

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.

73 RECIPES

COPYCAT SPICES

A Copycat Christmas & Holidays Collection

The Copycat Christmas Cookbook

CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS EDITION · 73 RECIPES

November 9, 2026

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

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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 73 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

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STARBUCKS

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.

Chocolate Chip Cookie 173

Peanut Butter Blossoms 176

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

Nutter Butter Cookies 179

Milano Cookies 182

The ganache keeps refrigerated up to 1 week or frozen up to 2 months.

Christmas Shape Sugar Cookies 185

Refrigerator: wrapped tightly in plastic, up to 5 days.

Danish Butter Cookies 188

Snowman Cookie 191

The dough keeps well in the refrigerator for up to 3 days, tightly wrapped, or in the freezer for up to 1 month.

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 41

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

Andes Crème de Menthe Thins 195

At room temperature in an airtight container: up to 2 weeks.

Almond Roca 198

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

Chocolate Covered Cherries 201

After the centers have liquefied (day 14+): refrigerate for up to 6 weeks, or keep at room temperature for up to 2 more weeks.

Fannie May Trinidads 204

At room temperature in an airtight container: 1 to 2 weeks.

Dark Chocolate Truffles 207

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

Fantasy Fudge 210

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

Peppermint Bark Cheesecake 220
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.

Peanut Butter Trees 213
Stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator, these keep well for up to 2 weeks.

Bauducco Panettone 217
It stays at peak quality for 3–4 days and remains good for up to a week.

Apple Pie 224
At room temperature, loosely covered, up to 2 days.

Christmas Tree Cakes 227
Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Iced Gingerbread Loaf 230
The un-iced loaf keeps tightly wrapped at room temperature for 2 days.

Sugar Plum Cheese Danish 233

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.

Slow Cooker Wassail 37
Strain the finished wassail, cool it completely, and refrigerate in a sealed container for up to 3 days.

Summer Sausage and Port Wine Cheese Ball 44
It also freezes well — up to 3 months, wrapped tightly and placed in a zip-top bag.

French Onion Brie Puffs 50
First option: caramelize the onions up to 3 days in advance and refrigerate.

Holiday Chex Mix 53
Stored in an airtight container at room temperature, completely cooled homemade Chex mix stays crunchy and good for 2 weeks.

TikTok Parmesan Potato Stacks 56

Smashed Potato Board 65

Sugared Cranberries 68
They're best within 24 to 48 hours of making, when the sugar coating is at its crunchiest and most sparkly.

Chicken Marbella 84
Cook it completely, let it cool, and refrigerate in the pan juices for up to 2 days.

Christmas Morning Breakfast Casserole 96

TikTok Salmon Wellington 99
Up to 24 hours.

Crispy Roast Potatoes 106

Cinnamon Rolls 117
After the first 1-hour rise and the second flour addition, you can refrigerate the dough overnight (or for up to 2 days).

Creamy Mashed Potatoes 120
Refrigerate for up to 2 days.

Candied Yams 123
Up to 2 days ahead.

Cranberry Fluff Salad 126
Up to 3 days in advance.

Sweet Potato Casserole with Brown Sugar Pecan Topping 129
Prepare the filling completely (through step 4) and refrigerate it covered in the baking dish for up to 2 days.

Mushroom Bourguignon 133
Make it up to 2 days ahead, let it cool completely, and refrigerate.

Five Cheese Ziti al Forno 142
Assemble the pasta completely (pasta + sauce + cheeses in the baking dish), cover tightly with plastic wrap, and refrigerate up to 24 hours before baking.

Eggplant Parmigiana 145
Fully assembled and baked, it keeps refrigerated for up to 4 days.

TikTok Mushroom Wellington 154
Assemble the Wellington fully (up through the egg wash and scoring), wrap loosely in plastic wrap, and refrigerate up to 24 hours.

5 ON THE DAY

Roast, bake & pour

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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 41
Chocolate Chip Cookie 173
Peanut Butter Blossoms 176
Nutter Butter Cookies 179
Christmas Shape Sugar Cookies 185
Danish Butter Cookies 188
Snowman Cookie 191
Andes Crème de Menthe Thins 195
Almond Roca 198
Chocolate Covered Cherries 201
Fannie May Trinidads 204
Fantasy Fudge 210
Peanut Butter Trees 213
Bauducco Panettone 217

Pack with care

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

Milano Cookies 182
Dark Chocolate Truffles 207
Christmas Tree Cakes 227
Iced Gingerbread Loaf 230

Hand-deliver

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

Peppermint Bark Cheesecake 220
Apple Pie 224
Sugar Plum Cheese Danish 233

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

Chocolate Chip Cookie

TO _____

FROM _____

HOMEMADE FOR YOU

Peanut Butter Blossoms

TO _____

FROM _____

HOMEMADE FOR YOU

Nutter Butter Cookies

TO _____

FROM _____

HOMEMADE FOR YOU

Milano Cookies

TO _____

FROM _____

HOMEMADE FOR YOU

Christmas Shape Sugar Cookies

TO _____

FROM _____

HOMEMADE FOR YOU

Danish Butter Cookies

TO _____

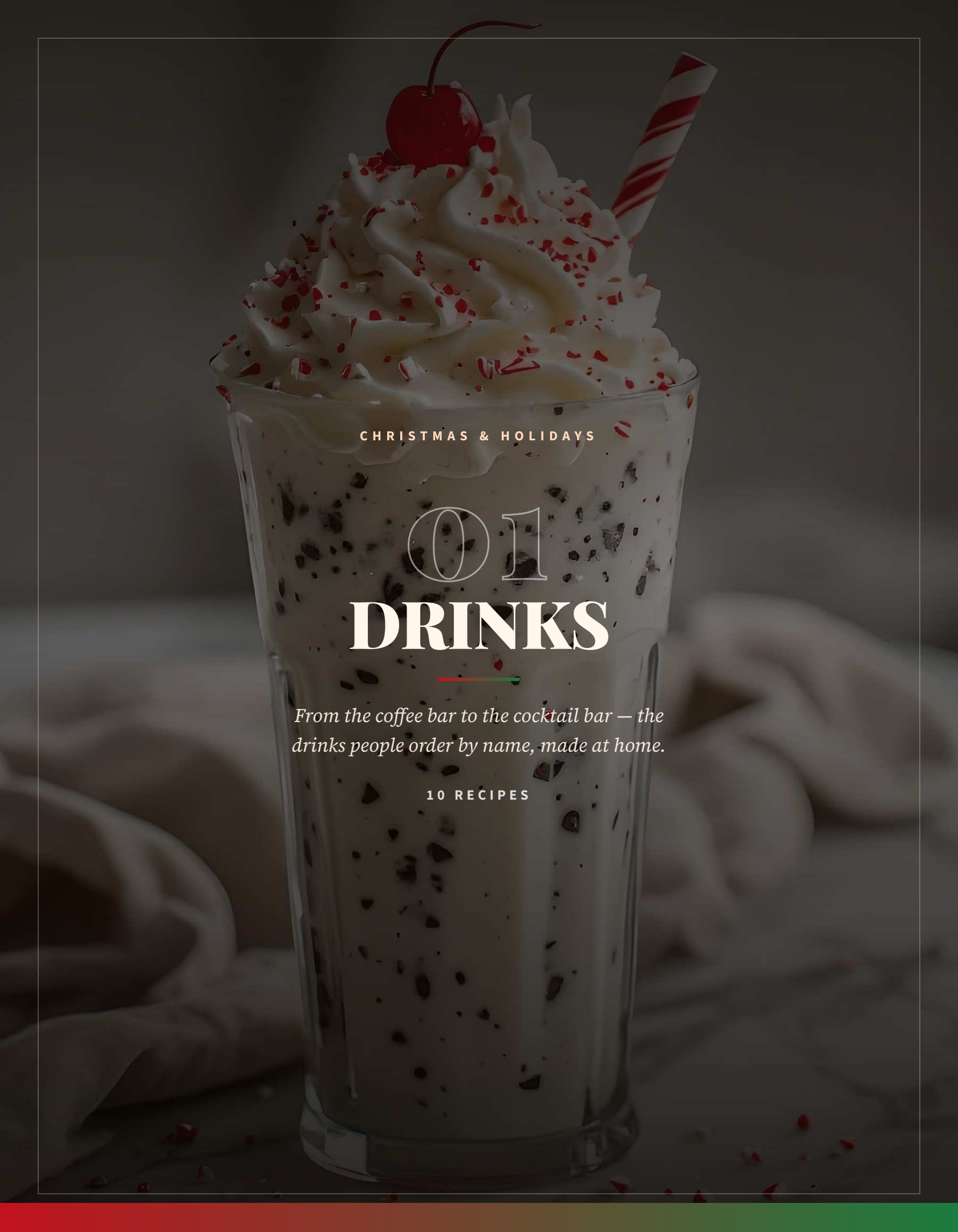
FROM _____

HOMEMADE FOR YOU

Snowman Cookie

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

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.

THE CAPITAL GRILLE · COPYCAT

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.



№ 02

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.



№ 03

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



№ 04

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.



№ 05

STARBUCKS

Sugar Cookie Latte

The Starbucks Sugar Cookie Latte is back for the 2026 holiday menu. Make it at home with Blonde-style espresso, a 5-minute homemade sugar cookie syrup (the almond extract is the secret), your milk of choice, and red and green sprinkles.

STARBUCKS · COPYCAT

Sugar Cookie Latte

The Starbucks Sugar Cookie Latte is back for the 2026 holiday menu. Make it at home with Blonde-style espresso, a 5-minute homemade sugar cookie syrup (the almond extract is the secret), your milk of choice, and red and green sprinkles.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
5 min	5 min	1 drink	Easy	140

01 Ingredients

SUGAR COOKIE SYRUP (MAKES ABOUT 1 1/2 CUPS, ~12 DRINKS)

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup water
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter (or ½ teaspoon butter extract for a shelf-stable, dairy-free syrup)
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon almond extract
- Small pinch of fine salt

LATTE (ONE 16 OZ DRINK)

- 2 shots espresso (about 2 oz), Blonde or other light roast if you have it
- 2 tablespoons sugar cookie syrup (adjust to taste)
- 8 oz milk: almondmilk is the classic; oat, dairy, or any milk works
- 1 cup ice (for iced)

TOPPING

- 1 teaspoon red and green sprinkles (sanding sugar or nonpareils)

WHY IT WORKS

In past seasons the build was Blonde espresso, sugar cookie-flavored syrup, and milk, topped with red and green sprinkles. It's most commonly ordered iced.

02 Method

1. **Make the syrup.** Combine sugar and water in a small saucepan over medium heat. Stir until the sugar fully dissolves and the syrup just reaches a simmer, about 3 to 4 minutes. Don't boil it hard, since you're not making caramel.
2. **Add the butter.** Take the pan off the heat and whisk in the butter until it melts and the syrup looks slightly cloudy and glossy. If you're using butter extract, add it in the next step with the other extracts.
3. **Add the extracts.** Let the syrup cool for 2 minutes, then stir in the vanilla, almond extract, and a pinch of salt. Extracts go in off the heat so their aromatics don't cook off. Taste a drop: you want buttery vanilla up front with a faint almond, frosted-cookie finish. If you can clearly taste marzipan, you used too much almond.
4. **Cool and store.** Pour into a clean jar and let it cool completely before sealing. Refrigerate for up to about 2 weeks. Butter-based syrup can separate in the fridge, so shake it before each use.
5. **Brew the espresso.** Pull 2 shots of espresso (or use one of the substitutes below). Stir 2 tablespoons of syrup into the hot espresso so it dissolves evenly.
6. **Iced version.** Fill a 16 oz glass with ice, pour in the milk, then pour the sweetened espresso over the top so it cascades down through the milk. Stir before drinking.
7. **Hot version.** Steam or heat the milk to about 150°F and froth lightly. Pour the sweetened espresso into a mug, then add the steamed milk.
8. **Finish with sprinkles.** Scatter red and green sprinkles over the top right before serving. On an iced drink, add them last so they sit on the surface rather than sinking through the ice.



№ 06

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.



№ 07

VIRAL

TikTok 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 · COPYCAT

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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



№ 08

VIRAL

Peppermint Hot Chocolate

The viral TikTok peppermint hot chocolate made at home: rich stovetop real-chocolate base, peppermint extract, and a crushed candy-cane rim that makes every mug look like a holiday prop.

VIRAL · COPYCAT

Peppermint Hot Chocolate

The viral TikTok peppermint hot chocolate made at home: rich stovetop real-chocolate base, peppermint extract, and a crushed candy-cane rim that makes every mug look like a holiday prop.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
5 min	8 min	2 servings	Easy	340

01 Ingredients

FOR THE CANDY-CANE RIM

- 2 standard candy canes (or 8 mini candy canes) — unwrapped and crushed fine in a zip-lock bag with a rolling pin or the bottom of a heavy mug; aim for pea-size pieces mixed with fine powder, not big shards
- 2 tsp light corn syrup, honey, or simple syrup — for adhering the candy cane to the rim; just enough for a 1-cm band around the outside of the rim

FOR THE PEPPERMINT HOT CHOCOLATE

- 2 cups whole milk — whole milk gives the richest, creamiest result; 2% works but the body is thinner; oat milk (barista formula) is the best dairy-free swap, it froths and emulsifies similarly to whole milk
- 2 oz semi-sweet chocolate, finely chopped (about ⅓ cup) — OR ⅓ cup semi-sweet chips; a 60–65% cacao dark chocolate makes it noticeably richer and less sweet, which is the direction most TikTok versions trending in 2025 moved; avoid white chocolate chips here (they melt but don't give the deep chocolate base)
- 2 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder — Dutch-process cocoa (the darker, non-acidic kind) gives better depth and a smoother, rounder flavor than natural cocoa; Hershey's Special Dark or Droste are both widely available Dutch-process options
- 2 tbsp granulated sugar — adjust to taste; if using 60%+ dark chocolate, you may want an extra half-tablespoon
- Pinch of fine salt — about ⅛ tsp; salt rounds out the chocolate and makes the peppermint flavor land more cleanly
- ¼ tsp pure peppermint extract — this is the flavor backbone; pure peppermint extract (not imitation, not spearmint) gives clean, true peppermint without an artificial or medicinal aftertaste; taste after adding and add another ⅛ tsp if you want it sharper

TO SERVE

- Whipped cream OR marshmallows (large or mini) — the whipped cream melts slowly and photographs better; marshmallows add sweetness and have more of a diner-style hot cocoa feel; both work
- Reserved pinch of crushed candy cane for the top
- Optional: a small candy cane to hook over the rim, or a chocolate-peppermint stirring stick

02 Method

1. **Crush the candy canes and rim the mugs first.** Place 2 unwrapped candy canes in a zip-lock bag and crush with a rolling pin until you have fine pieces mixed with powder — no chunks larger than a pea, since those fall off the rim. Spread on a small plate. Dip a pastry brush, or simply your finger, in the corn syrup and paint a 1-cm stripe around the outside of each mug rim. Roll each mug through the crushed candy cane, pressing gently to adhere. Set the mugs upright and don't touch the rim again — it sets as it sits.

2. **Warm the milk with the cocoa base.** Pour 2 cups whole milk into a medium saucepan. Whisk in the cocoa powder, sugar, and salt while the milk is still cold — this prevents lumps better than adding them to already-hot milk. Heat over medium, whisking frequently, until the milk steams and tiny bubbles form around the edge of the pan. This takes 4 to 5 minutes. Do not let it boil — boiling milk develops a skin, dulls the chocolate flavor, and can cause the milk solids to separate into a grainy texture.

3. **Add the chopped chocolate and melt it in.** Reduce heat to low. Add the chopped semi-sweet chocolate (or chips) and whisk continuously for 1 to 2 minutes until fully melted and the mixture is smooth and glossy. At this point it should coat the back of a spoon — if it looks grainy or separated, the heat was too high; remove from heat immediately and whisk vigorously for 30 seconds to bring it back together.

4. **Add the peppermint extract off heat.** Remove the pan from the heat and stir in ¼ tsp pure peppermint extract. Taste immediately — peppermint extract is potent, so start with ¼ tsp and add more ⅛ tsp at a time until it reaches the intensity you want. The peppermint should be clear and bright without being sharp or overwhelming the chocolate. Adding the extract off heat (rather than into boiling liquid) preserves the volatile compounds that give peppermint its fresh, clean aroma.

5. **Pour into the rimmed mugs.** Pour slowly and carefully down the inside wall of each mug to avoid splashing the candy-cane rim. The rim is fragile while the corn syrup is still tacky — a direct stream of hot liquid on the rim will dissolve the candy cane before anyone sees it.

6. **Top and serve immediately.** Add a generous dollop of whipped cream or a pile of marshmallows, then pinch a small amount of the reserved crushed candy cane directly over the top. The peppermint aroma is strongest when the hot chocolate is steaming — serve right away. For the full TikTok look, hold the mug so the candy-cane rim is visible, topped with whipped cream, with the red-and-white striped rim clearly framed.

WHY IT WORKS

Peppermint extract is peppermint oil diluted in alcohol — typically 1 part oil to 3 to 4 parts alcohol. It's the right ingredient here.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 09

VIRAL

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 · 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.



№ 10

VIRAL

Slow Cooker Wassail

The viral TikTok slow cooker wassail: half a gallon of apple cider, cranberry juice, fresh orange juice, and whole warm spices in the crockpot for 2 to 4 hours. Your whole house smells like Christmas.

VIRAL · COPYCAT

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The viral TikTok slow cooker wassail: half a gallon of apple cider, cranberry juice, fresh orange juice, and whole warm spices in the crockpot for 2 to 4 hours. Your whole house smells like Christmas.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
10 min	2 hr	10	Easy	128

01 Ingredients

THE CIDER BASE

- ½ gallon (64oz / 2 quarts) fresh-pressed apple cider, unfiltered if possible
- 2 cups (16oz) cranberry juice — 100% juice, not cranberry cocktail
- 1 cup (8oz) freshly squeezed orange juice (from about 3 large navel oranges), or store-bought 100% OJ
- 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar (reduce or omit if your cider is already sweet)

WHOLE SPICES (ALL GO IN LOOSE — STRAIN BEFORE SERVING)

- 4 cinnamon sticks (3-inch / 7cm), plus more for garnish
- 10 whole cloves
- 8 whole allspice berries (or ¼ teaspoon ground allspice in a tea ball)
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg (or a pinch of ground)
- Optional: 2 star anise pods (adds a faint anise note — traditional in some Southern wassail recipes)
- Optional: 1-inch knob of fresh ginger, peeled and sliced

CITRUS

- 1 large navel orange, sliced into ¼-inch rounds (leave the peel on — the essential oils in the peel are essential to the aroma)
- 1 small apple (Gala or Honeycrisp), cored and sliced thin (floats attractively; adds apple depth)

TO SERVE

- Extra cinnamon sticks, orange rounds, and star anise for garnish
- Optional: 1 to 2 oz bourbon, apple brandy, or spiced rum per adult mug

02 Method

1. **Combine everything in the slow cooker.** Pour the apple cider, cranberry juice, and orange juice into a 6-quart slow cooker. Add the brown sugar and stir once. Add all the whole spices (cinnamon sticks, cloves, allspice berries, nutmeg, optional star anise, optional ginger) directly to the liquid — no need to tie them up at this stage, you'll strain before serving. Lay the orange rounds and apple slices on top. The apple will float; the orange will soften and release its essential oils into the cider below.

2. **Cook on LOW for 2 to 4 hours.** Set the slow cooker to LOW and cook with the lid on for 2 to 4 hours. At 2 hours the spices are present and pleasant. At 3 to 4 hours they're fully bloomed and the drink is richer. Do not cook on HIGH for more than 2 hours — the cider can begin to simmer aggressively in some slow cookers, dulling the aromatics. If your model runs hot, check at 1½ hours and switch to WARM if the surface is showing bubbles.

3. **Switch to WARM to serve.** After the cook time, switch to WARM. This is the secret to the TikTok crockpot wassail — it holds at exactly

the right drinking temperature for up to 6 hours without degrading. Guests can help themselves for the entire party.

4. **Taste and adjust before serving.** Dip in a spoon and taste. If it needs more sweetness, stir in another teaspoon of brown sugar (it dissolves immediately in hot liquid). If the spice is overwhelming, fish out a few cloves — they extract quickly and can dominate after long cook times. A squeeze of fresh orange juice brightens a batch that tastes flat.

5. **Strain into mugs.** Set a fine-mesh sieve over a large heatproof measuring cup or directly over individual mugs. Ladle the wassail through the sieve to catch the whole spices, orange rounds, and apple slices. The finished wassail should be a warm ruby-amber color — deep red from the cranberry, gold from the cider. Garnish each mug with a fresh orange round, a cinnamon stick standing upright, and a star anise floated on top. Serve immediately while steaming.

6. **For adult servings:** Add 1 to 2 oz of bourbon, apple brandy, or spiced rum directly to individual mugs after straining. This keeps the main batch alcohol-free for kids and non-drinkers while still giving adults the option. The alcohol goes in the cup, not the cooker.

WHY IT WORKS

Wassail is a hot spiced drink with a fruit juice base — almost always apple cider in the American version — combined with cranberry juice, orange juice, and whole warming spices (cinnamon, cloves, allspice). Mulled wine uses red wine as its base.

KITCHEN NOTES



CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS

02
APPETIZERS

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

10 RECIPES



№ 11

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

The two most common causes are toffee temperature and underbaking. The toffee must reach 300°F (hard crack stage) — most caramel corn recipes only go to 250–270°F, which leaves the coating sticky and chewy.



№ 12

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.

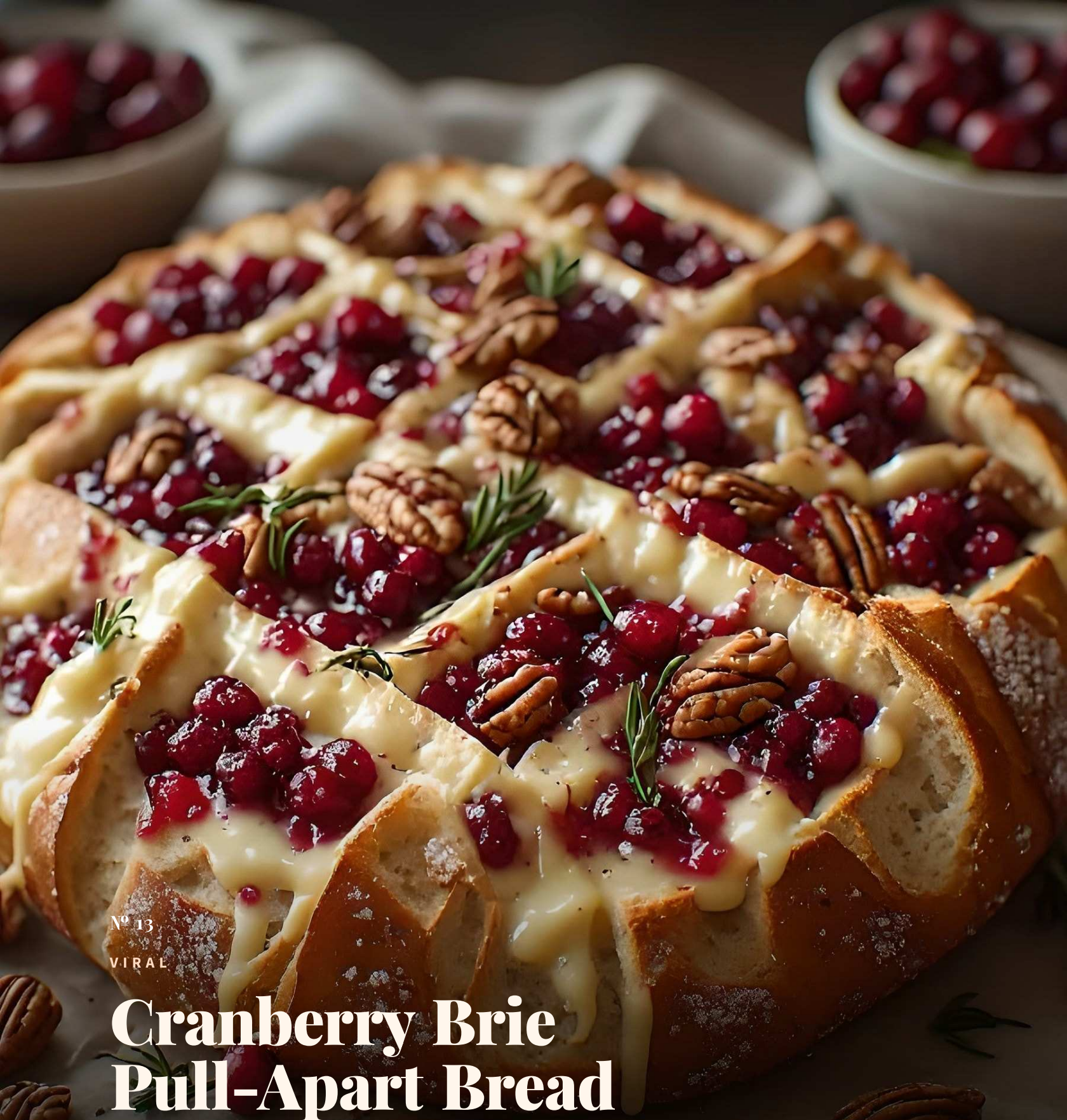
6. **Cool and refrigerate.** Remove the logs from the oven and let them cool completely — at least 1 hour at room temperature — before refrigerating. The exterior will firm further as it cools. Once cooled, wrap the logs tightly in butcher paper or plastic wrap and refrigerate. The sausage can be eaten 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.



№ 13

VIRAL

Cranberry Brie Pull-Apart Bread

The viral TikTok Thanksgiving appetizer: a whole round sourdough boule scored in a crosshatch, stuffed with molten brie, whole-berry cranberry sauce, and toasted pecans, then baked until the cheese runs into every pull-apart chunk.

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PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
15 min	30 min	8	Easy	342

01 Ingredients

- 1 round sourdough boule, about 16 oz (a standard supermarket or bakery round loaf)
- 8 oz brie, cold from the fridge
- ⅔ cup whole-berry cranberry sauce (canned or homemade)
- ⅓ cup pecans, roughly chopped and lightly toasted
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 small garlic clove, finely minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, finely chopped (or 1 teaspoon dried)

OPTIONAL GARNISH

- Pomegranate seeds
- Fresh thyme sprigs
- 1 tablespoon honey or hot honey, for drizzling after baking
- Flaky sea salt

02 Method

1. **Preheat the oven to 375°F** and tear off a sheet of heavy-duty foil large enough to wrap the boule — about 24 inches. Set a rimmed baking sheet on the rack.

2. **Score the bread in a crosshatch.** This is the step that makes or breaks the recipe. Place the boule on a cutting board. Using a serrated knife with a gentle sawing motion, cut a series of parallel lines across the top of the loaf, spacing them about 1 inch apart. Cut straight down, going as deep as you can while keeping the bottom crust intact — aim to stop about ½ inch from the bottom. You should feel the knife starting to hit more resistance as you near the base; that resistance is your signal to stop. Rotate the loaf 90 degrees and repeat the cuts in the other direction, making the crosshatch. The result looks like a grid of deep slots with the loaf still connected at the base. Gently press the chunks apart a few millimeters to open the slots — this makes it easier to stuff.

3. **Cut and stuff the brie.** Take the brie cold from the fridge (room-temperature brie is too soft to handle neatly). Remove the rind if desired — it softens almost completely during baking either way, but some people find it slightly bitter in large amounts, so this is a matter of preference. Cut the brie into strips or irregular chunks roughly ½ inch wide and 2 inches long. Working over every slot in the crosshatch, push brie pieces deep into each gap — use your fingers or a small butter knife to press them in. The brie will melt and spread once it heats, so getting it below the surface matters more than perfect placement. Use all 8 ounces; the slots look overstuffed before baking, which is exactly right.

4. **Add cranberry sauce and pecans.** Spoon the cranberry sauce over the top of the scored loaf, letting it fall naturally into the gaps between chunks. You don't need to force it in — it will flow into the slots as the bread bakes and the brie melts. Scatter the chopped pecans over the top. The pecans on the surface will toast during the final open bake; the ones that fall into the gaps will soften, which is also good.

5. **Make the herb butter, then coat.** In a small bowl, stir together the melted butter, minced garlic, and rosemary. Drizzle and brush this mixture over the top of the scored loaf, making sure some runs into the crosshatch slots. The butter keeps the bread from drying out during the foil phase and adds a garlicky savory note that keeps the dish from veering too sweet.

6. **Wrap in foil and bake 20–22 minutes.** Place the stuffed loaf in the center of the foil sheet. Fold the foil up and over the loaf, sealing it loosely but completely — you want steam to stay inside (which melts the brie evenly), but not so tight that the foil tears. Place on the preheated baking sheet. Bake 20–22 minutes. At this point the brie will be fully melted and bubbling inside but the top crust hasn't browned yet.

7. **Unwrap, raise heat, bake 8–10 more minutes.** Carefully open the foil and fold the edges back to expose the top of the loaf. Raise the oven temperature to 400°F. Return to the oven for 8–10 minutes until the top surface is golden, the exposed brie is lightly browned at the edges, and the whole loaf smells intensely of rosemary and garlic. Watch the last few minutes — the difference between golden and overdone is fast at 400°F.

8. **Garnish and serve immediately.** Slide the foil-wrapped loaf onto a serving board (the foil becomes the platter; fold back the edges neatly). If using, scatter pomegranate seeds over the top for color, add a few thyme sprigs, and drizzle with hot honey. Serve while the brie is still liquid — this dish does not hold well. As the loaf cools, the brie firms up and the pull-apart effect diminishes. Have guests start pulling within 5–10 minutes of it coming out of the oven.

WHY IT WORKS

The stuffed, unbaked loaf can be assembled up to 24 hours ahead. Score the bread, stuff with brie, add cranberry and pecans, drizzle with herb butter, wrap tightly in foil, and refrigerate.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 14

VIRAL

French Onion Brie Puffs

The viral TikTok holiday appetizer: puff pastry cups with jammy caramelized onions and molten brie, finished with fig jam. Assembles ahead, bakes in 15 minutes.

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French Onion Brie Puffs

The viral TikTok holiday appetizer: puff pastry cups with jammy caramelized onions and molten brie, finished with fig jam. Assembles ahead, bakes in 15 minutes.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
50 min	15 min	24 puffs	Easy	108

01 Ingredients

FOR THE CARAMELIZED ONIONS

- 2 large yellow onions, halved and very thinly sliced (about 4 cups sliced)
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves (or ½ teaspoon dried)
- 1 tablespoon dry white wine or balsamic vinegar

FOR THE PUFFS

- 1 sheet (from a 17.3 oz box) frozen puff pastry, thawed
- 8 oz brie cheese, cold from the fridge

FOR FINISHING

- 3–4 tablespoons fig jam (or honey)
- Flaky sea salt (Maldon or similar), for finishing

OPTIONAL

- 1 egg yolk + 1 tablespoon milk (egg wash for deeper golden color)
- Fresh thyme sprigs, for garnish

02 Method

1. **Caramelize the onions — this takes 35–40 minutes, so start here.** Melt 2 tablespoons unsalted butter in a 12-inch skillet over medium-low heat. Add the sliced onions and ½ teaspoon kosher salt and stir to coat. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring every 5–7 minutes. At the 10-minute mark the onions will look barely wilted; at 20 minutes they'll have softened and turned lightly golden; at 30–35 minutes they should be deeply amber, almost mahogany, and significantly reduced in volume. If they're darkening but not yet soft, add 1 tablespoon of water and stir. When they reach a deep golden-brown color and jam-like consistency, add 1 teaspoon thyme and 1 tablespoon white wine or balsamic vinegar. Cook 1 more minute while stirring, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Taste: they should be sweet, deeply savory, and aromatic. Transfer to a plate and cool completely before assembling — hot onion filling makes the pastry greasy.

2. **Thaw the puff pastry correctly.** Leave the unopened sheet in the fridge overnight (best), or thaw at room temperature for 35–45 minutes. The right texture: pliable and unfoldable without cracking, but still cold and firm to the touch. If it feels limp and soft, refrigerate for 10 minutes before cutting. Too-warm pastry goes flat in the oven because the butter layers merge together instead of steaming apart to create layers.

3. **Preheat and prep.** Preheat oven to 400°F. Grease all 24 cups of a mini muffin tin with cooking spray or melted butter, covering both the bottom and sides of each cup.

4. **Cut the pastry into 24 squares.** Unfold the thawed pastry sheet on a lightly floured surface. Using a sharp knife or pizza cutter, cut it into a 4×6 grid — 24 equal squares, each about 1¾ to 2 inches wide. Press each square firmly into a greased cup: push the center all the way down to the bottom of the cup, then let the corners fold naturally up and over the rim. The corners should stick up above the cup edge — they'll turn deeply golden in the oven. If a square springs back when you press it, hold your fingertip in place for a count of five to warm the pastry slightly into the shape.

5. **Cut the brie.** Take the brie straight from the fridge — cold brie cuts cleanly; room-temperature brie smears and is impossible to portion evenly. For a cleaner, fully-molten bite, remove the rind first: slice it off in long strips with a sharp knife, then cut the paste into 24 half-inch cubes. If you prefer to leave the rind on (the brie still melts around it), just cut the whole wheel into 24 cubes. Keep the cubes cold in the fridge until you're ready to assemble.

6. **Assemble the puffs.** Add a heaping teaspoon of cooled caramelized onions to each pastry cup — spread them so they reach the walls and create an even base. Set one cold brie cube in the center of each cup on top of the onions. Optional: brush the exposed pastry corners lightly with egg wash (1 yolk whisked with 1 tablespoon milk) for a richer golden color — avoid getting egg wash on the filling.

7. **Bake 12–15 minutes.** Slide the tin into the preheated 400°F oven. The puffs are ready when the pastry corners are deep amber-brown — not pale gold — and the brie is visibly melted and beginning to bubble. Check at 12 minutes; if the pastry is still pale, give it 2–3 more minutes. The color of the pastry corners is the signal, not the timer.

8. **Cool 3 minutes in the tin, then finish.** Right out of the oven the filling is molten — if you try to pop the puffs out immediately they'll tear. Let them sit in the tin for 3 minutes; the brie firms slightly and the pastry sets. Pop them out gently with a small offset spatula or butter knife onto a serving platter. While still warm, add a dot of fig jam (about ½ teaspoon, from a small spoon or piping bag for clean presentation) on top of each puff and a pinch of flaky salt. Optional: tuck a small thyme sprig beside the fig jam on each bite for color. Serve warm or at room temperature — they hold well for up to 45 minutes.

WHY IT WORKS

Fig jam is the classic pairing because its earthy-sweet flavor echoes the savory depth of the caramelized onions without competing with the brie. Apricot preserves are the most common substitute and work very well.



№ 15

VIRAL

Holiday Chex Mix

Viral TikTok holiday Chex mix: the original oven-baked party snack with three Chex cereals, mixed nuts, pretzels, and buttery Worcestershire seasoning.

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Holiday Chex Mix

Viral TikTok holiday Chex mix: the original oven-baked party snack with three Chex cereals, mixed nuts, pretzels, and buttery Worcestershire seasoning.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
10 min	1 hr	24 servings	Easy	140

01 Ingredients

DRY MIX

- 3 cups (90g) Corn Chex cereal
- 3 cups (84g) Rice Chex cereal
- 3 cups (96g) Wheat Chex cereal
- 1 cup (135g) mixed nuts (peanuts, cashews, almonds — whatever you have)
- 1 cup (60g) bite-size pretzels
- 1 cup (60g) garlic-flavored bite-size bagel chips — or plain bagel chips broken into 1-inch pieces

SEASONING SAUCE

- 6 tablespoons (85g) unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1½ teaspoons seasoned salt (such as Lawry's)
- ¾ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder

02 Method

1. **Preheat the oven to 250°F.** You need a genuinely low oven — not 300°F or 325°F. The low temperature is what slowly draws moisture out of every piece without burning the cereals. Set a rack in the center of the oven.

2. **Combine the dry mix.** In a very large bowl (at least 6-quart capacity), combine the Corn Chex, Rice Chex, Wheat Chex, mixed nuts, pretzels, and bagel chips. Toss gently to mix the components. The bowl needs to be large enough that you can stir everything vigorously without spilling.

3. **Make the seasoning sauce.** Melt the butter in a small saucepan over medium-low heat (or in a microwave-safe bowl in 30-second bursts). Remove from heat and whisk in the Worcestershire sauce, seasoned salt, garlic powder, and onion powder until fully combined. The sauce should look like a thin, deeply golden liquid.

4. **Coat the dry mix.** Pour the butter sauce over the cereal mixture in a thin, even stream while stirring with a large spatula — work from the outside edges in, folding from the bottom up, to coat every piece. Take your time here: 2 minutes of thorough stirring ensures even coverage. Every piece should look lightly glossy; no dry white cereal squares should remain. Taste a few pieces — they should be clearly seasoned, not bland.

5. **Transfer to the roasting pan.** Pour the coated mix into a large ungreased roasting pan — a standard 15x11-inch roasting pan is ideal, or use two rimmed sheet pans. Spread into an even layer. The pieces don't need to be perfectly separated, but no deep piles; the goal is roughly a single layer for even toasting.

6. **Bake for 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes.** Set a kitchen timer at 15-minute intervals. At each interval, remove the pan from the oven, stir thoroughly (again from the bottom up, rotating the pan to bring edge pieces to the center), and return it to the oven. By the 45-minute mark the mix will smell noticeably toasted and buttery. By the 60-minute mark, each piece should feel completely dry when pressed — not sticky or slightly soft. If a few pieces still feel soft at 60 minutes, bake another 10 minutes.

7. **Cool on paper towels.** Spread the finished mix in a single layer on paper towels. Let it cool completely — at least 15 minutes, ideally 30. The mix crisps up further as it cools, and cooling on paper towels wicks any residual surface oil so the finished texture is snappy rather than greasy. Don't skip this step; sealed into a container while warm, the mix will soften overnight.

8. **Store in an airtight container.** Once completely cool, transfer to a large airtight container or zip-lock bags. The mix stays crunchy at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.

WHY IT WORKS

Oven, every time, if you have an hour. The oven method at 250°F slowly drives moisture out of every piece over a full hour, stirring every 15 minutes to prevent scorching and ensure even coating.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 16

VIRAL

TikTok Parmesan Potato Stacks

The viral TikTok Parmesan potato stacks — thinly sliced Yukon Golds layered in a muffin tin with garlic butter and Parmesan, baked until the edges are lacy and crispy.

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TikTok Parmesan Potato Stacks

The viral TikTok Parmesan potato stacks — thinly sliced Yukon Golds layered in a muffin tin with garlic butter and Parmesan, baked until the edges are lacy and crispy.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
20 min	55 min	12 stacks	Easy	220

01 Ingredients

- 2 lbs Yukon Gold potatoes (about 4 medium), unpeeled
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- ⅓ cup finely grated Parmesan, plus 2 tablespoons more for topping
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder (NOT fresh garlic — it burns)
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, or ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- Cooking spray or additional melted butter, for the tin

OPTIONAL FOR SERVING

- Flaky sea salt
- 2 tablespoons fresh chives or parsley, finely chopped
- Sour cream or crème fraîche, for dipping

02 Method

1. **Heat the oven and prep the tin.** Preheat the oven to 375°F. Generously grease all 12 cups of a standard muffin tin with cooking spray or melted butter, making sure to coat the sides and bottom of each cup. Set the tin on a rimmed baking sheet (this catches any drips and makes it easier to maneuver).

2. **Slice the potatoes paper-thin.** Wash the potatoes but don't peel them — the skin adds flavor and helps the slices hold together. Using a mandoline set to ⅛ inch, or a very sharp knife, slice the potatoes into rounds as uniform as possible. Irregular slices bake unevenly, so consistency matters here more than it does in most recipes. Transfer the slices to a large bowl.

3. **Season the slices.** Pour the melted butter over the potato slices. Add the ⅓ cup Parmesan, garlic powder, thyme, salt, and pepper. Use your hands or a large spoon to toss everything together thoroughly, making sure the seasoning reaches every slice. The slices will be slightly coated in butter and Parmesan rather than swimming in it.

4. **Fill the muffin cups.** Stack the seasoned slices into the greased muffin cups, pressing them down gently with your fingers as you go. Keep stacking until each cup is piled about 1 to 1½ inches above the rim — the stacks will shrink by roughly a quarter as they release moisture and settle during baking. If you have any stray potato slices left over, tuck them into the fuller cups. Distribute the remaining 2 tablespoons of Parmesan across the top of each stack.

5. **Cover and bake 30 minutes.** Cover the muffin tin tightly with aluminum foil — crimp the edges down so steam is fully trapped. Slide the tin (on its baking sheet) into the oven and bake for 30 minutes. At this point the interiors should be mostly cooked through but the tops won't be browned yet.

6. **Remove the foil and bake until crispy.** Take off the foil and return the tin to the oven. Bake for another 20–25 minutes, until the top of each stack is golden and you can see the edges pulling away from the sides of the muffin cups with a lacy, crispy look. Test doneness by pressing a thin knife or skewer through the center of a stack — it should slide through without resistance. If the tops are browning faster than the centers are cooking, reduce the oven to 350°F and give them a few more minutes.

7. **Rest, then release.** Remove the tin from the oven and let the stacks rest for 5 minutes — they firm up slightly as they cool, which makes releasing them much easier. Run a thin butter knife or small offset spatula around the edge of each stack to loosen it, then slide a dinner spoon under the base and lift each stack out cleanly. Transfer to a serving platter.

8. **Finish and serve.** Scatter flaky sea salt over the top of the stacks, then add the chopped chives or parsley. Serve immediately while the edges are still crackling crispy. For dipping, a small bowl of sour cream or crème fraîche alongside is excellent — the cool creaminess against the hot, salty, Parmesan-crusted stack is very satisfying.

WHY IT WORKS

Fresh minced garlic sinks to the bottom of the muffin cup as the potatoes settle, sits against the hot metal, and burns before the stacks are done — giving the bottom layer a bitter, acrid flavor that flavors the whole stack.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 17

VIRAL

TikTok Puff Pastry Christmas Tree

The viral TikTok puff pastry Christmas tree appetizer: two sheets of store-bought puff pastry, a layer of basil pesto and Parmesan, cut into a tree shape, branches twisted and baked golden.

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TikTok Puff Pastry Christmas Tree

The viral TikTok puff pastry Christmas tree appetizer: two sheets of store-bought puff pastry, a layer of basil pesto and Parmesan, cut into a tree shape, branches twisted and baked golden.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
15 min	22 min	8	Easy	280

01 Ingredients

- 1 package (17.3 oz / 490g) frozen puff pastry (2 sheets), thawed in the refrigerator overnight
- 3–4 tablespoons basil pesto, store-bought or homemade (Barilla or Rao's work well)
- ¼ cup (25g) freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon water
- Flaky sea salt, for sprinkling (optional)
- Optional: 2 oz thinly sliced prosciutto; pinch of red pepper flakes
- For serving: warm marinara sauce or extra pesto for dipping

02 Method

1. **Assemble the layers.** Unfold one sheet of thawed puff pastry onto a lightly floured surface. Spread 3–4 tablespoons of basil pesto evenly across the entire surface, leaving a ¼-inch border at all edges. Scatter the grated Parmesan over the pesto. If using prosciutto, lay the slices in a single layer over the Parmesan without overlapping. Place the second puff pastry sheet directly on top, aligning the edges as closely as possible. Press gently with your palm across the entire surface to seal the two layers together.

2. **Chill — do not skip this step.** Slide the assembled pastry onto a parchment-lined baking sheet and transfer it to the refrigerator. Chill for 15 minutes. Cold butter in the pastry layers is what creates the steam that puffs the tree and keeps every twisted branch in its shape through baking. Warm dough tears during cutting and the twists unravel in the oven, leaving a flat rather than puffed result.

3. **Preheat the oven.** While the pastry chills, heat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Allow the full preheat to complete before the tree goes in.

4. **Cut the tree shape.** Remove the chilled pastry from the refrigerator, keeping it on the parchment-lined pan. Using a sharp knife or kitchen scissors, cut a rectangle at the bottom center of the pastry for the trunk — about 1½ inches wide and 1½ inches tall. Cut a triangle from the remaining dough above the trunk: widest at the base, tapering to a point at the top. Set the corner scraps aside to bake as cheesy pastry scraps on the same pan.

5. **Cut and twist the branches.** Identify the center spine of the triangle — this is the vertical strip running down the middle, roughly 1 inch wide, which must remain fully uncut to hold the tree together. Starting about 1 inch below the top of the triangle, make horizontal cuts from the spine to the outer edge on both sides, spaced ¾ to 1 inch apart. You should have matching pairs of strips (left branch and right branch) at each level.

Working from the top of the tree down to the base, twist each strip 2–3 times in the same direction. Do not twist the trunk rectangle.

6. **Egg wash and season.** Whisk together the egg and 1 tablespoon of water. Brush a thin, even layer over the entire tree — branches, spine, and trunk. Sprinkle with flaky sea salt and, if using, a pinch of red pepper flakes.

7. **Bake until deeply golden.** Bake for 20–22 minutes until the tree is a deep golden brown, visibly puffed, and the twisted branch layers have opened and separated. Rotate the pan once halfway through for even color. If the tip of the tree browns faster than the base branches, lay a small piece of foil loosely over just the top for the final 5 minutes.

8. **Serve immediately.** Slide the tree on its parchment onto a board or serving platter. Serve within 10 minutes while the pastry is still warm and crisp. Place a bowl of warm marinara alongside. Guests pull individual branches directly from the tree.

WHY IT WORKS

The most common cause is warm dough. Puff pastry requires cold butter layers intact to generate the steam that makes it puff. If the pastry warms too much after assembly, the butter softens, the layers merge, and the tree bakes flat.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 18

VIRAL

TikTok Pull-Apart Garlic Bread Wreath

The show-stopping holiday appetizer all over TikTok — golden pizza dough balls stuffed with melted mozzarella, brushed with herb garlic butter, and baked into a pull-apart wreath. Ready in under an hour.

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TikTok Pull-Apart Garlic Bread Wreath

The show-stopping holiday appetizer all over TikTok — golden pizza dough balls stuffed with melted mozzarella, brushed with herb garlic butter, and baked into a pull-apart wreath. Ready in under an hour.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
20 min	22 min	10	Easy	295

01 Ingredients

FOR THE DOUGH BALLS

- 1½ lbs (680g) store-bought refrigerated pizza dough, at room temperature (about 45 minutes out of the fridge)
- 8 oz low-moisture block mozzarella — or 8 standard mozzarella string cheese sticks, each cut into 3 pieces
- All-purpose flour, for dusting

FOR THE GARLIC BUTTER (USED TWICE)

- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter
- 3 garlic cloves, finely minced or pressed
- 1 teaspoon dried Italian seasoning (or ½ tsp dried oregano + ½ tsp dried basil)
- 2 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon flaky sea salt (or ¼ tsp fine salt)

FOR DECORATION (OPTIONAL BUT RECOMMENDED FOR THE HOLIDAY LOOK)

- 5–6 fresh rosemary sprigs
- A small handful of fresh cranberries (about 10–12)

FOR SERVING

- Warm marinara sauce, for dipping — or a simple garlic aioli

02 Method

1. **Prep the sheet pan and preheat the oven.** Preheat the oven to 375°F (conventional). Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Lightly grease a small oven-safe ramekin or bowl (4–6 inch diameter) and place it in the center of the baking sheet. This is your placeholder for the wreath's center — the dough balls will be arranged around it.

2. **Make the garlic butter.** Melt the butter in a small saucepan or microwave-safe bowl. Stir in the minced garlic, Italian seasoning, parsley, and salt. Set aside. You'll use half before baking and half right after — make it all now so it's ready.

3. **Portion the dough.** Lightly flour your work surface. Divide the pizza dough into 24 equal pieces using a bench scraper or knife. (A kitchen scale keeps things uniform: each piece should be about 28–30g.) Don't stress about perfect uniformity — a difference of a few grams is fine.

4. **Stuff and seal each ball.** Working with one piece at a time, flatten a dough piece into a rough circle about 3 inches in diameter using your fingers (don't roll it — rolling makes it too thin to seal). Place one piece of mozzarella (¾-inch cube from the block, or one-third of a string cheese stick) in the center. Draw the edges of the dough up around the cheese and pinch firmly together, rotating the ball in your hand to make sure there are no gaps. Press the seam with your fingers — the seal needs to hold against the expanding cheese during

baking. Place the sealed ball seam-side down on your work surface while you finish the rest. Repeat with all 24 pieces.

5. **Arrange the wreath.** Starting close to the ramekin, place the dough balls seam-side down in a ring around it, leaving about ½ inch between each ball. (The balls will expand and push together as they bake — the gaps prevent them from fusing into a solid ring and make them easier to pull apart.) Arrange in a single, tight ring. If you have leftover dough balls, make a small inner ring around the ramekin, or bake them separately as plain rolls.

6. **First garlic butter brush.** Use a pastry brush to coat all of the dough balls generously with half the garlic butter, working it into the gaps between the balls as well. Don't skimp — this butter soaks in during baking and adds the base of flavor.

7. **Bake.** Place the sheet pan in the preheated oven on the center rack. Bake for 20–22 minutes, until the tops are deep golden brown and the dough feels firm when you press one ball gently. At 18 minutes, check the underside: lift one corner of the parchment to see if the bottoms are browning evenly. Rotate the pan if the back is browning faster than the front.

8. **Second garlic butter brush.** Remove the wreath from the oven and immediately brush all of the rolls with the remaining garlic butter. This second layer is what creates the glossy, fragrant finish that photographs well. The butter melts into the surface while the rolls are hot — don't wait.

9. **Remove the ramekin and decorate.** Let the wreath cool in the pan for 5 minutes, then carefully remove the ramekin from the center. The ring will hold its shape on its own at this point. Tuck fresh rosemary sprigs between the rolls to form a wreath garland, and place a few fresh cranberries in the gaps for color. The herbs don't need to be edible decoration — they just complete the wreath look.

10. **Serve.** Slide the wreath (on the parchment) onto a serving board or platter. Serve within 20 minutes of baking for the best pull and cheese stretch. Set a small bowl of warm marinara in the center for dipping, or place it alongside.

WHY IT WORKS

Low-moisture whole-milk block mozzarella is the best choice. It melts smoothly, holds together, and gives a satisfying pull without releasing too much liquid (which makes the dough soggy). Fresh mozzarella has too much moisture for this application.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 19

VIRAL

Smashed Potato Board

The viral TikTok smashed potato board — crispy, golden smashed baby potatoes arranged on a board with small bowls of toppings so guests build their own.

VIRAL · COPYCAT

Smashed Potato Board

The viral TikTok smashed potato board — crispy, golden smashed baby potatoes arranged on a board with small bowls of toppings so guests build their own.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
10 min	45 min	8 servings	Easy	230

01 Ingredients

- 1½ lbs baby potatoes (Yukon Gold or red, golf-ball size or smaller)
- Kosher salt (for the boiling water, plus more for finishing)
- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided (more as needed)
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- Flaky sea salt, for finishing

TOPPINGS — SET OUT 4 OR MORE IN SMALL BOWLS

- Sour cream or Greek yogurt
- Shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- Crumbled cooked bacon or bacon bits
- Chopped fresh chives or green onions
- Ranch dressing
- Hot sauce
- Everything bagel seasoning

OPTIONAL UPGRADES (CHOOSE ONE OR TWO FOR A 'FANCY' BOARD)

- Crème fraîche + thinly sliced smoked salmon + capers
- Whipped ricotta + hot honey + fresh thyme
- Blue cheese crumbles + walnuts + hot honey

02 Method

1. **Boil the potatoes until very soft.** Add the baby potatoes to a large pot and cover with cold water by an inch. Add 1 tablespoon kosher salt. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a steady simmer and cook for 20–25 minutes — longer than you think you need. Test by piercing a potato with a fork or skewer: it should slide through with no resistance and the potato should start to look just slightly wrinkled. You want them soft all the way through, not just tender on the outside. Drain and let them steam-dry in the colander for 5 minutes.

2. **Heat the oven and prep the pan.** While the potatoes drain, heat the oven to 425°F and place your sheet pan inside to get hot — a preheated pan makes the bottom of the potatoes crisp faster. Brush or drizzle about 1½ tablespoons of the olive oil on the hot pan (carefully — it will spit) so it coats the surface.

3. **Arrange and smash.** Place the drained potatoes on the oiled sheet pan, spacing them at least 1 inch apart. Use the flat bottom of a drinking glass or dry measuring cup to press firmly straight down on each potato until it flattens to about ½ inch thick. If a potato splits into pieces, press them back together — irregular, craggly edges mean more crispy surface area.

4. **Season and add more oil.** Drizzle the remaining 1½ tablespoons olive oil over the flattened potatoes so the tops and edges get coated. Sprinkle evenly with the garlic powder, black pepper, and a generous pinch of

kosher or flaky sea salt. The oil needs to cover the flat tops — if any look dry, add a small additional drizzle.

5. **Roast 25–30 minutes without moving them.** Slide the pan into the hot oven. Do not flip or move the potatoes. Let them go a full 25 minutes before checking — the bottoms need uninterrupted contact with the hot pan to build a crust. At 25 minutes, check one edge: it should be deep golden, not pale. If needed, give it another 5 minutes. The finished potatoes will be visibly brown and lacy at the edges with a crispy, almost fried texture on the bottom.

6. **Transfer to the board while hot.** Use a thin metal spatula to lift each potato and arrange it on a large wooden board or platter — the flat bottom should face up, showing the deeply browned surface. Work quickly so they stay warm. Scatter a pinch of flaky salt over the top.

7. **Arrange the toppings bowls.** Fill small prep bowls or ramekins with sour cream, shredded cheddar, bacon bits, chives, ranch, hot sauce, and everything bagel seasoning. Set them around the perimeter of the board — the potatoes are in the center, the toppings are the frame. Leave a small spoon or teaspoon in each bowl. Set the board on the table and let guests spoon on their own toppings.

8. **Serve immediately.** Smashed potatoes are at their best the moment they hit the board — the crust is crackling crisp, the center is fluffy. They stay warm and reasonably crispy for about 20–25 minutes, after which the crust softens as moisture escapes. For a party, roast them in two batches 20 minutes apart so the second batch hits the board fresh as the first round disappears.

WHY IT WORKS

Boiling first makes smashing possible without the potatoes crumbling. When you boil them until very soft, the inside is fully cooked and fluffy, so pressing down flattens them into a wide, even disc.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 20

VIRAL

Sugared Cranberries

The viral TikTok sugared cranberries — fresh cranberries soaked in simple syrup, rolled in granulated sugar, and dried until they sparkle like frost.

VIRAL · COPYCAT

Sugared Cranberries

The viral TikTok sugared cranberries — fresh cranberries soaked in simple syrup, rolled in granulated sugar, and dried until they sparkle like frost.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
10 min	5 min	8 servings	Easy	95

01 Ingredients

SIMPLE SYRUP

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup water
- Optional aromatics: 1 fresh rosemary sprig, 1 cinnamon stick, or 2-inch strip of orange peel (choose one; add to the water before heating)

CRANBERRIES

- 12 oz (about 3 cups) fresh cranberries, picked over to remove any soft or wrinkled berries

COATING

- 1 cup granulated sugar (a separate cup from the syrup sugar — do not reuse the syrup)
- **Note on fresh vs. frozen:** Fresh cranberries only. Frozen cranberries thaw into soft, partially-broken berries with compromised skins — they won't hold the sugar coating, they break apart when rolled, and they release too much moisture during drying. If fresh cranberries are unavailable, this recipe cannot be made well with frozen.

02 Method

1. **Pick over the cranberries.** Spread the cranberries on your counter and remove any that are soft, shriveled, or have broken skins. You want every berry to be firm, fully round, and intact — a cranberry with a split or soft spot will absorb too much syrup, turn mushy, and fall apart during the rolling step. This takes about 2 minutes and is worth doing carefully.

2. **Make the simple syrup.** Combine the sugar and water in a medium saucepan. If you're using an aromatic (rosemary, cinnamon, or orange peel), add it now. Set the pan over medium heat and stir gently until the sugar is fully dissolved — about 3 to 4 minutes. You don't need the syrup to boil; it just needs to reach a full simmer with all sugar crystals dissolved. Remove from heat and let the syrup cool for 5 to 10 minutes. It should still be warm — you can hold a hand above the pot and feel heat rising — but no longer simmering. If you add cranberries to boiling-hot syrup, the rapid heat causes the skins to split and burst, which ruins both the appearance and the structural integrity of the berries.

3. **Soak the cranberries.** Add the cranberries to the warm syrup and stir very gently with a spoon — not vigorously, just enough to make sure every berry is coated and submerged. Let them soak for 5 minutes. Set a timer. Five minutes gives the syrup time to penetrate just the outer layer of each berry, creating the sticky tacky surface the sugar will adhere to. Ten minutes is the absolute maximum — any longer and the cranberry skins begin to soften and the interior gets too saturated with syrup, which makes the berries weepy and mushy after coating. You are NOT trying to pickle or macerate the cranberries; you're creating a sticky coating, not absorbing the syrup throughout.

4. **Transfer to the rack and dry — first drying phase.** Use a slotted spoon or spider strainer to transfer the cranberries from the syrup to a wire rack set over a rimmed baking sheet. Spread them into a single layer with no berries touching each other. Let them dry at room temperature for 45 minutes to 1 hour. This is the most important step, and skipping or shortening it is the number-one reason sugared cranberries fail. After drying, the surface of each berry should feel tacky and slightly sticky — like the tacky surface of a Post-It note — and look matte and slightly dull rather than wet and glossy. If the surface still looks wet or feels slippery, keep drying. A wet surface cannot hold sugar; the granules will just stick together in clumps rather than coating the berry individually.

5. **Roll in sugar — second phase.** Pour the fresh granulated sugar into a wide, shallow bowl. Add the cranberries in two or three batches (don't crowd them — you want to be able to roll and tumble them freely). Toss them gently in the sugar, turning to coat all sides, and roll each berry briefly between your fingers to press the sugar into the surface. Transfer the coated berries back to the wire rack in a single layer. The berries should look white and frosted immediately after rolling, though the coating will look slightly damp from the tacky surface. Work quickly but gently — cranberries that are rolled too aggressively develop pressure cracks in the skin and weep.

6. **Dry the coated cranberries — second drying phase.** Let the sugared cranberries dry on the rack at room temperature for at least 30 minutes before using, longer if possible (up to 2 hours for the crunchiest, most defined sparkle coating). During this drying phase, the tacky syrup layer between the berry skin and the sugar granules slowly dries and crystallizes. The finished result is a dry, crisp, crunchy coating that doesn't dissolve or smear when touched — the individual sugar crystals visible on the surface give the berry its sparkle-frost appearance. A cranberry used straight off the rolling step (without this second drying) will have a damp, heavy coating that feels sticky and doesn't photograph as well.

7. **Strain and save the simple syrup.** If you used an aromatic, strain it out of the syrup. Let the syrup cool completely, then transfer it to a jar with a lid. It will be faintly pink and lightly tart from the cranberries — this is one of the best holiday drink syrups you can make, with no extra effort. Refrigerate for up to 2 weeks and use in cocktails (vodka soda, Campari spritz, gin tonic), hot drinks (it dissolves easily in warm tea), or sparkling water mocktails.

8. **Use, store, and serve.** Sugared cranberries are best the day they're made, but they hold well in the refrigerator in a single layer (not stacked, not in a sealed container — they need airflow) for up to 5 days. The coating softens slightly in the refrigerator's humidity but remains intact and attractive. Do not freeze them. Use them to garnish pies (especially any cranberry, pecan, or pumpkin pie — press a cluster into the top after the pie has cooled completely), cocktails (rest 3 to 5 berries on a cocktail pick over the rim of a coupe, or float them on a punch), a cheese board (scattered among the cheeses and nuts, they add color, contrast, and a sweet-tart bite alongside a sharp aged cheddar), or a holiday dessert platter.

WHY IT WORKS

The berries went into the sugar before they were dry enough from the first drying phase.



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 Glaze

The famous HoneyBaked Ham glaze copycat recipe: a warm-spiced sugar crust torched or broiled into a hard, crackly shell over a spiral bone-in ham.

THE HONEYBAKED HAM COMPANY · COPYCAT

HoneyBaked Ham Glaze

The famous HoneyBaked Ham glaze copycat recipe: a warm-spiced sugar crust torched or broiled into a hard, crackly shell over a spiral bone-in ham.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
20 min	2 hrs 30 min	14	Easy	265

01 Ingredients

FOR THE HAM

- 1 bone-in spiral-sliced pre-cooked half ham, 7–9 lbs (bone-in is non-negotiable for structure and flavor)

FOR THE HONEY-BUTTER WASH

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

FOR THE SPICED SUGAR CRUST

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

02 Method

1. **Bring the ham to temperature.** Remove the ham from the refrigerator 30 to 45 minutes before cooking. Preheat oven to 275°F.
2. **Warm the ham.** Place the ham cut-side down in a large roasting pan. Cover the entire pan tightly with foil — no gaps, or moisture escapes. Bake 15 to 18 minutes per pound, until a thermometer inserted into the thickest part (not touching bone) reads 130°F. For a 7 lb ham, this is about 1 hour 45 minutes. For a 9 lb ham, about 2 hours 15 minutes.
3. **Mix the spiced sugar.** While the ham warms, combine the granulated white sugar, cinnamon, paprika, cloves, nutmeg, ginger, dry mustard, and allspice (if using) in a small bowl. Stir thoroughly until the spices are evenly distributed. Set aside.
4. **Make the honey-butter wash.** Combine the honey, melted butter, and Dijon mustard (if using) in a small bowl. Stir to combine.
5. **Rest the ham.** When the ham reaches 130°F, remove from the oven and carefully remove the foil. Let the ham rest uncovered for 10 minutes to let the surface dry slightly — a dry surface is essential for the sugar to adhere and caramelize properly.
6. **Apply the honey-butter wash.** Brush the honey-butter mixture over the entire exposed surface of the ham, working it into the spiral cuts with a pastry brush or your fingers. The surface should be evenly coated and slightly sticky.
7. **Apply the first sugar layer.** Using a fine-mesh sieve or your fingertips, sift or sprinkle a thin, even layer of the spiced sugar over the entire

ham surface. Thin is the critical word — you should be able to see the ham surface through the sugar in most spots. Press lightly to adhere into the cuts. Do not dump a thick layer.

8. **Torch or broil the first layer.** Kitchen torch method: working in small sections, hold the torch 2 to 3 inches from the surface and move it in slow, steady circles for 15 to 20 seconds per section. The sugar will first melt (clear), then bubble, then turn amber. Stop when it's a deep golden-amber — not brown, not black. Broiler method: place the ham on the top oven rack 8 inches from the broiler on HIGH. Broil 3 to 4 minutes, watching constantly. Rotate the pan once to even out the caramelization.

9. **Rest and repeat for a second layer.** Let the first caramelized layer cool and harden for 2 minutes — it will visibly firm. Apply a second thin layer of spiced sugar over the hardened first crust. Torch or broil again as described. Two layers produces the thick, signature crackly shell.

10. **Final rest.** Transfer the ham to a cutting board or serving platter and let rest uncovered for 10 minutes. The crust hardens fully as it cools. Do not cover — steam will soften the crust.

11. **Serve.** The spiral slices will separate easily. For presentation, serve on the bone and let guests pull slices. The crust will crackle as each slice is removed — that's the sound you're after.

WHY IT WORKS

White granulated sugar caramelizes into a harder, more glass-like crust than brown sugar. Brown sugar contains molasses, which stays slightly sticky and hygroscopic — it absorbs moisture from the air and keeps the crust soft and tacky even after it cools.

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

THE SILVER PALATE

Chicken Marbella

Chicken Marbella from The Silver Palate Cookbook — the 1982 recipe by Sheila Lukins and Julee Rosso that made sweet-savory dinner-party cooking mainstream.

THE SILVER PALATE · COPYCAT

Chicken Marbella

Chicken Marbella from The Silver Palate Cookbook — the 1982 recipe by Sheila Lukins and Julee Rosso that made sweet-savory dinner-party cooking mainstream.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
20 min	55 min	6	Easy	465

01 Ingredients

FOR THE MARINADE

- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup red wine vinegar
- 10 garlic cloves, minced (about 3 tablespoons)
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- ¼ cup capers, drained (plus 2 tablespoons caper brine)
- 16 pitted green olives (Castelvetrano or Manzanilla)
- 12 pitted prunes (dried plums)
- 3 bay leaves
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE CHICKEN

- 3½ to 4 lbs bone-in, skin-on chicken pieces (thighs and/or drumsticks)

FOR ROASTING

- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- ½ cup dry white wine

FOR SERVING

- 2 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped

02 Method

1. **Make the marinade.** Combine the olive oil, red wine vinegar, minced garlic, dried oregano, capers and their brine, green olives, prunes, bay leaves, salt, and pepper in a large bowl or zip-top bag. Stir or shake to combine.

2. **Marinate the chicken.** Add the chicken pieces to the marinade and turn to coat every surface thoroughly. Cover tightly and refrigerate overnight, or for at least 8 hours. (Up to 24 hours is excellent. Beyond 24 hours the acid may start to make the surface of the meat mealy.) Turn the pieces once or twice during the marinade if you think of it, though it is not strictly required.

3. **Preheat the oven.** When ready to cook, remove the chicken from the refrigerator and preheat the oven to 350°F. Let the chicken sit at room temperature while the oven heats, about 20 minutes.

4. **Arrange for roasting.** Transfer the chicken pieces skin-side up in a single layer to a large roasting pan, heavy baking dish, or 9×13-inch pan. Pour the entire marinade — olives, prunes, capers, garlic, bay leaves and all — over and around the chicken pieces.

5. **Add the sugar and wine.** Scatter the brown sugar evenly over each piece of chicken skin. Pour the dry white wine around the base of the pan, not directly over the chicken, so you do not wash the sugar off the skin.

6. **Roast.** Roast uncovered at 350°F for 50 to 55 minutes, basting the chicken two or three times with the pan juices as they accumulate. The chicken is done when the skin is deep

golden brown — almost caramelized at the edges — and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of a thigh (not touching the bone) reads 165°F. The pan juices will be a glossy, sweet-savory reduced sauce; if they look too thin after 55 minutes, transfer the chicken to a platter and reduce the juices briefly on the stovetop over medium-high heat until they coat a spoon.

7 **Serve.** Transfer the chicken to a serving platter. Spoon the prunes, olives, capers, and garlic over the top. Discard the bay leaves. Serve the pan juices in a small pitcher alongside as a sauce, or pour them directly over the chicken and platter. Scatter fresh flat-leaf parsley over the top just before serving.

WHY IT WORKS

The Silver Palate Cookbook was published in 1982 by Workman Publishing and written by Sheila Lukins and Julee Rosso, who ran a specialty food shop of the same name at 274 Columbus Avenue on Manhattan's Upper West Side from 1977 to 1993.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 26

SMITH & WOLLENSKY

Prime Rib

Smith & Wollensky's famous prime rib made at home: a USDA Prime standing rib roast seasoned with salt, pepper, garlic, and dried herbs, roasted low-and-slow at 225°F to a perfectly even medium-rare.

SMITH & WOLLENSKY · COPYCAT

Prime Rib

Smith & Wollensky's famous prime rib made at home: a USDA Prime standing rib roast seasoned with salt, pepper, garlic, and dried herbs, roasted low-and-slow at 225°F to a perfectly even medium-rare.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
30 min	4 hr 30 min	6	Medium	720

01 Ingredients

THE ROAST

- 1 bone-in standing rib roast, 3 ribs (7 to 8 lbs) — USDA Prime preferred; well-marbled Choice is a good substitute
- 3 tablespoons Diamond Crystal kosher salt (or 2 tablespoons Morton kosher salt)
- 2 tablespoons coarse-ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary, crumbled fine
- 2 tablespoons neutral oil (grapeseed, avocado, or vegetable)

FOR THE AU JUS

- Pan drippings from the roast
- 2 cups low-sodium beef stock
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- Salt and black pepper to taste

FOR THE HORSERADISH CREAM

- ½ cup sour cream (or crème fraîche for a richer result)
- 3 tablespoons prepared horseradish, drained well
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
- ½ teaspoon fine sea salt
- White pepper to taste

02 Method

1. **Season and dry-brine (24–48 hours ahead, or 2–3 hours ahead minimum).** Pat the roast completely dry on all surfaces with paper towels. In a small bowl, mix the salt, pepper, garlic powder, onion powder, thyme, rosemary, and oil into a thick paste. Rub the paste evenly into all surfaces of the roast — the fat cap, the meat surfaces, between the rib bones. Set the roast bone-side down on a wire rack set over a rimmed sheet pan. Refrigerate uncovered for 24 to 48 hours if time allows (the salt draws moisture out and then reabsorbs it, seasoning the meat throughout and drying the exterior for better crust formation). If cooking same-day, skip the refrigerator: season now and leave at room temperature for 2 to 3 hours.

2. **Come to room temperature (mandatory, 2–3 hours before roasting).** If refrigerating overnight, pull the roast from the refrigerator 2 to 3 hours before it goes into the oven. A 7 to 8 lb bone-in roast takes a full 2 to 3 hours to lose the cold from its center. Skipping this step produces the uneven 'gray band' exterior that separates home prime rib from the steakhouse version.

3. **Roast low and slow.** Preheat oven to 225°F. Place the roast bone-side down in a roasting pan or Dutch oven (no rack needed — the bones act as their own rack). Insert a leave-in probe thermometer into the deepest part of the meat, angled so the probe tip sits in the thickest area without touching bone. Roast at 225°F without opening the oven. The roast will take 3½ to 5 hours depending on your specific oven and the exact weight — begin checking temperature at 3 hours. Pull the roast when the probe reads 120°F for medium-rare (the target after resting).

4. **Rest (45 minutes).** Transfer the roast to a cutting board. Do not tent with foil — the heat trapped under foil steams the crust soft. Rest uncovered at room temperature for 45 minutes. Internal temperature will climb 5 to 8°F during this period from carryover. After resting, the internal should read 125 to 128°F at medium-rare. While it rests, make the au jus and horseradish cream (steps 5 and 6).

5. **High-heat crust finish (the steakhouse exterior).** After the 45-minute rest, return the roast to a 550°F oven (or position it 6 inches below your broiler on its highest setting). Roast 10 to 12 minutes until the exterior is a deep mahogany and visibly caramelized — check at 10 minutes. The crust develops quickly at this temperature; do not leave unattended past 12 minutes. Pull and let stand 5 minutes before carving.

6. **Make the au jus.** While the roast rests after the low-and-slow stage, pour all pan drippings into a fat separator or measuring cup. Let stand 5 minutes until the fat rises. Pour the meat juices (bottom layer) into a medium saucepan, discarding the excess fat (leave 1 tablespoon of fat in the pan for flavor). Add 2 cups beef stock and the Worcestershire sauce. Bring to a boil, scraping any browned bits from the roasting pan into the saucepan. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes until slightly reduced and deepened in color. Taste and adjust salt. Strain through a fine mesh strainer into a small pitcher for serving. Keep hot over low heat until ready to serve.

7. **Make the horseradish cream.** Combine sour cream, drained horseradish, Dijon, vinegar, salt, and white pepper in a small bowl. Stir to combine. Taste — the heat from the horseradish should be forward but not overwhelming; add more horseradish if needed. Refrigerate until serving. (Horseradish cream is served cold alongside the hot au jus — the contrast of temperatures is part of the presentation.)

8. **Carve and serve.** Stand the roast on its cut surface. Using a long, sharp carving knife, cut down along the rib bones to remove them in one connected slab — run the knife flush against the bone surface. Set the bone slab aside. Now slice the boneless roast into portions ½ to ¾ inch thick, cutting perpendicular to where the bones were. Each portion should show the even medium-rare gradient from edge to center. To serve: pool 3 tablespoons of hot au jus in the center of each plate, lay the sliced prime rib on top, and place a tablespoon of cold horseradish cream to the side. The rib bones, cut into individual ribs, can be served separately — they are heavily flavored and among the best pieces of the roast.

WHY IT WORKS

Technically, prime rib is a preparation method (slow-roasted standing rib roast served with au jus), not a specific cut.



№ 27

STARBUCKS

Turkey & Stuffing Panini

Make the iconic Starbucks Holiday Turkey & Stuffing Panini at home — roasted turkey, cranberry cornbread stuffing, and turkey gravy on toasted focaccia.

STARBUCKS · COPYCAT

Turkey & Stuffing Panini

Make the iconic Starbucks Holiday Turkey & Stuffing Panini at home — roasted turkey, cranberry cornbread stuffing, and turkey gravy on toasted focaccia.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
15 min	20 min	4 sandwiches	Easy	580

01 Ingredients

FOCACCIA

- 4 focaccia rolls (or 1 large focaccia loaf cut into 4 sandwich-sized pieces)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, for brushing

TURKEY

- 12 oz thinly sliced roasted turkey breast (deli counter, or leftover carved turkey)

CRANBERRY CORNBREAD STUFFING (SHORTCUT — MAKES FILLING FOR 4 SANDWICHES)

- 4 cups day-old cornbread, crumbled into rough ¾-inch chunks
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- ⅓ cup dried cranberries
- 1 small shallot, finely minced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon fresh sage, finely chopped (or ½ tsp dried rubbed sage)
- ½ teaspoon fresh thyme leaves (or ¼ tsp dried)
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ⅓ cup low-sodium chicken broth

TURKEY GRAVY

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- Salt to taste

02 Method

1. **Make the stuffing.** Preheat oven to 375°F. Toss the crumbled cornbread with melted butter, dried cranberries, minced shallot, garlic, sage, thyme, and black pepper. Drizzle the chicken broth over the top and toss gently — you want the bread to absorb the liquid but still hold its shape (not turn to mush). Spread on a small baking sheet in a single layer. Bake 15 minutes until the edges are set and lightly golden and the interior is moist and just holding together. Remove and let cool for 5 minutes. The stuffing will firm slightly as it cools — it should hold a scoop shape without falling apart.

2. **Make the turkey gravy.** Melt the butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add the flour and whisk constantly for 1–2 minutes until the paste turns lightly golden (this cooks out the raw flour taste). Add the chicken broth in a slow stream, whisking continuously to prevent lumps. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat, whisking, until the gravy thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon — about 3–4 minutes. Stir in the heavy cream, black pepper, and garlic powder. Taste and season with salt. Remove from heat and keep warm, covered. If the gravy tightens up, stir in a splash of broth to loosen it.

3. **Toast the focaccia.** Slice the focaccia rolls in half horizontally. Brush the cut surfaces lightly with olive oil. Set a large skillet or griddle over medium-high heat. Toast the focaccia cut-side down for 2–3 minutes until golden and slightly crisp. Press lightly with a spatula as you go. Remove and set aside, toasted side up.

4. **Assemble the sandwiches.** Spoon a generous layer of stuffing onto the bottom half of each toasted focaccia (about ⅓ cup per sandwich — pack it in; it compacts when pressed). Lay 3 oz of turkey over the stuffing, folding slices as needed to cover the surface evenly. Drizzle 2–3 tablespoons of turkey gravy over the turkey — enough to moisten the meat but not so much that the sandwich becomes soggy. Place the top half of the focaccia on and press firmly.

5. **Press and serve.** For a panini press: press at medium heat 3–4 minutes until the bread is golden with grill marks and the stuffing is hot through (you'll hear it sizzle slightly). For a skillet: set the sandwich in the skillet, lay a heavy pan on top as a weight, and press over medium heat 2–3 minutes per side until golden. Serve immediately. The sandwich is best hot — the stuffing firms and the turkey steams inside the warm focaccia. Serve extra gravy in a small ramekin on the side for dipping.

6. **For the day-after shortcut.** If you have leftover Thanksgiving stuffing and carved turkey, this sandwich comes together in under 10 minutes: warm the stuffing in a skillet with a splash of broth to loosen it, slice the turkey, heat the gravy, and press the assembled focaccia. This is exactly the sandwich's soul — Starbucks designed it to taste like a beautiful leftover plate in portable form.

WHY IT WORKS

The original version used a focaccia roll — a soft, olive-oil-enriched flatbread with an open, chewy crumb and a slightly crisp crust when pressed.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 28

VIRAL

TikTok Beef Tenderloin

The TikTok reverse-sear beef tenderloin that convinced a generation to skip the holiday turkey: a 4-lb whole tenderloin dry-brined overnight, low-roasted to a perfect pink edge-to-edge.

VIRAL · COPYCAT

TikTok Beef Tenderloin

The TikTok reverse-sear beef tenderloin that convinced a generation to skip the holiday turkey: a 4-lb whole tenderloin dry-brined overnight, low-roasted to a perfect pink edge-to-edge.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
30 min	1 hr 30 min	8	Medium	390

01 Ingredients

FOR THE BEEF TENDERLOIN

- 1 whole beef tenderloin (about 4 lbs), trimmed and tied by the butcher
- 1 tablespoon Diamond Crystal kosher salt (or ½ tablespoon Morton kosher salt — different grain sizes)
- 1 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon neutral high-smoke-point oil (avocado or grapeseed)

FOR THE GARLIC HERB BUTTER BASTE

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 4 garlic cloves, finely minced or pressed
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves (from about 8 sprigs)
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, finely chopped (from 2 sprigs)
- ½ teaspoon flaky sea salt (Maldon or similar)
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

02 Method

1. **Dry brine the tenderloin (1 hour minimum, overnight preferred).** Pat the tenderloin completely dry with paper towels. Season all surfaces generously with kosher salt and black pepper, including the ends. Set on a wire rack over a rimmed sheet pan and refrigerate uncovered for at least 1 hour — or overnight for the best crust and deepest seasoning. The surface will look slightly dry by morning; that's ideal.

2. **Bring to room temperature.** Remove the tenderloin from the refrigerator 1 hour before you plan to start cooking. This helps the center cook more evenly.

3. **Preheat the oven to 275°F.** Position a rack in the center of the oven with the wire rack and sheet pan already in place.

4. **Roast low and slow.** Place the tenderloin on the wire rack and roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the center reads 120–125°F for medium-rare. This takes 60–90 minutes depending on the diameter of your particular roast — start checking at 50 minutes. The thin tail end will read 10–15°F hotter than the center; that's normal.

5. **Rest while you prep the sear.** Remove the tenderloin from the oven and let it rest on the rack for 10 minutes. Make the herb butter: mash together the softened butter, garlic, thyme, rosemary, flaky salt, and pepper in a small bowl until fully combined.

6. **Heat the cast iron.** Place a large cast-iron skillet over high heat and leave it completely undisturbed for 3–4 full minutes — the pan should be smoking. Add the tablespoon of neutral oil and swirl to coat.

7. **Sear all sides.** Carefully lay the tenderloin in the hot pan. Sear without moving for 60–90 seconds until deep mahogany brown on that

side, then rotate a quarter turn. Repeat until all four sides and both ends have a crust — about 6–7 minutes total. Do not rush: a weak sear means a gray, soft crust.

8. **Baste with herb butter.** Add all the herb butter to the pan at once. As it foams and melts, tilt the pan slightly so the butter pools. Using a large spoon, scoop the bubbling, garlicky butter continuously over the top of the roast for 60–90 seconds, basting the entire surface. Remove from heat.

9. **Final rest.** Transfer the tenderloin to a cutting board and tent loosely with foil. Rest for 10–15 minutes — the internal temperature will carry over to 125–135°F depending on your oven and starting temperature. Cut the butcher's twine before slicing.

10. **Slice and serve.** Cut into 1-inch medallions. Pour any resting juices from the cutting board back over the sliced meat. Serve immediately — tenderloin is best hot, within 15 minutes of slicing.

WHY IT WORKS

A steer yields only two tenderloins — one on each side of the spine — and each weighs just 5–6 lbs untrimmed. After trimming the silverskin and chain muscle, you get about 4 lbs of usable meat per side from a 1,200-lb steer.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 29

VIRAL

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 · 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.



№ 30

VIRAL

TikTok 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.

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TikTok 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.

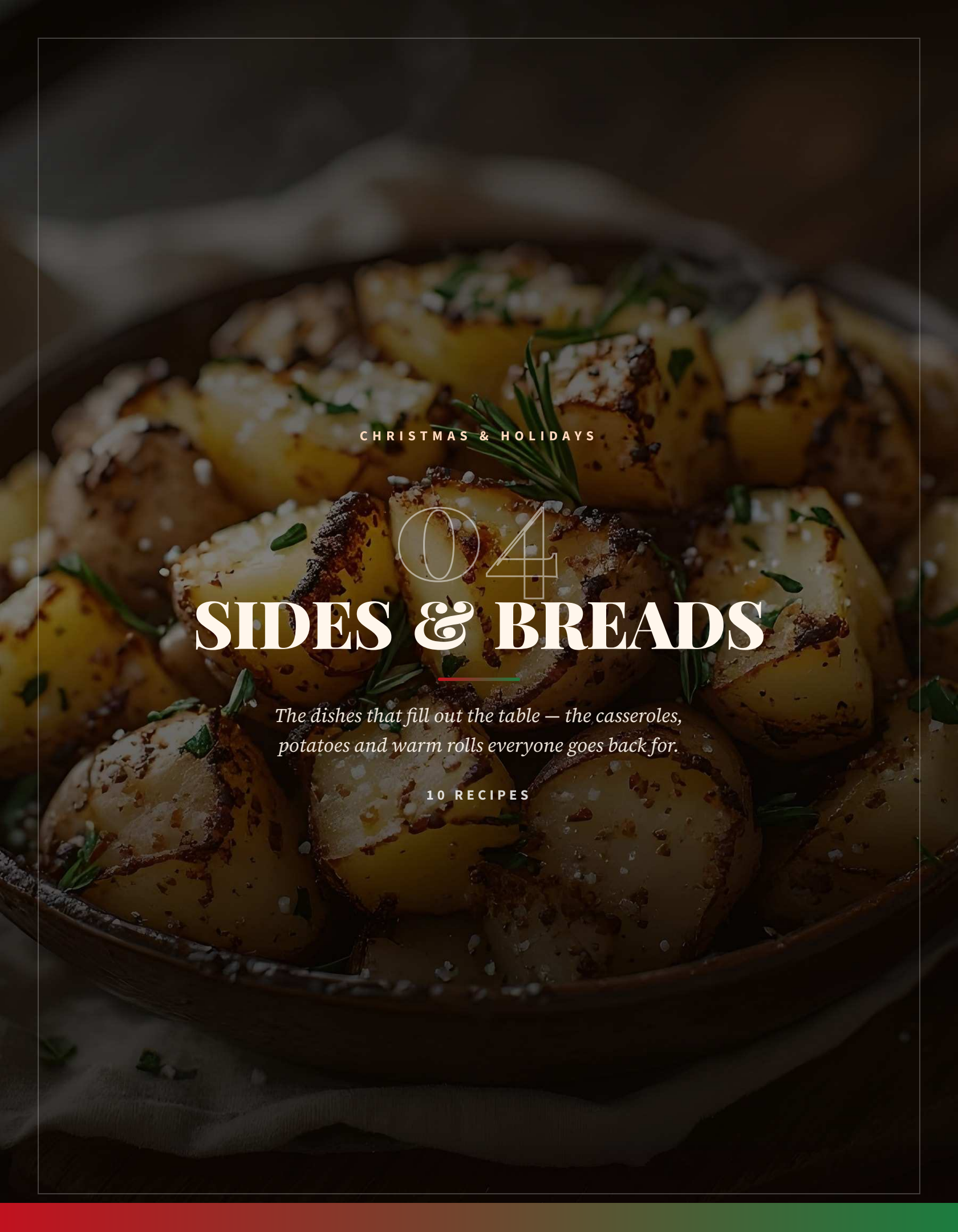
8. **Bake.** Bake at 425°F for 25–28 minutes until the pastry is deeply amber-golden all over. Check at 20 minutes — if it's browning unevenly, rotate the pan. The pastry should be the color of a well-baked croissant, not pale gold. A deeply colored crust means properly cooked, flaky layers. Insert an 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

CHEF-INSPIRED

Crispy Roast Potatoes

J. Kenji López-Alt's Food Lab method for the crispiest roast potatoes you can make at home: parboil with baking soda to break down the surface, shake aggressively to roughen the exterior, then roast in preheated fat at 450°F.

CHEF-INSPIRED · COPYCAT

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J. Kenji López-Alt's Food Lab method for the crispiest roast potatoes you can make at home: parboil with baking soda to break down the surface, shake aggressively to roughen the exterior, then roast in preheated fat at 450°F.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
15 min	45 min	4	Easy	285

01 Ingredients

- 3 lbs (1.4 kg) Russet or Yukon Gold potatoes — peeled, cut into 2–2½ inch chunks (about 3 pieces per medium potato; don't go smaller or they'll dry out)
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 1½ tsp kosher salt, divided (1 tsp for the water, ½ tsp for seasoning)
- 5 tablespoons (75ml) fat: duck fat or goose fat (traditional; best flavor) OR extra-virgin olive oil OR avocado oil
- Freshly ground black pepper

OPTIONAL AROMATICS (ADD AFTER DRAINING)

- 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary leaves, roughly chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced or grated
- 1 tsp finely grated lemon zest

02 Method

1. **Preheat oven and fat together.** Set your oven to 450°F (230°C). Pour the fat into a large rimmed baking sheet (half-sheet, 18×13 inches) or a 9×13-inch roasting pan and place it on the middle rack. The pan and fat must preheat for at least 10–15 minutes before the potatoes go in — this step is non-negotiable.

2. **Parboil with baking soda.** Fill a large pot with cold water — enough to cover the potatoes by at least an inch (about 2 quarts). Bring to a boil. Add 1 tsp kosher salt and the ½ tsp baking soda. Add the potato chunks. Boil at a vigorous simmer for 10–15 minutes. You're looking for a specific visual cue: the edges of the potatoes should look visibly soft and crumbly, almost starting to fall apart at the corners, while the centers are still firm when you stab them with a fork. Do not undercook — if the edges aren't clearly yielding, keep going.

3. **Drain and rough up aggressively.** Drain the potatoes into a colander, then return them to the empty pot (off the heat). Add the remaining ½ tsp salt, black pepper, and any aromatics now. Cover the pot with the lid and shake hard — really hard, for about 20–30 seconds. The goal is to violently rough up the potato surfaces until they look like a lumpy, paste-covered mess. You want the edges to look like the surface of a mashed potato. This is supposed to look destructive. If the chunks look perfectly intact, you haven't shaken hard enough.

4. **Transfer to hot fat immediately.** Open the oven, slide out the pan, and carefully tip the roughed-up potatoes directly onto the hot fat-covered surface. The fat should immediately sizzle aggressively — that sizzle means the crust is forming. Use tongs or a spatula to turn each chunk once so all sides get coated in fat.

5. **Roast — don't touch — for 20 minutes.** Slide the pan back in and set a timer for 20 minutes. Do not open the oven, do not move the potatoes. The bottom crust needs this uninterrupted time to set. If you move them early, you'll pull up the developing crust and it won't recover.

6. **Flip and finish.** After 20 minutes, the bottoms should be deep golden brown. Use a thin spatula to flip each chunk. If any stick, wait 2–3 more minutes — a properly formed crust releases cleanly; a crust that isn't ready will tear. Return to the oven for another 20–25 minutes until deeply golden and crunchy on all sides. The total roasting time is 40–45 minutes.

7. **Rest briefly and serve.** Transfer to a plate lined with paper towels for 2–3 minutes to drain any excess fat. Season one more time with flaky sea salt. Serve immediately — these are at their peak right out of the oven.

WHY IT WORKS

Baking soda raises the pH (alkalinity) of the boiling water. At higher pH, the pectin in potato cell walls breaks down much faster than it would in neutral water.

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

LONGHORN STEAKHOUSE

Crispy Brussels Sprouts

Make LongHorn Steakhouse's famous crispy Brussels sprouts at home — oven-roasted at 425°F until caramelized and shatteringly crisp, then tossed in a warm honey-chili butter sauce with smoked paprika and Calabrian chili.

LONGHORN STEAKHOUSE · COPYCAT

Crispy Brussels Sprouts

Make LongHorn Steakhouse's famous crispy Brussels sprouts at home — oven-roasted at 425°F until caramelized and shatteringly crisp, then tossed in a warm honey-chili butter sauce with smoked paprika and Calabrian chili.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
10 min	25 min	4	Easy	265

01 Ingredients

- 1 lb Brussels sprouts, outer leaves removed, trimmed and halved through the stem
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE HONEY-CHILI BUTTER

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon Calabrian chili paste
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons honey

02 Method

1. **Preheat and line the pan.** Set the oven to 425°F and line a large rimmed sheet pan with aluminum foil. Foil — not parchment — is the right material here. Parchment insulates the cut surface from the hot metal underneath, trapping steam and producing pale, soft sprouts. Foil conducts heat directly to the cut face, which is what turns it caramel-dark and crispy.

2. **Dry the sprouts thoroughly.** Pat the halved Brussels sprouts dry with paper towels, getting into the cut face as well as the outer surface. Any residual water turns to steam in the oven before the surface can brown. Dry sprouts roast; wet sprouts braise. Transfer to a large bowl, drizzle with olive oil, and toss until every surface is lightly coated. Season with salt and black pepper and toss again.

3. **Roast cut-side down without crowding.** Arrange the sprouts cut-face down on the foil-lined pan in a single layer, leaving a small gap between each one. Crowding the pan traps steam between the sprouts and is the second most common reason for soft, uncrispy results. Roast 15 minutes undisturbed, then flip each sprout with tongs and roast another 8 to 10 minutes until the outer leaves are crisped and the cut faces are deeply golden — nearly dark brown in spots, which is the caramelization you're after.

4. **Make the honey-chili butter while the sprouts roast.** Melt the butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add the Calabrian chili paste, smoked paprika, garlic powder, and salt. Stir constantly for 30 to 45 seconds — the spices will bloom and the kitchen will smell smoky and fragrant. Remove from heat and stir in the honey until fully combined. The sauce should be glossy, brick-red, and slightly thick. Taste it: you want a clear sweet-smoky-spicy balance. If it lacks heat, add a pinch more chili; if it's too spicy, stir in another half teaspoon of honey.

5. **Toss and serve immediately.** Transfer the hot roasted sprouts to a large bowl. Pour the honey-chili butter over them and toss quickly so every piece gets coated. The sauce will sizzle when it hits the hot sprouts and thicken slightly into a lacquer. Plate immediately — the crispy outer leaves stay crunchy for about 3 minutes after saucing before moisture from the sauce begins to soften them. This dish does not wait.



№ 35

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



№ 36

CHEF-INSPIRED

Cinnamon Rolls

Ree Drummond's famous cinnamon rolls: scalded-milk yeast dough rolled in a pound of butter and cinnamon sugar, baked to golden, then drenched while hot in a maple-coffee glaze.

CHEF-INSPIRED · COPYCAT

Cinnamon Rolls

Ree Drummond's famous cinnamon rolls: scalded-milk yeast dough rolled in a pound of butter and cinnamon sugar, baked to golden, then drenched while hot in a maple-coffee glaze.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
30 min	18 min	40	Intermediate	380

01 Ingredients

FOR THE DOUGH

- 4 cups whole milk
- 1 cup vegetable oil (or canola oil)
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 4½ teaspoons active dry yeast (two ¼-oz packets)
- 8 cups all-purpose flour (first addition)
- 1 cup all-purpose flour (second addition)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt

FOR THE FILLING

- 1½ to 2 cups (3–4 sticks) unsalted butter, melted — be generous
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- Generous ground cinnamon, to coat

FOR THE PANS

- 7 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted (1 tablespoon per pan)

FOR THE MAPLE GLAZE

- 2 lbs (about 8 cups) powdered sugar
- 2 teaspoons maple flavoring (not maple syrup — the extract)
- ½ cup whole milk
- ¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter, melted
- ¼ cup brewed coffee (regular or decaf)
- ⅛ teaspoon salt

02 Method

1. **Heat and cool the milk mixture:** Combine the milk, vegetable oil, and 1 cup sugar in a large pot over medium heat. Warm just until the mixture is about to boil — small bubbles will form around the edges and steam will rise — then immediately remove from heat. Let it cool until it reads 105–115°F on an instant-read thermometer (lukewarm; it should feel just barely warm on your wrist). This takes 45–60 minutes.

2. **Activate the yeast and make the dough:** Sprinkle the yeast over the surface of the cooled milk mixture. Let it sit 2–3 minutes until it begins to foam. Add the 8 cups of flour all at once and stir well with a wooden spoon until a soft, shaggy dough forms. Cover the pot with a kitchen towel and let rise in a warm spot for 1 hour, or until the dough has puffed noticeably.

3. **Add the second flour and leaveners:** Uncover the dough and add the remaining 1 cup flour, 1 tsp baking powder, 1 tsp baking soda, and 1 tbsp salt. Fold and stir until fully incorporated. The dough will be soft, slightly sticky, and somewhat oily — that's correct. (At this point, the dough can be refrigerated covered overnight or up to 2 days.)

4. **Prep pans and preheat oven:** Preheat the oven to 400°F. Pour 1 tablespoon melted butter into each of 7 round foil pans (or your equivalent baking dishes) and swirl to coat the bottom.

5. **Roll the first half of the dough:** Generously flour a large surface. Pinch off half the dough and place it on the floured surface. Flour the top and your rolling pin. Roll the dough into a roughly rectangular shape, about 18×24 inches and ¼ inch thick. Don't worry about perfect edges — irregular is fine.

6. **Fill and roll:** Brush ¾ to 1 cup of the melted butter all over the surface of the rolled dough, going all the way to the edges. Sprinkle ½ cup of the sugar evenly over the butter. Dust very generously with ground cinnamon — it should look like a cinnamon snowfall, not a light dusting. Starting at the far long edge, roll the dough toward you into a tight log, working steadily across the width. Pinch the seam shut.

7. **Slice the rolls:** Using a bench scraper or sharp knife, cut the log into slices about ¾ to 1 inch thick. Each log should yield about 18–22 rolls. Place the rolls cut-side up into the prepared pans, spacing them about ½ inch apart. Repeat steps 5 and 6 with the second half of the dough.

8. **Second rise:** Let the rolls in their pans rise, uncovered, for 20–30 minutes until slightly puffed. They don't need to double; just a visible puff.

9. **Bake:** Bake in the preheated 400°F oven for 15–18 minutes, until the tops are light golden brown and the rolls feel set when lightly pressed. Don't overbake — they should be just cooked through, not dark.

10. **Make the glaze while the rolls bake:** Combine the powdered sugar, maple flavoring, milk, melted butter, brewed coffee, and salt in a large bowl. Stir until smooth and thick but pourable. Taste and adjust — a few extra drops of maple flavoring or a pinch more salt both improve it.

11. **Glaze immediately:** The instant the rolls come out of the oven, pour the glaze generously over all the pans. Don't wait — the rolls need to be hot so the glaze soaks in and melds with the layers, not just sit on top. Some glaze will pool around the edges of each pan; that's correct. Let the rolls sit 5 minutes before serving.

WHY IT WORKS

The yeast does the primary rising work over the 1–1.5 hours the dough sits. The baking powder and baking soda are added in the second flour addition as secondary leaveners — a clever hybrid technique.



№ 37

CHEF-INSPIRED

Creamy Mashed Potatoes

Ree Drummond's creamy mashed potatoes — the Pioneer Woman's most-made Thanksgiving side — get their famously silky texture from one unexpected move: a full block of cream cheese folded in with the butter.

CHEF-INSPIRED · COPYCAT

Creamy Mashed Potatoes

Ree Drummond's creamy mashed potatoes — the Pioneer Woman's most-made Thanksgiving side — get their famously silky texture from one unexpected move: a full block of cream cheese folded in with the butter.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
15 min	20 min	10	Easy	395

01 Ingredients

- 5 lbs Yukon Gold potatoes (about 10 medium), peeled and cut into 2-inch chunks
- 1½ sticks (¾ cup / 12 tbsp / 170g) unsalted butter, cut into tablespoon-size pieces
- 8 oz (227g) full-fat cream cheese, at room temperature, cut into chunks
- ½ cup half-and-half, warmed (plus more as needed)
- 1½ to 2 tsp kosher salt, plus more for the cooking water
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter and thinly sliced chives, to serve (optional)

02 Method

1. **Prep the potatoes.** Peel and cut the potatoes into roughly 2-inch chunks — keep them similar in size so they cook at the same rate. Place in a large pot, cover with cold water by at least an inch, and add a generous pinch (about 1 tbsp) of kosher salt to the water.
2. **Boil until very tender.** Bring to a full boil over high heat, then reduce to a steady simmer. Cook until a fork slides into the thickest piece with absolutely no resistance and the chunk nearly falls apart, about 15 to 20 minutes (longer if your chunks run larger). The potatoes should be thoroughly cooked, not just fork-tender — undercooked potatoes never mash smoothly.
3. **Drain and steam-dry.** Drain the potatoes into a colander and shake well to remove excess water. Return the empty pot to the stove over low heat. Add the drained potatoes back to the dry pot and cook, stirring gently once or twice, for 2 minutes. You'll see steam rising; that's surface moisture leaving the potatoes. Remove from heat.
4. **Mash while hot.** Mash the potatoes with a hand masher until mostly smooth and no large lumps remain. Work quickly while the potatoes are still hot — they mash more smoothly before they begin to cool.
5. **Work in the butter.** Add the butter pieces a few at a time, stirring with a wooden spoon or folding with a spatula between additions. The residual heat from the potatoes melts the butter; keep stirring until each addition disappears before adding the next.
6. **Add the cream cheese.** Add the room-temperature cream cheese chunks to the pot. Stir firmly until every piece dissolves into the potatoes — this takes a minute or two of steady stirring. If you see small white streaks remaining, keep going; they'll disappear once the cream cheese fully melts in. Cold cream cheese will not blend this smoothly.
7. **Thin with half-and-half.** Add the warmed half-and-half and stir until the potatoes reach a silky, spoonable consistency. If they're thicker

than you'd like, add more half-and-half a tablespoon at a time, stirring after each addition. Season with 1½ to 2 tsp kosher salt and the black pepper; taste and adjust. Ree's original uses seasoned salt such as Lawry's, which adds a savory, faintly oniony note — swap it in for the kosher salt if you want her exact flavor.

8 **Serve.** Transfer to a warm serving bowl. If serving immediately, make a small well in the center, add a tablespoon or two of butter to melt, and scatter sliced chives over the top. For make-ahead, transfer to a buttered baking dish, dot with butter, cover tightly with foil, and refrigerate up to 2 days; bake covered at 350°F for 25 to 30 minutes to reheat.

WHY IT WORKS

To steam-dry them. Cooked potatoes hold onto surface water even after draining, and if you add butter and cream directly onto wet potatoes, that extra liquid dilutes the mixture and makes the final dish watery.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 38

VIRAL

Candied Yams

The viral TikTok candied yams recipe with the thick, glossy brown sugar glaze — stovetop method that lets the sauce reduce right in front of you.

VIRAL · COPYCAT

Candied Yams

The viral TikTok candied yams recipe with the thick, glossy brown sugar glaze — stovetop method that lets the sauce reduce right in front of you.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
15 min	35 min	8	Easy	355

01 Ingredients

- 4 lbs (about 5–6 medium) garnet or jewel sweet potatoes — the deep orange-flesh variety sold in most US grocery stores as 'yams'
- 6 tablespoons (¾ stick) unsalted butter — salted butter works; reduce the added salt to ¼ teaspoon
- 1 cup (210g) packed dark brown sugar — more molasses flavor than light; light brown sugar works but gives a slightly milder, less caramelized glaze
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg (or ¼ teaspoon pre-ground — freshly grated is meaningfully more aromatic)
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons fresh orange juice (from about ½ orange) — adds a faint citrus brightness that keeps the dish from tasting flat-sweet; lemon juice works but produces a sharper flavor
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt — not optional; without it the dish tastes one-dimensional and cloying

OPTIONAL GARNISHES

- Flaky sea salt — a light pinch just before serving heightens every flavor in the glaze
- 1 cup toasted pecans — add in the last 3 minutes of the uncovered glazing phase for crunch
- 2 cups mini marshmallows — scatter over the top, cover briefly for the last 5 minutes of the uncovered phase until melted, for the classic version

02 Method

1. **Prep the sweet potatoes.** Peel each sweet potato and slice crosswise into rounds about ½ inch thick — uniform thickness matters more than perfection; slices under ¼ inch become very fragile once soft, and slices over ¾ inch stay hard in the center while the outside is done. If your sweet potatoes are large in diameter, cut the rounds into half-moons so they fit more easily in the pan. No need to soak in water — peel, slice, and cook immediately.

2. **Build the glaze base.** Melt the butter in a 12-inch skillet or wide heavy pot over medium heat. Add the brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, vanilla, orange juice, and salt. Stir constantly for 1 to 2 minutes until the sugar is fully dissolved and the mixture is bubbling and fragrant — it will look like a thin caramel sauce. Taste carefully (it's hot): intensely sweet, buttery, warmly spiced, with a faint citrus edge. If it tastes flat, add a pinch more salt, not more sugar.

3. **Add the sweet potatoes and coat.** Add the sweet potato slices to the skillet. Overlap them slightly if needed — they'll shrink as they cook. Turn each slice with tongs or a spatula to coat both sides in the butter-sugar mixture. They don't need to be submerged; steam from the covered phase does most of the work.

4. **Cover and cook until tender.** Reduce the heat to medium-low and cover the skillet tightly. Cook for 18 to 22 minutes, turning the sweet potato slices gently every 5 to 6 minutes — they'll be fragile once soft, so slide the spatula underneath carefully. After 15 minutes, test one of the thicker slices with the tip of a paring knife or a fork: it should slide through with no resistance. If there's any firmness left in the center, cover and cook another 3 to 5 minutes. Every slice must be completely soft before you remove the lid — undercooked sweet potatoes tighten up and toughen during the glaze step.

5. **Uncover and reduce to a glaze.** Remove the lid and increase the heat to medium. The liquid in the pan will be relatively thin and abundant — your job now is to reduce it to a thick, sticky glaze. Spoon the sauce over the sweet potatoes every 1 to 2 minutes, working the syrup across every visible surface. Cook for 8 to 12 minutes, basting continuously. Visual cues for done: (1) the bubbles slow down and get larger as the sauce thickens; (2) a spoonful lifted from the pan falls back in a thick, slow sheet rather than running like water; (3) tilting the pan, the sauce moves slowly. Don't walk away — high sugar content means the glaze can burn quickly once thick. If it reduces too far before the sweet potatoes look done, add 2 tablespoons of water, stir, and continue reducing.

6. **Serve immediately.** Transfer the candied yams to a serving dish and scrape every drop of glaze from the pan over the top. The glaze thickens further as it cools — if it solidifies into a hard candy shell on the serving dish, it was reduced slightly too far; the flavor is fine, but pull it off the heat while it's still thick and saucy for best presentation. Finish with flaky salt, toasted pecans, or mini marshmallows if desired.

WHY IT WORKS

American grocers and food companies began labeling the moister orange-flesh sweet potato varieties as 'yams' in the 1930s and 1940s to distinguish them from the drier, paler varieties on the same shelf.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 39

VIRAL

Cranberry Fluff Salad

The viral cranberry fluff salad going around TikTok every Thanksgiving: whole-berry cranberry sauce, cream cheese, Cool Whip, pineapple, and marshmallows in under 10 minutes of active work.

VIRAL · COPYCAT

Cranberry Fluff Salad

The viral cranberry fluff salad going around TikTok every Thanksgiving: whole-berry cranberry sauce, cream cheese, Cool Whip, pineapple, and marshmallows in under 10 minutes of active work.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
10 min	0 min	10	Easy	295

01 Ingredients

- 8 oz (227g) full-fat cream cheese, at room temperature for at least 1 hour — this is the single most important prep step; cold cream cheese will not beat smooth and leaves visible lumps that won't disappear when you fold in the Cool Whip
- One 14-oz (397g) can whole-berry cranberry sauce — NOT jellied cranberry sauce (jellied is smooth and gelatinous; whole-berry has fruit pieces and gives the fluff its distinctive texture); Ocean Spray whole-berry is the most widely available
- 8 oz (227g) Cool Whip, thawed — thaw overnight in the refrigerator or at room temperature for 30 minutes; frozen Cool Whip deflates and collapses when folded in
- One 20-oz (567g) can crushed pineapple, drained very well — press the pineapple firmly against a fine-mesh strainer to remove as much liquid as possible; under-drained pineapple is the most common reason cranberry fluff turns watery and loose
- 2½ cups (125g) mini marshmallows — mini marshmallows distribute evenly and are the right size to suspend in the cream; full-size marshmallows don't distribute well and create pockets of sweetness
- ½ cup (60g) chopped pecans or walnuts, optional — adds crunch and a lightly savory note that balances the sweet base; toast them first (5 min at 350°F or in a dry skillet) for noticeably better flavor
- ½ cup (40g) sweetened shredded coconut, optional — a traditional addition in some regional versions; adds a chewy texture and a slight tropical sweetness

02 Method

1. **Prep the cream cheese.** At least 1 hour before you start (2 hours is better), take the cream cheese out of the refrigerator and unwrap it onto a plate. Leave it at room temperature. When it's ready, it should feel soft when you press it, look slightly glossy, and leave an indent when you press with a finger. If you press the block and it springs back firm, it's too cold — give it more time.

2. **Drain the pineapple.** Pour the entire can of crushed pineapple into a fine-mesh strainer set over a bowl. Press firmly with the back of a spoon repeatedly to push out as much liquid as possible. Tilt the strainer to drain. Leave it draining while you make the cream base — the longer it sits, the more liquid it releases. The pineapple juice is excellent: sweeten it with a tablespoon of lime juice and use it as a mixer or add it to sparkling water.

3. **Beat the cream cheese.** Put the room-temperature cream cheese in a large mixing bowl. Beat with a hand mixer on medium speed for 1–2 minutes until completely smooth with no lumps. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl. The cream cheese should look fluffy and uniform — if you see any lumps or streaks, keep beating. If it's still lumpy after 2 minutes, the cream cheese was too cold; set the bowl over a bowl of warm (not hot) water for 2 minutes and beat again.

4. **Beat in the cranberry sauce.** Add the entire can of whole-berry cranberry sauce to the beaten cream cheese. Beat on low speed until fully incorporated and the mixture is uniformly pink — about 1 minute. The berry pieces from the whole-berry sauce will break apart partially and tint the entire base a vivid pink-magenta. You should see small fruit pieces throughout, not smooth sauce. Scrape down the bowl.

5. **Fold in the Cool Whip.** Add the thawed Cool Whip to the cranberry-cream cheese base. Using a wide silicone spatula, fold with slow under-and-over strokes — slide the spatula under the mixture, lift it up and over the Cool Whip, rotate the bowl a quarter-turn. About 15–20 strokes. Stop when no white streaks remain. The mixture will be a vivid pink and noticeably lighter and more voluminous. Do not stir or beat — you'll knock out the air that makes it fluffy.

6. **Fold in the pineapple and marshmallows.** Press the drained pineapple one more time against the strainer to remove any remaining liquid, then add it to the bowl along with the 2½ cups of mini marshmallows (and coconut and/or pecans, if using). Fold with 6–8 slow sweeping strokes — just enough to distribute everything. A few uneven spots are fine; every scoop should have pineapple and marshmallows.

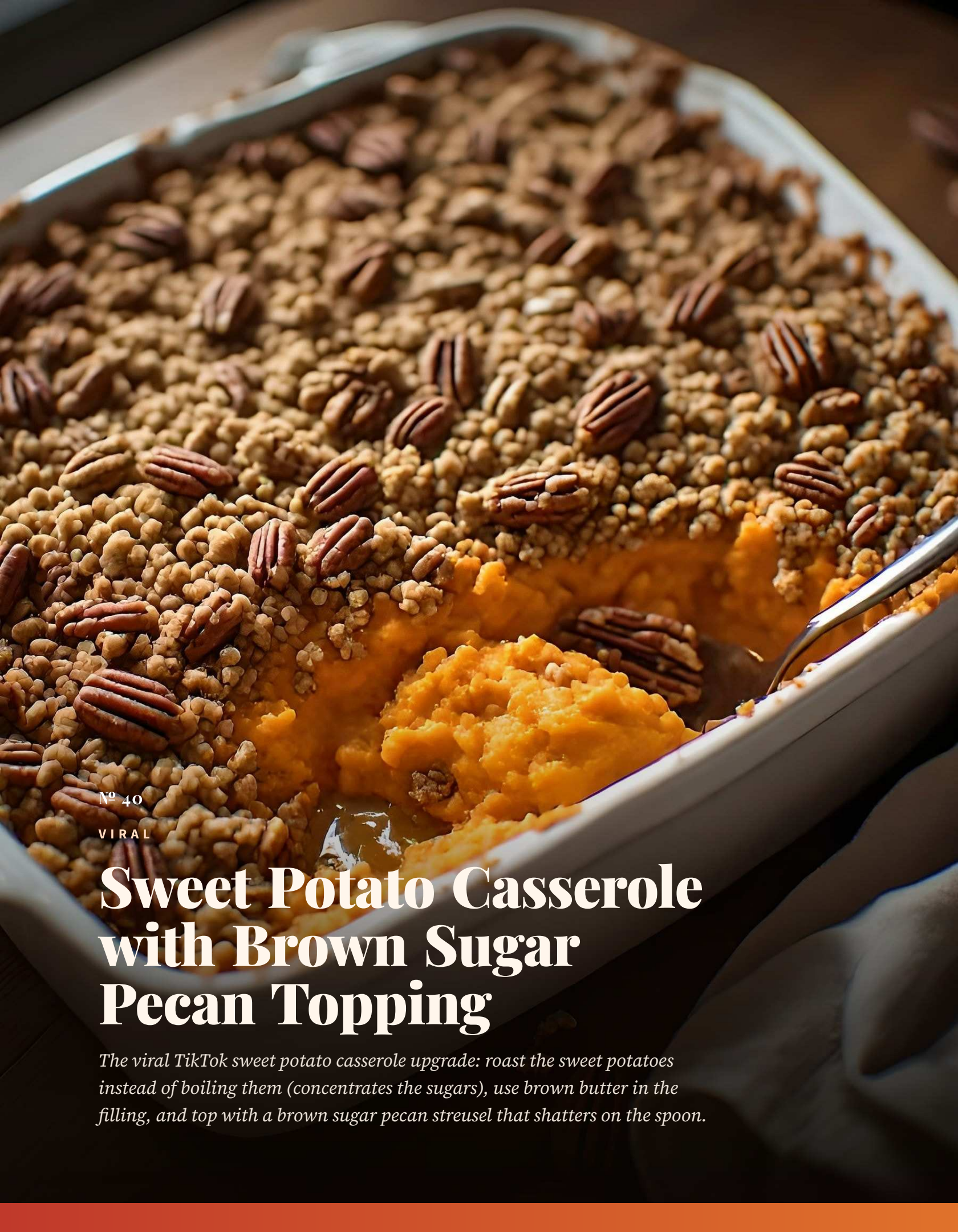
7. **Refrigerate.** Transfer the fluff to a 9×13 baking dish or trifle bowl. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Overnight is significantly better: the marshmallows soften and absorb the cranberry-cream flavor, the flavors meld, and the texture becomes cohesive and scoopable rather than soft and loose. The color deepens from bright pink to a deep, saturated magenta overnight.

8. **Serve.** Scoop with a large serving spoon directly from the dish. Garnish with a handful of whole fresh cranberries (for color), a sprig of rosemary, or a light dusting of powdered sugar for a holiday presentation. Serve cold from the refrigerator. It keeps well for up to 3 days covered.

WHY IT WORKS

Cranberry fluff salad is a no-bake, make-ahead American side dish (or dessert) built from whole-berry cranberry sauce folded into sweetened cream cheese, Cool Whip, drained crushed pineapple, and mini marshmallows.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 40

VIRAL

Sweet Potato Casserole with Brown Sugar Pecan Topping

The viral TikTok sweet potato casserole upgrade: roast the sweet potatoes instead of boiling them (concentrates the sugars), use brown butter in the filling, and top with a brown sugar pecan streusel that shatters on the spoon.

VIRAL · COPYCAT

Sweet Potato Casserole with Brown Sugar Pecan Topping

The viral TikTok sweet potato casserole upgrade: roast the sweet potatoes instead of boiling them (concentrates the sugars), use brown butter in the filling, and top with a brown sugar pecan streusel that shatters on the spoon.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
15 min	1 hr 10 min	10	Easy	370

01 Ingredients

ROASTED SWEET POTATO FILLING

- 4 lbs whole sweet potatoes (about 5 medium), scrubbed and unpeeled
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter, for browning
- ½ cup (105g) packed light brown sugar
- ½ cup (120ml) heavy cream or half-and-half
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract (or 1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste)
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt — this is important: sweet potatoes are very sweet and need salt to taste like food, not dessert
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, softened, for the baking dish

BROWN SUGAR PECAN STREUSEL

- 1 cup (100g) roughly chopped pecans — chop most of them but leave a few halves for visual texture
- ½ cup (105g) packed light brown sugar
- ⅓ cup (42g) all-purpose flour
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) cold unsalted butter, cut into small cubes
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt

OPTIONAL MARSHMALLOW TOPPING (FOR THE CLASSIC VERSION, OR TO DO HALF-AND-HALF)

- 2 cups mini marshmallows — see the Variations section for the half-pecan/half-marshmallow hybrid

02 Method

1. **Roast the sweet potatoes.** Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with foil. Pierce each sweet potato 3 or 4 times with a fork (this lets steam escape and prevents the skin from bursting), then arrange them directly on the prepared sheet. Roast for 45 to 55 minutes until a knife slides into the thickest part with zero resistance. The potatoes are done when the skin has puffed slightly and a thick amber syrup has oozed and caramelized on the foil around each one — that syrup is the concentrated sugar you're after. Set aside to cool for 15 minutes. The oven can stay on: reduce to 350°F for the casserole bake.

2. **Brown the butter.** While the sweet potatoes cool, put the 4 tablespoons of butter in a small light-colored saucepan over medium heat. The butter will melt, then foam — the foam means water is evaporating. Once the foam subsides (about 3 minutes), watch closely: the milk solids at the bottom of the pan will start to turn from pale gold to tan to a deep amber.

The moment the solids are a deep hazelnut brown and the butter smells like toasted nuts and caramel (not burned), immediately pour it into a heatproof bowl. It will continue cooking from residual heat for 10–15 seconds after you pour it, so pull it slightly before you think it's done. Set aside.

3. **Make the filling.** Slice each roasted sweet potato in half lengthwise and scoop the flesh into a large bowl — it should slide out easily in one motion, leaving the skin behind. Discard the skins. Beat the sweet potato flesh with a hand mixer on medium speed for 30 seconds to break it up. Add the browned butter, brown sugar, heavy cream, eggs, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Beat on medium speed for 1 to 2 minutes until the filling is completely smooth, light, and slightly fluffy. Taste it: it should be intensely sweet-potato-forward, warmly spiced, and distinctly savory at the finish from the salt. If it tastes flat, add another pinch of salt — not more sugar.

4. **Transfer to the baking dish.** Butter a 9×13 baking dish with the tablespoon of softened butter. Scrape in the filling and use a spatula to spread it into an even layer about 1 to 1½ inches deep. Don't worry about getting it perfectly smooth — the streusel covers it completely.

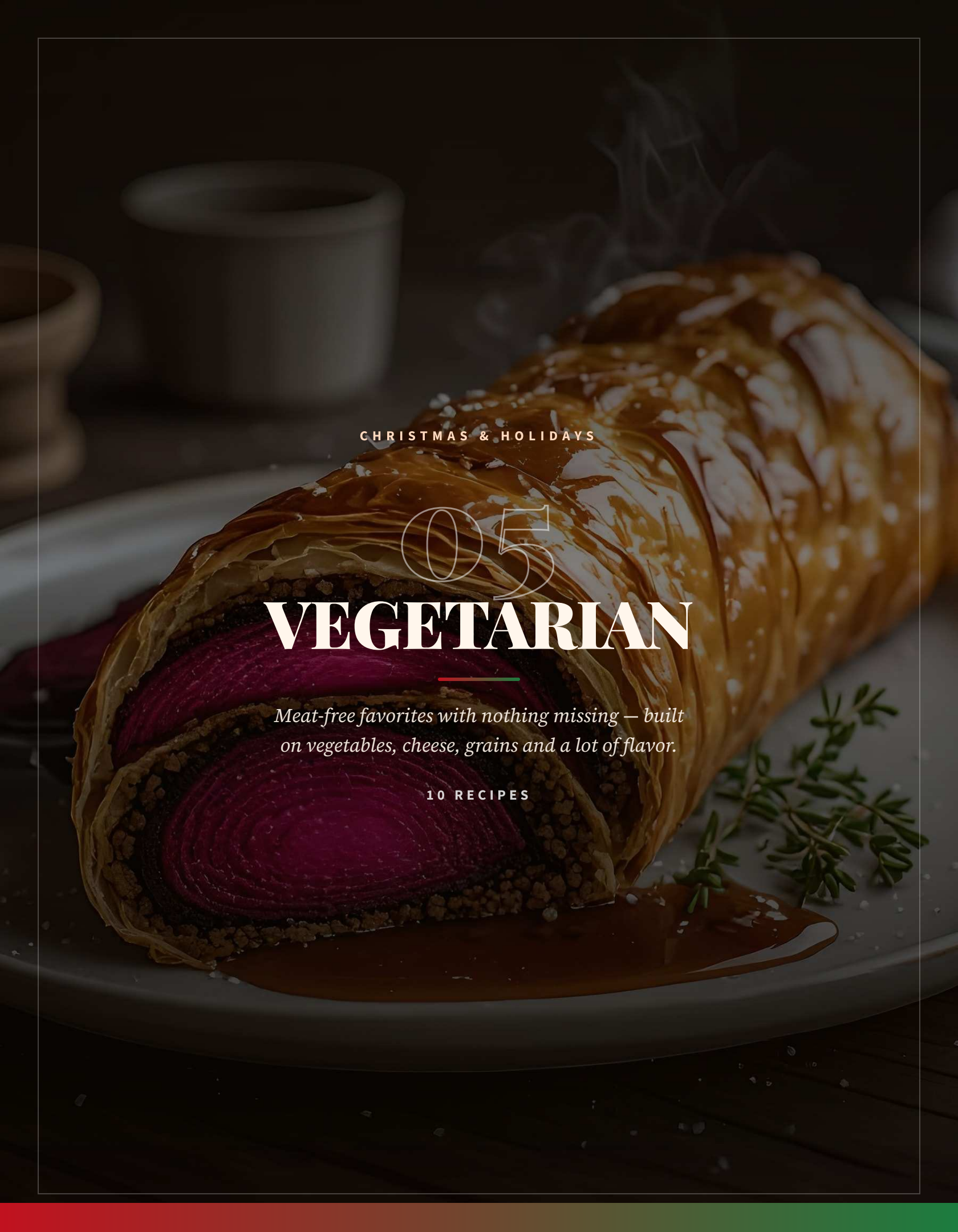
5. **Make the pecan streusel.** In a medium bowl, combine the chopped pecans, brown sugar, flour, cold butter cubes, cinnamon, and salt. Use your fingertips to press and rub the butter into the flour and sugar — work quickly so the butter stays cold. Stop when the mixture looks like coarse crumbs with some pea-sized pieces of butter still visible. Some clumps are good; they'll bake into crunchy clusters. If the butter has gotten warm and greasy, refrigerate the streusel for 5 minutes before scattering it over the filling.

6. **Assemble and bake.** Scatter the pecan streusel evenly over the sweet potato filling. Bake at 350°F for 25 to 30 minutes until the streusel is deep golden brown — the color of honey going amber — and the filling is just set (it will jiggle slightly in the center but shouldn't look liquid). If the streusel darkens before the filling is set, tent loosely with foil. Let the casserole rest for 10 minutes before serving. This rest allows the filling to firm slightly so servings are cohesive rather than soupy.

WHY IT WORKS

Boiling sweet potatoes in water is fast, but the water draws out the natural sugars and aromatics — you lose a meaningful percentage of the concentrated sweetness that makes sweet potato casserole taste rich and complex.

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

OLIVE GARDEN

Five Cheese Ziti al Forno

Olive Garden Five Cheese Ziti al Forno at home: ziti tossed in a creamy five-cheese marinara (marinara blended with a quick Alfredo) with fontina, mozzarella, ricotta, Parmesan, and Romano, topped with garlicky panko and baked golden.

OLIVE GARDEN · COPYCAT

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Olive Garden Five Cheese Ziti al Forno at home: ziti tossed in a creamy five-cheese marinara (marinara blended with a quick Alfredo) with fontina, mozzarella, ricotta, Parmesan, and Romano, topped with garlicky panko and baked golden.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
20 min	1 hr	6	Medium	700

01 Ingredients

- 1 lb ziti (or penne rigate as substitute)
- Kosher salt for pasta water

ALFREDO CREAM COMPONENT

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup heavy cream
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ⅛ teaspoon white pepper

SAUCE ASSEMBLY

- 2 cups marinara sauce (good-quality jarred, such as Rao's, or homemade)

FIVE-CHEESE FILLING

- 1 cup whole-milk ricotta
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella (for the filling; see below for topping)
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan, divided (¼ cup filling, ¼ cup topping)
- ¼ cup freshly grated Romano
- ¾ cup shredded fontina, divided (½ cup filling, ¼ cup topping)

BAKED TOPPING

- ½ cup shredded mozzarella (reserved from above)
- ¼ cup shredded fontina (reserved from above)
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan (reserved from above)
- ½ cup panko breadcrumbs
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced (or ¼ tsp garlic powder)
- ¼ teaspoon dried Italian seasoning

02 Method

1. **Cook the ziti very short.** Bring a large pot of heavily salted water to a rolling boil. Add the ziti and cook 3 to 4 minutes less than the package directions for al dente — the pasta should still have a white, chalky center when you bite into it. It is not edible at this stage and should not be. It will finish cooking in the oven for 30 to 35 minutes. Overcooked pasta going in equals mushy pasta coming out. Reserve ½ cup pasta water before draining. Drain but do not rinse.

2. **Make the Alfredo cream component.** While the pasta cooks, melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add the minced garlic and cook, stirring, 30 to 45 seconds until fragrant — do not brown it. Pour in the heavy cream and bring to a gentle simmer. Cook uncovered 4 to 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the cream coats the back of a spoon. Remove from heat and stir in the Parmesan in two additions until smooth. Season with salt and white pepper. Set aside.

3. **Combine the sauces.** In a large mixing bowl, combine the 2 cups of marinara with the Alfredo cream component. Stir until uniform — you'll have an orange-pink, creamy-tomato sauce. Taste for seasoning. This is the base that coats the pasta.

4. **Mix the five-cheese filling layer.** To the mixing bowl, add the ricotta, 1 cup shredded mozzarella, ¼ cup Parmesan, the Romano, and ½ cup of the fontina. Stir to combine — the ricotta will blend into the sauce, making it thicker and creamier. Add the undercooked, drained ziti and fold everything together until every piece of pasta is evenly coated. If the mixture looks very thick, add a splash of the reserved pasta water to loosen it slightly.

5. **Prepare the panko topping.** In a small bowl, combine the panko breadcrumbs, olive oil, minced garlic (or garlic powder), and Italian seasoning. Toss with a fork until the panko is evenly coated in oil and the garlic is distributed. Set aside.

6. **Assemble the baking dish.** Preheat the oven to 375°F. Lightly grease a 9×13-inch baking dish with butter or cooking spray. Pour the ziti mixture in and spread it into an even layer with a spatula. Scatter the reserved ½ cup mozzarella, ¼ cup fontina, and ¼ cup Parmesan evenly over the top. Finish with the prepared panko topping spread in an even layer.

7. **Bake.** Place the baking dish uncovered on the center oven rack. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, until the top is golden brown and the sauce is visibly bubbling at the edges. If the panko starts browning too quickly before the 25-minute mark, loosely tent with foil. The center should be set and hot — test by inserting a knife into the middle; it should come out steaming.

8. **Rest before serving.** Pull the dish from the oven and let it rest, uncovered, on the counter for 10 minutes before serving. This is non-negotiable for baked pasta — the sauce needs to re-set slightly or every portion collapses. Use a large spoon or offset spatula to serve in generous portions. Finish each plate with extra Parmesan if desired.

WHY IT WORKS

Two techniques solve opposite problems. (1) To prevent dryness: use plenty of sauce. The pasta continues to absorb liquid in the oven for 30-plus minutes.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 45

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



№ 46

VIRAL

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 · 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



№ 47

VIRAL

TikTok 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 · COPYCAT

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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



№ 48

VIRAL

TikTok Mushroom Wellington

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

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TikTok 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



№ 49

VIRAL

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.

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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

TikTok 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 · COPYCAT

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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

Soups, breakfasts and everything in between — the recipes that round out the table.

3 RECIPES



№ 51

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.



№ 52

PEPPERIDGE FARM

Chessmen Butter Cookies

Homemade Pepperidge Farm Chessmen butter cookies: crisp, pale, clean-snapping. Cornstarch and a low 325°F oven are the keys. Makes about 40 for under $6.

PEPPERIDGE FARM · COPYCAT

Chessmen Butter Cookies

Homemade Pepperidge Farm Chessmen butter cookies: crisp, pale, clean-snapping. Cornstarch and a low 325°F oven are the keys. Makes about 40 for under $6.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
20 min + 2 hr chill	13 min per sheet	About 40 cookies	Easy	95

01 Ingredients

- 1 cup (226g) unsalted butter, at room temperature (not melted)
- ⅔ cup (133g) granulated sugar
- 1 large egg yolk
- 2 tablespoons whole milk
- 1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 2 cups (240g) all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling
- ¼ cup (28g) cornstarch
- ¼ teaspoon fine salt
- ¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
- ⅛ teaspoon baking soda

02 Method

1. **Cream the 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 2 minutes — until smooth and combined, but not very fluffy. Over-creaming at this stage incorporates too much air, which causes the cookies to puff instead of staying flat and crisp. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

2. **Add the wet ingredients.** Add the egg yolk, milk, and vanilla extract. Mix on medium speed until fully incorporated, about 1 minute. The mixture may look slightly broken or curdled at first; keep mixing and it will come together. Scrape down the sides again.

3. **Add the dry ingredients.** In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, cornstarch, salt, cream of tartar, and baking soda until evenly combined. Add the flour mixture to the butter mixture all at once. Mix on low speed just until a dough forms and no dry streaks remain. Do not overmix — the dough will be soft and slightly sticky at room temperature.

4. **Chill the dough.** Divide the dough into two equal portions. Flatten each portion into a disk about 1 inch thick, wrap tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or overnight. The dough needs to be cold enough to roll without sticking; if it feels warm or sticky after 2 hours, return it for another 30 minutes.

5. **Roll and cut.** Preheat the oven to 325°F (165°C) and line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Remove one dough disk from the refrigerator. On a lightly floured surface, roll it to exactly ¼ inch thick. For clean edges, flour the rolling pin lightly and flour the surface generously enough that the dough doesn't drag. Cut into 1½ × 2 inch rectangles using a sharp knife, a bench scraper, or a pastry wheel. If using a cookie stamp, flour the stamp, press firmly onto the dough first, then cut around the impression. Gather the scraps,

re-roll once, and cut again. Place cookies on the prepared parchment-lined sheets about ½ inch apart. Repeat with the second disk.

6. **Second chill.** Refrigerate the cut cookies on their baking sheets for 15 minutes before baking. This firms up any butter that warmed during rolling and keeps the cookie edges sharp in the oven. While the cookies chill, the oven should come to full temperature.

7. **Bake.** Bake at 325°F for 12–14 minutes, one sheet at a time. The cookies are done when the edges are barely golden — a light straw color, not brown — and the tops look matte and set. The centers will look underdone. Remove from the oven and let the cookies cool on the sheet for 5 minutes before moving them to a wire rack; the residual heat finishes the bake. They will feel soft when warm and firm up completely as they cool. Do not judge doneness while hot.

8. **Cool and store.** Once fully cool (about 15 minutes on the rack), the cookies should snap cleanly when broken. Store in an airtight tin or container at room temperature for up to 2 weeks. For gifting, layer in a tin between sheets of parchment. For the Paula Deen-style banana pudding, use them whole in the bottom and top layers directly from the tin — they soften to a cake-like texture after 2 hours refrigerated in a cream-based pudding.

WHY IT WORKS

The first chill (2 hours minimum after mixing) relaxes the gluten and firms the butter. Without it, the dough is too soft to roll without sticking and the cookies spread during baking.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 53

VIRAL

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 · 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.



CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS

07 COOKIES

The cookie-tin classics — bakery, box and coffee-shop cookies people buy by the dozen, baked at home.

7 RECIPES



№ 54

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



№ 55

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



№ 56

NUTTER BUTTER

Nutter Butter Cookies

Make copycat Nutter Butter cookies at home — the same crunchy peanut butter sandwich cookies Nabisco has made since 1969, with a crisp peanut butter shell and a thick, sweet peanut butter cream filling.

NUTTER BUTTER · COPYCAT

Nutter Butter Cookies

Make copycat Nutter Butter cookies at home — the same crunchy peanut butter sandwich cookies Nabisco has made since 1969, with a crisp peanut butter shell and a thick, sweet peanut butter cream filling.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
20 min	13 min	12	Easy	230

01 Ingredients

FOR THE COOKIES

- 1¾ cups (218g) all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
- ½ cup (1 stick / 113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- ½ cup (128g) commercial creamy peanut butter (Jif, Skippy, or Peter Pan — not natural)
- ¾ cup (150g) granulated sugar
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE PEANUT BUTTER CREAM FILLING

- ½ cup (128g) commercial creamy peanut butter
- 1 cup (120g) powdered sugar, sifted
- 2 tablespoons (28g) unsalted butter, softened
- 2–3 tablespoons heavy cream or whole milk, to thin
- Pinch of fine sea salt

02 Method

1. **Make the dough.** Beat the softened butter, peanut butter, and granulated sugar together in a large bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment on medium speed for 3 full minutes until the mixture is noticeably lighter in color and texture. Add the egg and vanilla extract; beat on medium speed for 1 minute until smooth and fully incorporated.

2. **Add the flour.** Whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt in a separate bowl, then add the flour mixture to the butter mixture all at once. Mix on low speed just until a smooth, cohesive dough forms — stop the moment no dry flour remains. The dough will be firm and slightly tacky. Divide it in half, flatten each half into a disk, wrap in plastic, and refrigerate for 30 minutes (this firms the dough enough to roll cleanly without sticking).

3. **Preheat and prep.** Heat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.

4. **Roll and cut.** On a lightly floured surface, roll one dough disk to exactly ⅛-inch thickness — no thicker. This is the single most important step for crunch; use a ruler or the edge of a chopstick as a thickness guide if helpful. Cut into 2-inch oval shapes (or use a peanut-shaped cutter if you have one). Re-roll scraps once. Use the tines of a fork to press a crosshatch pattern into the surface of each oval — press firmly enough to leave a clear impression without cutting through. Transfer to the prepared baking sheets, spacing about ½ inch apart (these spread very little). Repeat with the second disk.

5. **Bake.** Bake for 12–14 minutes, rotating the pans top-to-bottom and front-to-back at the 7-minute mark. The cookies are done when the entire top surface looks set, matte, and lightly golden across the whole surface — not just the edges. Remove from the oven and let them sit on the pans for 10 minutes before transferring to a wire rack. They are fragile when warm; they crisp up fully as they cool to room temperature, which takes about 20 minutes. Do not test doneness by pressing them while hot.

6. **Make the filling.** While the cookies cool, combine the peanut butter, sifted powdered sugar, softened butter, and a pinch of salt in a bowl. Beat on medium speed (or vigorously by hand) for 2 minutes until smooth. Add the cream 1 tablespoon at a time, beating after each addition, until the filling is thick but spreadable — about the consistency of a soft buttercream. It should hold its shape when spooned but spread easily under light pressure.

7. **Assemble.** Once the cookies are completely cool, match them into pairs of similar size. Spoon or pipe about 1½ teaspoons of filling onto the flat side of one cookie from each pair. Press the matching cookie on top, flat side down, pressing gently until the filling just reaches the edges. The filling will firm slightly as it sits. Let the assembled cookies set for 15 minutes before stacking or serving.

WHY IT WORKS

For the cookies: beat ½ cup (113g) softened unsalted butter with ½ cup (128g) commercial creamy peanut butter (like Jif or Skippy) and ¾ cup (150g) granulated sugar on medium speed for 3 minutes until light.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 57

PEPPERIDGE FARM

Milano Cookies

The copycat Pepperidge Farm Milano cookie — two thin, crispy oval butter cookies sandwiching a layer of dark chocolate ganache. The key is egg whites only (no yolks) for the signature crunch, and piping the dough into 3-inch ovals.

PEPPERIDGE FARM · COPYCAT

Milano Cookies

The copycat Pepperidge Farm Milano cookie — two thin, crispy oval butter cookies sandwiching a layer of dark chocolate ganache. The key is egg whites only (no yolks) for the signature crunch, and piping the dough into 3-inch ovals.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
20 min	12 min	24 sandwich cookies	Medium	130

01 Ingredients

FOR THE MILANO COOKIE WAFERS

- 8 tablespoons (1 stick / 113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 1 cup (120g) powdered sugar, sifted
- 4 large egg whites, room temperature (save the yolks for another use)
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1¼ cups (150g) all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon fine salt

FOR THE DARK CHOCOLATE GANACHE FILLING

- 6 oz (170g) bittersweet chocolate (60–70% cacao), finely chopped — not chips
- 4 tablespoons heavy cream
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract (optional)

02 Method

1. **Preheat and prep.** Heat the oven to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Fit a piping bag with a Wilton #12 plain round tip (½-inch opening). If using a zip-top bag, do not cut the corner yet — fill the bag first, then snip.

2. **Make the cookie batter.** Beat the softened butter and sifted powdered sugar with a hand or stand mixer on medium-high for 3 minutes until very pale and fluffy. Reduce speed to medium. Add the egg whites one at a time, beating 30 seconds after each addition before adding the next. Add the vanilla and beat until incorporated. The batter may look slightly curdled after the egg whites — this is normal. Add the flour and salt all at once and stir on low speed until just combined and smooth. Do not overmix.

3. **Fill the piping bag.** Transfer the batter into the prepared piping bag. The batter should be smooth and thick enough to hold a piped shape without running. If it feels very loose, refrigerate it in the piping bag for 15 minutes before proceeding.

4. **Pipe the cookie ovals.** Hold the piping bag at a 45-degree angle, about ½ inch above the parchment. Pipe 3-inch oval shapes (a short, fat sausage), spacing them 2 inches apart on the baking sheet. You should fit about 12 ovals per standard half-sheet pan. After piping, use a damp fingertip to smooth any tips or bumps. Aim for thin, even ovals — they will spread slightly in the oven.

5. **Bake and cool.** Bake one sheet at a time on the center rack for 10–12 minutes, until the edges are just barely golden and the centers look dry (not wet or shiny). Do not overbake — the goal is a light golden edge with a pale center. The cookies will crisp fully as they cool. Let them cool on the pan for 3 minutes, then transfer to

a wire rack. Cool completely before filling — even slightly warm cookies will melt the ganache.

6. **Make the ganache.** Place the finely chopped chocolate in a small heatproof bowl. Heat the heavy cream in a small saucepan over medium heat (or in the microwave in 30-second bursts) until it just begins to simmer — small bubbles around the edge, not a full boil. Pour the hot cream over the chocolate. Let it sit, undisturbed, for 2 minutes. Add the vanilla if using, then stir slowly from the center outward until the ganache is completely smooth and glossy. If any lumps remain, return to a barely warm bain-marie for 30 seconds and stir again.

7. **Cool the ganache to piping consistency.** Let the ganache cool at room temperature for 20–30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until it thickens to a consistency like soft peanut butter — it should hold a shape when dropped from a spoon but not be stiff or grainy. To speed this up, refrigerate for 10 minutes, then stir. Transfer to a second piping bag (or use a small offset spatula).

8. **Assemble the sandwiches.** Turn half the cookie wafers flat-side up. Pipe or spread about 1 teaspoon of ganache onto the flat side of each upturned cookie, leaving a small border. Press a second cookie on top, flat-side down, and apply gentle pressure until the ganache spreads to the edges. Arrange assembled cookies on a parchment-lined plate or baking sheet.

9. **Set and serve.** Refrigerate the assembled cookies for 10 minutes to firm up the ganache. Once set, store at room temperature in an airtight container between sheets of parchment. Serve at room temperature.

WHY IT WORKS

The fat in egg yolks makes baked goods tender and chewy — great for chewy cookies, wrong for Milanos. Milanos are supposed to be crisp and delicate, with a clean snap rather than a soft bite.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 58

PILLSBURY

Christmas Shape Sugar Cookies

The copycat Pillsbury Christmas Shape Sugar Cookies — the iconic slice-and-bake refrigerator cookies with colored sugar edges and that signature soft, cakey interior.

PILLSBURY · COPYCAT

Christmas Shape Sugar Cookies

The copycat Pillsbury Christmas Shape Sugar Cookies — the iconic slice-and-bake refrigerator cookies with colored sugar edges and that signature soft, cakey interior.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
20 min	12 min	28–32 cookies	Easy	110

01 Ingredients

FOR THE DOUGH

- 2 cups (250g) all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon fine salt
- ½ cup (96g) vegetable shortening (Crisco solid), at room temperature
- ¼ cup (½ stick / 56g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- ¾ cup (150g) granulated sugar
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon butter extract (Watkins or McCormick)
- ¼ teaspoon almond extract

FOR COATING THE LOGS

- 3 tablespoons red sanding sugar (coarse crystal sugar, not regular granulated)
- 3 tablespoons green sanding sugar

02 Method

1. **Make the dough.** In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, cornstarch, baking powder, and salt; set aside. In a large bowl, beat the shortening and softened butter on medium-high speed until smooth and creamy, about 2 minutes. Add the granulated sugar and beat until pale and fluffy, 3–4 minutes. Beat in the egg, vanilla extract, butter extract, and almond extract; mix until fully incorporated, about 1 minute. Reduce speed to low and add the flour mixture; mix until just combined — the dough should be smooth and hold together when pressed, but not sticky. Do not overmix.

2. **Shape into logs.** Turn the dough onto a clean surface and divide it in half (about 280–290g per half). Shape each half into a smooth cylinder about 1½ inches in diameter and 7–8 inches long. Work it like rolling a rope, using even pressure and the flat of your palms. If the dough cracks at the edges, it's slightly dry — press the cracks closed and roll more gently. Aim for a consistent diameter; uneven logs produce cookies that bake unevenly.

3. **Coat the logs in sanding sugar.** Pour the red sanding sugar in a thin strip on a piece of wax paper. Roll one dough log over the sugar, pressing lightly with your hands as you go, until the entire surface and both ends are coated. Press the sugar gently into the surface with your palms. Repeat with the green sanding sugar and the second log. Any bare spots can be patched by dipping that section briefly in the sugar pile.

4. **Chill the logs.** Wrap each log tightly in plastic wrap, twisting the ends closed. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours — 4 hours is better, and overnight is ideal. The chill firms the fat so the cookies hold their shape in the oven (soft fat

spreads; firm fat doesn't). The logs can be refrigerated for up to 5 days or frozen for up to 3 months.

5. **Preheat and slice.** When ready to bake, preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Remove one log from the refrigerator (leave the other cold until you need it). Using a sharp chef's knife, slice the log into rounds ¼ inch thick — one clean downward press per slice, not a sawing motion. If the log crumbles, let it sit at room temperature for 2 minutes and try again.

6. **Arrange and bake.** Place the sliced cookies on the prepared baking sheet, spacing them about 1½ inches apart. They don't spread much (that's the shortening doing its job), so you can fit about 15–16 cookies per half-sheet pan. Bake at 350°F for 12–14 minutes, rotating the pan halfway through, until the edges are just set and the centers still look barely done and slightly pale. Don't wait for browning — Pillsbury cookies are pale and soft, not golden.

7. **Cool on the pan.** Remove from the oven and let the cookies cool on the pan for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack. They'll look underdone when you pull them but firm up as they cool to room temperature, which takes about 10 more minutes. Resist moving them before the 5-minute mark — they're fragile when hot and will tear.

8. **Repeat with the second log.** Always start the second batch on a cool parchment-lined pan. A hot pan from the first batch will start melting the fat before the oven air does, causing the second batch to spread more than the first.

WHY IT WORKS

Butter extract is a concentrated flavoring made from real butter or imitation butter compounds — it adds a mild, sweet, buttery note without any actual fat. It's what gives store-bought cookies, frosting, and cake mixes their characteristic 'bakery' flavor.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 59

ROYAL DANSK

Danish Butter Cookies

Homemade Royal Dansk Danish butter cookies in all five classic shapes — Vanilla Ring, Pretzel Style, Finnish Style, Country Style, and Coconut.

ROYAL DANSK · COPYCAT

Danish Butter Cookies

Homemade Royal Dansk Danish butter cookies in all five classic shapes — Vanilla Ring, Pretzel Style, Finnish Style, Country Style, and Coconut.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
20 min	14 min	About 48 cookies	Medium	70

01 Ingredients

- 1 cup (225g / 2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature — European-style butter (83–84% butterfat, such as Kerrygold or Plugrá) gives a crisper, more flavor-forward result; standard American butter (80% fat) works but the cookies will be very slightly softer
- ⅔ cup (130g) granulated sugar
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 1 large egg yolk, at room temperature — the extra yolk adds richness and color without making the dough too wet to pipe
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 2 cups (250g) all-purpose flour — spoon into the measuring cup and level; do not scoop directly from the bag or you will over-pack it by 20–30g and the cookies will be dense and dry
- ¼ tsp fine sea salt
- **For Coconut Style (optional, to coat the rings before baking):** 1 cup (80g) finely shredded sweetened coconut, spread on a flat plate
- **Optional topping:** coarse or granulated sugar, for Country Style and Pretzel shapes

02 Method

1. **Prep.** Position oven racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven. Preheat to 325°F (160°C). Line two baking sheets with parchment. Fit a large piping bag with a large open star tip — Wilton 1M (the most available option at craft stores), Ateco 826, or any equivalent ½-inch star tip. If you don't have a piping bag, a zip-top bag with a corner cut off gives round blobs that taste the same but won't have ridges.

2. **Cream butter and sugar.** In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or using a handheld electric mixer and a large bowl), beat the softened butter and sugar on medium speed for 3 minutes until pale, light, and noticeably increased in volume. Scrape the bowl halfway through. The mixture should look creamy and almost white — not yellow, not grainy. Do not over-beat past 3–4 minutes or the excess air will cause the piped shapes to puff and lose definition.

3. **Add egg, yolk, and vanilla.** With the mixer on low, add the egg, then the egg yolk, then the vanilla extract, scraping the bowl after each addition. Increase to medium speed and beat for 30 seconds until completely smooth. The mixture may look slightly curdled after the egg — that is normal; it comes together once the flour goes in.

4. **Add flour and salt.** Add the flour and salt all at once. Mix on the lowest speed for 30–45 seconds, just until the flour disappears and the dough forms a smooth, cohesive mass. Stop the instant no dry streaks remain — overworking develops gluten and makes the cookies tough. The dough should be soft and

creamy, about the consistency of very thick hummus, and it will hold a shape briefly when pressed.

5. **Fill the piping bag.** Spoon the dough into the prepared piping bag. If the dough feels warm or loose, refrigerate the filled bag for 10 minutes before piping — a too-warm dough flows uncontrollably and loses its ridges.

6. **Pipe the five shapes.** Work directly onto the parchment-lined baking sheets, leaving about 1½ inches between each cookie (they spread moderately). For each shape: **Vanilla Ring** — hold the tip ¼ inch above the parchment, pipe a circle about 1¾ inches in diameter, and end by pulling up sharply to cut the dough cleanly. **Pretzel Style** — pipe two overlapping S-curves about 2 inches long that cross in the center to form a rough pretzel; sprinkle with coarse sugar if desired. **Finnish Style** — pipe short straight logs or diagonal ridges about 1¾ inches long, applying consistent pressure to keep the star ridges defined. **Country Style** — pipe a flat rosette (a tight swirl) about 1½ inches across and sprinkle generously with coarse or granulated sugar. **Coconut** — pipe the same Vanilla Ring, then immediately press the piped ring into the plate of shredded coconut and lift; the coconut adheres to the outer ridges.

7. **Chill before baking — this is important.** Slide the filled baking sheets into the refrigerator and chill for 15–20 minutes. Cold dough holds its piped shape during the first few minutes in the oven while the butter sets; unchilled cookies spread before the structure sets and lose their ridges. This step is the reason homemade versions often look less defined than the originals.

8. **Bake.** Place the chilled sheets in the oven — both racks simultaneously, rotating top to bottom and front to back at the halfway point. Bake for 12–14 minutes, until the edges are barely golden and the centers still look slightly underbaked and pale. Pull the pans at this point even if they look too light: the cookies continue baking from the residual heat of the pan for several minutes, and the full crispness develops only after they cool completely. Overbaked Danish butter cookies taste noticeably more bitter and dry.

9. **Cool.** Let the cookies cool on the baking sheets for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. They should be fully crisp within 20 minutes at room temperature. Do not transfer to an airtight container until fully cool — trapping warm cookies traps steam and makes them soft.

10. **Store.** Store in an airtight tin or container at room temperature for up to 2 weeks — a metal tin keeps them crisper than plastic. They do not need refrigeration. For gifting: pack in layers separated by parchment inside the tin; the cookies are sturdy enough to ship.

WHY IT WORKS

The main difference is eggs. Shortbread is made from just butter, sugar, and flour — no eggs, no leavening — which produces a very crumbly, melt-in-your-mouth texture.



№ 60

STARBUCKS

Snowman Cookie

Homemade Starbucks snowman cookie: the buttery shortbread base and white chocolaty coating that shows up in the holiday bakery case every November — made at home for about $0.40 each instead of $3.50.

STARBUCKS · COPYCAT

Snowman Cookie

Homemade Starbucks snowman cookie: the buttery shortbread base and white chocolaty coating that shows up in the holiday bakery case every November — made at home for about $0.40 each instead of $3.50.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
25 min	12 min	20 cookies	Medium	230

01 Ingredients

FOR THE SHORTBREAD DOUGH

- 1 cup (227g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature — not melted; the butter should be pliable but cool enough to hold an indent
- 1 cup (120g) powdered sugar, sifted — do NOT substitute granulated sugar; the cornstarch in powdered sugar is what gives shortbread its tender, fine crumb rather than a crisp snap
- 3 oz (85g) good-quality white chocolate (Ghirardelli white chocolate baking bar, Lindt Classic White, or Callebaut W2 white callets), melted and cooled to room temperature — white chocolate chips have stabilizers that make the dough grainier; use bar chocolate
- 2 large egg yolks, room temperature — yolks only add richness without the extra moisture from whites, which can make the dough sticky and cause spreading
- 1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 2¼ cups (270g) all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

FOR THE WHITE CHOCOLATE COATING

- 10 oz (283g) good-quality white chocolate, finely chopped — the same baking-bar white chocolate used in the dough; chips are too thick and produce a matte, waxy surface instead of a glossy shell
- 1 teaspoon neutral oil (grapeseed, refined coconut, or vegetable) — keeps the coating pourable and thin enough to drape over the cookie in a smooth layer

FOR DECORATION

- ⅓ cup mini semi-sweet chocolate chips — for eyes (2 per cookie) and buttons (3 per cookie); mini chips stay in proportion on a snowman-sized cookie
- Orange royal icing for the carrot nose: 3 tablespoons powdered sugar + ¾ teaspoon meringue powder + 1–2 teaspoons water + orange gel food coloring — stir to a thick, pipeable consistency
- Black royal icing or an edible black food-coloring pen for the mouth: 3 tablespoons powdered sugar + ¾ teaspoon meringue powder + 1–2 teaspoons water + black gel food coloring
- Optional scarf: red and green royal icing in small piping bags or squeeze bottles (2 tablespoons powdered sugar + ½ teaspoon meringue powder + 1 teaspoon water per color)

02 Method

1. **Melt the white chocolate for the dough.** Finely chop 3 oz of white chocolate and melt it in a microwave-safe bowl in 20-second intervals on medium power, stirring between each, until smooth. Set aside to cool to room temperature — it should be fluid but not warm to the touch. If it's warm, it will soften the butter and make the dough greasy.

2. **Cream butter and powdered sugar.** Beat the softened butter and sifted powdered sugar together with a hand mixer or stand mixer on medium speed for 2–3 minutes until the mixture is pale, fluffy, and there are no lumps of butter visible. The pale color indicates the sugar is fully incorporated. Don't rush this step — under-creamed butter produces dense, greasy cookies.

3. **Add egg yolks, vanilla, and white chocolate.** With the mixer on low, add the egg yolks one at a time, mixing well after each. Add the vanilla extract and the cooled melted white chocolate. Mix on low until just combined — the dough may look slightly broken or streaky at this point; that's normal.

4. **Add the flour and salt.** Add the flour and salt all at once. Mix on low speed just until no dry flour streaks remain — do not overmix. The dough should be soft and cohesive but not sticky. If it clings to your fingers, add flour 1 tablespoon at a time until it pulls away cleanly.

5. **Chill the dough — this is essential.** Divide the dough in half, flatten each half into a 1-inch disk, wrap tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour (up to 24 hours). Shortbread dough that isn't properly chilled spreads in the oven and the snowman shape loses definition. Don't skip or shorten this step.

6. **Preheat the oven.** Heat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

7. **Roll and cut.** Working with one disk at a time (keep the other refrigerated), roll the dough on a lightly floured surface to ¼-inch thickness. Cut out snowman shapes with a 3-inch snowman cookie cutter. Re-roll scraps once. Arrange cut cookies 1½ inches apart on the prepared baking sheets. If the dough warms up and becomes sticky during cutting, slide the cutting board into the freezer for 5 minutes before continuing.

8. **Chill the cut cookies briefly.** Place the filled baking sheets in the refrigerator for 10 minutes before baking — this second chill is what keeps the snowman silhouette crisp and prevents the edges from rounding out in the oven.

9. **Bake.** Bake for 10–12 minutes, until the edges are just set and barely golden but the centers still look underdone and matte. Do not bake until the surface browns — properly baked shortbread cookies look underdone when you pull them out. They firm up as they cool. A golden-brown shortbread cookie is an overbaked one.

10. **Cool completely.** Let the cookies rest on the baking sheet for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire cooling rack. The cookies must be completely cool before coating — even slightly warm cookies will melt the white chocolate and cause streaking and a thin, uneven coat. Cool for at least 30 minutes at room temperature.

11. **Make the white chocolate coating.** Finely chop the 10 oz of white chocolate for coating and combine with the teaspoon of oil in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave in 30-second intervals on medium power, stirring between each, until smooth. The coating should be fluid and barely warm — not hot. If it's too thick to pour smoothly, microwave for 10 seconds more and stir; if it's warm enough to feel hot on the back of your hand, let it cool for 5 minutes.

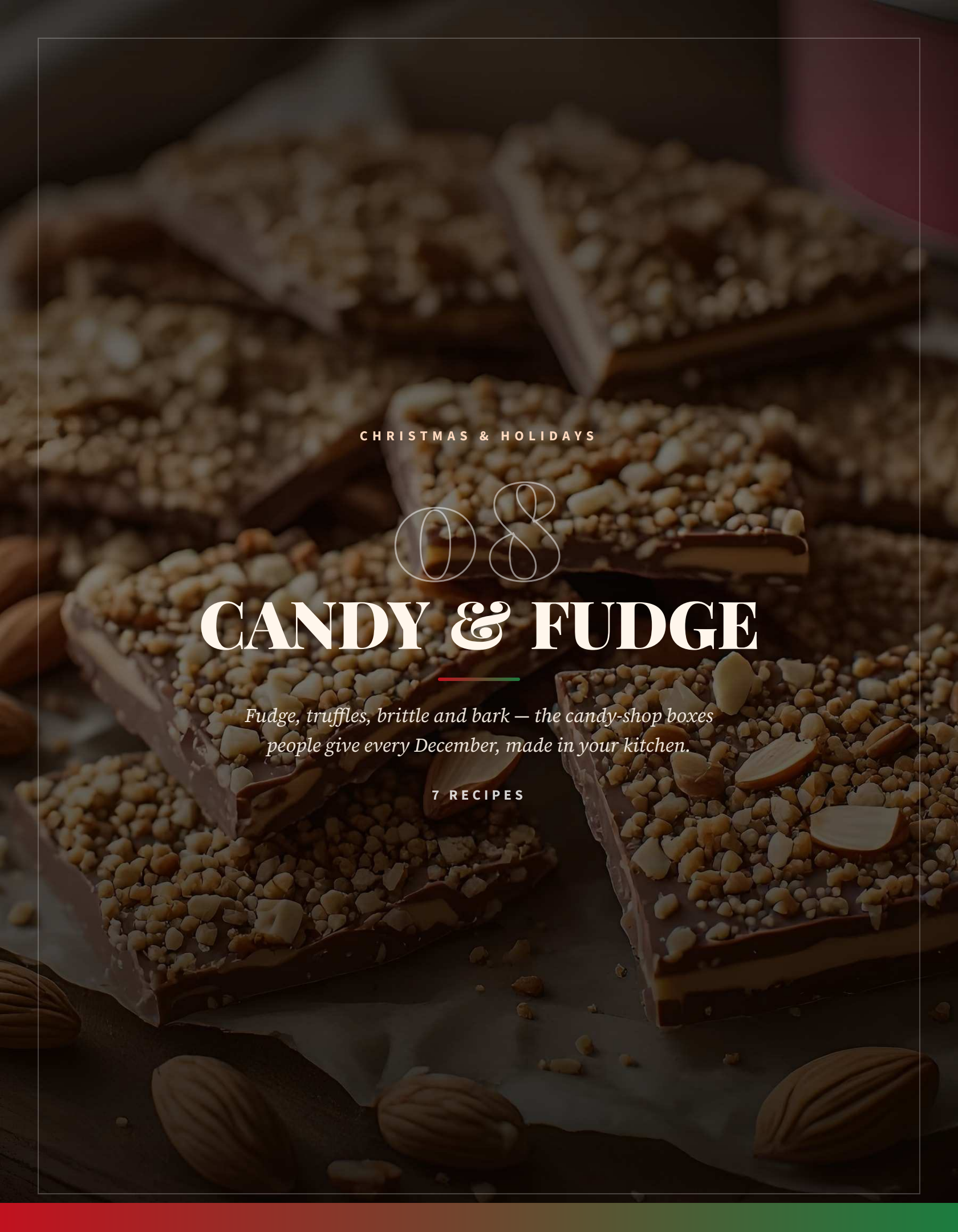
12. **Coat the cookies.** Place a cooled cookie on a fork over the bowl of white chocolate. Spoon the coating over the top of the cookie, letting it drip down the sides in a thin layer. Tap the fork gently on the bowl rim to shake off excess. Slide the coated cookie onto a clean parchment-lined surface. Repeat with remaining cookies. Work quickly — the coating will begin to set within 2–3 minutes at room temperature.

13. **Decorate before the coating sets.** While the coating is still wet, place 2 mini chocolate chips for eyes in the upper circle of the snowman (one for each eye), 3 mini chocolate chips in a vertical row down the body for buttons, and use a toothpick or small piping bag to place a small dot of orange royal icing for the carrot nose. Add the mouth detail with black royal icing or an edible pen. For a scarf, pipe a line of red royal icing across the neck join and a small green or striped end. The decorations must go on before the white chocolate sets — once it hardens (about 10–15 minutes), nothing will adhere.

14. **Let the coating set fully.** Allow the decorated cookies to sit at room temperature for 20–30 minutes until the white chocolate is completely set and firm. Do not refrigerate to speed this up — the condensation that forms when the cookies go from cold to room temperature will make the coating bloom (turn white and streaky). Store at room temperature in an airtight container, separated by parchment, for up to 1 week.

WHY IT WORKS

Powdered sugar (confectioners' sugar) is granulated sugar that has been ground fine and blended with about 3% cornstarch.



CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS

08

CANDY & FUDGE

Fudge, truffles, brittle and bark — the candy-shop boxes people give every December, made in your kitchen.

7 RECIPES



№ 61

ANDES CANDIES

Andes Crème de Menthe Thins

The copycat Andes Mints made at home — dark chocolate sandwiching a cool mint cream center, cut into the same thin green-striped rectangles served with the check at Olive Garden and sold in holiday tins.

ANDES CANDIES · COPYCAT

Andes Crème de Menthe Thins

The copycat Andes Mints made at home — dark chocolate sandwiching a cool mint cream center, cut into the same thin green-striped rectangles served with the check at Olive Garden and sold in holiday tins.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
15 min	10 min	60 pieces	Easy	44

01 Ingredients

- 2 cups (340g) semi-sweet or dark chocolate chips, divided (use 60% cacao or higher for the most authentic flavor; Ghirardelli 60% Cacao or Trader Joe's Pound Plus Dark are good choices)
- 1 cup (170g) white chocolate chips or white candy melts (white candy melts set more reliably and tolerate food coloring better than white chips, which can seize)
- 1 teaspoon pure peppermint extract (not spearmint; LorAnn or McCormick work well — start with ¾ tsp and taste before the layer sets)
- 4–5 drops green gel food coloring (gel not liquid; add drop by drop to reach classic Andes sage green, not neon)
- 1 teaspoon coconut oil, divided (½ tsp per chocolate layer; thins the melt for easier spreading without affecting flavor)

02 Method

1. **Prepare the pan.** Line a 9×13 inch (23×33 cm) baking pan with parchment paper, pressing it into the corners and leaving a 2-inch overhang on the long sides — this overhang lets you lift the finished slab cleanly out of the pan. Place the pan in the refrigerator to chill while you melt the first layer.

2. **Melt the first chocolate layer.** Combine 1 cup (170g) of the semi-sweet or dark chocolate chips with ½ teaspoon of coconut oil in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave at 50% power in 30-second bursts, stirring after each, until melted and smooth — about 2 to 3 minutes total. Do not overheat; chocolate should be fluid and glossy, registering no more than 115°F on an instant-read thermometer. Alternatively, melt in a double boiler over barely simmering water, stirring until smooth.

3. **Pour and spread the first layer.** Remove the chilled pan from the refrigerator. Pour the melted chocolate into the center of the pan and immediately use an offset spatula to spread it in a thin, even layer covering the entire parchment surface. Work quickly — the cold pan will cause the chocolate to begin setting within 60 seconds. Aim for a layer roughly ⅛ inch thick; it doesn't need to be perfect at this stage. Place the pan flat in the refrigerator and chill until the chocolate is completely firm and no longer tacky — at least 25 to 30 minutes. Test by pressing gently with a fingertip in one corner: it should feel hard, not give.

4. **Make the mint cream layer.** While the first layer sets, combine the white chocolate chips (or candy melts) in a clean microwave-safe bowl. Melt at 50% power in 30-second bursts, stirring between each, until smooth — white chocolate burns more easily than dark, so low power and short bursts are important. Once melted and smooth, stir in the peppermint extract. Add the green gel food coloring drop by drop, stirring thoroughly between drops, until you reach the classic Andes shade — a

medium sage green, not neon. Taste a small amount: the mint should be clearly present but not sharp or medicinal. If it needs more mint, add extract in ⅛ teaspoon increments and stir well. Let the mixture cool to room temperature (about 5 minutes) so it doesn't melt the chocolate beneath it when poured.

5. **Pour and spread the mint layer.** Once the first chocolate layer is completely firm, remove the pan from the refrigerator. Pour the mint cream mixture over the set chocolate and spread immediately to an even layer using the offset spatula. If the mint layer sets before you've spread it evenly, don't panic — a small additional amount melted and poured over thin spots will blend in. Return the pan to the refrigerator and chill until the mint layer is completely firm, at least 30 minutes.

6. **Add the final chocolate layer.** Melt the remaining 1 cup (170g) of dark chocolate chips with the remaining ½ teaspoon of coconut oil using the same microwave method. Let the melted chocolate cool for 2 to 3 minutes (a very warm top layer poured directly onto the cold mint layer can cause condensation that makes the chocolate look matte or blotchy). Remove the pan from the refrigerator, pour the chocolate over the set mint layer, and spread to an even coat. Return the pan to the refrigerator and chill until fully set — a minimum of 1 hour, though overnight produces a better set that cuts more cleanly.

7. **Cut into thins.** When fully set, lift the slab from the pan using the parchment overhang and place it on a cutting board. Run a sharp chef's knife under hot water, dry it completely, and press straight down — no sawing — to cut the slab into strips about 1½ inches wide. Rotate and cut those strips into individual pieces about ¾ inch wide. Warm and dry the knife between each cut for the cleanest edges. The trimmings (the outer ⅛ inch on each edge where layers may not be even) are for the cook.

8. **Store.** Place the finished mints in a single layer on parchment inside an airtight container. Store at room temperature for up to 2 weeks or refrigerate for up to 6 weeks. Bring refrigerated mints to room temperature (15 minutes) before serving — the flavor and snap are better at room temperature.

WHY IT WORKS

Both use the same three-layer architecture — two chocolate layers and one mint layer — but the positions are reversed.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 62

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.



№ 63

CELLA'S

Chocolate Covered Cherries

The copycat Cella's Chocolate Covered Cherries made at home — a maraschino cherry wrapped in sweet fondant and dipped in milk or dark chocolate.

CELLA'S · COPYCAT

Chocolate Covered Cherries

The copycat Cella's Chocolate Covered Cherries made at home — a maraschino cherry wrapped in sweet fondant and dipped in milk or dark chocolate.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
30 min	15 min	24 pieces	Intermediate	110

01 Ingredients

- 1 jar (10 oz) maraschino cherries with stems, drained
- 2 cups (240g) powdered sugar, plus more if fondant is sticky
- 2 tablespoons (28g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 1½ tablespoons (22ml) maraschino cherry juice (from the jar)
- ½ teaspoon pure almond extract
- ½ teaspoon invertase (optional — for liquid cordial centers; find it online or at candy supply stores)
- 12 oz (340g) milk chocolate chips (Ghirardelli recommended) or semi-sweet for a less sweet result
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil or vegetable shortening (thins the chocolate for smooth dipping)

02 Method

1. **Dry the cherries — the most important step.** Drain the jar of maraschino cherries and spread the cherries in a single layer on several layers of paper towels. Pat the tops gently with another paper towel. Let them dry at room temperature for at least 2 hours. For even better results, spread them on a rack uncovered in the refrigerator overnight. Any moisture left on the cherry will eventually work through the fondant and cause the finished chocolate to crack and leak. The cherries are ready when the surface is no longer wet and they feel dry to the touch.

2. **Make the fondant.** In a medium bowl, combine the powdered sugar, softened butter, and maraschino cherry juice. Work together with a fork, then knead by hand until smooth and pliable — it should feel like soft modeling clay, not sticky and not crumbly. If too sticky, add powdered sugar one tablespoon at a time; if too dry, add cherry juice a few drops at a time. Mix in the almond extract. If you are using invertase for liquid centers, add it now and mix until fully incorporated. The fondant can be wrapped in plastic and refrigerated for up to a week before use.

3. **Wrap each cherry.** Pinch off about 1 teaspoon of fondant and flatten it into a disk roughly 2½ inches wide. Place a dry cherry in the center, stem pointing up. Fold the fondant up around the sides and over the top of the cherry, pinching to seal all edges completely — including the base, which is the most leak-prone spot. The stem should poke out through the top of the fondant like a flag. Roll gently between your palms to smooth any seams. Place each wrapped cherry on a parchment-lined baking sheet, stem up. When all 24 are done, refrigerate uncovered for 30 minutes to firm up the fondant.

4. **Melt the chocolate.** Combine the chocolate chips and coconut oil in a medium microwave-safe bowl. Microwave at 50% power in 30-second bursts, stirring after each, until melted and smooth — about 2 to 3 minutes total. Do

not overheat; chocolate should be fluid and glossy, not grainy. Alternatively, melt in a double boiler over barely simmering water, stirring constantly. Keep the chocolate warm over the double boiler during dipping.

5. **Dip the cherries.** Working with chilled fondant-wrapped cherries, hold each one by the stem and lower it into the melted chocolate, submerging it completely. Lift it out and let the excess drip for 3–4 seconds, using the side of the bowl to wipe off any thick drips from the bottom. Set each dipped cherry stem-up on a fresh parchment-lined baking sheet. Work quickly so the chocolate doesn't cool and thicken before you finish.

6. **Seal the bottom (double-dip the foot).** Once all 24 cherries have been dipped and the first coat has set for 5 minutes at room temperature, turn each cherry upside down (resting it on its stem in the holes of a cooling rack works well, or just hold it briefly) and re-dip just the bottom third in the chocolate. This creates a thicker 'foot' over the base seam, which is where most leaks start. Set stem-up again on parchment and let fully set.

7. **Set the chocolate.** Let the dipped cherries set at room temperature for 30 minutes. The chocolate should be firm and matte (not glossy) when fully set. If your kitchen is above 75°F, refrigerate for 10 minutes only to set, then return to room temperature — do not leave refrigerated long-term during the invertase aging period.

8. **Age the candies (invertase method) or serve immediately.** If you used invertase: transfer the set candies to an airtight container lined with wax paper, in a single layer. Store at room temperature (65–72°F) for 1 to 2 weeks, undisturbed. The enzyme will convert the fondant to a liquid cordial center over this period — do not refrigerate during aging. After 2 weeks, the centers should be fully liquid. If you did not use invertase: the candies are ready to eat immediately and have a soft, sweet fondant center.

WHY IT WORKS

Maraschino cherries are the standard — their firmness, sweetness, and low moisture (after drying) make them ideal. Fresh cherries contain too much moisture and will cause leaks even after drying; they also don't have the sweetness to balance the fondant.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 64

FANNIE MAY

Fannie May Trinidads

Make the famous Fannie May Trinidads at home — dark chocolate ganache truffle centers enrobed in white confection and toasted coconut. A 1-lb gift box runs $25–35; this recipe makes 32 pieces for about $10–12.

FANNIE MAY · COPYCAT

Fannie May Trinidads

Make the famous Fannie May Trinidads at home — dark chocolate ganache truffle centers enrobed in white confection and toasted coconut. A 1-lb gift box runs $25–35; this recipe makes 32 pieces for about $10–12.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
30 min	15 min	32 pieces	Intermediate	130

01 Ingredients

- 10 oz (283g) dark chocolate, 60–70% cacao, finely chopped (not chips)
- ¾ cup (180ml) heavy whipping cream
- 2 tablespoons (28g) unsalted butter, cut into small cubes
- 1½ cups (120g) sweetened or unsweetened shredded coconut
- 10 oz (283g) white chocolate, finely chopped (not chips; or white candy wafers)
- 1 tablespoon neutral coconut oil or vegetable oil (thins the coating for smooth dipping)

02 Method

1. **Make the ganache.** Place the chopped dark chocolate in a heatproof bowl. Heat the heavy cream in a small saucepan over medium heat until it just barely begins to simmer — small bubbles at the edges, not a full boil. Pour the hot cream over the chocolate all at once and let it sit without stirring for 2 minutes; this lets the chocolate melt evenly before you disturb it. After 2 minutes, start in the center and stir in slow, tight circles, gradually widening outward, until the ganache is completely smooth and glossy. Add the butter cubes and stir until fully melted. The finished ganache should be fluid and shiny, like a very thick sauce.

2. **Chill until firm.** Pour the ganache into a shallow dish (an 8×8 glass baking dish works well) and smooth it into an even layer. Press a sheet of plastic wrap directly against the surface to prevent a skin from forming. Refrigerate until firm enough to scoop cleanly, at least 2 hours or up to overnight. The ganache is ready when it holds its shape when scooped but isn't rock-hard — about the consistency of firm cold butter.

3. **Toast the coconut.** Pour the shredded coconut into a dry skillet over medium heat. Cook, stirring constantly, for 3 to 4 minutes until the coconut turns golden and smells nutty. Watch carefully — it goes from toasted to burned quickly. Spread on a plate to cool completely before using. Toasted coconut adds real nuttiness and crunch; raw coconut on the finished candy will be bland and soft by comparison.

4. **Roll the ganache balls.** Line a baking sheet with parchment. Using a small cookie scoop or tablespoon, portion the ganache into roughly 1-tablespoon rounds. Working quickly (the warmth of your hands softens the ganache), roll each portion between your palms into a smooth ball, then place on the parchment. If the ganache becomes too soft to roll, return it to the refrigerator for 10 minutes. Once all balls are formed, place the baking sheet in the

freezer for 20 minutes. Cold hands help: rinse them under cold water and dry thoroughly before rolling each batch.

5. **Melt the white chocolate coating.** Place the chopped white chocolate and coconut oil in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave at 50% power in 30-second bursts, stirring thoroughly after each, until melted and completely fluid — about 2 to 3 minutes total. White chocolate scorches more easily than dark; never microwave at full power. The finished coating should be thin enough to drip off a spoon in a smooth stream. Keep it warm over a bowl of hot water while dipping.

6. **Dip the truffles.** Set up your dipping station: the bowl of melted white chocolate, a fork or dipping tool, the plate of toasted coconut, and a clean parchment-lined baking sheet to receive the finished truffles. Work with the frozen ganache balls directly from the freezer — do them in batches of 6–8 at a time, returning the rest to the freezer until needed. Place one ball on the fork, lower it into the white chocolate to submerge fully, then lift and let excess drip for 3–4 seconds. Slide the coated truffle onto the parchment, then immediately scatter a pinch of toasted coconut over the top. The coating sets fast against the frozen center, so add the coconut within 10–15 seconds.

7. **Let set.** Once all truffles are dipped and coated, leave the baking sheet at room temperature for 30 minutes until the white chocolate is completely firm. If your kitchen is very warm (above 72°F), refrigerate for 10 minutes to set the coating. The finished Trinidads should have a matte white exterior with coconut visible across the top, with a firm snap when you bite into the coating and a silky dark chocolate center.

WHY IT WORKS

Chocolate chips contain added stabilizers (typically soy lecithin plus extra emulsifiers and sometimes wax) that prevent them from melting as smoothly as chopped chocolate.

KITCHEN NOTES



№ 65

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



№ 66

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



№ 67

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.

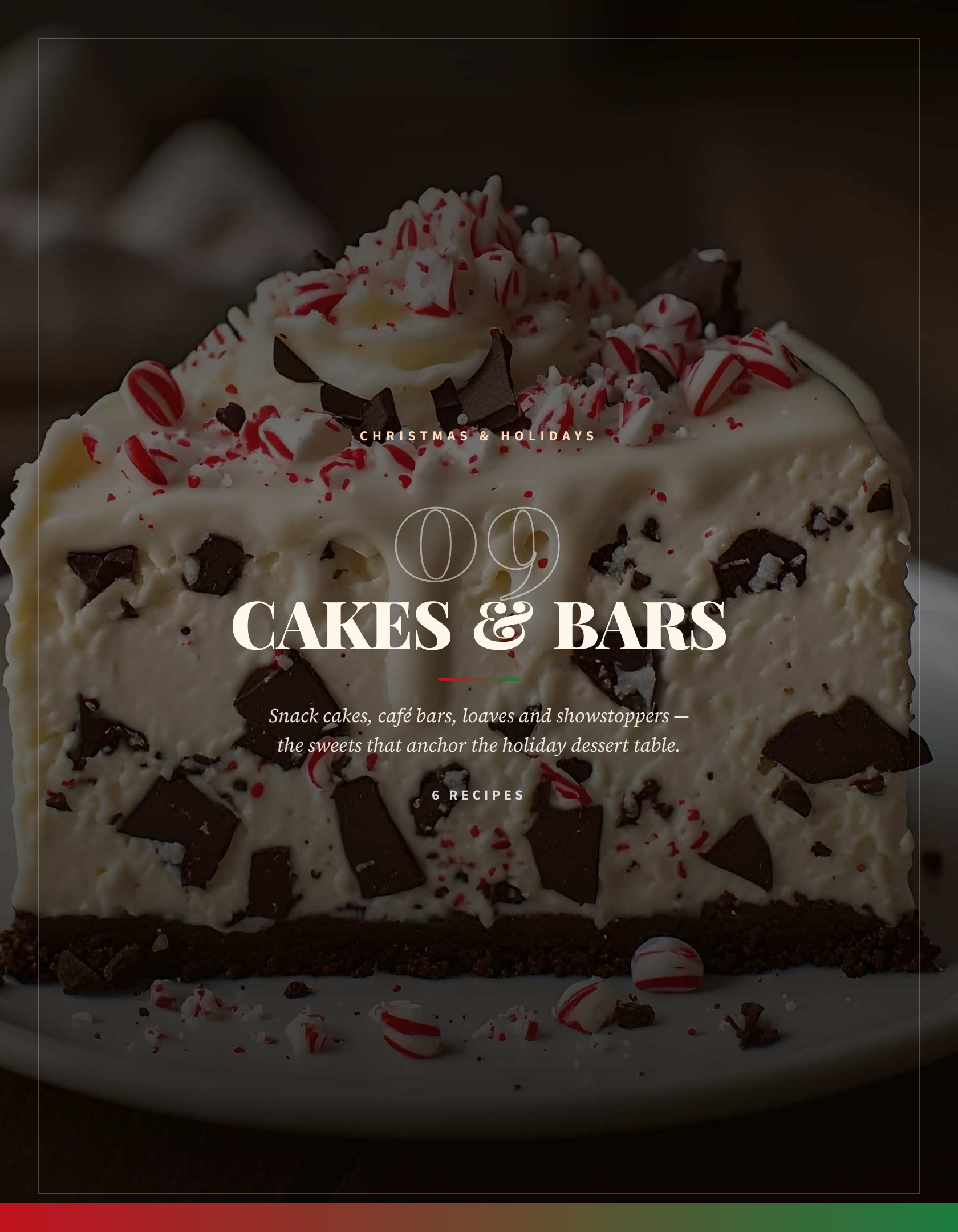
5. **Add decorations (optional).** If decorating, do it immediately after placing each tree on the parchment — before the chocolate sets. Press green sanding sugar onto the surface, add sprinkles, or pipe a white chocolate drizzle. Work quickly; the coating starts to set within 2 to 3 minutes.

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



CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAYS

09 CAKES & BARS

Snack cakes, café bars, loaves and showstoppers — the sweets that anchor the holiday dessert table.

6 RECIPES



№ 68

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.



№ 69

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.



№ 70

COSTCO

Apple Pie

Make the Costco Kirkland Signature Apple Pie at home — a tall, deeply filled double-crust pie packed with 8 apples. The key: a 50/50 Granny Smith and Honeycrisp blend and a 15-minute pre-drain that keeps the filling jammy instead of watery.

COSTCO · COPYCAT

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PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
45 min	1 hr 15 min	8 slices	Medium	450

01 Ingredients

FOR THE CRUST

- 2½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon fine salt
- 1 cup (2 sticks / 225g) unsalted butter, very cold, cut into ½-inch cubes
- 6–8 tablespoons ice water

FOR THE FILLING

- 4 medium Granny Smith apples (about 1½ lbs), peeled, cored, and sliced ¼-inch thick
- 4 medium Honeycrisp apples (about 1½ lbs), peeled, cored, and sliced ¼-inch thick (Fuji or Braeburn work equally well)
- ½ cup packed light brown sugar
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon lemon zest
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

FOR ASSEMBLY

- 1 large egg beaten with 1 tablespoon water (egg wash)
- 1 tablespoon coarse sugar (turbinado or Demerara)

02 Method

1. **Make the crust.** Whisk together the flour, sugar, and salt in a large bowl. Add the cold butter cubes. Use your fingertips or a pastry cutter to work the butter into the flour until the mixture looks like coarse sand with pea-sized butter pieces still visible — these intact butter pieces are what create flaky layers. Drizzle in 6 tablespoons of ice water and stir with a fork until the dough just starts to hold together. Add the remaining tablespoon or two of water only if needed; the dough should hold when squeezed but not look wet.

2. **Chill the dough.** Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and divide into two equal pieces. Press each into a flat disc, wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour and up to 2 days. Cold dough rolls more evenly and produces a flakier crust. Do not skip the chill.

3. **Toss and drain the apples.** Peel, core, and slice all 8 apples to an even ¼-inch thickness. Add to a large bowl along with the brown sugar, granulated sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, lemon juice, and lemon zest. Toss thoroughly

to coat every slice, then set the bowl aside at room temperature for 15 minutes. Liquid will pool visibly at the bottom of the bowl.

4. **Reduce the syrup.** Drain the accumulated liquid into a small saucepan — you should have about ⅓ to ½ cup. Set the apple slices aside in the bowl. Bring the liquid to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce to a rapid simmer. Cook, stirring frequently, until it thickens and reduces to about 2 tablespoons of glossy syrup, 5–7 minutes. Remove from heat, cool for 2 minutes, then pour the syrup back over the drained apple slices.

5. **Finish the filling.** Sprinkle the cornstarch over the apple mixture and toss thoroughly until every slice is coated and the mixture looks lightly glazed. The filling is ready when it no longer appears wet or saucy.

6. **Preheat the oven.** Position a rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat to 425°F. Set a large rimmed baking sheet on the rack below to catch drips.

7. **Roll the bottom crust.** On a lightly floured surface, roll one dough disc into a 13-inch circle about ⅛-inch thick. Roll the dough loosely onto your rolling pin and transfer it to a 9-inch deep-dish pie plate. Press the dough gently into the bottom and up the sides — do not stretch it. Trim the overhang to ½ inch beyond the rim. Refrigerate while you work on the filling.

8. **Fill the pie.** Remove the crust from the refrigerator. Pour in the apple filling, mounding the apples high in the center — they cook down significantly. Scatter the 2 tablespoons of cold butter pieces over the apples.

9. **Add the top crust.** Roll the second dough disc into a 12-inch circle. Roll it onto your rolling pin, then unroll it over the filling. Trim to ½ inch past the rim. Press the top and bottom crust edges together, fold them under, and crimp firmly all the way around — the seal keeps the filling from bubbling out. Cut 5 or 6 vents (each about 2 inches long) in the top crust.

10. **Finish and bake at 425°F.** Brush the entire top crust and crimped edge evenly with egg wash. Sprinkle the coarse sugar over the top. Carefully set the pie on the preheated baking sheet and bake at 425°F for 20 minutes — this high initial heat sets the bottom crust and begins caramelizing the top.

11. **Reduce heat and finish baking.** Lower the oven to 375°F. Bake for 45–55 more minutes until the top crust is deep golden brown and filling juices are actively bubbling through the vents. If the edge over-browns before the filling bubbles, tent just the crust rim loosely with foil or fit a pie shield.

12. **Cool before slicing.** Transfer the pie to a wire rack and cool for at least 2 hours. The cornstarch-bound filling needs time to set after coming out of the oven — cutting too early produces a loose, runny slice. For the cleanest cuts and best texture, cool to room temperature, then refrigerate 1 hour before slicing.

WHY IT WORKS

The water comes from the apples themselves. Once you slice and sugar them, osmosis pulls juice out of the fruit.



№ 71

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).



№ 72

STARBUCKS

Iced Gingerbread Loaf

Copycat Starbucks Iced Gingerbread Loaf — the moist, molasses-rich holiday loaf with thick cream cheese icing. Starbucks' seasonal gingerbread loaf is hard to find now, so make 10 slices at home for about $0.75 each.

STARBUCKS · COPYCAT

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Copycat Starbucks Iced Gingerbread Loaf — the moist, molasses-rich holiday loaf with thick cream cheese icing. Starbucks' seasonal gingerbread loaf is hard to find now, so make 10 slices at home for about $0.75 each.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
15 min	55 min	10 slices	Easy	380

01 Ingredients

FOR THE GINGERBREAD LOAF

- 1¾ cups (210g) all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp fine salt
- 2 tsp ground ginger — fresh ground if possible; the flavor is noticeably more vibrant
- 1½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- ½ cup (113g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- ½ cup (100g) packed light brown sugar
- ¼ cup (50g) granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- ⅓ cup (110g) unsulfured molasses — Grandma's Original or Brer Rabbit, NOT blackstrap; blackstrap is too bitter and will overwhelm the spices
- ½ cup (120g) sour cream, room temperature — full-fat; low-fat makes the crumb drier
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 1 tsp freshly grated orange zest — optional but recommended; it brightens the spice profile

FOR THE CREAM CHEESE ICING

- 4 oz (113g) full-fat cream cheese, softened to room temperature — brick-style, not whipped or spread
- 1 cup (120g) powdered sugar, sifted
- 3–4 tbsp whole milk or heavy cream
- ½ tsp pure vanilla extract
- Pinch of fine salt

02 Method

1. **Preheat the oven.** Heat oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease a 9x5-inch loaf pan with butter or nonstick spray, then line with a parchment paper sling (leave a 2-inch overhang on both long sides). The sling makes removing the loaf clean and prevents the iced top from tearing.

2. **Whisk the dry ingredients.** In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, salt, ground ginger, cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg until fully combined. Set aside. Pre-mixing the spices into the flour ensures they distribute evenly instead of clumping into pockets in the batter.

3. **Cream the butter and sugars.** In a large bowl, beat the softened butter with the brown sugar and granulated sugar on medium speed for 2–3 minutes until pale and fluffy. The mixture should be notably lighter in color and look whipped — this step incorporates air that helps the loaf rise evenly. Under-creaming produces a dense, heavy crumb.

4. **Add the eggs.** Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. The batter may look slightly curdled after the second egg — that's normal; it will come together when the molasses is added.

5. **Add the molasses, sour cream, vanilla, and orange zest.** Add the molasses, sour cream, and vanilla extract. Mix on low until just combined. Stir in the orange zest if using. The batter will be dark brown and glossy.

6. **Fold in the flour mixture.** Add the flour-spice mixture all at once. Stir by hand with a spatula just until no dry streaks remain — do not overmix. Overmixing develops gluten and turns a tender quick bread into a dense, chewy one. A few small lumps are fine.

7. **Bake the loaf.** Pour the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the top. Bake for 50–55 minutes, until a wooden skewer inserted into the center comes out with just a few moist crumbs. If the top darkens too quickly (gingerbread's molasses makes it prone to this), tent loosely with aluminum foil after 35 minutes.

8. **Cool completely — do not rush this.** Let the loaf cool in the pan for 15 minutes, then use the parchment sling to lift it onto a wire rack. Cool for at least 1 full hour until completely room temperature before icing. A warm loaf will melt the cream cheese icing into a thin glaze that runs off the sides rather than setting in the thick white layer the Starbucks version has.

9. **Make the cream cheese icing.** Beat the softened cream cheese until smooth with no lumps, about 1 minute. Add the sifted powdered sugar, vanilla, and salt. Mix on low until the sugar is incorporated, then add 3 tablespoons of milk and mix until the icing is smooth and pourable but not runny — it should flow slowly from a spoon, like thick pancake batter. Add the fourth tablespoon of milk only if needed. If the icing is too thin, refrigerate for 10 minutes to firm it up before pouring.

10. **Ice the loaf.** Place the cooled loaf on the wire rack set over a parchment-lined baking sheet (to catch drips). Pour the cream cheese icing over the center of the loaf and use a small spatula or the back of a spoon to nudge it toward the edges so it drips naturally down the sides in a few places — just like the Starbucks version. Don't spread it too aggressively or it will slide off. Let the icing set at room temperature for 20–30 minutes before slicing.

11. **Slice and serve.** Use a serrated knife and wipe the blade between cuts for clean slices. Store covered at room temperature for up to 2 days, or refrigerate (covered) for up to 5 days — the icing keeps better in the fridge. Bring to room temperature before serving for the best texture.

WHY IT WORKS

The loaf wasn't fully cool when you poured the icing. Even slight residual warmth from inside the bread melts cream cheese icing into a thin glaze that slides off the sides instead of setting into a thick white layer.



№ 73

STARBUCKS

Sugar Plum Cheese Danish

Make the Starbucks Sugar Plum Cheese Danish at home: flaky puff pastry, sweet cream cheese, and spiced plum jam — the holiday bakery case staple that comes back every November for about $4.50, made for $1 each in 30 minutes.

STARBUCKS · COPYCAT

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Make the Starbucks Sugar Plum Cheese Danish at home: flaky puff pastry, sweet cream cheese, and spiced plum jam — the holiday bakery case staple that comes back every November for about $4.50, made for $1 each in 30 minutes.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	LEVEL	CAL
12 min	18 min	4 danishes	Easy	330

01 Ingredients

FOR THE PASTRY

- 1 sheet (about 9 oz / 255g) frozen puff pastry, thawed overnight in the refrigerator — Pepperidge Farm Puff Pastry Sheets work well and are widely available; thaw in the fridge, not on the counter, so the butter layers stay cold and separate
- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon water

FOR THE CREAM CHEESE FILLING

- 4 oz (113g) cream cheese or neufchâtel cheese, completely softened to room temperature — neufchâtel is what Starbucks uses; it has about 25% less fat than standard cream cheese but behaves identically here
- 3 tablespoons powdered sugar, plus more for dusting
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- Pinch of fine sea salt

FOR THE SUGAR PLUM JAM

- ¼ cup (75g) dark plum jam — not jelly; the jam's fruit pulp keeps the layer thick enough to stay in place during baking
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon ground allspice

02 Method

1. **Simmer the sugar plum jam.** Combine the plum jam, nutmeg, and allspice in a small saucepan over medium heat. Stir and cook for 2 minutes, until the jam loosens, the spices bloom, and any excess moisture cooks off. Remove from heat and let cool to room temperature — the jam should be thick and spreadable, not runny. If you have a jam with large fruit pieces, press it through a strainer first for a smooth layer.

2. **Beat the cream cheese filling.** Beat the softened cream cheese, powdered sugar, vanilla, and salt together with a hand mixer or whisk until completely smooth and there are no lumps. The mixture should hold soft peaks when you lift the whisk. If it looks grainy or stiff, the cream cheese was too cold — let it sit at room temperature for another 10 minutes and beat again.

3. **Preheat the oven.** Heat the oven to 400°F (205°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

4. **Cut and score the pastry.** Unfold the thawed puff pastry sheet on a lightly floured surface. Cut it evenly into 4 squares (cut once down the middle and once across, making a 2×2 grid). Transfer the squares to the prepared baking sheet, spacing them about 1 inch apart. Using a sharp knife, score a ½-inch border around each square — press the knife about halfway through the pastry without cutting all the way

through. This scored line is what creates the puffed frame around the filling when the pastry bakes.

5. **Fill the danishes.** Spoon about 1 tablespoon of the cream cheese filling into the center of each square, inside the scored border. Spread it to within ¼ inch of the scored line but do not go over it. Add 1 teaspoon of the cooled spiced plum jam on top of the cream cheese, leaving a small border of cream cheese visible around the jam edge. Do not mix them together.

6. **Apply the egg wash.** Beat the egg and water together in a small bowl. Brush the egg wash onto the scored border of each danish, taking care not to let it drip onto the filling. A thin, even coat gives the best color — a heavy application can seal the pastry layers together and reduce the puff.

7. **Bake.** Bake for 14 to 18 minutes, until the borders are deep golden brown and well-puffed and the filling is just set (it may look slightly jiggly in the center — it firms up as it cools). Watch the danishes from 14 minutes onward; oven-to-oven variance is significant with puff pastry and the window between golden and over-browned is about 2 minutes.

8. **Cool and dust.** Let the danishes cool on the baking sheet for 10 minutes before serving — the cream cheese filling is very hot immediately out of the oven. Once cooled slightly, sift a light dusting of powdered sugar over the tops. Serve warm or at room temperature.

WHY IT WORKS

Scoring the border is the single most important technique step. When puff pastry bakes without any scoring or scoring that doesn't reach the center, the whole square rises as one solid block and pushes the filling off the top.

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