, push off with the other. For a classic mounded look, swirl the top slightly as you push each piece off. You should get about 36 pieces.

9. **Let set.** Allow the divinity to stand at room temperature, uncovered, for at least 1 hour until completely set and no longer sticky to the touch. The surface will develop a thin, slightly matte crust while the interior stays soft. Store in an airtight container at room temperature, with waxed paper between layers, for up to 2 weeks.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Divinity is a meringue-based candy, which means the egg whites' ability to hold their structure is central to whether the candy sets. Egg whites hold air and set because the proteins in them denature and form a stable network.*

## KITCHEN NOTES



CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS

# 09 CAKES & BARS

*Snack cakes, café bars, loaves and showstoppers — the sweets that anchor the holiday dessert table.*

4 RECIPES



№ 79

BAUDUCCO

# Bauducco Panettone

*The famous Bauducco panettone made at home: a tall, golden Italian Christmas bread filled with candied orange peel and raisins, using a simplified commercial-yeast method that produces the genuine domed crumb.*

BAUDUCCO · COPYCAT

# Bauducco Panettone

*The famous Bauducco panettone made at home: a tall, golden Italian Christmas bread filled with candied orange peel and raisins, using a simplified commercial-yeast method that produces the genuine domed crumb.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 min | 55 min | 16 | Medium | 270 |

## 01 Ingredients

### RAISIN SOAK

- ½ cup golden raisins
- 2 tablespoons orange juice (or dark rum)

### SPONGE STARTER

- 2¼ teaspoons (1 standard packet) active dry yeast
- ¼ cup warm whole milk (around 110°F — warm to the touch, not hot)
- 1 teaspoon granulated sugar
- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour

### MAIN DOUGH

- 2½ cups (315g) all-purpose flour
- ⅓ cup (67g) granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 large egg yolk, at room temperature
- ¼ cup warm whole milk
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon finely grated orange zest (from about 1 large orange)
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
- 10 tablespoons (140g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature

### MIX-INS

- ½ cup diced candied orange peel (or use 2 tbsp thick orange marmalade + ¼ cup extra raisins)
- ¼ cup diced citron or candied lemon peel

### TO FINISH

- 1 teaspoon cold unsalted butter (for the X score)

## 02 Method

1. **Soak the raisins.** Combine the golden raisins and orange juice (or rum) in a small bowl. Stir, cover, and let soak while you prepare the dough. Drain before using (discard the soaking liquid or save for another purpose).

2. **Make the sponge.** In a small bowl, stir together the yeast, warm milk, 1 teaspoon sugar, and ⅓ cup flour until smooth. Cover with a kitchen towel and let stand at room temperature for 25–30 minutes, until the surface is visibly bubbly and the mixture has puffed to roughly twice its original volume. If nothing happens after 35 minutes, your yeast may be old — start fresh.

3. **Combine the dough base.** In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook, combine the 2½ cups flour, ⅓ cup sugar, and salt. Stir briefly with a spoon to distribute. Add the puffed sponge, the whole eggs, the extra yolk, the ¼ cup warm milk, vanilla extract, orange zest, and lemon zest. Mix on medium-low speed until a rough, shaggy dough forms, about 3–4 minutes. It will look messy — that's fine.

4. **Incorporate the butter.** With the mixer running on medium speed, add the softened butter one tablespoon at a time. Wait 20–30 seconds between each addition, giving the dough time to

absorb each piece before adding the next. The whole process takes 10–12 minutes. The dough will gradually transform from rough and sticky to smooth, shiny, and extremely soft — it should clear the sides of the bowl but stick slightly to the bottom. This is correct panettone dough texture. Increase speed to medium-high and beat for 2 minutes more to build the gluten network.

5. **Fold in the mix-ins.** Remove the dough hook and use a flexible spatula to fold in the drained raisins, candied orange peel, and citron. Distribute evenly throughout the dough with 8–10 folds.

6. **First rise.** Cover the mixer bowl tightly with plastic wrap. Let the dough rise at room temperature (ideally 68–72°F) until it has doubled in volume, about 2 to 2½ hours. The dough will look puffy and slightly jiggly — do not punch it down.

7. **Shape.** Scrape the dough onto a lightly floured surface using a bench scraper or spatula. Working quickly (the dough is soft and warm), fold the outer edges into the center two or three times to create surface tension, then flip the ball seam-side down and use cupped hands to drag it gently toward you in a circular motion on the counter — this tightens the surface into a smooth, taut ball. Place the ball seam-side down into a 7-inch paper panettone mold (or prepared parchment-lined mold).

8. **Second rise.** Loosely drape plastic wrap over the top of the mold. Let the dough rise in a warm, draft-free spot until it has crested 1 to 1½ inches above the rim of the mold, about 1½ to 2 hours. If your kitchen is cool (below 65°F), place the mold in an oven with just the light on, or next to (not on) a warm stovetop. This second rise is slower than the first and cannot be rushed — it is what creates the domed top.

9. **Preheat and score.** About 20 minutes before the dough reaches the top of the mold, preheat your oven to 350°F with a rack in the lower third. When the dough is ready, remove the plastic wrap. Use a sharp knife or a lame (bread-scoring razor) to cut an X about ½ inch deep across the top of the dough. Place a small pat of cold butter — about 1 teaspoon — directly in the center of the X.

10. **Bake.** Place the panettone on the oven rack and bake at 350°F for 15 minutes. Reduce the temperature to 325°F and continue baking for another 35–40 minutes (50–55 minutes total), until the top is a deep golden brown and a wooden skewer inserted into the center comes out clean. The internal temperature should read 190–195°F on an instant-read thermometer inserted through the side. If the top is browning too fast (check at the 35-minute mark), tent loosely with a piece of foil.

11. **Hang upside down (critical step).** Immediately after the panettone comes out of the oven, push two long wooden skewers or metal knitting needles horizontally through the base of the mold, about ¾ inch from the bottom, spaced evenly so they span the full width. Suspend the panettone upside down between two tall pots or the backs of two sturdy chairs, letting it hang freely so the top (now facing down) is not touching any surface. Leave it inverted for at least 2 hours, until fully cooled to room temperature. Do not skip this step — without it, the delicate crumb will slowly compress under its own weight as it cools.

12. **Rest and serve.** Remove the skewers, right the panettone (it will slide out cleanly once cooled), and wrap tightly in plastic wrap. The flavor and texture improve significantly over the first 24 hours. Serve at room temperature, sliced in wedges. Toasting day-old slices at 325°F for 8 minutes revives the crumb and intensifies the orange notes. Store wrapped at room temperature for up to 5 days, or freeze individual slices.



№ 80

THE CHEESECAKE FACTORY

# Peppermint Bark Cheesecake

*The Cheesecake Factory Peppermint Bark Cheesecake copycat: white chocolate cheesecake with homemade peppermint bark folded into the batter, finished with a white chocolate ganache and crushed candy cane. Holiday seasonal, now made at home.*

THE CHEESECAKE FACTORY · COPYCAT

# Peppermint Bark Cheesecake

*The Cheesecake Factory Peppermint Bark Cheesecake copycat: white chocolate cheesecake with homemade peppermint bark folded into the batter, finished with a white chocolate ganache and crushed candy cane. Holiday seasonal, now made at home.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 45 min | 75 min | 12 | Hard | 810 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE PEPPERMINT BARK (MAKE THIS FIRST, THE DAY BEFORE OR AT LEAST 2 HOURS AHEAD)

- 4 oz (115g) semisweet chocolate (60–65% cacao), finely chopped — use bar chocolate, not chips
- ½ teaspoon peppermint extract, divided
- 4 oz (115g) white chocolate, finely chopped — use bar chocolate (Ghirardelli or Lindt white chocolate bars); white chocolate chips have more stabilizers and set streakier
- ⅓ cup finely crushed candy canes (about 4 standard canes) — process in a zip-lock bag with a rolling pin until you have a mix of fine powder and small shards (both sizes matter)

### FOR THE OREO CRUST

- 28 Oreo cookies (regular, with the cream) — the filling is part of the crust and you want it; do not scrape it out
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and slightly cooled

### FOR THE WHITE CHOCOLATE CHEESECAKE FILLING

- 4 oz (115g) white chocolate, finely chopped — this goes into the batter, not the topping
- 4 packages (8 oz each, 32 oz total) full-fat cream cheese, softened to room temperature for at least 2 hours
- 1¼ cups (250g) granulated sugar
- ¾ cup (180g) full-fat sour cream, room temperature
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour — this is intentional; white chocolate adds fat and moisture and the flour stabilizes the batter
- 2 teaspoons peppermint extract
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 3 large eggs plus 1 egg yolk, room temperature
- Chopped peppermint bark from above (reserve ½ cup for garnish)

### FOR THE WHITE CHOCOLATE GANACHE

- 6 oz (170g) white chocolate, finely chopped
- ⅓ cup (80ml) heavy whipping cream

### FOR GARNISH

- Lightly sweetened whipped cream
- ¼ cup finely crushed candy canes (reserved from above, or fresh)
- Reserved chopped peppermint bark (½ cup)
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped dark chocolate

## 02 Method

1. **Make the peppermint bark (at least 2 hours ahead or the night before).** Line a small baking sheet or dinner plate with parchment. Melt the semisweet chocolate: place in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave in 20-second intervals on 50% power, stirring between each, until just melted and smooth (do not overheat). Stir in ¼ teaspoon peppermint extract. Spread into a thin, roughly 7×5-inch rectangle on the parchment — thin is correct, you're making bark not a chocolate bar. Refrigerate 10 minutes until solid. While the dark layer chills, melt the white chocolate the same way: 20-second

intervals at 50% power, stirring between each. Stir in the remaining ¼ teaspoon peppermint extract and ¾ of the crushed candy canes. Spread this white chocolate layer evenly over the chilled dark layer. Immediately sprinkle the remaining crushed candy canes over the top, pressing them very lightly. Refrigerate until completely set, at least 1 hour. Once solid, lift the bark off the parchment, break it into irregular pieces, then chop roughly into ½-inch chunks. Reserve ½ cup of the nicest-looking pieces for garnish; the rest goes into the batter.

2. **Make the Oreo crust.** Preheat the oven to 325°F. Pulse the Oreo cookies (cream filling included) in a food processor until you have fine, uniform crumbs — no large pieces. Alternatively, seal them in a heavy zip-lock bag and crush with a rolling pin. Combine the crumbs with the melted butter in a bowl and stir until the mixture resembles damp, clumping sand. Press firmly and evenly into the bottom and about 1½ inches up the sides of a 9-inch springform pan. Use the bottom of a flat measuring cup to press the crust compact — a loose crust won't hold a clean slice. Bake for 10 minutes until set and slightly fragrant. Set aside to cool while you make the filling.

3. **Prepare for the water bath.** Wrap the outside of the springform pan tightly in two layers of heavy-duty aluminum foil, pressing the foil snug all the way up the sides. Set the wrapped pan inside a large roasting pan. Bring a kettle of water to a boil and set aside.

4. **Melt the white chocolate for the filling.** Place 4 oz of finely chopped white chocolate in a small microwave-safe bowl. Microwave in 20-second intervals at 50% power, stirring between each, until just melted and smooth. Let cool until it is barely warm to the touch — if it's hot when it hits the cold cream cheese, it will seize. Set aside.

5. **Beat the cream cheese until completely smooth.** Using a stand mixer with the paddle attachment (or a hand mixer), beat the room-temperature cream cheese on medium speed for 4 minutes, scraping down the bowl twice, until no lumps remain. This is the single most important step — start with fully softened cream cheese and beat longer than you think necessary. Lumps in the batter are permanent; they do not work out during baking.

6. **Add sugar, flour, and extracts.** With the mixer on low, add the sugar and beat just until incorporated, about 1 minute. Add the flour, peppermint extract, and vanilla. Mix on low until just combined. Scrape the bowl.

7. **Add the melted white chocolate.** With the mixer on low, stream in the cooled melted white chocolate and mix until the batter is uniformly pale and smooth. Scrape down the bowl. The white chocolate is what makes the filling distinctly pale ivory rather than the typical light yellow of a standard cheesecake batter.

8. **Add the sour cream.** Add the sour cream and mix on low until just incorporated. Scrape the bowl.

9. **Add the eggs — low speed, no air.** Add the 3 eggs and egg yolk one at a time on low speed, mixing only until each egg disappears into the batter before adding the next — about 20 seconds per egg. Do not beat vigorously at this stage. Adding air into the batter at this point causes the cheesecake to puff, then collapse and crack. Scrape the bowl after the last egg.

10. **Fold in the peppermint bark pieces.** Remove the bowl from the mixer. Using a rubber spatula, fold the chopped peppermint bark pieces (not the reserved garnish) gently through the batter in a few wide strokes — you want them distributed, not ground down into the batter. A few large pieces breaking slightly is fine.

11. **Bake in the water bath.** Pour the filling over the cooled Oreo crust and smooth the top with an offset spatula. Place the roasting pan on the middle rack of the preheated oven. Carefully pour the hot water from the kettle into the roasting pan until it reaches halfway up the

sides of the springform pan — about ¾ to 1 inch deep. Bake at 325°F for 70–75 minutes. The cheesecake is done when the outer 2 inches look set and slightly puffed and the center (a 3-inch circle) still has a distinct jiggle when you gently shake the pan. It will look underdone — it's not.

12 **Cool in the oven.** Turn the oven off. Crack the oven door open 2 inches using a folded kitchen towel. Leave the cheesecake in the turned-off oven for 1 full hour. This gradual cool prevents the rapid temperature change that causes the center to sink and the surface to crack. Do not skip or shorten this step.

13 **Chill the cheesecake.** Remove the cheesecake from the water bath and peel off the foil. Run a thin knife around the inside edge of the springform pan to release any sticking. Let the cheesecake cool to room temperature on the counter (about 30 minutes), then refrigerate uncovered for at least 6 hours, preferably overnight. Cover lightly with plastic wrap after the first 2 hours in the fridge.

14 **Make the white chocolate ganache when you're ready to serve (or a few hours before).** The cheesecake must be fully cold before you apply the ganache. Place the 6 oz of chopped white chocolate in a heatproof bowl. Heat the heavy cream in a small saucepan over medium heat until it just barely simmers — small bubbles around the edge, not a rolling boil. Pour the hot cream over the white chocolate and let sit undisturbed for 1 minute. Whisk slowly from the center outward until the ganache is completely smooth and glossy. Let it cool at room temperature for 10–15 minutes until it has thickened slightly and is no longer hot but is still pourable. If it's too hot, it will run off the cheesecake.

15 **Glaze and garnish.** Remove the springform sides. Place the cheesecake on a serving plate or cake stand. Pour the cooled ganache over the center of the cheesecake and use an offset spatula to nudge it toward the edges, letting a little drip over the sides — this is the look. Work within a 2-minute window before the ganache starts to set. While the ganache is still slightly tacky, scatter the reserved chopped peppermint bark pieces, crushed candy canes, and dark chocolate pieces over the top. The tactile surface is part of what makes this visually recognizable as the Cheesecake Factory version. Refrigerate 20 minutes to set the ganache before adding whipped cream and slicing.

16 **Slice and serve.** Dip a sharp knife in hot water, wipe dry, and cut cleanly. Pipe or spoon whipped cream in swirls between slices just before serving. The peppermint flavor intensifies on day 2, so if you're making this for a party, baking the day before is genuinely better.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*The Original Cheesecake relies on eggs and sour cream for structure, with no flour or cornstarch. This recipe adds white chocolate to the batter, which contributes significant fat (cocoa butter) and a small amount of moisture when it melts.*



№ 81

GERMAN

# Dresden-Style Christmas Stollen

*Make authentic German Christmas stollen at home — rich enriched dough wrapped around a marzipan center, studded with rum-soaked dried fruits and slivered almonds, finished with melted butter and a generous coat of powdered sugar.*

GERMAN · COPYCAT

# Dresden-Style Christmas Stollen

*Make authentic German Christmas stollen at home — rich enriched dough wrapped around a marzipan center, studded with rum-soaked dried fruits and slivered almonds, finished with melted butter and a generous coat of powdered sugar.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 45 min | 55 min | 16 slices | Intermediate | 365 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE RUM-SOAKED FRUIT (SOAK THE NIGHT BEFORE)

- ¾ cup (120g) golden raisins
- ½ cup (80g) dark raisins or currants
- ½ cup (80g) finely diced candied orange peel
- ¼ cup (40g) finely diced candied lemon peel
- ½ cup (60g) slivered blanched almonds
- 3 tbsp dark rum (or fresh orange juice)

### FOR THE ENRICHED DOUGH

- 3½ cups (420g) all-purpose flour, plus extra for dusting
- 2¼ tsp (7g) active dry yeast (1 standard packet)
- ½ cup (120ml) whole milk, warmed to 110°F
- ¼ cup (60ml) water, warmed to 110°F
- ¼ cup (50g) granulated sugar, divided — 1 tsp reserved for proofing yeast
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- ¾ cup (170g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature, cut into tablespoons
- ⅓ cup (80g) full-fat sour cream (or plain full-fat Greek yogurt)
- ½ tsp ground cardamom
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- ¼ tsp ground mace
- ½ tsp fine sea salt
- Finely grated zest of 1 lemon
- Finely grated zest of 1 orange

### FOR THE MARZIPAN CENTER

- 7 oz (200g) store-bought marzipan

### FOR THE FINISH

- ½ cup (113g) unsalted butter, melted
- 1½ cups (180g) powdered sugar, sifted

## 02 Method

1. **Soak the fruit (night before):** Combine the golden raisins, dark raisins, candied orange peel, candied lemon peel, and slivered almonds in a bowl. Add the rum, toss to coat, cover tightly, and let soak at room temperature overnight (or at least 4 hours). The fruit will absorb most of the liquid.

2. **Make the sponge:** In a large bowl, whisk together ½ cup of the flour, 1 tsp of the sugar, all the yeast, the warm milk, and the warm water. Cover loosely and let stand 20 minutes until the mixture is foamy and visibly bubbling — this confirms the yeast is active before you invest time in the full dough.

3. **Build the dough:** Add to the sponge: the remaining flour, remaining sugar, eggs, sour cream, cardamom, cinnamon, nutmeg, mace, salt, lemon zest, and orange zest. Stir until a shaggy dough forms, then turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead by hand for 8 minutes (or use a stand mixer with the dough hook on medium) until smooth and somewhat elastic. The dough will feel soft and sticky — this is correct.

4. **Incorporate the butter:** Add the softened butter a few tablespoons at a time, kneading each addition in fully before adding more. The dough will look greasy and unruly at first, then come back together — this takes 5 to 7 minutes total. The finished dough should be smooth and silky, pulling cleanly from clean hands with just a slight tackiness.

5. **Add the fruit:** Drain the soaked fruit and almonds thoroughly, squeezing out excess liquid. Flatten the dough on the work surface, scatter the drained fruit over it, and fold and knead until evenly distributed — about 3 minutes. The dough will want to tear; work gently and persist.

6. **First rise:** Shape the dough into a ball, place in a lightly oiled bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and let rise in a warm spot for 1 to 1½ hours until noticeably puffed. Heavily enriched doughs do not double the way lean doughs do — look for visible expansion and a lighter feel, not a strict doubling.

7. **Shape the stollen:** On a lightly floured surface, pat the dough into an oval roughly 12 × 9 inches. Roll the marzipan between your palms into a smooth log about 10 inches long. Lay the marzipan log lengthwise across the center of the oval, slightly off-center. Fold the larger side of the dough over the marzipan, stopping about 1 inch short of the opposite edge — the classic off-center fold that gives stollen its distinctive silhouette. Press the top down gently.

8. **Second rise:** Transfer the shaped stollen to a parchment-lined baking sheet, fold-side up. Cover loosely and let rise 30 to 45 minutes; it will puff slightly but not dramatically.

9. **Bake:** Heat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Bake for 50 to 60 minutes until deep golden brown all over and the internal temperature reads 190–200°F on an instant-read thermometer. If the top is browning too fast after 35 minutes, tent loosely with foil. The loaf will sound hollow when tapped on the bottom.

10. **Finish immediately while hot:** As soon as the stollen comes out of the oven, brush it generously all over — top, sides, and bottom — with half the melted butter. Wait 2 minutes for it to absorb, then brush again with the remaining melted butter. Dust the entire surface with half the powdered sugar. After 15 minutes, once the butter layer has set, dust generously with the remaining powdered sugar. The top should be completely, thoroughly white — this is not decorative, it is the seal.

11. **Cool completely:** Transfer to a wire rack and let cool at least 2 hours before wrapping. The crumb is still setting during this time.

12. **Mature before cutting:** Wrap the cooled stollen tightly in plastic wrap, then in foil. Store at room temperature in a cool, dry place — not the refrigerator — for at least 1 week before slicing. Two to four weeks produces the best result. To serve, slice from the center outward; wrap the cut ends back together between servings to prevent drying.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Dense is correct — stollen is not a fluffy bread. It is an enriched, heavily loaded dough, and a compact, slightly dense crumb is exactly what you want.*



№ 82

LITTLE DEBBIE

# Christmas Tree Cakes

*The copycat Little Debbie Christmas Tree Cakes — soft yellow butter sponge sandwiched with sweet marshmallow cream, coated in green vanilla candy icing, decorated with red stripe accents.*

LITTLE DEBBIE · COPYCAT

# Christmas Tree Cakes

*The copycat Little Debbie Christmas Tree Cakes — soft yellow butter sponge sandwiched with sweet marshmallow cream, coated in green vanilla candy icing, decorated with red stripe accents.*

| PREP | COOK | SERVES | LEVEL | CAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 45 min | 14 min | 12–14 cakes | Intermediate | 245 |

## 01 Ingredients

### FOR THE SPONGE CAKE

- 1½ cups (190g) all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon fine salt
- ½ cup (1 stick / 113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- ¾ cup (150g) granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ½ cup (120ml) whole milk, at room temperature

### FOR THE MARSHMALLOW CREAM FILLING

- ½ cup (1 stick / 113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 1 cup (120g) powdered sugar, sifted
- ½ cup (140g) marshmallow fluff or marshmallow creme
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1–2 teaspoons heavy cream, if needed

### FOR THE GREEN CANDY COATING

- 16 oz (454g) white candy melts or white almond bark, chopped
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil or vegetable shortening (to thin)
- Green gel food coloring (about ¼ teaspoon; use oil-compatible gel, NOT liquid)

### FOR DECORATION

- 2–3 tablespoons red cookie icing or red gel icing (in a squeeze tube or piping bag)

## 02 Method

1. **Make the sponge cake.** Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line an 18×13-inch half-sheet pan (rimmed baking sheet) with parchment paper, leaving a 1-inch overhang on two sides. Spray the parchment lightly with nonstick spray. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt; set aside. In a large bowl, beat the softened butter and granulated sugar on medium-high speed until pale and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in the vanilla. Reduce speed to low and add the flour mixture in three additions, alternating with the milk (flour–milk–flour–milk–flour), beginning and ending with flour. Mix just until the last streak of flour disappears — do not overmix.

2. **Bake the cake.** Scrape the batter onto the prepared pan and spread it into a thin, even layer with an offset spatula or the back of a spoon. The batter is stiff; work it to the edges so the layer is as uniform as possible (about ¼ inch thick). Bake at 350°F for 12–14 minutes, until the top is just set and dry to the touch and the edges are barely beginning to turn golden. Do not overbake — the cake should be pale and pliable, not brown. Cool completely in the pan on a wire rack, at least 30 minutes.

3. **Cut the tree shapes.** Once the cake is fully cool, press a 3-inch (or 2½-inch) Christmas tree cookie cutter firmly through the cake and parchment. Work methodically from one end of the pan, rotating the cutter slightly between cuts to interlock tree shapes and reduce scrap. Transfer each cutout to a clean work surface as you go. You

should get 28–32 trees from one pan — plan on 14–16 assembled cakes. Pair them up by size so each sandwich has a matching top and bottom. Reserve the scraps for snacking.

4. **Make the filling.** In a medium bowl, beat the softened butter on medium speed until smooth, about 1 minute. Add the sifted powdered sugar and beat on low until combined, then increase to medium-high and beat for 2 minutes until fluffy. Add the marshmallow fluff and vanilla and beat until fully incorporated and smooth, another 1–2 minutes. The filling should be thick and spreadable; if it seems stiff, add 1–2 teaspoons of heavy cream and beat briefly. Taste and adjust: it should be sweet, lightly marshmallow-forward, and not too buttery.

5. **Assemble the sandwiches.** Flip half the tree cutouts upside-down (these are the bottoms). Transfer the filling to a piping bag with a ¼-inch round tip, or to a zip-lock bag with one corner snipped. Pipe a generous layer of filling over each bottom tree, leaving a ⅛-inch border at the edges. Press a matching top tree onto each filled bottom, flat side down, and press gently until the filling just reaches the edges. Don't overfill — the coating will seal the sandwich, but filling squeezed out on the sides before dipping makes the dip messy.

6. **Freeze the assembled cakes.** Place the assembled sandwiches on a parchment- or wax-paper-lined baking sheet in a single layer. Freeze uncovered for 30 minutes. This step is not optional: frozen sandwiches hold their shape in the warm candy melt, and the cold surface helps the coating set fast and smooth. Longer than 30–40 minutes is fine; don't go over 2 hours uncovered or the exposed cake edges dry out.

7. **Melt and tint the candy coating.** Place the white candy melts (or chopped almond bark) in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave in 30-second intervals at 50% power, stirring after each, until mostly melted. Stir in the coconut oil or shortening until the coating is smooth and pourable — it should run off a spoon in a thin stream, not in a thick ribbon. (If still too thick, add another teaspoon of oil.) Add the green gel food coloring, stirring well. Start with a smaller amount and build up — the color reads lighter in the bowl than on the set coating, so go a shade deeper than you think you need. Do not use liquid food coloring; it will cause the candy melt to seize.

8. **Let frozen cakes breathe, then dip.** Remove the frozen cakes from the freezer. Let them sit at room temperature for 60–90 seconds to allow surface condensation to evaporate before dipping — moisture from the frozen cakes will cause the candy coating to seize or streak if they go straight from freezer to bowl. Set up a dipping station: the bowl of green candy coating, a fork or dipping fork, and a wax-paper-lined pan for the finished cakes.

9. **Dip the cakes.** Working quickly, lower one frozen cake into the green candy coating, submerging it fully. Lift it out with a fork, hold it above the bowl, and gently tap the fork handle against the bowl rim 2–3 times to shake off excess coating. Drag the bottom of the cake across the bowl rim to remove any drips from the bottom, then slide it onto the wax paper. Repeat with all cakes. If the coating in the bowl thickens as it cools, reheat in 15-second bursts, stirring well. Work in batches if needed.

10. **Let the coating set, then add red decoration.** Let the dipped cakes sit at room temperature for about 15 minutes until the green coating is fully set and dry to the touch. Then, using the red cookie icing or red gel icing, pipe a diagonal stripe or zigzag across each tree — this is the signature decoration on the original. A thin line across the tree on an angle is the closest to the Little Debbie version; a zigzag gives a slightly bolder look. Let the red decoration dry for 5 minutes before handling.

11. **Serve or store.** The cakes can be served at room temperature and are best within 2 days. For longer storage, refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 5 days, or freeze individually wrapped for up to 2 months. Remove from the refrigerator 15 minutes before serving for the best texture.

**WHY IT WORKS**

*Candy melt coating is applied warm (about 105–110°F).*

# Index

By ingredient and by restaurant.


## A

### APPLES

Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese Fondue 52
Christmas Tree Charcuterie Board 60
HoneyBaked Ham Co. Smoked Turkey Breast 76

## B

### BACON

Clams Casino 40

### BAILEYS IRISH CREAM

Baileys Irish Cream 17

### BAUDUCCO

Bauducco Panettone 244

### BEEF

Summer Sausage and Port Wine Cheese Ball 46
Pigs in a Blanket Wreath 63
French-Canadian Tourtière 88
Lawry's Yorkshire Pudding 110

### BOURBON & WHISKEY

Baileys Irish Cream 17
Old-Fashioned Eggnog 25
Homemade Eggnog 34
Kentucky Bourbon Balls 224

### BROCCOLI

Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese Fondue 52

### BROWN & HALEY

Almond Roca 215

## C

### CARROTS

Mushroom Bourguignon 129

### CHASE CANDY COMPANY

Cherry Mash-Style Candy Bars 218

### CHEDDAR

Summer Sausage and Port Wine Cheese Ball 46
Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese Fondue 52
Christmas Tree Charcuterie Board 60
Christmas Morning Breakfast Casserole 82
Fleming's Potatoes au Gratin 101
HoneyBaked Ham Double Cheddar Macaroni and Cheese 104
Lobster Mac and Cheese 163
Famous Christmas Potatoes 181

### CHEF-INSPIRED

Ham in Cola 79
Mushroom Bourguignon 129
Beet Wellington 132
Lobster Mac and Cheese 163

### CHERYL'S COOKIES

Cheryl's Frosted Cutout Cookies 190

### CHICK-FIL-A

Peppermint Chip Milkshake 21

### CHOCOLATE

Baileys Irish Cream 17
Peppermint Chip Milkshake 21
Irish Cream Cold Brew 30
Hot Cocoa Mix 32
Moose Munch 43
Chocolate Chip Cookie 196
Florentine Lace Cookies 199
Peanut Butter Blossoms 202
Cathedral Window Cookies 211
Almond Roca 215
Cherry Mash-Style Candy Bars 218
Dark Chocolate Truffles 221
Kentucky Bourbon Balls 224
Fantasy Fudge 227
Martha Washington Candy 230
Peanut Butter Trees 234
See's Candies Bordeaux 237
Peppermint Bark Cheesecake 247

COCONUT
- Moose Munch 43
- Florentine Lace Cookies 199
- Cathedral Window Cookies 211
- Cherry Mash-Style Candy Bars 218
- Dark Chocolate Truffles 221
- Kentucky Bourbon Balls 224
- Martha Washington Candy 230
- Peanut Butter Trees 234
- See's Candies Bordeaux 237
- Christmas Tree Cakes 254

COFFEE & ESPRESSO
- Baileys Irish Cream 17
- Kahlúa-Style Coffee Liqueur 23
- Irish Cream Cold Brew 30
- Czech Kolaches 160

CORN
- Christmas Eve Pork Tamales 94
- Ruth's Chris Corn Pudding 121

CRANBERRIES
- Christmas Tree Charcuterie Board 60
- Hasselback Butternut Squash 144
- Wild Rice & Cranberry Stuffed Butternut Squash 153

CREAM CHEESE
- Summer Sausage and Port Wine Cheese Ball 46
- Hot Crab Dip 49
- Stuffed Crescent Wreath 66
- Salmon Wellington 97
- Cinnamon Roll Christmas Tree 125
- Cheese Rolls 172
- French Toast Roll-Ups 184
- Cheryl's Frosted Cutout Cookies 190
- Cherry Mash-Style Candy Bars 218
- Peppermint Bark Cheesecake 247

# D

DAELMANS
- Dutch Stroopwafels 193

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON
- Chocolate Chip Cookie 196

# E

ENTENMANN'S
- Crumb Coffee Cake 166

# F

FLEMING'S PRIME STEAKHOUSE & WINE BAR
- Fleming's Potatoes au Gratin 101

# G

GODIVA
- Dark Chocolate Truffles 221

# H

HAM
- Stuffed Crescent Wreath 66
- HoneyBaked Ham 73
- Ham in Cola 79
- Honey-Garlic Ham 91

HARRY & DAVID
- Moose Munch 43

HEAVY CREAM
- Baileys Irish Cream 17
- Old-Fashioned Eggnog 25
- Iced Gingerbread Chai 28
- Irish Cream Cold Brew 30
- Homemade Eggnog 34
- Christmas Morning Breakfast Casserole 82
- Fleming's Potatoes au Gratin 101
- HoneyBaked Ham Double Cheddar Macaroni and Cheese 104
- Lobster Mashed Potatoes 112
- Ruth's Chris Corn Pudding 121
- Lobster Mac and Cheese 163
- Crème Brûlée French Toast Casserole 178
- Cheryl's Frosted Cutout Cookies 190
- Florentine Lace Cookies 199
- Dark Chocolate Truffles 221
- New Orleans Pecan Pralines 232
- See's Candies Bordeaux 237
- Peppermint Bark Cheesecake 247
- Christmas Tree Cakes 254

HERSHEY'S
- Peanut Butter Blossoms 202

HICKORY FARMS
- Summer Sausage and Port Wine Cheese Ball 46

HONEY
- Christmas Tree Charcuterie Board 60
- Pigs in a Blanket Wreath 63
- Stuffed Crescent Wreath 66
- HoneyBaked Ham 73
- HoneyBaked Ham Co. Smoked Turkey Breast 76
- Honey-Garlic Ham 91
- Sweet Rolls 107
- Pfeffernüsse 208

## I

### IHOP

Gingerbread Pancakes 169

## J

### JOE'S CRAB SHACK

Hot Crab Dip 49

## K

### KAHLÚA

Kahlúa-Style Coffee Liqueur 23

### KING'S HAWAIIAN

Sweet Rolls 107

### KRAFT

Fantasy Fudge 227

## L

### LAWRY'S THE PRIME RIB

Lawry's Yorkshire Pudding 110

### LITTLE DEBBIE

Christmas Tree Cakes 254

## M

### MAPLE SYRUP

Hasselback Butternut Squash 144
Wild Rice & Cranberry Stuffed Butternut Squash 153
Gingerbread Pancakes 169
Crème Brûlée French Toast Casserole 178

### MASTRO'S

Lobster Mashed Potatoes 112

### MOZZARELLA

Hot Crab Dip 49
Eggplant Parmigiana 138
Famous Christmas Potatoes 181

### MUSHROOMS

Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese Fondue 52
Mushroom Bourguignon 129
Beet Wellington 132
Mushroom Wellington 147

## N

### NOBU

Miso Eggplant 135

## O

### O&H DANISH BAKERY

Racine Danish Kringle 175

## P

### PARMESAN

Hot Crab Dip 49
Eggplant Parmigiana 138
Grinch Spaghetti 141
Lobster Mac and Cheese 163
Famous Christmas Potatoes 181

### PASTA & NOODLES

HoneyBaked Ham Double Cheddar Macaroni and Cheese 104
Mushroom Bourguignon 129
Grinch Spaghetti 141
Lobster Mac and Cheese 163

### PEANUT BUTTER

Peanut Butter Blossoms 202
Peanut Butter Trees 234

### PECANS

Summer Sausage and Port Wine Cheese Ball 46
Hasselback Butternut Squash 144
Wild Rice & Cranberry Stuffed Butternut Squash 153
Racine Danish Kringle 175
Cathedral Window Cookies 211
Kentucky Bourbon Balls 224
Fantasy Fudge 227
Martha Washington Candy 230
New Orleans Pecan Pralines 232
Old-Fashioned Divinity Candy 240

### PILLSBURY

Crescent Rolls 115

### PORK

Pigs in a Blanket Wreath 63
Ham in Cola 79
Christmas Morning Breakfast Casserole 82
French-Canadian Tourtière 88
Christmas Eve Pork Tamales 94

### PORTO'S BAKERY

Cheese Rolls 172

### POTATOES

Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese Fondue 52
French-Canadian Tourtière 88
Fleming's Potatoes au Gratin 101
Lobster Mashed Potatoes 112
Famous Christmas Potatoes 181

## R

### RAO'S

Eggplant Parmigiana 138

REESE'S
Peanut Butter Trees 234
RHODES BAKE-N-SERV
Rhodes-Style Freezer Dinner Rolls 118
RICE
Miso Eggplant 135
Wild Rice & Cranberry Stuffed Butternut Squash 153
RUM
Kahlúa-Style Coffee Liqueur 23
Old-Fashioned Eggnog 25
Homemade Eggnog 34
Dark Chocolate Truffles 221
Bauducco Panettone 244
Dresden-Style Christmas Stollen 251
RUTH'S CHRIS STEAK HOUSE
Ruth's Chris Corn Pudding 121

S

SALMON
Salmon Wellington 97
SAUSAGE
Summer Sausage and Port Wine Cheese Ball 46
Pigs in a Blanket Wreath 63
Christmas Morning Breakfast Casserole 82
SEE'S CANDIES
See's Candies Bordeaux 237
SHRIMP
Shrimp Cocktail 54
SOUR CREAM
Hot Crab Dip 49
Mushroom Bourguignon 129
Sour Cream Coffee Cake 150
Crumb Coffee Cake 166
Peppermint Bark Cheesecake 247
Dresden-Style Christmas Stollen 251
SOUTHERN COMFORT
Old-Fashioned Eggnog 25
SPINACH
Salmon Wellington 97
Stouffer's-Style Spinach Soufflé 123
Grinch Spaghetti 141
Mushroom Wellington 147
ST. ELMO STEAK HOUSE
Shrimp Cocktail 54
STARBUCKS
Iced Gingerbread Chai 28
Irish Cream Cold Brew 30
STOUFFER'S
Stouffer's-Style Spinach Soufflé 123
SWISS MISS
Hot Cocoa Mix 32

T

THE BEATRICE INN
Rack of Lamb 70
THE CAPITAL GRILLE
Stoli Doli Pineapple Martini 19
THE CHEESECAKE FACTORY
Peppermint Bark Cheesecake 247
THE HONEYBAKED HAM COMPANY
HoneyBaked Ham 73
HoneyBaked Ham Co. Smoked Turkey Breast 76
HoneyBaked Ham Double Cheddar Macaroni and Cheese 104
THE MELTING POT
Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese Fondue 52
TOMATOES
Eggplant Parmigiana 138
Grinch Spaghetti 141
TURKEY
HoneyBaked Ham Co. Smoked Turkey Breast 76

V

VODKA
Stoli Doli Pineapple Martini 19
Sugar Cookie Martini 37

W

WALNUTS
Christmas Tree Charcuterie Board 60
Sour Cream Coffee Cake 150
Chocolate Chip Cookie 196
Cathedral Window Cookies 211
Fantasy Fudge 227

PAY WHAT YOU WANT

# This book is free. *It always will be.*

*No paywall and no catch. Every recipe in these pages is yours to keep, print and share.*

If it earned a spot on your counter, you can chip in whatever it's worth to you. Tips pay for the research, photography and typesetting behind the next free book.

SCAN OR VISIT

## copycatspices.com/support

Pick any amount or type your own. It takes about 20 seconds.

---

*Thank you for cooking with us, the Copycat Spices team*

COPYCATSPICES.COM

# From a browser tab to *your kitchen counter.*

Every recipe in this book was researched and fact-checked by the Copycat team — so the dishes you love from your favorite restaurants are yours to make at home, any night you want.

Hungry for more? Fresh copycat recipes drop every week.






*Copycat Spices*

COPYCATSPICES.COM