Better Homes and Gardens Special Interest Publications®

CHRISTMAS COOKIES™

Beautiful & Easy

WATERCOLOR DECORATING!
P. 6

ONE DOUGH, 5 WAYS
P. 74

SANTA'S SWEETS
P. 28

COOKIE BAKING **FOR A CAUSE**
P. 10

NOSTALGIC **HOLIDAY MOVIE** COOKIES
P. 50

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6 WATERCOLOR DECORATING
Learn how to create the cookies on our cover!

8 STORAGE GUIDE

10 COOKIES FOR A CAUSE
Find out how cookies have helped make a difference in the lives of those in need.

18 SUGAR, SUGAR
Sugar cookies, baby! We have cutouts, cookie cups, bars, decorating, and more.

28 BIG COOKIES
Why go small when you can eat these tasty fist-size cookies?

36 RED VELVET
Red velvet is not just for cakes—these treats are as deliciously festive as they come.

42 MORE MOLASSES
There's more than one way to love molasses this season.

50 AT THE MOVIES
Snack on our movie-themed cookies while you watch your favorite holiday films.

60 COPYCAT CANDY BARS
Your favorite candy bars as delicious one-pan treats.

68 SNOWBALLS
They're not frosty, but they are utterly yummy cookies.

74 ONE DOUGH, FIVE WAYS
Use one deliciously versatile dough to make five different cookies and treats.

80 WE BE JAMMIN'
Cookies with jam inside or on top—it doesn't get sweeter!

88 CRUMB BARS
Crisp buttery crusts do double duty as a topping.

96 SPRITZ IT UP
Get out your cookie press—it's time to glam up your classic spritz cookies.

102 CHEESECAKE BARS
Creamy cheesecake bars try on tasty new flavors.

110 SURPRISE INSIDE
Nestled in the middle of each cookie is a sweet treat to savor.

116 BLONDIES MADE BETTER
The rich, caramel flavors of blondies get even more amazing with these remakes.

122 MERRY MERINGUES
Cute doesn't even begin to describe these meringue trees, Santa hats, and snowmen.

124 FROM CAN TO PAN
A can of sweetened condensed milk turns bars into gooey masterpieces.

128 TOOLBOX
Get your recipes right with these useful tips and tricks.

134 I DID IT!
See how Diane Stewart turned our Christmas cookies into a business.

136 INDEX

Better Homes and Gardens Test Kitchen

This seal assures you that every recipe in this issue of *Christmas Cookies*™ magazine has been tested in the Better Homes and Gardens® Test Kitchen. This means each recipe is practical and reliable, and meets our high standards of taste appeal.

ON THE COVER:
WATERCOLOR DECORATING, *P. 6*
PHOTOGRAPHER: JASON DONNELLY
FOOD STYLIST: KELSEY BULAT
ILLUSTRATOR: SARA PEREZ

wishing you peace, love & joy

Christmas may be the most wonderful time of year, but in our *Better Homes and Gardens*® Test Kitchen and photo studio, it's a year-round celebration—how lucky are we? I started planning this issue right after last Christmas, the cookie taste testing started in late winter (yum!), photography was done by late spring, and we spent the summer putting the pieces together to create deliciousness for your holiday season.

So what did we put on the cookie plate for this year? Every scrumptious thing we tested and sampled! That said, the following are my favorite parts of the magazine.

One Dough, 5 Ways: The title speaks for itself. One easy-to-make dough gets tweaked five different ways to create bars, sandwich cookies, and more *(page 74)*. But here's the best part—we give you the option to create three different cookies from just one batch of the dough. With some easy adjustments, you can make three swap-ready treats at once!

Copycat Candy Bars: Think of these bars as pans of bliss *(page 60)*. We took the flavors of your favorites and turned them into soft, melty, warm-from-the-oven treats that won't hang around long on the party scene. Seriously gooey nougat, layers of caramel, and swirls of chocolate are where it's at.

Cookies for a Cause: In the season of giving, we'll show you how cookies have brought hope and help to those in need *(page 10)*. Four nonprofits and committees across the country shine the spotlight on how they're baking to make the world a better place. (Plus, they share their best-selling recipes!)

Each of the stories in the magazine shares the decadence and festivity that bring us together during the holidays. So before I continue rambling about what I love, take a peek and get started on this year's holiday baking!

Jessica Christensen
Editor

CHRISTMAS COOKIES™

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(l to r)
Sarah Brekke,
Sammy Mila,
Kelsey Bulat

COME IN! THIS IS OUR TEST KITCHEN

THE BONES

8

NUMBER OF GALLEY KITCHENS IN OUR TEST KITCHEN.

Each is about the size of many NYC apartment kitchens. You won't find fancy gadgets or restaurant-style ovens; we test with appliances and tools the Average Joe home cook might use. We do, however, have one awesome chandelier that hangs above our sharing table (aka the trough).

Q: *Do you go home and cook supper every night?*
(THE #1 QUESTION ASKED OF OUR CULINARY PROFESSIONALS)

A: *Yes, absolutely. Our culinary specialists are home cooks at heart—like you. So at the end of their day they often step right back into their kitchens at home!*

84

YEARS OF ON-STAFF COOKING EXPERIENCE

We fail in our kitchen so you have success in yours!

Lynn Blanchard, Test Kitchen Director

Food Science + Culinary Arts + Consumer Science + Dietetics = VARIETY OF COLLEGE DEGREES OUR TEST KITCHEN STAFF HOLDS

5
a Day

AVERAGE NUMBER OF RECIPES EACH CULINARY PROFESSIONAL TESTS DAILY

Sarah Brekke

Carla Christian

THE SUPPORT SQUAD

KITCHEN HELPERS

The Test Kitchen wouldn't function as efficiently without our kitchen helpers. They move through the galley kitchens wrangling dirty dishes, loading dishwashers, and working to keep things as orderly as possible as the testers are cooking away.

A SHOPPER

The only way we can test so many recipes each day is with the help of a very key person: the shopper! She makes one enormous shopping list daily for the next day's testing, then heads out to shop major grocery stores and specialty markets.

THE SEAL: The Test Kitchen seal assures you that every recipe tested in the Better Homes and Gardens® Test Kitchen is practical and reliable, and meets our high standards of taste appeal.

NO ONE PERSON IS THE BOSS OF A RECIPE! WE GATHER EDITORS AND TEST KITCHEN FOLKS AROUND A TABLE OR STAND AT A KITCHEN SINK TO CHEW ON THINGS, LITERALLY. FLAVOR, DIFFICULTY, INGREDIENTS: THEY'RE ALL UP FOR DISCUSSION!

RECIPE TESTING BASICS

MEASURING FLOUR

The way you measure flour can really make a difference! So we're all on the same page: Stir the flour in the container to lighten, then spoon it into a measuring cup, and then level the measure.

EGGS: We test with large eggs 1 large egg = 3 ¼ Tbsp.

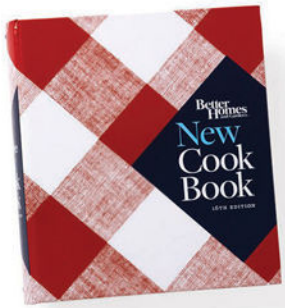
MILK: We test with 2-percent milk unless otherwise written.

VEGETABLE OIL: If the recipe calls for vegetable oil, we test with neutral oils, such as canola oil or corn oil, unless otherwise written.

BUTTER: We use and love butter! If you need to use margarine, that's OK for cooking but butter bakes best!

two

Number of registered dietitians on staff



THE RED PLAID COOK BOOK

Part of our cooking legacy at Better Homes and Gardens is the famed Red Plaid New Cook Book (currently in its 16th edition). This book is at the heart of everything we do in the Test Kitchen. Every new kitchen discovery we make is added to this book. Every new flavor and twist on the classics land in these pages.

Colleen Weeden

Juli Hale

Kelsey Bulat

BY THE NUMBERS

4,500
NUMBER OF RECIPES TESTED IN THE KITCHEN EACH YEAR

1,000
CUPS OF FLOUR

480
CUPS OF SUGAR

288
DOZEN EGGS

240
CUPS OF MILK

480
POUNDS OF BUTTER

144
POUNDS OF ONIONS

50
WOODEN SPOONS

12
JARS OF CINNAMON

On the Cover:

WATERCOLOR DECORATING

Decorated cookies are a sign of the season. When time is short go right for the wow effect with a paintbrush and food coloring. (It's also a fun afternoon activity for the kiddos!)

CHRISTMAS PLAID

Spread Royal Icing (*p. 130*) on Sugar Cookie Cutouts (*p. 21*). Let stand several hours or overnight until *completely* dry. In separate bowls or on a pan, mix green and/or red liquid food coloring with a few drops of water to dilute the food coloring slightly. Use clean new artist paintbrushes of different widths to paint plaid patterns on cookies. Let stand until dry.

LUSTER DUST PASTE

In small bowls, mix edible luster dust (available in the cake decorating department of hobby stores) with a few drops of vodka to make a paste to brush on cookies.

MORE THAN A CUTTER

Use a paintbrush and luster dust paste to trace around a small cookie cutter to create an outline or other designs on the cookies.

STORAGE

Once dry, store cookies in single layer in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days. Or freeze for up to 3 months.

SHARING

Royal Icing dries out completely, so these lovely cookies are perfect for giving as gifts. Layer them in tins, boxes, or other sturdy containers and wrap with a pretty bow.

SHIMMERY DESIGNS

Use a clean artist paintbrush to paint desired colors of luster dust paste (*opposite*) evenly onto cookies. Let stand to dry. Draw simple, free-form designs on cookies with a different color of luster dust paste or pipe designs or borders using Royal Icing (*p. 130*). Let stand until dry.

ABSTRACT COOKIE BAR

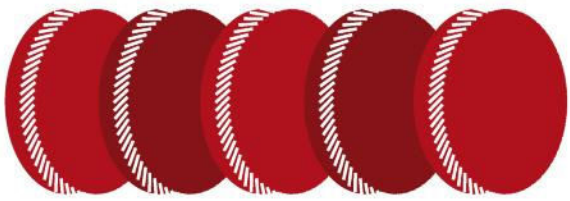
Spread Royal Icing (*p. 130*) over desired flavor sugar cookie bars (*p. 21-23*). (To simplify, you can omit the icing and paint straight on the cookie bar.) Dilute liquid food coloring as directed in Christmas Plaid cookies (*opposite, far left*). (For a mossy shade of green, add a drop of yellow to green coloring; for blue-green shade, add a drop of blue to green coloring). Use thick clean new artist paintbrushes to paint long and short strokes of color in desired designs. Let stand until dry.

FINISHING TOUCHES

You also can pipe desired icing or frosting onto cookies after painting to create accents and outlines.

STORAGEGUIDE

Overbooked this holiday season? Not a problem. When you start prepping early (up to 6 months ahead), you can have a whole stash of dough and/or cookies ready to go in the freezer. Here's what you need to know.



DON'TFREEZE

SKIP THE FREEZER ON THESE FOUR ITEMS

- Meringue and macaroon batters
- Caramel toppings and fillings
- Brownie and bar batters
- Custard fillings

REFRIGERATE

ALWAYS STORE THESE IN THE FRIDGE

- Caramel- and chocolate-based frostings and fillings
- Soft nougat fillings
- Frostings and fillings containing sour cream, cream cheese, or other dairy products
- Gooey, soft-set fillings that benefit from firming
- Custard and cheesecake fillings

FREEZINGDOUGH

FREEZING DOUGH SHAPES

For dough shaped into balls, freeze dough portions on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Transfer the frozen shapes to a freezer bag. Freeze up to 6 months. To bake the frozen dough, add 2 to 3 minutes to the recipe baking time.

FREEZING DOUGH

Most butter- and shortening-based cookie doughs can be frozen. Place dough in a tightly sealed container; freeze up to 6 months. Thaw dough in the refrigerator; shape and bake as directed.

FREEZING DOUGH LOGS

After shaping slice-and-bake cookie dough into logs, wrap the logs in plastic wrap and then in foil. Freeze logs up to 6 months. Thaw logs in the refrigerator overnight before slicing. Bake as directed.

STORINGCOOKIES

MULTIPLE-LAYER STORAGE

Layer sturdy drop cookies, unfrosted bars and cookies, and cookies with firm-set icing between sheets of waxed paper in an airtight container; cover. (Sturdy drop or shaped cookies can also be frozen in resealable plastic freezer bags.) Store at room temperature or in the refrigerator up to 3 days or freeze cookies up to 3 months. Thaw cookies if frozen. Decorate as desired.

SINGLE LAYER STORAGE

Place brownies, cheesecake bars, and cookies with sticky toppings in a single layer in an airtight container. Store at room temperature or in the refrigerator up to 3 days or freeze up to 3 months.

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COOKIES FOR A *cause*

Far beyond the holidays, cookies can go miles to further worthy causes all year. These nonprofit groups and committees show what a difference cookies can make when the right people are in charge of the oven.

COOKIES FOR KIDS' CANCER

A family's fight against a scary diagnosis jump-starts larger-than-life bake sales across the country.

HOW TO HELP!
Visit *cookiesforkidscancer.org* to buy freshly baked cookies and other gifts that support children's cancer research.

It all started in 2007 when Gretchen and Larry Witt's 2½-year-old son, Liam, was diagnosed with pediatric cancer. As the family navigated the difficult path of treatment for Liam, they discovered children's cancer research and pediatric drug development weren't nearly as progressive as that for cancers with higher profiles. That was unacceptable to the Witts. To help fund research for a new treatment that was still in the early stages of development, the dedicated parents put into motion the biggest cookie bake sale they could imagine—one that ended up selling 96,000 cookies and raising $420,000! The treatment that money funded is saving lives today.

It's a devastating fact that cancer is the leading cause of death by disease of children in the United States. Just as devastating is the lack of funding available to research new and better treatments that could help save young lives. So once the Witts realized how much their initial bake sale had touched and inspired people across the country, they had to keep the momentum going. Together they created Cookies for Kids' Cancer *(cookiesforkidscancer.org)*, a national nonprofit group that encourages people to host bake sales to further the cause. Since its creation in 2008, the foundation has been responsible for the following:

- $10 million given for pediatric cancer research grants
- 80 research grants awarded, resulting in 32 new treatments now available
- More than 7,000 events across the United States and around the world.

SPREAD THE WORD
Gretchen Holt-Witt has authored two cookbooks to inspire and support others to create their own fund-raising bake sales: *Cookies for Kids' Cancer: Best Bake Sale Cookbook* and *Cookies for Kids' Cancer: All the Good Cookies.*

KIDS TEAM UP TO RAISE MONEY FOR RESEARCH.

PRINCE LIAM'S PEANUT BUTTER COOKIES

PREP 25 minutes
BAKE 10 minutes per batch at 350°F
COOL 5 minutes

- ½ cup shortening
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup packed dark brown sugar
- ½ cup natural-style peanut butter at room temperature
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1¼ tsp. baking powder
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- ¾ cup dry-roasted peanuts, coarsely chopped
- Granulated sugar

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper. In a large bowl beat first six ingredients (through vanilla) with a mixer on medium 3 minutes, scraping bowl as needed. In another bowl combine flour, baking powder, and salt. Add flour mixture to peanut butter mixture; beat on low about 1 minute or until well combined. Add peanuts; beat until combined.
2. Roll tablespoons of dough into balls and place 1½ inches apart onto prepared cookie sheets. Dip the tines of a fork into granulated sugar and flatten each ball with a crosshatch mark, pressing dough into a 1½- to 1¾-inch round.
3. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Cool on cookie sheet 5 minutes. Remove; cool on wire racks. **Makes 30 cookies.**
PER COOKIE *130 cal., 8 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 6 mg chol., 69 mg sodium, 14 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

GRETCHEN AND LIAM

COOKIES FOR A CAUSE

PLYMOUTHGROUNDS

A full-service coffee shop that teaches essential job skills to those with special needs is baking up cookies and confidence at the same time.

BUTTERSCOTCH SPICE COOKIES

Plymouth Grounds Coffee Shop is raising the bar on coffee and cookies. Nestled in the expansive Plymouth Church near downtown Des Moines, this full-service shop is staffed by blossoming baristas and bakers with special needs from local high schools. During each semester, four employees rotate in to learn essential job skills to help them gain employment after graduation. They acquire skills such as making coffee drinks, customer service, professional behavior, working the register, and personal grooming.

Jenny Wetzel, 23, graduated from the program and was hired by a local tearoom. But the skills she learned as a baker at the coffee shop, under the watchful eye of shop manager Sue Hoss, made her indispensable to Plymouth Grounds. She was so good at cranking out batches of brownies and cookies during her Wednesday shift, the staff kept her on as the shop baker—a coveted position that she adores. Her favorite recipe to make at work (and at home on her days off) is the shop specialty—Butterscotch Spice Cookies.

BUTTERSCOTCH SPICE COOKIES

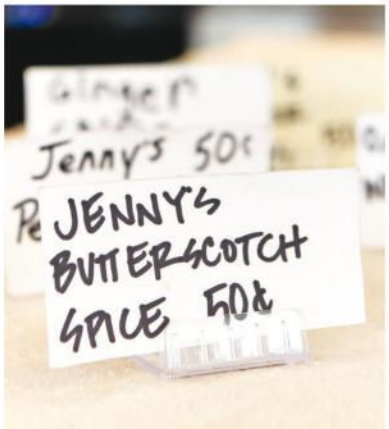
PREP 25 minutes **BAKE** 12 minutes per batch at 350°F

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1½ cups packed brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 11-oz. pkg. butterscotch-flavor pieces
- Powdered sugar

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper. In a large bowl beat butter and brown sugar with a mixer on medium until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg and vanilla. Beat in flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, and salt until combined. Stir in butterscotch pieces.
2. Roll scoops of dough in powdered sugar to coat heavily. Place dough 2 inches apart onto prepared cookie sheets. Bake 12 to 14 minutes or until edges are golden and centers are set but slightly moist. Cool slightly on cookie sheets. Remove; cool on wire racks. **Makes 38 cookies.**

PER COOKIE *158 cal., 7 g fat (5 g sat. fat), 18 mg chol., 112 mg sodium, 22 g carb., 1 g pro.*

Sue Hoss (shop manager) lends a hand if Jenny Wetzel needs help.



BITTERSWEET CHOCOLATE-ORANGE COOKIES

COOKIES FOR A CAUSE

COOKIES FOR GOOD

Three groups joined cookie-making forces to fight homelessness and help those in need.

When a dairy creamery, a caterer, and a homelessness action committee come together, homemade cookies are the only logical outcome—at least in the case of Cookies for Good, a collaborative program based in Burlington, Vermont. About eight years ago, Cabot Creamery approached the Committee on Temporary Shelters (COTS) to brainstorm ideas for generating additional revenue to fund the committee's efforts at ending homelessness. Before long, Sugarsnap, a local farm-to-table catering company, joined the partnership. Together, the team baked up the delicious idea to sell Sugarsnap's fresh-baked cookies to raise money for COTS. Cookies for Good was created and now 35 percent of every cookie sold by Sugarsnap—whether in a corporate lunch box or on a holiday cookie platter—goes directly to help those in need. Every year since its creation, Cookies for Good has generated about $10,000 for COTS.

Of the nine sweet cookies Sugarsnap offers, CEO and owner Abbey Duke has a soft spot for the Bittersweet Chocolate-Orange Cookies, *below*. Of course, they taste best if you use 100 percent Cabot Creamery butter!

Freshly baked cookies are a delicious addition to many local events.

BITTERSWEET CHOCOLATE-ORANGE COOKIES

PREP 30 minutes
BAKE 12 minutes per batch at 350°F

- 2 cups butter, softened
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 Tbsp. orange zest
- 4½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 8 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chopped

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease cookie sheets. In a large bowl beat butter and sugar with a mixer on medium to high until combined. Beat in eggs and orange zest. Add flour, baking powder, and salt, beating on low until combined. Stir in chopped chocolate.
2. Drop dough by heaping teaspoons 1½ inches apart on prepared cookie sheets. Bake 6 minutes. Turn cookie sheet; bake 6 minutes more or until edges are light golden brown. Cool on cookie sheet 2 minutes. Remove; cool on wire racks. **Makes 58 cookies.**

PER COOKIE *141 cal., 8 g fat (5 g sat. fat), 23 mg chol., 98 mg sodium, 17 g carb., 2 g pro.*

COOKIES FOR A CAUSE

COOKIECART

This urban bakery empowers kids with new skills and opportunities through the magic of baking cookies.

Opportunity does not frequently beckon in the low-income neighborhoods of North Minneapolis. But since the 1980s, dozens of bright teens from a collection of cultures have found a source of hope and guidance from an urban bakery called the Cookie Cart.

Years ago, Sister Jean Thuerauf opened the door to her own kitchen, inviting neighborhood kids to bake cookies to keep them off the streets and out of trouble. Before long, she had more hopeful students than she had room to provide, thus creating Minneapolis' famous Cookie Cart, a teen-driven, nonprofit urban bakery promoting education and empowerment.

Teens, such as 16-year-old Amirah (*below*), gain experience that will prepare them for post-high school challenges and opportunities as they sweeten the city with Sister Jean's original recipes.

When not mixing, shaping, and baking batches of treats, Amirah learns essential job skills such as customer service, teamwork, schedule management, and problem-solving while employed at the Cookie Cart. The program also offers classes to teach students about money management and job search essentials such as writing cover letters and résumés. Even sweeter than Sister Jean's Cookies is the fact that all this valuable education and experience adds up to an 80 percent job placement rate after program completion.

B. J. (YOUTH EMPLOYEE) IS RIGHT AT HOME IN THE KITCHEN.

BETH (PROGRAM ASSOCIATE) AND AMIRAH (YOUTH EMPLOYEE) TEAM UP TO GET THEIR COOKIES PREPPED FOR THE OVEN.

SISTER JEAN'S COOKIES

PREP 30 minutes BAKE 10 minutes per batch at 350°F

- ¾ cup shortening
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ¾ cup packed brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 Tbsp. water
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups regular rolled oats
- 1½ cups crisp rice cereal
- ½ cup (heaping) flaked coconut
- ½ cup (heaping) chopped nuts, such as walnuts or pecans
- 1 cup (heaping) semisweet chocolate pieces

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly grease cookie sheets. In a large bowl beat first nine ingredients (through vanilla) with a mixer on medium until combined. Add flour; beat just until combined. Stir in remaining ingredients.
2. Drop dough by teaspoons 2 inches apart onto prepared cookie sheets. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until light brown. Cool on cookie sheets 2 minutes. Remove; cool on wire racks.
Makes 60 cookies.

PER COOKIE *108 cal., 6 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 6 mg chol., 70 mg sodium, 13 g carb., 1 g pro.*

HOW TO HELP!
Cookie Cart ships cookies anywhere in the continental United States. Visit cookiecart.org.

SISTER JEAN'S COOKIES

SUGAR, SUGAR

Since sugar and spice are both pretty nice, we spruced up classic sugar cookie dough with the added flavor of nuts, citrus, spices, and chocolate. But that's not all! We also changed the shape by turning them into cookie cups, bars, and more.

ORANGE CREAM SUGAR COOKIE BARS, *page 23*

COCONUT-LIME SUGAR COOKIE BARS

COCONUT-LIME SUGAR COOKIE BARS

PREP 20 minutes
BAKE 20 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1¼ cups granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 Tbsp. sour cream
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- ½ tsp. coconut extract
- 1 recipe Coconut-Lime Frosting
- Flaked coconut, toasted if desired, and/or lime zest

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Coat foil with cooking spray. In a medium bowl stir together next five ingredients (through baking soda).
2. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add granulated sugar; beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg, sour cream, vanilla, and coconut extract. Gradually beat in flour mixture. Transfer dough to prepared pan. Press dough evenly into pan.
3. Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until light golden brown on edges. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars from pan. Spread with Coconut-Lime Frosting. Sprinkle with flaked coconut and/or lime zest. Cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. **Makes 48 bars.**

COCONUT-LIME FROSTING In a large bowl beat 1 cup butter, softened, with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Gradually beat in 3½ cups powdered sugar until smooth. Beat in 1 tsp. lime zest, 1 tsp. lime juice, and ¼ tsp. coconut extract.

PER COOKIE *161 cal., 8 g fat (5 g sat. fat), 25 mg chol., 108 mg sodium, 21 g carb., 1 g pro.*

SUGAR COOKIE CUTOUTS

SUGAR COOKIE CUTOUTS

PREP 40 minutes CHILL 30 minutes
BAKE 7 minutes per batch at 375°F

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1¼ cups granulated sugar
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- Desired icing or frosting (*p. 130*)

1. In a large mixing bowl beat butter on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add granulated sugar, baking powder, and salt. Beat until combined, scraping sides of bowl occasionally. Beat in eggs and vanilla until combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour. Divide dough in half. Cover and chill dough about 30 minutes or until easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 375°F. On a floured surface, roll half the dough at a time to ⅛- to ¼-inch thickness. Using a 2½- to 3-inch cookie cutter, cut into desired shapes. Place 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheets.
3. Bake about 7 minutes or until edges are firm and bottoms are very light brown. Transfer cookies to wire racks and let cool. Frost with desired icing. **Makes 52 cookies.**

CHOCOLATE SUGAR COOKIE CUTOUTS Prepare as directed except substitute ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder for ½ cup of the flour.

PER COOKIE (EITHER VARIATION) *80 cal., 4 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 17 mg chol., 63 mg sodium, 10 g carb., 1 g pro.*

PISTACHIO SUGAR COOKIE BARS

PREP 30 minutes
BAKE 20 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup finely chopped roasted, salted pistachios
- 2 tsp. cornstarch
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ¾ tsp. salt
- 1 recipe Fluffy Whipped Frosting
- Chopped roasted, salted pistachios (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray.
2. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add sugar. Beat on medium until light and fluffy, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg and vanilla.
3. In a medium bowl whisk together next five ingredients (through salt). Add flour mixture to butter mixture; beat on low to form a soft dough. Transfer dough to prepared baking pan. With lightly floured fingers, press dough evenly into baking pan.
4. Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Spread with Fluffy Whipped Frosting and, if desired, sprinkle with chopped pistachios. Cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.
Makes 48 bars.

FLUFFY WHIPPED FROSTING

In a medium bowl beat 1½ cups heavy cream with a mixer on medium until stiff peaks form. In a large bowl beat one 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened; 1 cup sugar; 1 tsp. vanilla; and ¼ tsp. salt until light and fluffy. Add whipped cream; beat until light and fluffy. If desired, tint with green food coloring.
PER BAR *144 cal., 9 g fat (5 g sat. fat), 27 mg chol., 118 mg sodium, 14 g carb., 2 g pro.*

ORANGE CREAM SUGAR COOKIE BARS

ORANGE CREAM SUGAR COOKIE BARS

PREP 35 minutes BAKE 20 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 cup butter, softened
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1½ tsp. vanilla bean paste (info, *right*) or vanilla extract
- 2 Tbsp. orange zest
- 1 recipe White Chocolate Frosting

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Coat foil with nonstick cooking spray. In a bowl combine flour, baking powder, cornstarch, and salt.
2. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add both sugars. Beat on medium to high until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg, vanilla bean paste, and orange zest. Beat in flour mixture. Transfer dough to the prepared baking pan. With lightly floured fingers, spread dough evenly in pan.
3. Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until edges are light golden brown. Cool completely on a wire rack. Spread White Chocolate Frosting evenly over cooled bars. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. **Makes 48 bars.**

WHITE CHOCOLATE FROSTING In a small heavy saucepan combine 2 oz. white baking chocolate, chopped, and 2 Tbsp. heavy cream. Cook and stir over low heat until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Remove from heat and let cool 5 minutes. In a large bowl beat ½ cup softened butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Beat in 2 cups powdered sugar until light and fluffy. Add melted white chocolate mixture, 1 tsp. vanilla bean paste or vanilla extract, and pinch salt, beating on low until combined. Beat in 2 Tbsp. heavy cream, 1 Tbsp. at a time. Beat on medium until very light and fluffy. If desired, tint frosting with orange food coloring.

PER BAR *129 cal., 7 g fat (4 g sat. fat), 21 mg chol., 87 mg sodium, 16 g carb., 1 g pro.*

FLAVOR UPGRADE

Vanilla bean paste (above right) is a step up from standard vanilla extract because it contains actual seeds from the vanilla bean pod (above left), which will add a lovely speckled look to your baked goods. It has a thicker consistency than vanilla extract, so won't thin your frostings and icings either. Substitute an equal amount of vanilla bean paste for vanilla extract. Look for it in kitchen stores or specialty food stores, or purchase it online.

ROUNDCOOKIES

EASY SUGAR COOKIES

PREP 35 minutes
BAKE 12 minutes per batch at 300°F

- ½ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup shortening
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. cream of tartar
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- 3 egg yolks
- ½ tsp. vanilla
- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour

1. Preheat oven to 300°F. In a large bowl beat butter and shortening with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add granulated sugar, baking soda, cream of tartar, and salt. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg yolks and vanilla. Beat in flour.

2. Shape dough into 1-inch balls; place 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets.

3. Bake 12 to 14 minutes or until edges are set but not brown. Cool on cookie sheet 2 minutes. Remove; cool on wire racks. **Makes 48 cookies.**

PER COOKIE (ANY VARIATION) *89 cal., 4 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 17 mg chol., 48 mg sodium, 12 g carb., 0 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

LEMON-POPPY SEED SUGAR COOKIES Prepare as directed, except before adding granulated sugar, combine sugar and 1 Tbsp. lemon zest in a small bowl. With fingertips, rub lemon zest into sugar until sugar becomes very fragrant. Add 2 Tbsp. poppy seeds with the flour.

VANILLA BEAN SUGAR COOKIES Prepare as directed, except substitute 2 tsp. vanilla bean paste for the vanilla. (Or cut a vanilla bean in half lengthwise; scrape the seeds from the pod. Beat seeds into dough with the egg yolks.)

SPICY SUGAR COOKIES Prepare as directed through shaping. In a shallow dish combine ¼ cup granulated sugar, ½ tsp. ground cinnamon, and ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper. Roll dough balls in mixture before baking.

BUTTERSCOTCH SUGAR COOKIES Prepare as directed, except omit the cream of tartar. Reduce granulated sugar to 1 cup. Add 1 cup packed brown sugar with granulated sugar. Add 1 tsp. pumpkin pie spice or apple pie spice with the flour.

CHAI-CLEMENTINE SUGAR COOKIES Prepare as directed, except add 2 tsp. clementine zest along with the butter and granulated sugar. Add 2 tsp. chai seasoning with the flour. (To make your own chai seasoning, combine 1½ tsp. ground cardamom, ¼ tsp. ground ginger, ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon, and dash ground cloves.)

LIME-COCONUT SUGAR COOKIES Prepare as directed, except combine the granulated sugar, ⅓ cup toasted coconut, and 2 tsp. lime zest in a food processor. Pulse quickly until coconut is very fine. Add to butter mixture as directed.

WHITE CHOCOLATE-PISTACHIO SUGAR COOKIES Prepare as directed, except reduce flour to 1⅓ cups and add ⅓ cup finely ground pistachios and ¼ cup grated white baking chocolate to the flour mixture. If desired, stir in 2 tsp. cracked pink peppercorns with the flour. After removing from oven, sprinkle with additional finely grated white baking chocolate.

SUGAR COOKIE CUPS

PREP 1 hour **BAKE** 10 minutes per batch at 350°F
COOL 5 minutes

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1¼ cups sugar
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 tsp. orange zest or almond extract (optional)
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- Desired Fillings (opposite)

1. Coat 1¾-inch muffin cups with cooking spray. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Beat in sugar, baking powder, and salt, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in eggs, vanilla, and, if desired, orange zest. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour. If necessary, cover and chill dough 30 minutes or until easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F. Shape dough into 1¼-inch balls. Press dough balls into bottom and up sides of prepared muffin cups.
3. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Re-press the centers with the rounded side of a measuring spoon. Let cool in pans 5 minutes. Remove cups from pans and cool completely on wire racks. Add Desired Fillings.

Makes 64 cookie cups.

PER CUP *65 cal., 3 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 13 mg chol., 55 mg sodium, 8 g carb., 0 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

SHAPING CUPS

There are a few ways to shape dough into cups in the muffin tins. If you have a mortar and pestle, depending on the size, the pestle, above, may be the perfect fit for creating an indentation. You can also try using the end of a wooden spoon. As a last resort, press with your fingers to create a cup shape.

ROCKY ROAD COOKIE CUPS Place marshmallow creme from one 13-oz. jar in a resealable plastic bag with a hole snipped from one corner. Squeeze marshmallow creme into each cookie cup. Drizzle with chocolate ice cream topping; sprinkle with chopped peanuts.
PER CUP *93 cal., 4 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 16 mg chol., 63 mg sodium, 15 g carb., 0 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

CHERRY-ALMOND COOKIE CUPS Prepare cookie cups as directed, using the almond extract. In a small bowl beat ½ cup heavy cream, 4 tsp. sour cream, 1 Tbsp. sugar, and ¼ tsp. vanilla with a mixer on medium until soft peaks form. Fill each cookie cup with 1 tsp. cherry preserves. Top with whipped cream mixture and toasted sliced almonds.
PER CUP *97 cal., 4 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 16 mg chol., 58 mg sodium, 14 g carb., 0 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

LEMON FLUFF COOKIE CUPS Place ½ of a 10-oz. jar lemon curd in a medium bowl and stir until smooth. In a separate bowl beat ½ cup heavy cream with 1 Tbsp. powdered sugar until soft peaks form. Gently fold whipped cream into lemon curd. Spoon or pipe into cups. Sprinkle with lemon, orange, and/or lime zest.
PER CUP *79 cal., 4 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 17 mg chol., 57 mg sodium, 10 g carb., 0 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

CHOCOLATE-PEPPERMINT MOUSSE COOKIE CUPS Fill a large bowl with ice and water. Place a slightly smaller bowl in the large bowl to make an ice bath. In a small saucepan heat and stir 6 oz. semisweet chocolate, chopped, and ½ cup water over medium heat until chocolate is melted. Remove from heat; stir in ½ tsp. vanilla and a few drops peppermint extract (mixture may appear grainy). Pour chocolate mixture into the smaller bowl in ice bath. Whisk 2 to 3 minutes or until thickened. Fold in ¼ of an 8-oz. container frozen whipped dessert topping, thawed. Pipe or spoon filling into cookies cup. If desired, sprinkle with crushed peppermint candies.
PER CUP *80 cal., 4 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 16 mg chol., 58 mg sodium, 14 g carb., 0 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

CHOCOLATE-HAZELNUT ESPRESSO COOKIE CUPS Spoon a heaping tsp. of chocolate-hazelnut spread into each cookie cup (you will need two 13-oz. jars). Top each with a chocolate-covered espresso bean.
PER CUP *119 cal., 6 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 14 mg chol., 59 mg sodium, 10 g carb., 0 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

CARAMEL-CASHEW COOKIE CUPS In a medium bowl beat 8 oz. cream cheese, softened, and 2 Tbsp. packed brown sugar with a mixer on medium until light and fluffy. Slowly beat in ⅔ cup caramel ice cream topping until smooth. Fold in 1 cup chopped roasted, salted cashews. Spoon into cookie cups. If desired, drizzle with additional caramel ice cream topping and sprinkle with additional chopped cashews.
PER CUP *119 cal., 6 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 14 mg chol., 59 mg sodium, 10 g carb., 2 g pro.*

BIG
COOKIES
They're huge, they're soft, and they're packed with warming winter ingredients like cinnamon, maple, ginger, pumpkin, and oatmeal. Share one of these fist-size favorites with a friend—or not!

CINNAMON-COFFEE COOKIES

PREP 35 minutes CHILL 2 hours
BAKE 12 minutes at 325°F

- 2 tsp. instant coffee crystals
- 1 Tbsp. hot water
- ½ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup shortening
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- ¾ cup packed brown sugar
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg or ½ tsp. ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. ground cloves
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon

1. Stir coffee crystals into hot water until dissolved; set aside. In a large bowl beat butter and shortening with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add the next eight ingredients (through cloves); beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in eggs, vanilla, and coffee mixture. Beat in flour. Cover; chill for 2 hours or until dough is easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 325°F. Lightly grease a cookie sheet. Combine the ⅓ cup granulated sugar and the 1 tsp. cinnamon. For each cookie, shape ¼ cup of the dough into a ball. Roll ball in cinnamon-sugar to coat. Place balls 3 inches apart on the prepared cookie sheet. Flatten to ¾-inch thickness.
3. Bake 12 to 13 minutes or until edges are set. Cool on cookie sheet 2 minutes. Remove; cool on a wire rack. **Makes 14 cookies.**

PER COOKIE *316 cal., 15 g fat (6 g sat. fat), 44 mg chol., 166 mg sodium, 43 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

CINNAMON ICE CREAM SANDWICHES

Place ½ cup slightly softened cinnamon ice cream on each bottom of half of the cookies. Top with the remaining cookies, bottom sides down. Press together lightly. Wrap each in plastic wrap. Freeze 2 hours or until firm. Store in the freezer up to 1 month. To serve, let stand at room temperature 5 minutes. Makes 7 sandwich cookies.

SOFT MAPLE SUGAR COOKIES

PREP 30 minutes
BAKE 12 minutes at 300°F

- ½ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup shortening
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ cup pure maple syrup
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. cream of tartar
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- 3 egg yolks
- ½ tsp. vanilla
- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 recipe Maple Icing

1. Preheat oven to 300°F. In a large bowl beat butter and shortening with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add the next six ingredients (through salt). Beat on medium 2 minutes, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg yolks and vanilla. Beat in flour.
2. Shape dough into 1½-inch balls. Place 3 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 12 to 14 minutes or until edges are lightly browned (tops will still look slightly soft). Cool on cookie sheet 2 minutes. Remove; cool on a wire rack. Centers will dip as cookies cool. Drizzle with Maple Icing. **Makes 20 cookies.**

MAPLE ICING Stir together ¼ cup milk; ¼ cup butter, melted; and 3 Tbsp. pure maple syrup. Whisk in 2 to 2½ cups powdered sugar to make icing drizzling consistency.

PER COOKIE *187 cal., 9 g fat (4 g sat. fat), 31 mg chol., 86 mg sodium, 27 g carb., 0 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

CARAMEL APPLE COOKIES

PREP 45 minutes
BAKE 12 minutes at 350°F

- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1¼ cups packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. apple pie spice
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 egg
- ½ cup apple juice or milk
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup coarsely shredded, peeled tart apple (info, *below right*)
- 1 recipe Apple Frosting
- ½ cup finely chopped pecans, toasted (tip, *p. 62*)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add the next four ingredients (through salt). Beat on medium 2 minutes, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg. Add apple juice; beat on low until combined. Beat in flour. Stir in apple (dough will be soft).
3. Drop ¼-cup portions of dough 3 inches apart onto prepared cookie sheet. Bake 12 to 14 minutes or until edges are light brown (tops will look slightly soft). Cool on cookie sheet 2 minutes. Remove; cool on a wire rack. Spread cooled cookies with Apple Frosting and sprinkle with pecans.
Makes 16 cookies.

APPLE FROSTING In a small saucepan cook and stir ½ cup packed brown sugar, 3 Tbsp. butter, and 3 Tbsp. apple juice over medium heat until brown sugar is dissolved. Gradually stir in 2⅔ cups powdered sugar. Use immediately. (If frosting begins to harden, stir in a few drops hot water until smooth.)

PER COOKIE *348 cal., 11 g fat (5 g sat. fat), 33 mg chol., 191 mg sodium, 61 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

apple

PICK AN APPLE
Tart (and sweet-tart) apples give baked treats a pop of fall flavor. Some of the most common varieties include Granny Smith, McIntosh, Braeburn, and Jonathan.

pumpkin

BUTTERY PUMPKIN COOKIES

PREP 30 minutes
BAKE 13 minutes at 350°F

- 2 cups butter, softened
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 15-oz. can pumpkin
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 recipe Brown Sugar Icing

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add the next five ingredients (through salt). Beat on medium 2 minutes, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Beat in pumpkin. Beat in flour.
2. Drop ¼-cup portions of dough 2 inches apart onto an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 13 to 15 minutes or until tops are set and edges are golden. Remove; cool on a wire rack.
3. Top cooled cookies with Brown Sugar Icing. If desired, sprinkle with additional pumpkin pie spice. **Makes 26 cookies.**

BROWN SUGAR ICING In a small saucepan cook and stir ½ cup butter and ½ cup packed brown sugar over medium heat until brown sugar is dissolved. Stir in ¼ cup milk and 1 tsp. vanilla. Stir in 2¾ cups powdered sugar until smooth. Use immediately. (If frosting begins to harden, stir in a few drops hot water until smooth.)

PER COOKIE *366 cal., 18 g fat (11 g sat. fat), 61 mg chol., 374 mg sodium, 49 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

OATMEAL-BUTTERSCOTCH COOKIES

PREP 30 minutes
BAKE 10 minutes at 350°F

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1½ cups packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 eggs
- 1½ tsp. vanilla
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 3 cups regular or quick-cooking rolled oats
- 1 11-oz. pkg. butterscotch-flavor pieces

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium for 30 seconds. Add the next four ingredients (through cinnamon). Beat on medium 2 minutes, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Beat in flour. Stir in oats and butterscotch pieces.
2. Drop ¼-cup portions of dough 3 inches apart onto an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until edges are brown (centers may still appear moist). Cool on cookie sheet 2 minutes. Remove; cool on a wire rack. **Makes 20 cookies.**
PER COOKIE *129 cal., 6 g fat (4 g sat. fat), 15 mg chol., 80 mg sodium, 18 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

TRIPLE-PEANUT COOKIES

PREP 35 minutes
BAKE 14 minutes at 350°F

- 1 cup peanut butter
- ½ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup shortening
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 9-oz. bag peanut butter-filled chocolate baking pieces or peanut butter baking pieces
- ¾ cup finely chopped peanuts
- 2 Tbsp. granulated sugar

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large bowl beat peanut butter, butter, and shortening with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add the next four ingredients (through baking powder). Beat on medium 2 minutes, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Beat in flour. Stir in baking pieces.
2. Combine peanuts and the 2 Tbsp. granulated sugar. Divide dough into 18 portions (about ⅓ cup each). Shape each portion into a ball. Place 3 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Flatten to ¾-inch thickness. Sprinkle each cookie with 2 tsp. of the peanut mixture. Press to adhere.
3. Bake about 14 minutes or until edges are light brown and appear set. Cool on cookie sheet for 5 minutes. Remove; cool on a wire rack. **Makes 18 cookies.**
PER COOKIE *473 cal., 27 g fat (10 g sat. fat), 39 mg chol., 251 mg sodium, 51 g carb., 2 g fiber, 8 g pro.*

GIANT DOUBLE-MINT COOKIES

PREP 30 minutes BAKE 10 minutes per batch at 350°F

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1½ cups sugar
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 2 eggs
- ½ tsp. mint extract (not peppermint)
- ½ tsp. green food coloring
- 2¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 4.67-oz. pkg. crème de menthe thins (such as Andes brand), coarsely chopped
- 1 cup dark chocolate pieces (optional)
- 2 tsp. vegetable oil or shortening (optional)
  Crème de menthe thins (such as Andes brand), coarsely chopped

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. In a very large bowl beat the butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add the sugar, baking soda, and salt. Beat on medium 2 minutes, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in eggs, mint extract, and food coloring until combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour. Stir in the coarsely chopped mints from two packages.
2. Drop dough by 3-Tbsp. scoops 3 inches apart onto ungreased cookie sheets. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until edges are just light brown. Cool on cookie sheets 2 minutes. Remove; cool on wire racks.
3. If desired, in a medium bowl microwave dark chocolate pieces and oil 30 to 60 seconds until chocolate is melted and smooth, stirring twice; let stand until chocolate cools and thickens slightly. Spread about 1 Tbsp. chocolate mixture on each cookie. Sprinkle with additional chopped mints. **Makes 22 cookies.**
PER COOKIE *254 cal., 13 g fat (9 g sat. fat), 39 mg chol., 135 mg sodium, 33 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

peanut

double mint

Chocolate & toffee

CHOCOLATE-TOFFEE COOKIES

PREP 40 minutes
BAKE 10 minutes at 375°F

- ½ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup shortening
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- ¾ cup packed brown sugar
- ¾ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 1⅓ cups dark chocolate pieces
- 1 cup toffee pieces or white baking pieces

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. In a large bowl beat butter and shortening with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add the next four ingredients (through baking soda). Beat on medium 2 minutes, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Beat in flour.

2. Microwave half of the dark chocolate pieces until melted and smooth, stirring often. Divide dough in half. Stir melted chocolate and remaining chocolate pieces into half of the dough. Stir toffee pieces into remaining dough.

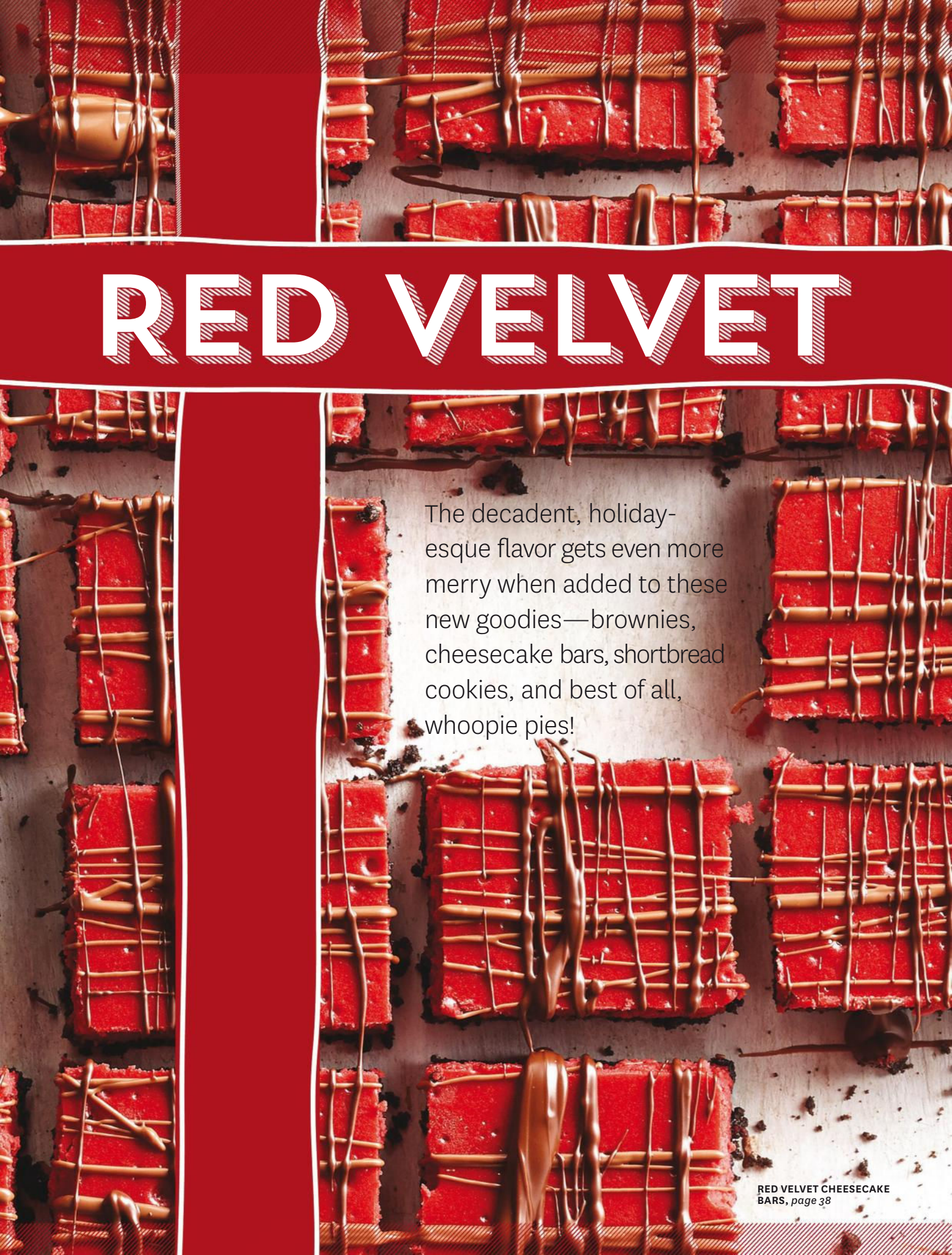
3. For each cookie, roll 2 Tbsp. of each dough into a ball, then roll balls together to make one ball. Place balls about 3 inches apart on prepared cookie sheet. Flatten to about ¾-inch thickness. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or just until edges are light brown. Cool on cookie sheet 2 minutes. Remove; cool on a wire rack. **Makes 18 cookies.**

PER COOKIE *395 cal., 19 g fat (11 g sat. fat), 37 mg chol., 256 mg sodium, 51 g carb., 2 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

COOKIES FOR STORAGE

Sturdy drop cookies (such as the ones in this story) are perfect for storing. Layer cookies (either unfrosted or once icing has hardened) between sheets of waxed paper in an airtight container; cover. Store at room temperature up to three days or freeze up to three months. Thaw at room temperature. (Note: Cookies frosted with Cream Cheese Frosting must be stored in the refrigerator.)

RED VELVET



The decadent, holiday-esque flavor gets even more merry when added to these new goodies—brownies, cheesecake bars, shortbread cookies, and best of all, whoopie pies!

RED VELVET CHEESECAKE BARS, *page 38*

RED VELVET WHOOPIE PIES

PREP 40 minutes
BAKE 7 minutes per batch at 375°F

- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup buttermilk or sour milk (tip, *p. 40*)
- 1 1-oz. bottle (2 Tbsp.) red food coloring
- 1 recipe Marshmallow Filling

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add next four ingredients (through salt). Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg and vanilla until combined. Add flour and buttermilk alternately, beating on low after each addition just until combined. Stir in food coloring.
2. Drop dough by teaspoons 2 inches apart onto prepared cookie sheet. Bake 7 to 9 minutes or until edges are set. Cool on cookie sheet 2 minutes. Remove; cool on wire racks.
3. Spread Marshmallow Filling onto bottoms of half of the cookies. Top with remaining cookies, bottom sides down. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to 3 days. Let stand at room temperature 15 minutes before serving. **Makes about 30 pies.**

MARSHMALLOW FILLING

Split a vanilla bean in half lengthwise; scrape seeds. In a medium bowl beat ½ cup softened butter, one 8-oz. pkg. softened cream cheese, and the vanilla bean seeds until smooth. Fold in one 13-oz. jar marshmallow crème.

PER SANDWICH COOKIE *126 cal., 5 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 18 mg chol., 79 mg sodium, 20 g carb., 1 g pro.*

RED VELVET CHEESECAKE BARS

PREP 25 minutes
BAKE 25 minutes at 350°F
CHILL 4 hours

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 8 oz. milk chocolate, chopped
- 2 cups finely crushed chocolate wafer cookies (about 38 cookies)
- 2 Tbsp. sugar
- 6 Tbsp. butter, melted
- 2 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup sour cream
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 4 tsp. liquid red food coloring
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 4 eggs, lightly beaten
- Melted chocolate (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. In a medium saucepan heat and stir chocolate over low heat until melted; let cool.
2. For crust, in a medium bowl combine crushed cookies and the 2 Tbsp. sugar; stir in melted butter. Press crumb mixture firmly into the bottom of the prepared pan.
3. In a bowl beat cream cheese, sour cream, ⅓ cup sugar, red food coloring, and vanilla with a mixer on medium until smooth. Beat in melted chocolate. Stir in eggs. Spread over crust.
4. Bake about 25 minutes or until edges are puffed and center is set. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Cover and chill 4 to 24 hours before serving. If desired, drizzle with melted chocolate. Use foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to 3 days or freeze up to 3 months. **Makes 32 bars.**
PER BAR *171 cal., 12 g fat (7 g sat. fat), 49 mg chol., 124 mg sodium, 13 g carb., 3 g pro.*

MAKE AHEAD

When cream cheese is used in an icing or frosting (or inside the cheesecake bars, left*), store in the refrigerator or freezer. Store cookies or bars in a single layer in an airtight container. Refrigerate for up to three days or freeze for up to three months (see* p. 8 *for more details).*

RED VELVET BROWNIES

PREP 40 minutes BAKE 25 minutes at 350°F

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup water
- ⅓ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup buttermilk or sour milk (tip, *left*)
- 1½ tsp. vanilla
- 1 1-oz. bottle (2 Tbsp.) red food coloring
- 1 recipe Cream Cheese Frosting

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease a 15×10-inch baking pan. In a large bowl stir together first four ingredients (through salt).

2. In a medium saucepan combine butter, the water, and cocoa powder. Bring just to boiling, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Add the cocoa mixture to flour mixture; beat with a mixer on medium to high until thoroughly combined. Add eggs, buttermilk, vanilla, and red food coloring. Beat 1 minute (batter will be thin). Pour batter into the prepared pan.

3. Bake about 25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Frost with Cream Cheese Frosting. **Makes 36 brownies.**

CREAM CHEESE FROSTING In a large bowl beat 4 oz. softened cream cheese, ¼ cup softened butter, and 1 tsp. vanilla with a mixer on medium until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in 2½ to 3 cups powdered sugar until frosting reaches spreading consistency.

PER BROWNIE *232 cal., 14 g fat (8 g sat. fat), 45 mg chol., 181 mg sodium, 27 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

TIP

To make ½ cup sour milk, place 1½ tsp. lemon juice or vinegar in a glass measuring cup. Add enough milk to make ½ cup total liquid; stir. Let stand 5 minutes before using.

RED VELVET SHORTBREAD COOKIES

PREP 30 minutes **BAKE** 20 minutes at 325°F

- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 2 Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ½ cup butter, cut up
- 1 Tbsp. red food coloring
- 3 oz. white baking chocolate with cocoa butter, coarsely chopped
- 1½ tsp. shortening

1. Preheat oven to 325°F. In a food processor (tip, *right*) combine flour, sugar, cocoa powder, and salt. Cover and pulse until combined. Add butter and red food coloring. Pulse until mixture resembles fine crumbs. Process just until mixture forms a ball.

2. On a lightly floured surface, knead dough lightly until nearly smooth. Roll or pat dough to ½ inch thick. Using a floured 1½-inch round cutter, cut out dough. Place cutouts 1 inch apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Press scraps together; reroll and cut.

3. Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until centers are set. Remove cookies; cool on wire racks.

4. Place cookies on waxed paper. In a small heavy saucepan heat white chocolate and shortening over low heat until melted and smooth, stirring constantly. Drizzle over tops of cookies. Let cookies stand until set.

Makes 24 cookies.

PER COOKIE *80 cal., 5 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 9 mg chol., 47 mg sodium, 9 g carb., 1 g pro.*

NO FOOD PROCESSOR?

To mix the dough without a food processor, in a medium bowl stir together flour, sugar, cocoa powder, and salt. Using a pastry blender, cut in butter and food coloring until mixture resembles fine crumbs and starts to cling together (it will take a while for the dough to come together). Form mixture into a ball, kneading until smooth. Continue as directed in Step 2.

SANTA'S GINGERBREAD COOKIES, *page 47*

MORE MOLASSES

Merry molasses makes the holidays taste sweeter in more ways than one. Gingerbread is a given, and truffles, cookie butter, plus three twists on cute cutouts round out the fun.

BIG GINGER COOKIES, *page 49*

WHAT'S INSIDE

Cookie butter is so easy to make at home. Just combine purchased cookies, milk, coconut oil, brown sugar, pumpkin spice, salt, and vanilla, and blend until smooth. Spread on quick bread or scones … yum!

GINGER COOKIE BUTTER

PREP 15 minutes **STAND** 45 minutes

- ½ cup milk
- 3 Tbsp. coconut oil or vegetable oil
- 1 Tbsp. packed brown sugar
- ½ tsp. pumpkin pie spice
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- 8 to 9 oz. Biscoff brand cookies or gingersnaps, coarsely broken
- ½ tsp. vanilla

1. In a large saucepan combine first five ingredients (through salt). Heat and stir over medium heat until milk is warm and brown sugar is dissolved. Stir in cookies; let stand 15 minutes. Transfer to a food processor or blender; add vanilla. Cover and process or blend until smooth, stopping to scrape container as needed.

2. Transfer to an airtight container and store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. Let stand at room temperature 30 minutes before serving. **Makes 1½ cups.**

PER TBSP. *65 cal., 4 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 0 mg chol., 50 mg sodium, 8 g carb., 1 g pro.*

FAT MOLASSES COOKIES

PREP 40 minutes CHILL 1 hour
BAKE 10 minutes per batch at 375°F

- 5 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 cup shortening
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 cup molasses
- 2 eggs
- 2 Tbsp. water
- 2 Tbsp. cider vinegar
- Finely chopped crystallized ginger or coarse sugar

1. In a large bowl combine first five ingredients (through salt).
2. In a very large bowl beat shortening with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Beat in brown sugar, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in molasses, eggs, the water, and vinegar. Beat in as much of the flour mixture as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour mixture. Divide dough in half. Cover and chill about 1 hour or until dough is easy to handle.
3. Preheat oven to 375°F. Grease a cookie sheet. On a floured surface, roll half of the dough at a time to ½ inch thick. Cut dough using a 3-inch scalloped or round cutter. Place cutouts 2½ inches apart on prepared cookie sheets. Sprinkle with chopped ginger.
4. Bake about 10 minutes or until edges are firm. Remove; cool completely on wire racks.
Makes 24 cookies.
PER COOKIE *239 cal., 8 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 16 mg chol., 155 mg sodium, 39 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

SANTA'S GINGERBREAD COOKIES

SANTA'S GINGERBREAD COOKIES

PREP 30 minutes CHILL 1 hour
BAKE 15 minutes at 325°F
COOL 10 minutes

- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2½ tsp. ground ginger
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- ¾ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp. salt
- ⅛ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- Dash ground cloves
- ¾ cup butter, softened
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- ½ cup molasses
- 1 egg

1. In a medium bowl stir together first seven ingredients (through cloves).
2. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add brown sugar and molasses. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg. Gradually beat in flour mixture until combined. Cover and chill about 1 hour or until dough is easy to handle.
3. Preheat oven to 325°F. Line two cookie sheets with parchment paper. Roll ⅓-cup portions of dough into balls. Place four or five balls 4 inches apart on each cookie sheet. Flatten balls slightly.
4. Bake 15 to 18 minutes or until edges are set. Do not overbake. Cool on cookie sheets 10 minutes. Remove; cool on wire racks. **Makes 9 cookies.**

PER COOKIE *471 cal., 16 g fat (10 g sat. fat), 64 mg chol., 541 mg sodium, 78 g carb., 1 g fiber, 5 g pro.*

PUMPKIN-GINGERBREAD TRUFFLES

PUMPKIN-GINGERBREAD TRUFFLES

PREP 45 minutes CHILL 2 hours
FREEZE 15 minutes

- 5 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- 5 oz. semisweet chocolate, chopped
- ½ cup finely crushed gingersnaps
- 1 3-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- ⅓ cup canned pumpkin
- 1 Tbsp. powdered sugar
- ½ tsp. orange zest
- ⅛ tsp. ground cinnamon
- Dash kosher salt
- 1 Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder or finely crushed gingersnaps

1. In a small bowl combine bittersweet and semisweet chocolate. Place ½ cup of the chocolate in a small saucepan; heat and stir over medium-low heat until melted and smooth. Transfer to a medium bowl. Stir in next seven ingredients (through salt). Cover and chill about 1½ hours or until firm.
2. Divide mixture into 30 portions, about 1 rounded tsp. each. Shape each portion into a ball. Freeze 15 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, line a baking sheet with waxed paper or parchment paper. In a medium saucepan heat and stir remaining chocolate over medium-low heat until melted and smooth.
4. Use a fork to dip frozen balls, one at a time, into melted chocolate (tip, *right*), allowing excess to drip off. Place balls on the prepared baking sheet. Sprinkle each ball immediately with cocoa powder. Chill truffles about 30 minutes or until set. Store in a single layer in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to 3 days. **Makes 30 truffles.**

PER TRUFFLE *68 cal., 4 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 3 mg chol., 28 mg sodium, 8 g carb., 1 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

KEEP IT SMOOTH

The melted chocolate may start to harden slightly while you dip the truffles. If this happens, reheat it, as needed, over medium-low heat so it stays melted and smooth.

GINGERBREAD CUTOUTS

PREP 35 minutes **CHILL** 3 hours
BAKE 6 minutes per batch at 375°F

- ½ cup shortening
- ¼ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp. ground cloves
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 egg
- ½ cup molasses
- 1 Tbsp. cider vinegar
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 recipe Powdered Sugar Icing (optional) (*p. 130*)

1. In a large bowl beat shortening and butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add next seven ingredients (through salt). Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg, molasses, and vinegar. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour. Divide dough in half. Cover and chill about 3 hours or until dough is easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 375°F. Grease a cookie sheet. On a lightly floured surface, roll one dough portion and cut shapes as directed in variations, *opposite,* rerolling scraps as needed. Place cutouts 1 inch apart on the prepared cookie sheet.
3. Bake 6 minutes or until edges are firm. Cool on cookie sheet 1 minute. Remove; cool on a wire rack. If desired, spread cookies with Powdered Sugar Icing. Let stand until icing is set. **Makes 21 cookies.**
PER COOKIE *82 cal., 3 g fat (1 g sat. fat), 6 mg chol., 28 mg sodium, 13 g carb., 0 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

FUN FACTS

Everyone knows what molasses is, but do you know how it's made? When the juice from sugarcane is boiled to extract sugar crystals (to create granulated sugar), the brown syrupy liquid remaining after extraction is molasses. Brown sugar is simply sugar mixed with molasses, which gives it color, moistness, and a rich flavor.

GINGERBREAD CHILD + TEDDY BEAR Roll dough to ¼ inch thick. Cut with 3- to 4-inch people-shape cookie cutters (with long arms); place on cookie sheet. Place a teddy bear-shape graham cracker on each cutout. Wrap the dough arms around the teddy bear, gently pressing and smoothing cracks. Bake and cool as directed in Step 3, *opposite*. When cool, decorate with Powdered Sugar Icing. **Makes 20 to 24 cookies.**

LOVING GINGERBREAD BEARS Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Roll dough to ¼ inch thick. Cut with 3- to 4-inch bear-shape cookie cuttersPlace cookies on prepared baking sheet. Use a 1-inch heart-shape cutter to cut a heart shape in the bear. Place 3 to 4 hard red or pink rectangular candies (such as Jolly Ranchers brand) in a plastic bag. Crush candies with a rolling pin. Lightly sprinkle a layer of crushed candies in the heart-shape hole. Bake 6 minutes or until edges are firm. Cool on cookie sheet 15 minutes or until candy hardens. Remove; cool on wire racks. When cool, decorate with Powdered Sugar Icing. **Makes 20 to 24 cookies.**

REINDEER STICKS Roll dough to ¼ inch thick. Use a pizza cutter to cut dough into forty-five 4×1-inch sticks; place on cookie sheets. Bake and cool as directed. Place melted chocolate in a heavy resealable plastic bag. Cut a small hole in one corner. Pipe antler shapes and eyes on cookies. If desired, use melted chocolate to attach small red candies for noses. **Makes about 45 cookies.**

BIG GINGER COOKIES

PREP 40 minutes
BAKE 11 minutes per batch at 350°F

- 4½ cups all-purpose flour
- 4 tsp. ground ginger
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 1½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground cloves
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1½ cups shortening
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup molasses
- ¾ cup coarse sugar or granulated sugar

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. In a medium bowl stir together first six ingredients (through salt).
2. In a large bowl beat shortening with a mixer on low 30 seconds. Gradually add 2 cups granulated sugar. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in eggs and molasses. Beat in as much of the flour mixture as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour mixture.
3. Shape dough into 2-inch balls using ¼ cup dough per cookie. Roll balls in the coarse sugar and place 2½ inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet.
4. Bake 11 to 13 minutes or until cookies are light brown and puffed. (Do not overbake or cookies will not be chewy.) Cool on cookie sheet 2 minutes. Remove; cool on wire racks. **Makes 24 cookies.**

PER BIG COOKIE *311 cal., 13 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 18 mg chol., 138 mg sodium, 46 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

MINI GINGER COOKIES

Prepare as directed, except shape dough into 1-inch balls. Place 1½ inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Bake in a 350°F oven 8 to 9 minutes or until cookies are light brown and puffed. (Do not overbake or cookies will not be chewy.) Cool on cookie sheets 1 minute. Remove; cool on wire racks. **Makes about 120 cookies.**

PER MINI COOKIE *62 cal., 3 g total fat (1 g sat. fat), 4 mg chol., 28 mg sodium, 9 g carb., 1 g pro.*

AT THE MOVIES

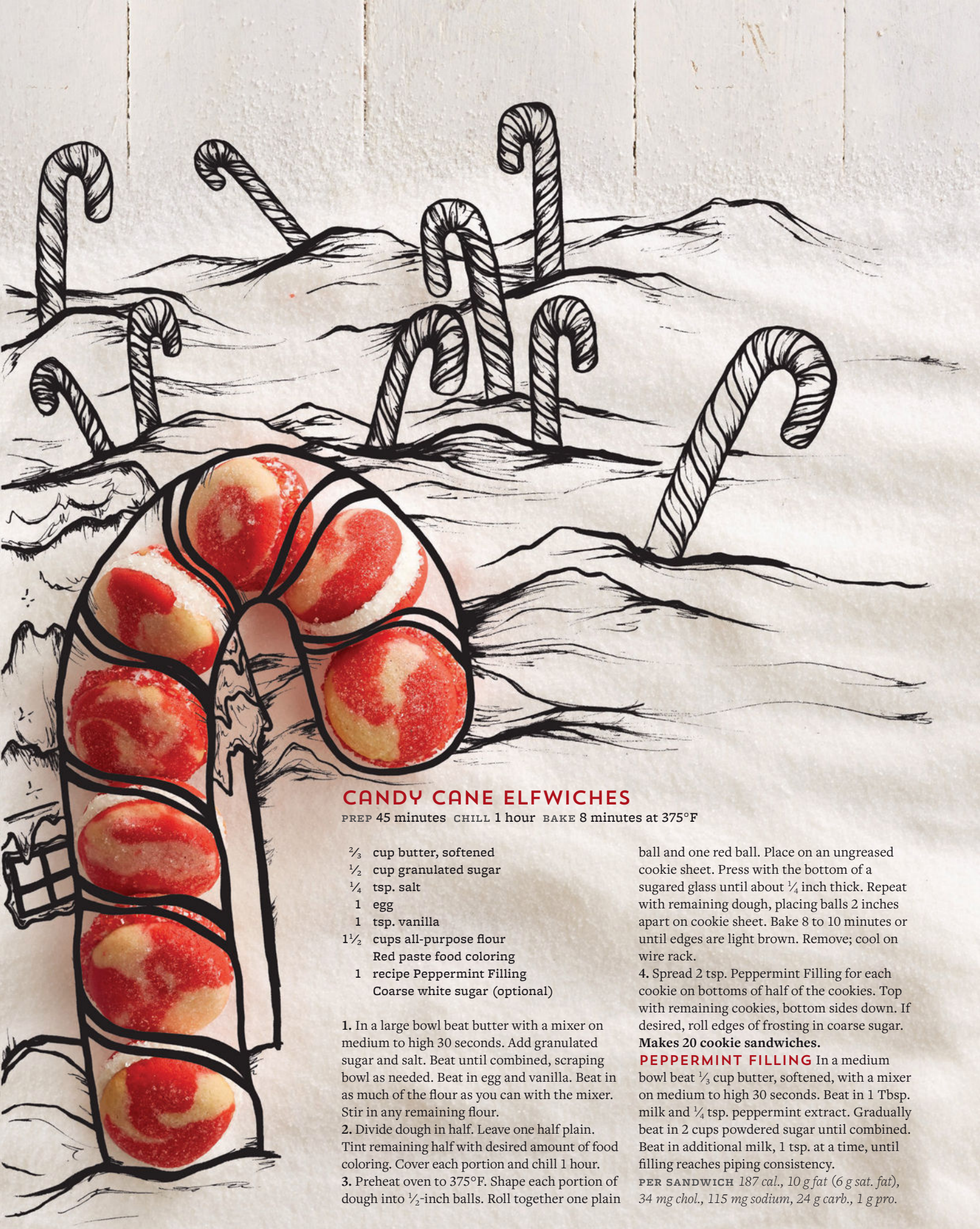
Popcorn, you have been replaced. Movie-inspired cookies are sweeping in for the standing ovation this holiday season. First, pick your favorite classic seasonal flick, then bake a batch of treats to match. Finally, kick back and enjoy the show.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TIA RODEMEYER

CHRISTMAS CLASSIC #1

ELF

We know how Buddy the Elf magically made his way through the seven levels of the Candy Cane Forest (and candy canes are one of his four main food groups!). So it's only right for you to polish off a couple Candy Cane Elfwiches while cheering Buddy on in his quest for love and acceptance.



CANDY CANE ELFWICHES

PREP 45 minutes **CHILL** 1 hour **BAKE** 8 minutes at 375°F

- ⅔ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- Red paste food coloring
- 1 recipe Peppermint Filling
- Coarse white sugar (optional)

1. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add granulated sugar and salt. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg and vanilla. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour.

2. Divide dough in half. Leave one half plain. Tint remaining half with desired amount of food coloring. Cover each portion and chill 1 hour.

3. Preheat oven to 375°F. Shape each portion of dough into ½-inch balls. Roll together one plain ball and one red ball. Place on an ungreased cookie sheet. Press with the bottom of a sugared glass until about ¼ inch thick. Repeat with remaining dough, placing balls 2 inches apart on cookie sheet. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until edges are light brown. Remove; cool on wire rack.

4. Spread 2 tsp. Peppermint Filling for each cookie on bottoms of half of the cookies. Top with remaining cookies, bottom sides down. If desired, roll edges of frosting in coarse sugar. **Makes 20 cookie sandwiches.**

PEPPERMINT FILLING In a medium bowl beat ⅓ cup butter, softened, with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Beat in 1 Tbsp. milk and ¼ tsp. peppermint extract. Gradually beat in 2 cups powdered sugar until combined. Beat in additional milk, 1 tsp. at a time, until filling reaches piping consistency.

PER SANDWICH *187 cal., 10 g fat (6 g sat. fat), 34 mg chol., 115 mg sodium, 24 g carb., 1 g pro.*

CHRISTMAS CLASSIC #2

A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS

Peanuts character Charlie Brown struggles to get in the holiday spirit despite the fun his friends and classmates are having with the Christmas play. We think it's impossible to watch him realize the true meaning of Christmas without a plate of these Peanutty Butter Cookies!

PEANUTTY BUTTER COOKIES

PREP 35 minutes **CHILL** 1 hour **BAKE** 7 minutes at 375°F

- 1 cup peanut butter
- ½ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup shortening
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- Granulated sugar
- Purchased chocolate frosting

1. In a large bowl beat peanut butter, butter, and shortening with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add 1 cup granulated sugar, the brown sugar, baking soda, and baking powder. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in eggs and vanilla until combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour. Cover and chill dough about 1 hour or until dough is easy to handle.

2. Preheat oven to 375°F. Shape dough into 1¼-inch balls. Roll in additional granulated sugar to coat. Place 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Dip the bottom of a glass in sugar. Flatten cookies with the glass.

3. Bake 7 to 9 minutes or until bottoms are light brown. Cool on cookie sheet 1 minute. Remove; cool on wire racks. Pipe chocolate frosting into a zigzag across cookie. **Makes 50 cookies.**

PER COOKIE *126 cal., 7 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 13 mg chol., 71 mg sodium, 15 g carb., 2 g pro.*

JELLY-OF-THE-MONTH COOKIES

PREP 40 minutes
BAKE 7 minutes at 375°F

- 8 oz. white baking chocolate with cocoa butter
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 2 eggs
- 2¾ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup jelly (any flavor)
- 1 recipe White Chocolate Drizzle

1. Chop 4 oz. of the white chocolate. In a small saucepan heat and stir remaining 4 oz. white chocolate over low heat until melted and smooth; cool.
2. Preheat oven to 375°F. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add sugar, baking soda, and salt. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in eggs and the melted white chocolate until combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour. Stir in 4 oz. chopped white chocolate.
3. Drop dough by rounded teaspoons 2 inches apart onto greased cookie sheet. Bake 7 to 9 minutes or until cookies are light brown around the edges. Cool on cookie sheet 1 minute. Remove; cool on a wire rack.
4. About 1 hour before serving, in a small saucepan cook and stir jelly over low heat until melted. Spoon about ½ tsp. of the jam onto top of each cookie. Top cookies with White Chocolate Drizzle. If necessary, chill cookies about 15 minutes or until chocolate is set. **Makes 48 cookies.**

WHITE CHOCOLATE DRIZZLE
In a small saucepan heat and stir 3 oz. white baking chocolate with cocoa butter and ½ tsp. shortening over low heat until melted and smooth.

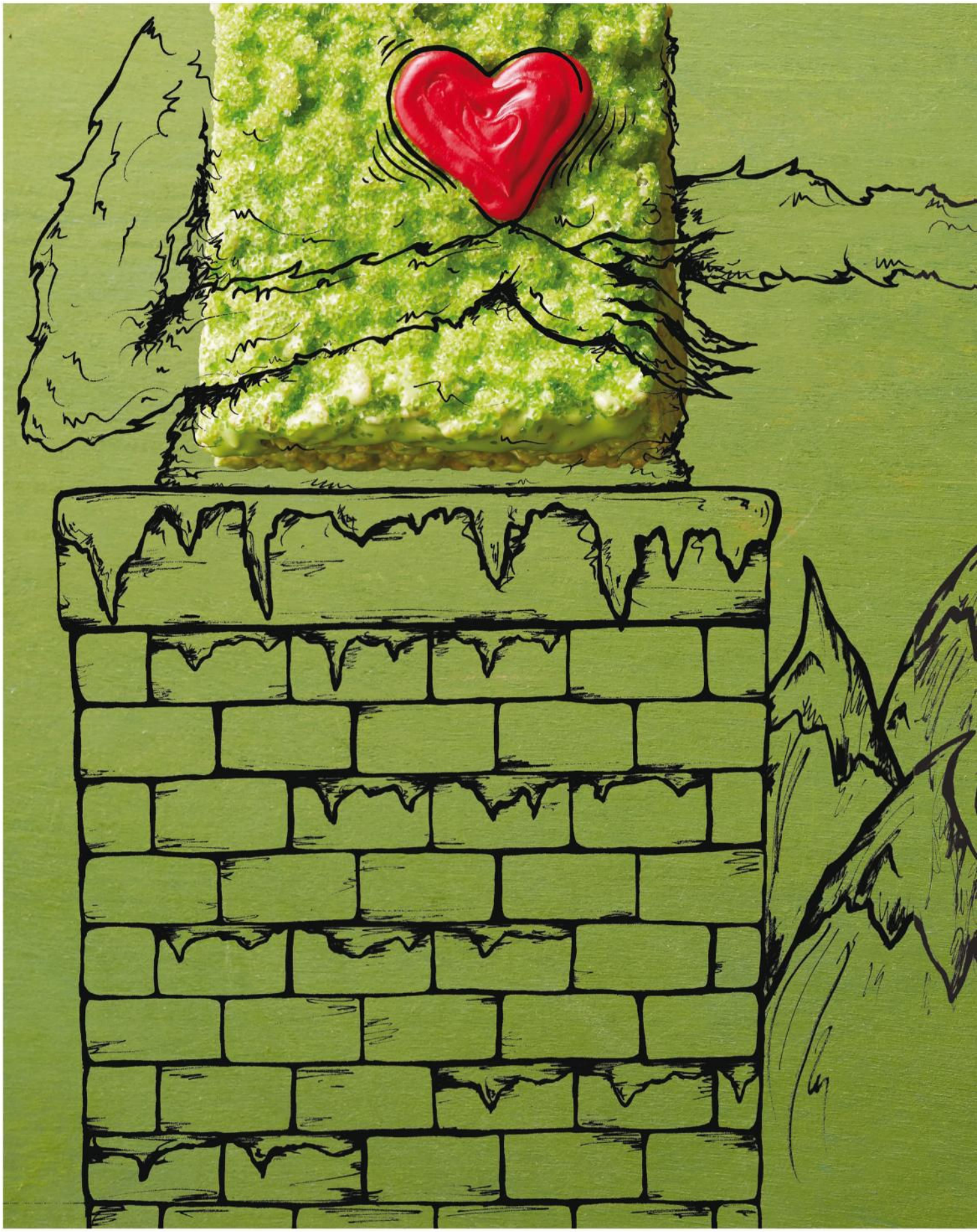
TO STORE Prepare as directed through Step 3. Layer cookies between sheets of waxed paper in an airtight container; cover. Store at room temperature for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 1 month. To serve, thaw cookies, if frozen. Top as directed in Step 4.

PER COOKIE *109 cal., 4 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 13 mg chol., 64 mg sodium, 16 g carb., 1 g pro.*

CHRISTMAS CLASSIC #3

NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CHRISTMAS VACATION

Clark Griswold deemed his annual bonus a bust when he received a subscription to the jelly-of-the-month club. Don't worry, Clark. We'll show you how to make the best of it.



CHRISTMAS CLASSIC #4

HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS

Though he is a grouchy beast, Mr. Grinch's heart triples in size once he discovers the true meaning of Christmas. Because you're piping the hearts on these monster-size Grumpy Marshmallow Treats, you can make them as big as you want.

GRUMPY MARSHMALLOW TREATS

PREP 25 minutes **STAND** overnight

- ⅓ cup butter
- 2 10-oz. pkg. tiny marshmallows
- 2 13-oz. jars marshmallow creme
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. green liquid food coloring
- 15 cups crisp rice cereal
- Nonstick cooking spray
- ¼ cup green colored sugar
- Purchased tube red frosting

1. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly butter foil.
2. In a 6- to 8-qt. Dutch oven melt butter over low heat. Add marshmallows; cook and stir until melted. Stir in marshmallow creme, vanilla, and salt. Remove from heat. Stir in green food coloring. Reserve 1 cup of the marshmallow mixture. Gently stir cereal into remaining marshmallow mixture.
3. Transfer cereal mixture to the prepared pan; use buttered waxed paper to press firmly into pan. Coat an offset spatula with nonstick cooking spray and use it to spread reserved marshmallow mixture over cereal layer; top with green sugar.
4. Weight cookies down to press the layers together.* Let stand overnight. Use edges of foil to transfer to a cutting board. Using a buttered knife, cut into bars. Pipe red frosting into heart shapes. **Makes 24 bars.**

TO STORE Wrap bars individually in plastic wrap and place in an airtight container. Store at room temperature for up to 1 week or freeze for up to 3 months.

***TIP** To weight the cookies down, cover the surface with a sheet of buttered waxed paper and a sheet of foil. Place another 13×9-inch baking pan on top of cookies; add a few unopened cans of food to the top pan for weight.

PER BAR *284 cal., 3 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 7 mg chol., 212 mg sodium, 62 g carb., 2 g pro.*

CHRISTMAS CLASSIC #5

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

A bit of bad luck threw George Bailey into a crisis on Christmas Eve, but he got himself back on track with help from his guardian angel Clarence. As his daughter reminded him, "Every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings." Well, Clarence, our Angel Wings are just for you.

ANGEL WINGS

PREP 20 minutes **FREEZE** 2 hours
BAKE 15 minutes at 375°F

- 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. orange zest
- 2 tsp. vanilla bean paste or vanilla
- 1 17.3-oz. pkg. frozen puff pastry, thawed
- Powdered sugar (optional)

1. For filling, in a medium bowl beat first five ingredients (through vanilla bean paste) with a mixer on low to medium until smooth.
2. On a lightly floured surface, unfold one pastry sheet. Roll to a 10-inch square. Spread half of the filling over dough, leaving a ½-inch border on two opposite edges. Roll up from each of these edges, scroll fashion, to meet in the center. Brush seam where dough spirals meet with water; lightly press together. Repeat with remaining filling and dough. Wrap each roll in plastic wrap and place on a tray or cookie sheet. Freeze 2 hours or until firm.
3. Preheat oven to 375°F. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper. Using a serrated knife, cut rolls into ¼-inch slices. Place slices 2 inches apart on the prepared cookie sheets. Bake 15 to 17 minutes or until edges are firm and bottoms are brown. Remove; cool on wire racks. If desired, before serving, sprinkle cookies with powdered sugar.* Store in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours. **Makes 60 cookies.**
***TIP** When sprinkling the cookies with powdered sugar, use a fine-mesh sieve to make a light, even dusting of sugar.
PER COOKIE *65 cal., 4 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 4 mg chol., 32 mg sodium, 6 g carb., 1 g pro.*

CHRISTMAS CLASSIC #6

A CHRISTMAS STORY

The story of Ralphie Parker's wish for a Red Ryder air rifle is a classic. We got such a kick out of his "old man's" fascination with the fishnet-wearing leg lamp that we had to do it justice with its own brownie. Behold, our Milk Chocolate Stocking Brownies.

MILK CHOCOLATE STOCKING BROWNIES

PREP 25 minutes
BAKE 25 minutes at 325°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- ⅔ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ cup butter
- 1 cup milk chocolate pieces
- 3 oz. unsweetened chocolate, chopped
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1½ tsp. vanilla
- 3 eggs
- 1 recipe Caramel Frosting
- ¼ cup milk chocolate pieces, melted

1. Preheat oven to 325°F. Line a 9-inch square baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of pan. Coat foil with cooking spray. In a small bowl stir together flour, baking powder, and salt.
2. In a medium saucepan heat and stir butter, ½ cup of the milk chocolate pieces, and the unsweetened chocolate over low heat until melted and smooth. Cool slightly. Stir in granulated sugar and vanilla until combined. Add eggs, one at a time, beating with a wooden spoon after each addition. Stir in flour mixture just until combined. Stir in remaining ½ cup milk chocolate pieces. Pour batter into the prepared baking pan, spreading evenly. Bake 25 minutes. Cool in pan on a wire rack.
3. Spread brownies with Caramel Frosting. Fill a small heavy resealable plastic bag with the melted chocolate. Snip off a small corner. Pipe chocolate in diagonal lines across brownies. Give pan a one-quarter turn. Pipe remaining chocolate in diagonal lines across brownies forming a crosshatch pattern. Chill until set. Using edges of foil, lift uncut brownies out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. **Makes 20 brownies.**

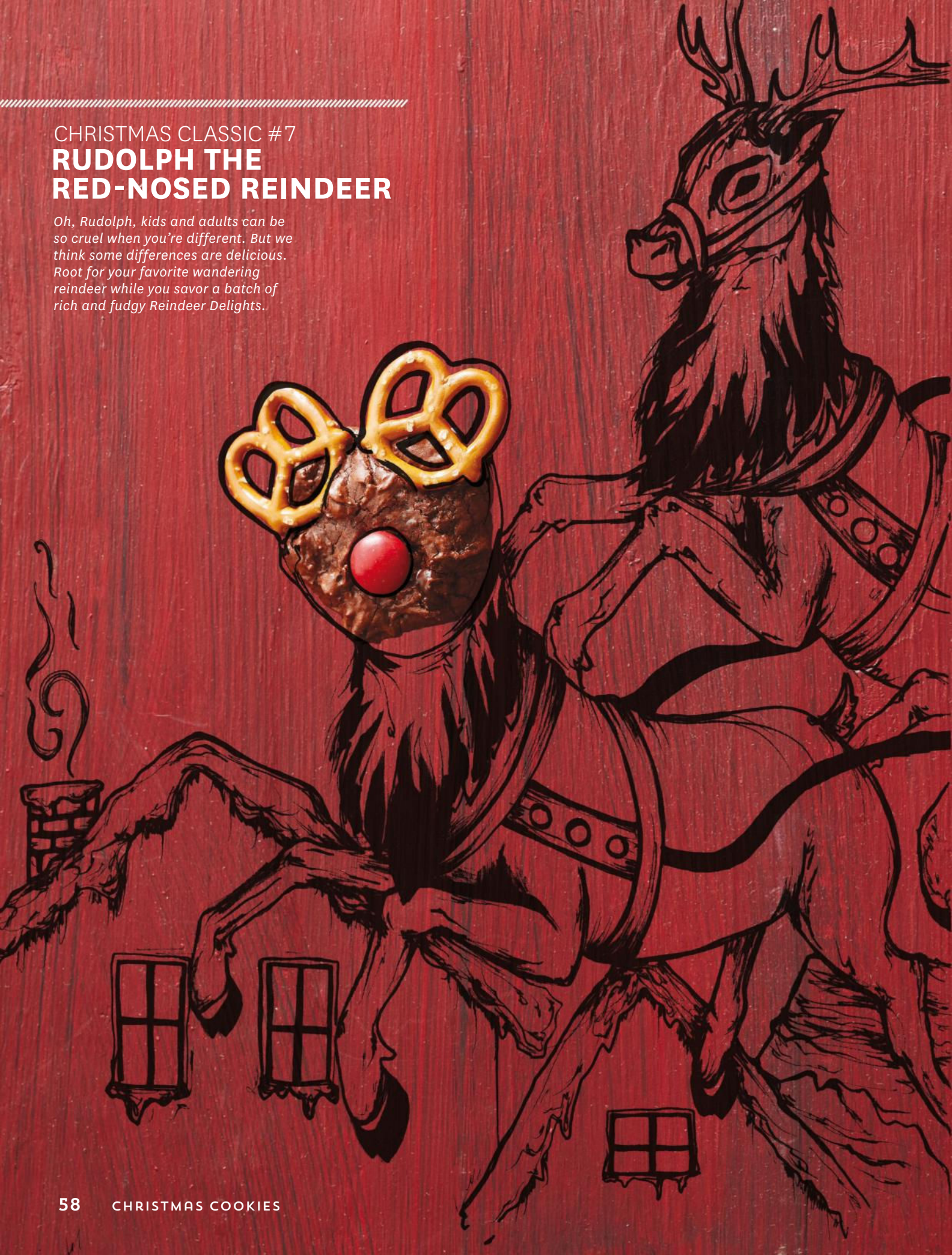
CARAMEL FROSTING In a large bowl beat ⅓ cup butter, softened, with a mixer on medium until smooth. Gradually add 1 cup powdered sugar, beating well. Slowly beat in ¼ cup purchased caramel ice cream topping and ⅛ tsp. salt. Gradually beat in an additional 2 cups powdered sugar. Beat in 2 to 3 Tbsp. milk to make spreading consistency.

PER BROWNIE *314 cal., 15 g fat (10 g sat. fat), 53 mg chol., 180 mg sodium, 45 g carb., 2 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

CHRISTMAS CLASSIC #7

RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER

Oh, Rudolph, kids and adults can be so cruel when you're different. But we think some differences are delicious. Root for your favorite wandering reindeer while you savor a batch of rich and fudgy Reindeer Delights.



REINDEER DELIGHTS

PREP 25 minutes **BAKE** 8 minutes at 350°F

- 6 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 10 oz. bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, chopped
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 2 tsp. instant espresso coffee powder
- 12 oz. bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, chopped
- Tiny pretzel twists
- Small round red candies

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly grease cookie sheets or line with parchment paper. In a small bowl combine flour, baking powder, and salt. In a large bowl combine eggs, granulated sugar, and vanilla. Whisk until combined.

2. In a heavy medium saucepan heat 10 oz. chocolate, the butter, and coffee powder over medium-low heat until melted and smooth, stirring occasionally. Remove saucepan from heat. Whisk melted chocolate mixture into the egg mixture until combined. Stir in the flour mixture just until combined. Stir in 12 oz. chocolate (dough will have consistency of a thick brownie batter).

3. Drop dough by heaping teaspoons 2 inches apart onto prepared cookie sheets. Place two pretzel twists at the top of each dough mound for antlers. Bake 8 to 9 minutes or until tops appear dry and centers remain soft. While cookies are still hot, place a red candy in center of each cookie for a nose. Cool on cookie sheets 3 minutes. Remove; cool on wire racks. **Makes 40 cookies.**

PER COOKIE *114 cal., 7 g fat (4 g sat. fat), 11 mg chol., 67 mg sodium, 14 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

COPYCAT CANDY BARS

If one candy bar is great, a whole pan is even better. Re-create the beloved flavors of all your favorites with layers of chocolate, caramel, nougat, and more. Signal the applause!

TWIXY BARS, *page 67*

PEANUT BUTTER CUP BARS, *page 65*

COCONUT JOY CANDY BARS

PREP 20 minutes BAKE 32 minutes at 350°F
COOL 30 minutes CHILL 1 hour

- Nonstick cooking spray
- ¾ cup butter, melted
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 4 cups flaked coconut
- 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- ½ tsp. almond extract
- ½ cup chopped almonds, toasted (tip, *left*)
- 1 recipe Milk Chocolate Ganache

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. In a large bowl stir together melted butter, sugar, and 1 tsp. of the vanilla until combined. Stir in eggs until combined.

2. In another bowl combine flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, and salt. Add flour mixture to butter mixture and stir until combined. Spread half of the batter into the prepared pan. Bake 12 minutes or just until set. Cool on a wire rack 30 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, for filling, in a large bowl combine coconut, condensed milk, remaining 1 tsp. vanilla, and the almond extract.

4. Spread filling over baked chocolate layer; sprinkle with almonds. Carefully spread remaining chocolate batter over filling. Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until chocolate layer is set. Cool in pan on a wire rack.

5. Spoon Milk Chocolate Ganache over cooled bars, spreading evenly. Chill for at least 1 hour or until ganache is firm. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. **Makes 48 bars.**

MILK CHOCOLATE GANACHE Pour one 11.5-oz. pkg. milk chocolate pieces into a medium bowl. In a small saucepan bring ¾ cup heavy cream just to boiling. Immediately pour cream over chocolate in bowl. Let stand, without stirring, 5 minutes. Stir until smooth.

PER BAR *187 cal., 10 g fat (6 g sat. fat), 28 mg chol., 96 mg sodium, 24 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

TOASTY TIP

To toast nuts, preheat oven to 350°F. Spread nuts in a shallow baking pan. Bake 5 to 10 minutes or until nuts are just golden, stirring once or twice; let cool.

SALTED PEANUT BARS

PREP 25 minutes **BAKE** 12 minutes at 350°F

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup very finely crushed pretzels*
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- ½ cup butter, softened
- ⅔ cup packed brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 7-oz. jar marshmallow creme
- ½ cup creamy peanut butter
- ¼ cup powdered sugar
- 1 cup salted cocktail peanuts
- 1 14-oz. pkg. vanilla caramels, unwrapped (about 50) (caramel info, *p. 64*)
- 2 Tbsp. milk

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. In a small bowl stir together first four ingredients (through baking soda).
2. For crust, in a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add brown sugar, egg, and vanilla. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in as much of the flour mixture as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour mixture. Using an offset spatula and holding the foil, spread dough evenly onto the bottom of the prepared baking pan. Bake 12 to 14 minutes or until light brown. Place on a wire rack.
3. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl microwave marshmallow creme and peanut butter about 30 seconds or until softened; stir until smooth. Stir in powdered sugar. Spread over warm crust. Sprinkle with peanuts.
4. In a medium heavy saucepan cook and stir caramels and milk over medium-low heat until caramels are melted and smooth. Pour caramel mixture evenly over peanut butter mixture; spread evenly. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Use the edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars.
Makes 48 bars.
PER BAR *128 cal., 6 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 9 mg chol., 91 mg sodium, 17 g carb., 0 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

SNICKEROONI BARS

PREP 30 minutes
BAKE 12 minutes at 350°F
FREEZE 30 minutes CHILL 2 hours

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 14.3-oz. pkg. chocolate sandwich cookies with white filling (36 cookies)
- ⅓ cup butter, melted
- 1¼ cups sugar
- ⅓ cup butter
- 1 5-oz. can (⅔ cup) evaporated milk
- 1 7-oz. jar marshmallow creme
- ¼ cup creamy peanut butter
- 1¾ cups cocktail peanuts, chopped
- 1 14-oz. bag vanilla caramels (about 50), unwrapped
- 1½ cups milk chocolate pieces (8 oz.)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. Place cookies in a food processor. Cover and process until very finely chopped. In a medium bowl combine cookie crumbs and ⅓ cup melted butter. Firmly press crumb mixture into the prepared pan. Bake 12 minutes or until set. Cool in pan on a wire rack.
2. For the nougat, in a medium saucepan combine sugar, ⅓ cup butter, and ½ cup of the evaporated milk. Bring to boiling over medium-high heat, stirring to dissolve sugar. Reduce heat to medium. Simmer, uncovered, 10 minutes. Remove saucepan from heat. Stir in marshmallow creme and peanut butter. Stir in chopped peanuts. Pour nougat over crust in the baking pan. Carefully spread evenly to edges. Place pan in freezer for 20 minutes while preparing caramel layer.
3. For caramel layer, place caramels and remaining evaporated milk (about 2 Tbsp.) in a medium bowl. Microwave 1½ to 2 minutes or until caramels are melted, stirring every 30 seconds. Pour caramel mixture evenly over nougat layer in pan, carefully spreading to edges. Return pan to freezer for 10 to 15 minutes while preparing chocolate layer.
4. In a small bowl microwave chocolate pieces 1 minute or until melted and smooth, stirring every 30 seconds. Pour chocolate mixture over caramel layer. Spread evenly to edges. Cover and chill 2 hours or until firm. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. **Makes 60 bars.**

PER BAR *154 cal., 8 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 7 mg chol., 86 mg sodium, 20 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

SIZE CHECK

Vanilla caramels come in two different-size packages: 11 ounces and 14 ounces. When testing these recipes, we used the 14-ounce bag (yields about 50 caramels). Why is this important? Using fewer than the recommended quantity of caramels can result in a softer-set caramel layer for your bars (it throws off the milk-to-caramel ratio). If you can only find the 11-ounce bag, purchase two and count out the recommended 50 caramels.

SNICKEROONI BARS

NESTLING BUTTERFINGER BARS

NESTLING BUTTERFINGER BARS

PREP 25 minutes BAKE 25 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 cup creamy peanut butter
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ⅓ cup finely crushed corn flakes
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 10 1.9-oz. bars chocolate-covered crisp peanut butter candy, coarsely broken (such as Butterfinger brand)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. In a very large bowl beat peanut butter and butter with a mixer on medium until smooth. Add brown sugar and vanilla; beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Add eggs; beat until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes.
2. In a medium bowl combine flour, crushed corn flakes, baking powder, and salt; mix well. Add flour mixture to peanut butter mixture and beat until well combined.
3. Spread half of the batter evenly in the bottom of the prepared pan. Arrange candy bar pieces on top. Spread remaining batter in an even layer on top of candy layer.
4. Bake 25 to 28 minutes or until the top appears dry. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. **Makes 48 bars.**

PER BAR *142 cal., 7 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 21 mg chol., 124 mg sodium, 17 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

PEANUT BUTTER CUP BARS

PEANUT BUTTER CUP BARS

PREP 25 minutes CHILL 30 minutes

- Nonstick cooking spray
- ¾ cup butter
- 1½ cups creamy peanut butter
- 2½ cups powdered sugar
- 1½ cups finely crushed honey graham cereal
- 1 11.5-oz. pkg. milk chocolate pieces
- 3 Tbsp. shortening
- 8 to 10 chocolate-covered peanut butter cups, chopped

1. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending the foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat the foil with cooking spray. In a large saucepan melt butter over low heat. Add peanut butter; heat and stir until melted and smooth. Stir in powdered sugar and crushed cereal; mix well. Pat the peanut butter mixture evenly into the bottom of the prepared pan.
2. In a medium bowl microwave chocolate pieces and shortening for 1 to 1½ minutes or just until melted and smooth, stirring every 30 seconds. Spread melted chocolate over the peanut butter layer. Sprinkle with chopped peanut butter cups. Cover and chill 30 minutes or until firm. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. **Makes 48 bars.**

PER BAR *171 cal., 11 g fat (4 g sat. fat), 10 mg chol., 102 mg sodium, 17 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

COPYCAT MUSKETEER BARS

PREP 25 minutes **CHILL** 1 hour

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 11.5-oz. pkg. milk chocolate pieces
- 18 to 21 chocolate wafer cookies
- 1 13-oz. jar chocolate spread
- 2 Tbsp. butter, melted
- 2 Tbsp. malted milk powder
- 2 7-oz. jars marshmallow creme

1. Line a 13×9-inch pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. In a small bowl microwave half of the chocolate pieces 1 minute or until melted, stirring every 30 seconds. Spread evenly over the bottom of the prepared pan. Arrange chocolate wafer cookies in a single layer on top of the chocolate layer, breaking cookies as needed to fit. Chill 30 minutes or until chocolate is set.

2. Meanwhile, in a large bowl combine chocolate spread, butter, and malted milk powder. Stir in marshmallow creme. Microwave 30 seconds, stirring after 15 seconds. Stir until fully combined. With lightly greased hands or a lightly greased rubber spatula, pat mixture evenly over the cookie layer in pan.

3. In a small bowl microwave remaining chocolate pieces 1 minute or until melted, stirring every 30 seconds. Immediately spread melted chocolate evenly over marshmallow layer. Chill 30 minutes or until topping is firm. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. **Makes 36 bars.**

PER BAR *163 cal., 7 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 6 mg chol., 57 mg sodium, 23 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

TWIXY BARS

PREP 45 minutes
BAKE 18 minutes at 350°F
CHILL 2 hours

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 cup butter, softened
- ⅓ cup sugar
- ½ tsp. vanilla
- 1 egg
- 1⅔ cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups finely crushed rich round crackers (33 to 40 crackers)
- 60 vanilla caramels, unwrapped
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- 1 12-oz. pkg. miniature semisweet chocolate pieces
- ½ cup heavy cream

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray.
2. For crust, in a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add sugar and vanilla. Beat until well combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg until combined. Beat in flour. Stir in crushed crackers. Pat mixture evenly into the prepared pan. Bake 18 to 20 minutes or until lightly browned. Place on a wire rack.
3. Meanwhile, in a heavy medium saucepan combine caramels and ¼ cup heavy cream. Heat and stir over medium-low heat until melted and smooth. Carefully spread hot caramel mixture evenly over crust.
4. Place chocolate pieces in a large bowl. In a small saucepan heat ½ cup heavy cream just until simmering. Pour cream over chocolate. Let stand 5 minutes without stirring. Stir until smooth (if any unmelted chocolate remains, return mixture to saucepan and stir over very low heat until smooth). Pour chocolate mixture over caramel layer, spreading evenly. Chill bars 2 hours or until firm. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars from pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. **Makes 48 bars.**

PER BAR *169 cal., 9 g fat (6 g sat. fat), 18 mg chol., 83 mg sodium, 19 g carb., 0 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

PEPPERMINT CREAM BITES

MAKE AHEAD

To make any of these bars ahead of time, prepare as directed. Layer between sheets of waxed paper in an airtight container (if the topping is soft, place in a single layer in the container). Refrigerate for up to 3 days. For longer storage, freeze for up to 3 months.

PEPPERMINT CREAM BITES

PREP 25 minutes BAKE 12 minutes at 350°F FREEZE 45 minutes
STAND 15 minutes CHILL 15 minutes

- 1 14.3-oz. pkg. chocolate sandwich cookies with white filling (36 cookies)
- ⅓ cup butter, melted
- 4 cups powdered sugar
- ¼ cup butter, softened
- ¼ cup milk
- ½ tsp. peppermint extract
- 12 oz. semisweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 1 Tbsp. shortening

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan.
2. For crust, place the cookies in a food processor; cover and process until very finely chopped. In a medium bowl combine crushed cookies and ⅓ cup melted butter. Firmly press crumb mixture evenly onto the bottom of the prepared pan. Bake 12 minutes or until set. Cool in pan on a wire rack.
3. Meanwhile, for peppermint filling, in a large bowl beat powdered sugar and ¼ cup softened butter with a mixer on low until butter is evenly distributed. Add milk and peppermint extract; beat until smooth. Using an offset spatula, spread filling evenly over crust. Freeze 45 minutes.
4. In a medium bowl combine chocolate and shortening. Microwave 1 to 2 minutes or until chocolate is melted and smooth, stirring every 30 seconds. Let stand 15 minutes. Pour melted chocolate over peppermint filling, spreading evenly. Cover and chill 15 minutes or until chocolate is firm. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. **Makes 36 bars.**

PER BAR *180 cal., 9 g fat (4 g sat. fat), 9 mg chol., 71 mg sodium, 28 g carb., 1 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

SNOWBALLS

These soft sugar-coated snowballs—in cozy flavors like peppermint, coconut, chocolate, even green matcha—aren't the frosty kind. Instead, they'll warm you up from toes to nose on the snowiest of days.

COCONUT-PECAN SNOWBALLS, *page 73*

SURPRISE SNOWBALLS, *page 71*

CHERRY-WALNUT BALLS

PREP 40 minutes
BAKE 18 minutes per batch at 325°F

- ¼ cup coarsely chopped maraschino cherries
- 1 cup butter, softened
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- ½ tsp. almond extract
- ½ tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup chopped walnuts, toasted (tip, *p. 62*)
- Red edible glitter (optional)
- Powdered sugar

1. Preheat oven to 325°F. Drain chopped maraschino cherries on paper towels; pat dry to remove any excess liquid.
2. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium speed 30 seconds. Add ½ cup powdered sugar, almond extract, and vanilla. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with mixer. Stir in any remaining flour, the walnuts, and maraschino cherries.
3. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Place balls 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 18 to 20 minutes or until bottoms are light brown. Cool on cookie sheets 5 minutes.
4. If desired, stir some red glitter into the additional powdered sugar. Roll warm cookies in the powdered sugar to coat. Cool on wire racks. If desired, roll cookies in the powdered sugar again before serving. **Makes 48 cookies.**
PER COOKIE *74 cal., 5 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 10 mg chol., 34 mg sodium, 6 g carb., 0 g pro.*

SURPRISE SNOWBALLS

SURPRISE SNOWBALLS

PREP 30 minutes CHILL 30 minutes
BAKE 15 minutes per batch at 325°F

- 1 cup butter, softened
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- 1 Tbsp. hazelnut liqueur
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups finely chopped pecans or hazelnuts, toasted (tip, *p. 62*)
- 55 chocolate-covered caramels (such as Milk Duds)
- 1 cup powdered sugar

1. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add ½ cup powdered sugar. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in liqueur and vanilla. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour and the pecans. Cover dough and chill 30 minutes or until easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 325°F. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Press a chocolate-covered caramel into each ball, reshaping the ball around the candy to enclose it completely. Place balls about 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Bake about 15 minutes or until bottoms are light brown. Remove; cool on wire racks.
3. Place 1 cup powdered sugar in a large plastic bag. Add cooled cookies in batches to bag. Gently shake to coat. **Makes 55 cookies.**
PER COOKIE *94 cal., 6 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 9 mg chol., 35 mg sodium, 9 g carb., 1 g pro.*

MATCHA-GINGER SNOWBALLS

MATCHA-GINGER SNOWBALLS

PREP 30 minutes CHILL 1 hour
BAKE 10 minutes per batch at 350°F

- ½ cup shortening
- 1 Tbsp. grated fresh ginger or 2 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla
- 1 Tbsp. matcha (green tea powder)
- 1 tsp. lemon zest
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 2 eggs
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- Green food coloring (optional)
- 1 recipe Powdered Sugar Glaze
- White nonpareils

1. In a large bowl beat shortening, ginger, vanilla, matcha, and lemon zest with a mixer on medium until combined. Add brown sugar; beat until fluffy. Beat in baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Beat in eggs. Beat in flour. If desired, beat in green food coloring. Chill dough 1 hour or until easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Place balls 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool on cookie sheets 2 minutes. Remove; cool on wire racks.
3. Dip tops in Powdered Sugar Glaze, letting excess drip off; sprinkle with nonpareils. Place cookies on waxed paper and let set. **Makes 48 cookies.**
POWDERED SUGAR GLAZE In a bowl stir together 1½ cups powdered sugar and 1 to 2 Tbsp. water to make a glaze of thick coating consistency.
PER COOKIE *87 cal., 3 g fat (1 g sat. fat), 8 mg chol., 40 mg sodium, 15 g carb., 1 g pro.*

MATCHA!

Lately, bright-green matcha tea has lit the culinary world on fire, showing up in everything from ice cream to pancakes. Part of its draw is the super-high level of antioxidants that come from directly consuming the ground leaves (versus infusing the tea leaves in water then discarding them, as with traditional tea). As a bonus, the tea is such a vivid hue, it dyes food a naturally festive green for the holidays.

CHOCOLATE SNOWBALLS

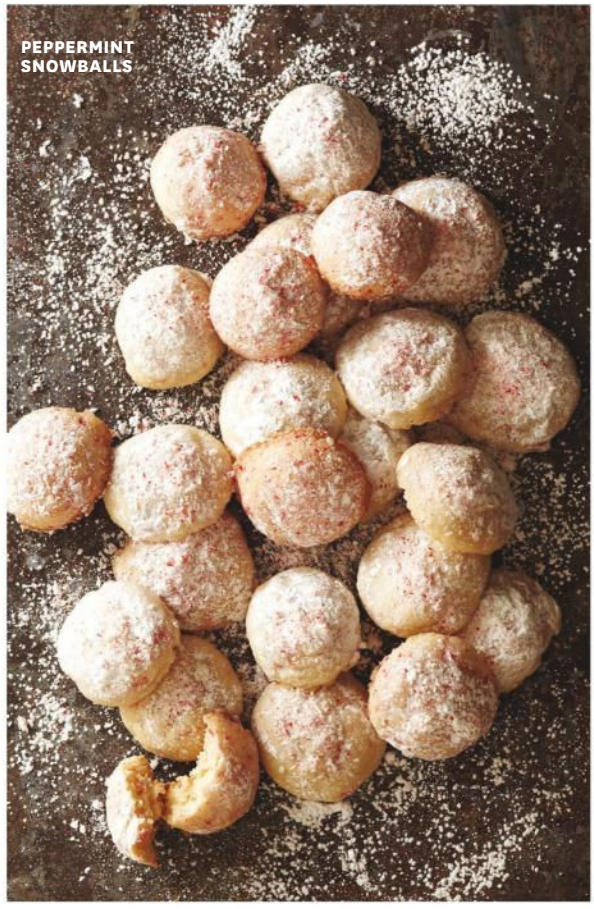
CHOCOLATE SNOWBALLS

PREP 25 minutes
CHILL 30 minutes
BAKE 15 minutes per batch at 325°F

- 1 cup butter, softened
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- ¼ cup unsweetened dark cocoa powder
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 tsp. orange zest
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup miniature semisweet chocolate pieces
- 1 cup powdered sugar

1. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add next five ingredients (through salt). Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in flour. Stir in chocolate pieces (dough will be crumbly). Hand-knead dough and shape into a ball. Cover dough; chill 30 to 60 minutes or until easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 325°F. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Place dough balls 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Bake about 15 minutes or until cookies are just firm and tops are no longer glossy. Cool on wire racks.
3. Place 1 cup powdered sugar in a large plastic bag. Add cooled cookies in batches to bag. Gently shake to coat. **Makes 48 cookies.**

PER COOKIE *88 cal., 5 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 10 mg chol., 61 mg sodium, 11 g carb., 1 g fiber, 1 g pro.*


PEPPERMINT SNOWBALLS

PEPPERMINT SNOWBALLS

PREP 20 minutes BAKE 9 minutes per batch at 350°F

- 1 cup butter, softened
- ⅔ cup powdered sugar
- ½ cup crushed peppermint candies (20)
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- Very finely crushed peppermint candies (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add ⅔ cup powdered sugar, ½ cup crushed peppermint candies, vanilla, and salt. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour.
2. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Place balls 2 inches apart on the prepared cookie sheets. Bake 9 to 11 minutes or until cookies are set and bottoms are light golden. Cool on cookie sheets 1 minute. Remove; cool on wire rack 5 minutes. Roll the warm cookies in 1 cup powdered sugar. Cool cookies completely on wire rack.
3. Roll cooled cookies in powdered sugar again. If desired, dust cookies lightly with very finely crushed peppermint candies. **Makes 36 cookies.**

PER COOKIE *103 cal., 5 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 14 mg chol., 79 mg sodium, 14 g carb., 1 g pro.*

COCONUT-PECAN SNOWBALLS

PREP 45 minutes **CHILL** 30 minutes
BAKE 15 minutes per batch at 325°F

- 1 cup butter, softened
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- 1 Tbsp. water
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup finely chopped pecans, toasted (tip, *p. 62*)
- ¾ cup finely chopped coconut
- ¾ cup powdered sugar

1. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add ½ cup powdered sugar. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in the water and vanilla until combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour, the pecans, and coconut. Cover and chill 30 to 60 minutes or until dough is easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 325°F. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Place balls 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Bake about 15 minutes or until bottoms are light brown. Remove; cool on wire racks.

3. Place ¾ cup powdered sugar in a large plastic bag. Add cooled cookies, a few at a time, shaking gently to coat. **Makes 36 cookies.**

COCOA-COVERED SNOWBALLS

Prepare as directed, except in Step 3 reduce the powdered sugar to ½ cup and stir in 3 Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder. Shake cooled cookies in the cocoa mixture.

PER COOKIE *99 cal., 7 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 12 mg chol., 45 mg sodium, 10 g carb., 1 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

ONE DOUGH, FIVE WAYS

Let this hardworking recipe be the hero of the holidays! One basic dough is used to make bars, slice-and-bake cookies, even cutouts. It's almost like ... magic!

1 RECIPE DOUGH = 5 VARIETIES

VANILLA COOKIE DOUGH

START TO FINISH 10 minutes

- 1 cup butter, softened
- ⅔ cup sugar
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 egg
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour

1. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add sugar and salt. Beat on high 2 minutes, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg and vanilla. Beat in flour until combined. Divide dough into three portions. (If preparing Cherry Crumb Bars or Cinnamon Roll Cookies, dividing dough into portions isn't necessary.)

HOW IT WORKS

The concept is simple. Here's what to do: Use one batch of dough to make Cinnamon Roll Cookies OR Cherry Crumb Bars. OR use one batch to make three at once: Mint Ganache Sandwiches, Pistachio Sticks, and Chai Pinecones.

OPTION 1

A swirl of cinnamon sugar and a creamy icing make these cookies taste just like your favorite bakery cinnamon rolls—but with a tantalizing cookie crunch.

CINNAMON ROLL COOKIES

PREP 30 minutes **CHILL** 30 minutes
FREEZE 30 minutes
BAKE 8 minutes per batch at 375°F

- 1 recipe Vanilla Cookie Dough (*p. 75*)
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon or apple pie spice
- 1 recipe Cream Cheese Icing

1. Wrap and chill dough 30 to 60 minutes or until easy to handle. On a floured surface, roll dough into a 15×10-inch rectangle. Brush with egg. Stir together brown sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle over dough. Roll up from a long side. Place on a baking sheet or tray, cover, and freeze about 30 minutes or until very firm.

2. Preheat oven to 375°F. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper. Slice roll into ¼-inch slices. Place 2 inches apart on prepared cookie sheets. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Cool on cookie sheets 1 minute. Remove; cool on wire racks. Top cooled cookies with Cream Cheese Icing. **Makes 40 cookies.**

CREAM CHEESE ICING In a medium bowl beat 2 oz. softened cream cheese and 1 Tbsp. softened butter with a mixer on medium until smooth. Beat in ¾ cup powdered sugar and enough milk (2 to 3 Tbsp.) to make desired consistency. Makes about ¾ cup.

PER COOKIE *108 cal., 6 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 24 mg chol., 77 mg sodium, 13 g carb., 1 g pro.*

OPTION 2

Look how easy it is to turn the Vanilla Cookie Dough into a bar recipe. Spread the bar with a luscious cherry-hazelnut topping and finish it with a buttery oat crumble. Magnificent? Oh, yes!

CHERRY CRUMB BARS

PREP 35 minutes
BAKE 45 minutes at 375°F
COOK 10 minutes

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 recipe Vanilla Cookie Dough (*p. 75*)
- ½ cup butter, cut up
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- ½ cup rolled oats
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ cup hazelnuts, chopped
- 1 12-oz. pkg. frozen pitted dark sweet cherries (2 cups)
- ¾ cup pomegranate juice
- ¼ cup hazelnut liqueur or pomegranate juice
- ¼ cup honey
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. Using an offset spatula, spread dough over the bottom of the pan, holding foil in place while spreading. Bake 15 minutes or just until starting to brown. Transfer to a wire rack.

2. For crumb topping, in a food processor combine butter, flour, brown sugar, oats, and salt. Cover and pulse until mixture resembles fine crumbs. Stir in the nuts.

3. For filling, in a large saucepan combine cherries, pomegranate juice, liqueur, and honey. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, 10 minutes, stirring occasionally (watch carefully as mixture foams up). Stir together cornstarch and 1 Tbsp. *water*. Add to cherry mixture. Cook and stir until thickened and bubbly. Spoon filling over partially baked crust. Sprinkle evenly with crumb topping.

4. Bake about 30 minutes more or until topping is golden. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars or triangles. **Makes 36 bars.**

PER BAR *174 cal., 9 g fat (5 g sat. fat), 26 mg chol., 129 mg sodium, 21 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

OPTION 3

Talk about getting the most from your dough! With just a few minor tweaks, you can make three completely different cookies from one batch of dough. This concept is perfect for cookie swaps when you need variety but are short on time.

CHAI PINECONES

PREP 30 minutes CHILL 30 minutes
BAKE 8 minutes per batch at 375°F

- 1½ tsp. Chai Spice or purchased chai spice
- 1 portion Vanilla Cookie Dough (one-third of the dough recipe) (*p. 75*)
- ¼ cup sliced almonds
- 2 oz. bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, chopped
- ½ tsp. shortening
- Powdered sugar (optional)

1. Stir Chai Spice into the one Vanilla Cookie Dough portion. Wrap and chill dough 30 to 60 minutes or until easy to handle. Preheat oven to 375°F. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough to ¼ inch thick. Use a 2-inch teardrop-shape or oval cookie cutter to cut dough. Arrange cutouts 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Insert almonds at an angle on cutouts to resemble pinecones, leaving about ½ inch at the bottoms without almonds.
2. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until edges start to brown. Cool on cookie sheet 1 minute. Remove; cool on wire racks.
3. Place chocolate and shortening in a small bowl. Microwave 1 minute or until melted and smooth, stirring once. Dip the bottom of each pinecone into melted chocolate mixture. Let stand or chill until set. If desired, lightly sprinkle with powdered sugar. **Makes 18 cookies.**

CHAI SPICE In a small bowl stir together 1 tsp. ground cardamom, ¼ tsp. ground ginger, ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon, and dash ground cloves.

SPICED MEXICAN PINECONES Prepare as above, except omit Chai Spice and stir 1 tsp. chili powder and dash cayenne pepper into dough. Substitute raw pepitas for the almonds.

PER COOKIE *84 cal., 6 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 12 mg chol., 50 mg sodium, 8 g carb., 1 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

PISTACHIO STICKS

PREP 25 minutes CHILL 30 minutes
BAKE 8 minutes per batch at 375°F

- ½ cup finely chopped pistachios
- ¼ cup dried cranberries, finely chopped
- 1 portion Vanilla Cookie Dough (one-third of the dough recipe) (*p. 75*)
- ½ cup white baking pieces
- 1 tsp. shortening

1. Stir pistachios and cranberries into the one Vanilla Cookie Dough portion. Cover and chill dough 30 to 60 minutes or until easy to handle. Preheat oven to 375°F. On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough to an 8×6-inch rectangle about ½ inch thick. Cut lengthwise into eight ¾-inch-wide strips. Cut each into thirds crosswise. Place 1 inch apart on an ungreased cookie sheet.
2. Bake 8 minutes or until edges start to brown. Cool on cookie sheet 1 minute. Remove; cool on wire racks.
3. Place baking pieces and shortening in a small bowl. Microwave 1 minute or until melted and smooth, stirring once. Dip ends of cookie sticks into melted chocolate to coat. Place on waxed paper; sprinkle white chocolate with additional finely chopped pistachios and/or cranberries. Let stand or chill until set. **Makes 24 cookies.**

PER COOKIE *91 cal., 5 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 9 mg chol., 56 mg sodium, 9 g carb., 1 g pro.*

MINT GANACHE SANDWICHES

PREP 25 minutes CHILL 50 minutes
BAKE 6 minutes per batch at 375°F

- 1 portion Vanilla Cookie Dough (one-third of the dough recipe) (*p. 75*)
- 2 Tbsp. heavy cream
- ¼ cup miniature semisweet chocolate pieces
- ⅔ cup powdered sugar
- 1 Tbsp. butter, softened
- 2 tsp. milk
- ¼ tsp. mint extract
- 1 drop green food coloring

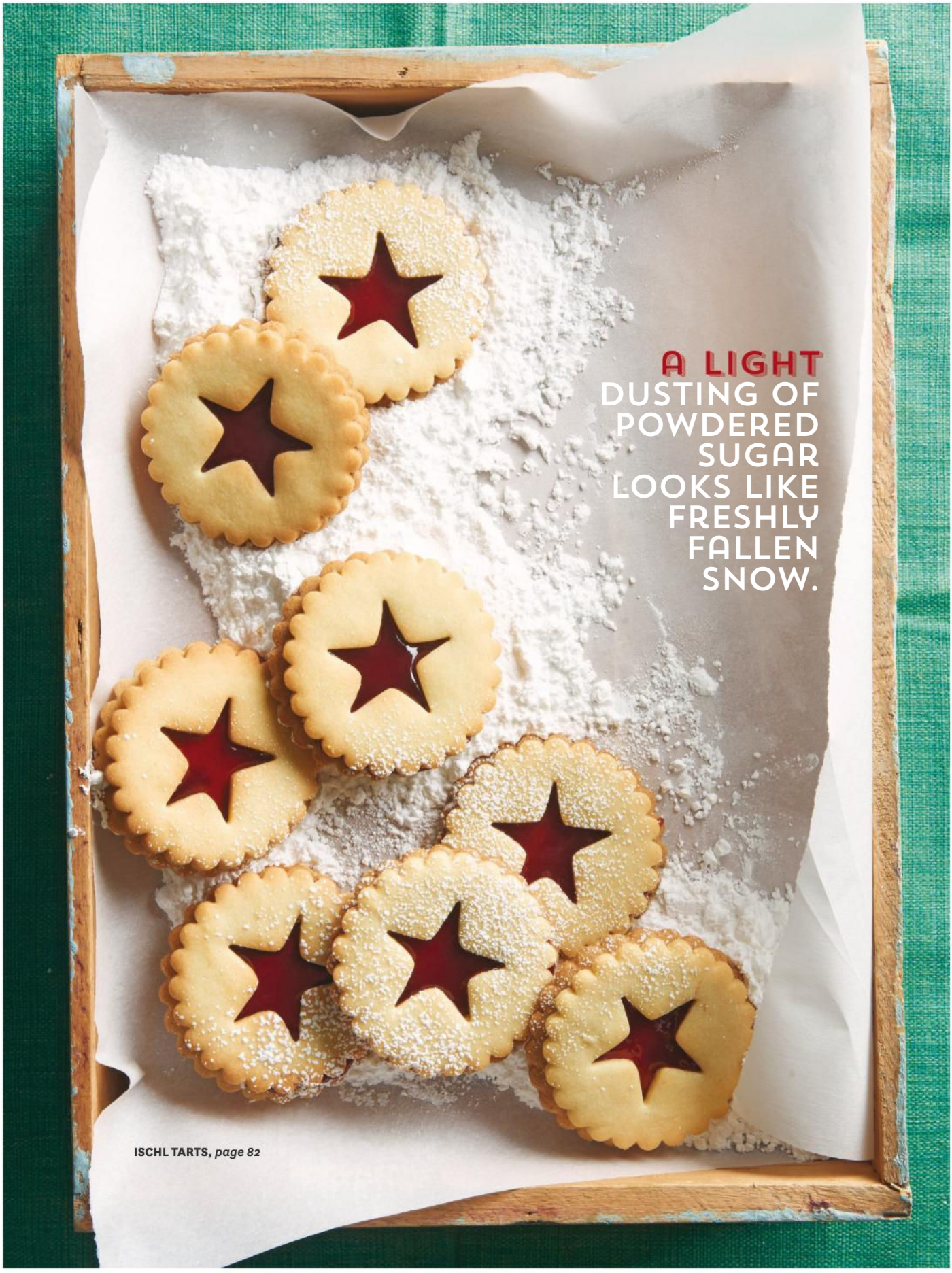
1. Wrap and chill the one Vanilla Cookie Dough portion 30 to 60 minutes or until easy to handle. Preheat oven to 375°F. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into a 9-inch square. Use a pastry wheel or pizza cutter to cut dough into 1½-inch squares. Arrange dough squares 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Prick each several times with a fork. Bake 6 to 8 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Cool on cookie sheet 1 minute. Remove; cool on wire racks.
2. For ganache, in a small bowl microwave cream 20 to 30 seconds or just until boiling. Add chocolate pieces (do not stir). Let stand 5 minutes. Stir until smooth. Chill 10 minutes or until spreadable.
3. For mint frosting, in a small bowl stir together powdered sugar, butter, milk, and mint extract until spreading consistency. Add food coloring.
4. Spread frosting on the bottoms of half of the cookies. Spread ganache on bottoms of remaining cookies; chill 10 minutes to set. Top ganache-topped cookies with frosting-topped cookies. If desired, lightly dust cookies with additional powdered sugar. **Makes 18 cookies.**

PER COOKIE *107 cal., 6 g fat (4 g sat. fat), 16 mg chol., 56 mg sodium, 13 g carb., 1 g pro.*

PISTACHIO STICKS
CHAI PINECONES
MINT GANACHE SANDWICHES

WE BE JAMMIN'

Jam and cookies, cookies and jam—the two go hand in hand for good reason: They're both delicious! Spoonfuls of jam are added as toppers and fillers to create sweet treats with festive flavor, color, and a pretty shimmer.



ISCHL TARTS, *page 82*

ISCHL TARTS

PREP 45 minutes
CHILL 1 hour 45 minutes
BAKE 8 minutes per batch at 375°F

- ½ cup butter
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 2 egg yolks
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ⅛ tsp. ground cloves
- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup seedless raspberry preserves

1. For spice dough, in a small saucepan cook ½ cup butter over medium heat about 12 minutes or until light brown. Pour into a medium bowl; chill just until firm (about 45 minutes). Beat with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Beat in ½ cup of the powdered sugar, one of the egg yolks, 1 tsp. of the vanilla, ⅛ tsp. of the salt, the cinnamon, and cloves until fluffy. Beat in 1 cup of the flour.
2. For plain dough, in another medium bowl beat ½ cup softened butter with mixer on medium 30 seconds. Beat in remaining powdered sugar, egg yolk, vanilla, and salt until fluffy. Beat in remaining 1¼ cups flour. Cover and chill doughs until easy to handle (about 1 hour).
3. Preheat oven to 375°F. On a lightly floured surface, roll spice dough to ⅛ inch thick. Using 2½- to 3-inch scalloped cookie cutters, cut out dough. Repeat with plain dough to make matching shapes. Using smaller cookie cutter, cut out desired shape(s) in plain dough cutouts. (Leave spice cutouts whole.) Place 1 inch apart on an ungreased cookie sheet.
4. Bake about 8 minutes or until edges are light brown. Remove; cool on wire racks.
5. Within 24 hours of serving, spread preserves on bottoms of spice cookies, using about 1 tsp. for each cookie. Top with plain cookies, bottom sides down. Sprinkle lightly with additional powdered sugar. **Makes 18 tarts.**

PER TART *207 cal., 11 g fat (7 g sat. fat), 48 mg chol., 127 mg sodium, 25 g carb., 2 g pro.*

SMALL CUTOUTS

If desired, bake small cutouts from Ischl Tarts separately just until edges are light brown, watching closely so they don't burn. Or reroll to make more larger cutouts.

COOKIE TARTS

The prettiest sandwich cookies ever, Ischl Tarts hail from Austria. You can customize them with different tiny cutout shapes in the top cookies or vary the flavor of spread in the middles (even chocolate-hazelnut). To prevent smudging the powdered sugar on top, sprinkle and assemble cookies just before serving (or store in a single layer in a storage container).

CHERRY PINWHEELS

CHERRY PINWHEELS

PREP 40 minutes CHILL 2 hours
BAKE 8 minutes per batch at 375°F

- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- Dash salt
- 1 egg
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1 tsp. lemon zest
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2¾ cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup cherry preserves
- 1 recipe Powdered Sugar Icing (*p. 130*)

1. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add granulated sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg, sour cream, lemon zest, and vanilla until combined. Beat in flour. Divide dough into four portions. Cover and chill about 2 hours or until dough is easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 375°F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. On a lightly floured surface, roll one portion of dough at a time into a 7½-inch square. Using a straight or fluted pastry wheel, cut dough into 2½-inch squares. (Keep remaining dough chilled until needed. If dough becomes too soft, return to refrigerator for a few minutes.)
3. Place squares 2 inches apart on the prepared cookie sheet. Using the pastry wheel, cut 1-inch slits from the corners toward the center of each square. Snip any large pieces of fruit in the preserves. Spoon 1 level tsp. preserves into center of each square. Fold every other tip (one from each corner) into the center of each square to form a pinwheel shape. Press dough gently in center to seal tips over filling. Repeat with remaining dough and preserves.
4. Bake 8 to 9 minutes or just until edges begin to brown. Cool on cookie sheet 3 minutes. Remove; cool on a wire rack.
5. Drizzle cookies with Powdered Sugar Icing. Let stand until icing is set. Store in the refrigerator. **Makes 36 cookies.**
PER COOKIE *118 cal., 3 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 13 mg chol., 52 mg sodium, 21 g carb., 1 g pro.*

HOW TO: MAKE PINWHEELS

Complicated? Not even close. Once you see how it's done, pinwheels can be cut, filled, and folded en masse. Here's how.

ROLL AND CUT
Roll dough into a 7½-inch square. Cut into nine 2½-inch squares. Place squares 2 inches apart on a baking sheet.

FILL AND FOLD
Cut a 1-inch slit from each corner to the center of each square. Spoon 1 level teaspoon of preserves into each center. Fold every other tip into each center to form a pinwheel shape. Press dough gently into each center.

STRAWBERRY CHEESECAKE TARTLETS

PREP 25 minutes **CHILL** 3 hours
BAKE 15 minutes at 350°F

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ cup ground toasted almonds
- ¼ cup butter
- 1 egg yolk, lightly beaten
- 2 to 3 Tbsp. water
- 1 4-serving-size pkg. cheesecake instant pudding and pie filling mix
- 1 cup evaporated milk
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- ½ tsp. almond extract
- ⅓ cup strawberry preserves
- Toasted sliced almonds (optional)

1. In a medium bowl stir together flour, sugar, and ground almonds. Using a pastry blender, cut in butter until pieces are pea-size. In a small bowl combine egg yolk and 2 Tbsp. water. Gradually stir egg mixture into flour mixture until combined. If necessary, add enough of the additional water to make a dough that starts to cling. Gently knead just until smooth; form dough into a ball. If necessary, cover and chill about 1 hour or until dough is easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F. Divide dough into 24 pieces. Shape pieces into balls. Press dough evenly into bottoms and up sides of 24 ungreased 1¾-inch muffin cups. Bake about 15 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool completely in pan on a wire rack.
3. In a medium bowl combine pudding mix, evaporated milk, vanilla, and almond extract. Beat with a mixer on medium about 2 minutes or until smooth and fluffy. Spoon 2 tsp. filling into each cookie. Cover and chill 2 to 24 hours.
4. Before serving, top each cookie with about ½ tsp. of the preserves and, if desired, a few sliced almonds. **Makes 24 tartlets.**

PER TARTLET *96 cal., 4 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 16 mg chol., 88 mg sodium, 14 g carb., 2 g pro.*

RED PLUM SHORTBREAD BARS

PREP 30 minutes
BAKE 20 minutes at 350°F

- 1 cup butter, softened
- ⅔ cup granulated sugar
- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ⅔ cup red plum jam
- 2 Tbsp. port wine (optional)
- 1 recipe Powdered Sugar Icing (*p. 130*)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add granulated sugar. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Gradually beat in flour on low just until combined. Knead until dough comes together (dough will be crumbly).
2. Divide dough in half. On a large ungreased cookie sheet, shape each half into a 12×2-inch rectangle, leaving 4 inches between rectangles. Press a ¼-inch-deep indentation down the middle of each rectangle. In a small bowl stir together jam and port wine (if using). Spoon half of the jam mixture into indentations in rectangles (set aside remaining jam).
3. Bake 15 minutes. Remove from oven and spoon on remaining jam. Bake 5 minutes more or until edges are lightly browned. Cool slightly on cookie sheet on a wire rack. While still warm, transfer to a cutting board and cut into 1-inch diagonal strips but do not separate strips. Cool completely.
4. Drizzle Powdered Sugar Icing over bars. Separate bars to serve. Store in the refrigerator. **Makes 26 bars.**
PER BAR *164 cal., 7 g fat (5 g sat. fat), 19 mg chol., 60 mg sodium, 24 g carb., 1 g pro.*

APRICOT-ALMOND KOLACHES

PREP 40 minutes CHILL 2 hours
BAKE 10 minutes per batch at 400°F

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ⅔ cup apricot jam
- ¼ tsp. ground cardamom
- 2 Tbsp. sliced almonds
- 1 recipe Powdered Sugar Icing (*p. 130*)

1. In a large bowl beat butter and cream cheese with a mixer on medium until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in flour. Divide dough into two portions; cover and chill 2 hours or until easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 400°F. In a small bowl stir together the jam and cardamom. On a lightly floured surface, roll one portion of dough into a 15×9-inch rectangle. Cut into 3-inch squares or rounds. Place 1 tsp. of the jam mixture in center of each square. Sprinkle with a few almonds. Overlap two opposite corners of dough to meet in the center; pinch tightly to seal. Place 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Repeat with remaining dough and jam mixture.
3. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until bottoms are lightly browned. Cool on cookie sheets 1 minute. Remove; cool on wire racks.
4. Drizzle Powdered Sugar Icing over kolaches. Store in the refrigerator. **Makes 30 cookies.**
PER COOKIE *147 cal., 9 g fat (5 g sat. fat), 24 mg chol., 76 mg sodium, 15 g carb., 2 g pro.*

MIX AND MATCH THE COATINGS AND FILLINGS FOR CUSTOMIZED TREATS EVERYONE WILL LOVE.

THUMBPRINTS

PREP 40 minutes CHILL 1 hour BAKE 10 minutes per batch at 375°F

- ⅔ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 2 egg yolks
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 egg whites, lightly beaten (optional)
- 1 cup finely chopped walnuts (optional)
- ⅓ to ½ cup desired jam or preserves

1. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add granulated sugar. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg yolks and vanilla until combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour. Cover and chill 1 hour or until dough is easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 375°F. Grease cookie sheets. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. If desired, roll balls in egg whites and in walnuts to coat. Place 1 inch apart on prepared cookie sheets. Using your thumb, make indentations in balls.
3. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until bottoms are light brown. If cookie centers puff during baking, re-press centers with rounded side of a measuring teaspoon. Remove; cool on wire racks. Just before serving, fill centers with jam. **Makes 30 cookies.**
PER COOKIE *86 cal., 4 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 23 mg chol., 34 mg sodium, 11 g carb., 1 g pro.*

SPRINKLE THUMBPRINTS Prepare as directed, except do not grease cookie sheets; omit egg whites and walnuts. Roll dough balls in white nonpareils or sprinkles. Bake and fill as directed in Step 3.
PER COOKIE *96 cal., 5 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 23 mg chol., 41 mg sodium, 12 g carb., 1 g pro.*

ALMOND-CHERRY THUMBPRINTS Prepare as directed, except add ½ tsp. almond extract with egg yolks and vanilla; omit walnuts. Roll balls in egg whites and in 1 cup finely chopped slivered almonds. Bake as directed in Step 3 and fill with cherry preserves.
PER COOKIE *108 cal., 6 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 23 mg chol., 38 mg sodium, 12 g carb., 1 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

LINZER THUMBPRINTS Prepare as directed, except omit egg whites and walnuts. Place ⅔ cup powdered sugar in a large plastic bag. Add cooled cookies; shake to coat. Remove cookies from bag, shaking off excess powdered sugar. Fill with raspberry preserves.
PER COOKIE *102 cal., 5 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 23 mg chol., 41 mg sodium, 14 g carb., 1 g pro.*

CITRUS-COCONUT THUMBPRINTS Prepare as directed, except add 1 tsp. lemon, lime, or orange zest to dough with egg yolks and vanilla; omit walnuts. Roll dough balls in egg whites and in 1 cup flaked or shredded coconut. Bake and fill as directed in Step 3.
PER COOKIE *97 cal., 5 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 23 mg chol., 41 mg sodium, 12 g carb., 1 g pro.*

PB&J THUMBPRINTS Prepare as directed, except omit walnuts. Roll dough balls in egg whites and in 1 cup finely chopped cocktail peanuts. Bake as directed in Step 3. Spoon about ½ tsp. creamy peanut butter into each thumbprint indentation. Top with grape jelly or strawberry jam.
PER COOKIE *126 cal., 8 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 23 mg chol., 65 mg sodium, 12 g carb., 1 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

THUMBPRINTS, FROM TOP: ORIGINAL, SPRINKLE, ALMOND-CHERRY, LINZER, CITRUS-COCONUT, PB&J

CRUMB BARS

The secret to a great bar is the crust on the bottom *and* the top! These streusel bars, revel bars, and oat bars make the crust do double duty as a topping over luscious fillings. Plus, try throwback favorite Oatmeal-Jam Bars.

TRIPLE-PEANUT BUTTER BARS, *page 94*

STREUSEL-BERRY BARS,
page 91

OATMEAL-JAM BARS

PREP 15 minutes
BAKE 35 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 lemon
- 1⅓ cups all-purpose flour
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¾ cup quick-cooking rolled oats
- ⅓ cup packed brown sugar
- 6 oz. cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup butter, softened
- ¾ cup seedless berry jam

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 9-inch square baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. Remove 1 tsp. zest and squeeze 1 tsp. juice from the lemon. In a medium bowl stir together flour, baking soda, and salt. Stir in oats, brown sugar, and lemon zest.

2. In a large bowl beat cream cheese and butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add flour mixture; beat on low until crumbly. Remove 1 cup of the crumb mixture for topping. Press remaining crumb mixture into the bottom of the prepared baking pan. Bake 20 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, in a small bowl combine jam and the lemon juice. Carefully spread jam mixture over hot crust. Sprinkle with reserved 1 cup crumb mixture.

4. Bake about 15 minutes more or until top is golden. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator.

Makes 16 bars.

PER BAR *173 cal., 7 g fat (5 g sat. fat), 20 mg chol., 121 mg sodium, 25 g carb., 2 g pro.*

STREUSEL-BERRY BARS

PREP 20 minutes
BAKE 50 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1½ cups butter, softened
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups pecans, coarsely chopped
- 2 10-oz. jars (2 cups) strawberry preserves
- 1 recipe Powdered Sugar Icing (*p. 130*) or sifted powdered sugar

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan.
2. In a large bowl beat butter and granulated sugar with a mixer on medium until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in eggs. Beat in as much flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour and the pecans (mixture will be crumbly). Remove 2 cups of the pecan mixture for topping.
3. Press remaining pecan mixture into the bottom of the prepared pan. Bake 15 minutes. Carefully spread preserves to within ½ inch of the edges. Break apart reserved topping and dot over preserves.
4. Bake 35 minutes more or until top is golden brown. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Drizzle with Powdered Sugar Icing or sprinkle with powdered sugar. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. **Makes 48 bars.**

PER BAR *189 cal., 9 g fat (4 g sat. fat), 23 mg chol., 58 mg sodium, 27 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

PUMPKIN CRÈME BARS

PUMPKIN CRÈME BARS

PREP 25 minutes
BAKE 47 minutes at 350°F
CHILL 2 hours

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1¼ cups quick-cooking rolled oats
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ¾ cup butter, cut up
- ½ cup almond toffee bits
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 cup canned pumpkin

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 9-inch square baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. In a large bowl combine flour, oats, brown sugar, and baking soda. Using a pastry blender, cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. For topping, place 2 cups of the crumb mixture in a small bowl; stir in toffee bits.
2. Press remaining crumb mixture into the bottom of the prepared pan. Bake 12 minutes or until lightly browned.
3. Meanwhile, for filling, in a medium bowl whisk together eggs, vanilla, and cinnamon. Whisk in condensed milk and pumpkin. Pour filling onto partially baked crust.
4. Bake 20 minutes. Sprinkle topping over filling. Bake 15 minutes more or until topping is light brown. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Chill at least 2 hours. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars from pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator up to 2 days or freeze up to 3 months. **Makes 24 bars.**

PER BAR *215 cal., 9 g fat (6 g sat. fat), 37 mg chol., 127 mg sodium, 30 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

MAKE AHEAD

Layer bars between sheets of waxed paper in an airtight container. Most crumb bars can be stored on the counter for up to three days (if the bar needs to be refrigerated for storage, the recipe will specify). All crumb bars can be stored in the freezer for up to three months.

SALTED CARAMEL REVEL BARS

SALTED CARAMEL REVEL BARS

PREP 30 minutes
BAKE 25 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 2 cups packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 2 eggs
- 4 tsp. vanilla
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 3 cups quick-cooking rolled oats
- 1 14-oz. pkg. vanilla caramels, unwrapped (about 50 pieces)
- 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 1½ tsp. fleur de sel or fine sea salt

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 15×10-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray.
2. Set aside 2 Tbsp. of the butter. In a large bowl beat remaining butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Beat in brown sugar and baking soda until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in eggs and 2 tsp. of the vanilla. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour. Stir in rolled oats.
3. For filling, in a medium saucepan combine reserved butter, caramels, and sweetened condensed milk. Cook over low heat until caramels melt, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat. Stir in remaining 2 tsp. vanilla, and ½ tsp. of the fleur de sel.
4. Press two-thirds (about 3⅓ cups) of the oat mixture into the bottom of the prepared pan. Spread filling over the oat mixture. Dot remaining oat mixture on filling. Sprinkle with remaining 1 tsp. fleur de sel.
5. Bake 25 minutes (filling will still look moist but will continue to set as it cools). Cool in pan on a wire rack. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Place on cutting board; cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator up to 3 days or freeze up to 3 months.
Makes 60 bars.

PER BAR *141 cal., 5 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 17 mg chol., 130 mg sodium, 22 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

APRICOT-ROSEMARY STREUSEL BARS

APRICOT-ROSEMARY STREUSEL BARS

PREP 40 minutes
BAKE 40 minutes at 350°F

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 tsp. snipped fresh rosemary
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 cup cold butter, cut up
- 2 15-oz. cans unpeeled apricot halves in light syrup
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- 2 Tbsp. cornstarch
- ⅓ cup water
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ⅓ cup pine nuts
- 1 recipe Powdered Sugar Icing (*p. 130*) (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly grease foil.
2. For crust, in a large bowl stir together flour, 1 cup granulated sugar, rosemary, baking powder, and 1 tsp. salt. Using a pastry blender, cut in 1 cup butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Remove 1½ cups of the crumb mixture for topping. Press remaining crumb mixture into the bottom of the prepared pan. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until set.
3. Meanwhile, drain apricots, reserving ¼ cup of the liquid. In a medium saucepan combine the reserved liquid, drained apricots, ¾ cup granulated sugar, cornstarch, water, 2 Tbsp. butter, and ¼ tsp. salt. Cook and stir over medium heat until thick and bubbly; cook and stir 1 minute more. Spoon apricot mixture evenly over crust in pan. Combine reserved crumb mixture and the pine nuts; sprinkle over apricot mixture.
4. Bake about 30 minutes or until filling is bubbly around the edges and topping is light brown. Cool in pan on a wire rack.
5. If desired, drizzle Powdered Sugar Icing over uncut bars. Let stand until set. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator up to 3 days or freeze up to 3 months.
Makes 32 bars.
PER BAR *181 cal., 7 g fat (4 g sat. fat), 17 mg chol., 165 mg sodium, 28 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

TRIPLE-PEANUT BUTTER BARS

TRIPLE-PEANUT BUTTER BARS

PREP 30 minutes
BAKE 28 minutes at 350°F
COOL 15 minutes

- 1½ cups quick-cooking rolled oats
- 1½ cups packed brown sugar
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- 1 cup butter
- ½ cup chopped unsalted dry-roasted peanuts
- 1 cup peanut butter-flavor pieces and/or semisweet chocolate pieces
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ cup butter, cut up
- ¼ cup peanut butter
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1½ tsp. vanilla
- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- 1 recipe Peanut Butter Icing

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 15×10-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. For crust, in a large bowl stir together oats, the 1½ cups brown sugar, 1 cup flour, 1 tsp. baking powder, and ½ tsp. baking soda. Using a pastry blender, cut in 1 cup butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. For topping, remove 1 cup of crumb mixture and stir in peanuts and peanut butter-flavor pieces.
2. Press remaining crumb mixture into the bottom of the prepared pan. Bake 10 minutes. Cool crust in pan on a wire rack at least 15 minutes.
3. In a medium saucepan heat and stir the 1 cup brown sugar, ¼ cup butter, and peanut butter over medium heat until butter melts and mixture is smooth; cool slightly. Stir in the egg and vanilla. Stir in the 1¼ cups flour, ½ tsp. baking powder, and ¼ tsp. baking soda. Drop in very small mounds evenly over crust in pan. Sprinkle with the topping.
4. Bake 18 to 20 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Drizzle Peanut Butter Icing over uncut bars. Let stand until set. Cut into bars. **Makes 32 bars.**

PEANUT BUTTER ICING Prepare half a recipe of Powdered Sugar Icing (*page 130*), except stir 1 Tbsp. creamy peanut butter into the powdered sugar. If necessary, add additional milk to reach drizzling consistency.

PER BAR *251 cal., 12 g fat (7 g sat. fat), 26 mg chol., 134 mg sodium, 33 g carb., 1 g fiber, 4 g pro.*

MAPLE-APPLE OAT BARS

PREP 30 minutes
BAKE 35 minutes at 350°F

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups rolled oats
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- 3 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 cup butter, cut into 8 pieces
- 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup finely chopped dried apples
- ½ cup chopped walnuts, toasted (tip, *p. 62*)
- ½ cup sweetened condensed milk
- ¼ cup pure maple syrup
- 1 recipe Powdered Sugar Icing (*p. 130*)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan.
2. In a large bowl stir together flour, oats, granulated sugar, 2 tsp. of the cinnamon, and the ginger. Using a pastry blender, cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Remove 1 cup of the crumb mixture for topping. Press remaining crumb mixture into the bottom of the prepared pan.
3. For filling, in a medium bowl beat cream cheese, apples, walnuts, sweetened condensed milk, maple syrup, and remaining 1 tsp. cinnamon with a mixer on medium until well combined. Spread filling over crust in pan. Sprinkle evenly with reserved topping.
4. Bake 35 to 40 minutes or until topping is light brown. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Drizzle Powdered Sugar Icing over cooled uncut bars. Use the edges of the foil to lift uncut bars out of the pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. **Makes 32 bars.**

PER BAR *203 cal., 10 g fat (6 g sat. fat), 25 mg chol., 72 mg sodium, 25 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

MAPLE-APPLE OAT BARS

SPRITZ IT UP

Classic spritz is the vintage cookie that never goes out of style. Versions of the signature cookie press have been cranking out cookies for hundreds of years—but none of those creations compares to the fun flavors we crafted for our lineup. S'mores? Chocolate-espresso? Neapolitan? Yes to all!

CITRUS SPRITZ,
page 101

PUMP IT UP

After measuring 1 cup pumpkin, you'll have about ¾ cup pumpkin left over in the can. Don't throw it out! Pump up the flavor (and vitamin content) of cream cheese, yogurt, or sour cream by stirring in a spoonful. Or add a scoop with a dash of pumpkin pie spice to a smoothie or vanilla milk shake. Yum!

PUMPKIN PIE SPRITZ

PREP 45 minutes BAKE 6 minutes per batch at 400°F
STAND 30 minutes

- 1 cup butter, softened
- ½ cup sugar
- 1½ tsp. pumpkin pie spice
- ¾ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup sugar
- 4 tsp. pumpkin pie spice
- ½ cup butter, melted

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add next four ingredients (through salt). Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in pumpkin, egg, and vanilla. Beat in flour.

2. Force unchilled dough through a cookie press 2 inches apart onto an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 6 to 8 minutes or until edges are firm and starting to brown. Remove; cool on wire racks.

3. In a small bowl combine ½ cup sugar and 4 tsp. pumpkin pie spice. Dip tops of cookies in melted butter and then in sugar-spice mixture. Let stand about 30 minutes until dry.

Makes 70 cookies.

PER COOKIE *68 cal., 4 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 13 mg chol., 55 mg sodium, 7 g carb., 1 g pro.*

S'MORES SPRITZ-WICHES

PREP 30 minutes
BAKE 6 minutes per batch at 375°F

- 1½ cups butter, softened
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup graham cracker crumbs
- Cinnamon-sugar (optional)
- Kisses milk chocolate miniatures
- 1 recipe Marshmallow Crème Filling

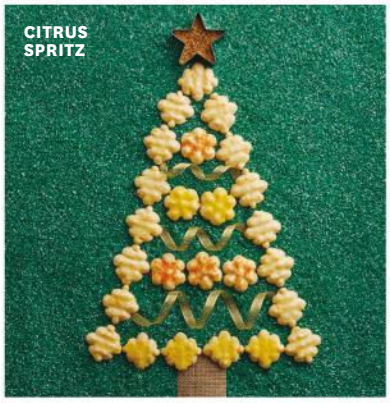
1. Preheat oven to 375°F. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add granulated sugar, baking powder, and cinnamon. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg and vanilla. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour and the graham cracker crumbs.
2. Force unchilled dough through a cookie press fitted with a flower plate 1 inch apart onto ungreased cookie sheets. If desired, sprinkle cookies with cinnamon-sugar. Bake about 6 minutes or until edges are firm but not brown. Immediately press a milk chocolate Kiss into center of half of the cookies. Remove cookies; cool on wire racks.
3. Spread Marshmallow Crème Filling on the bottoms of the plain cookies. Top with chocolate-topped cookies, bottom sides down. **Makes 62 sandwich cookies.**

MARSHMALLOW CRÈME FILLING In a large bowl beat 1 cup butter, softened, and 1 Tbsp. vanilla with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add 4 cups powdered sugar and one 13-oz. jar marshmallow crème. Beat until well combined. If needed, beat in milk to reach spreading consistency.

PER SANDWICH COOKIE *162 cal., 8 g fat (5 g sat. fat), 23 mg chol., 77 mg sodium, 22 g carb., 1 g pro.*

ESPRESSO YOURSELF!
You'll have plenty of espresso powder left in the jar from this recipe. If drinking cups of instant espresso isn't your thing, consider adding some of the powder to any of your favorite chocolate recipes for mocha flavor. When experimenting, start small—about 1 teaspoon per recipe—until you know how much is right.

CHOCOLATE-ESPRESSO SPRITZ



PICK A DISK

Whether old or new, cookie presses come with a selection of plates to swap for different shapes. Get creative and use any style you like for these recipes.

CITRUS SPRITZ

PREP 40 minutes
BAKE 6 minutes per batch at 375°F
STAND 20 minutes

- ¾ cup butter, softened
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- ⅔ cup granulated sugar
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. clementine zest
- 1 tsp. lemon zest
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- ⅓ cup finely ground slivered almonds
- 1 recipe Citrus Icing
- Yellow and/or orange sugar

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Beat in sour cream. Add granulated sugar, baking powder, and salt. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg, clementine zest, and lemon zest. Beat in flour and ground almonds.
2. Force the unchilled dough through a cookie press 1 inch apart onto ungreased cookie sheets. Bake 6 minutes or until edges are firm but not brown. Remove; cool on wire racks. Dip tops of cookies in Citrus Icing and sprinkle with yellow sugar. Let stand until set. **Makes 92 cookies.**

CITRUS ICING In a small bowl combine 2 cups powdered sugar and 1½ tsp. clementine or lemon zest. Stir in 3 Tbsp. clementine or lemon juice. If needed, stir in enough additional juice to make icing of thin coating consistency.

PER COOKIE *47 cal., 2 g fat (1 g sat. fat), 6 mg chol., 22 mg sodium, 7 g carb., 1 g pro.*

NEAPOLITAN SPRITZ COOKIES

PREP 50 minutes
BAKE 7 minutes per batch at 375°F

- 1½ cups butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla bean paste (info, *p. 23*) or 1 Tbsp. vanilla
- 3½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chopped and melted
- 2 Tbsp. strawberry-flavor gelatin

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add sugar and baking powder. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg and vanilla bean paste until combined. Beat in flour.
2. Divide dough into three portions. In a medium bowl stir melted chocolate into one portion; using your hands, knead until completely combined. In another bowl stir gelatin into second dough portion, kneading until combined. Leave remaining dough plain. (Do not chill dough.)
3. Break off equal pieces of each color dough. Roll pieces into logs and place together to fit into cookie press fitted with a wreath plate. Force through cookie press onto an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake about 7 minutes or until edges are firm and just starting to brown. Remove; cool on wire racks. **Makes 112 cookies.**

PER COOKIE *47 cal., 3 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 8 mg chol., 26 mg sodium, 5 g carb., 1 g pro.*

CHOCOLATE-ESPRESSO SPRITZ

PREP 40 minutes
BAKE 6 minutes per batch at 375°F

- 1½ cups butter, softened
- ½ 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. instant espresso coffee powder
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 3¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 recipe Espresso Glaze (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. In a large bowl beat butter and cream cheese with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add sugar, cocoa powder, baking powder, and espresso powder. Beat on medium until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg and vanilla. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour.
2. Force unchilled dough through a cookie press fitted with a star plate onto ungreased cookie sheets. Bake 6 minutes or until edges are firm. Remove; cool on wire racks. If desired, dip tops in Espresso Glaze and sprinkle with additional espresso powder. **Makes 140 cookies.**

ESPRESSO GLAZE Stir together 1½ cups powdered sugar, 1 tsp. instant espresso cocoa powder, and milk, 1 tsp. at a time, to reach a glaze consistency.

PER COOKIE *45 cal., 3 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 7 mg chol., 23 mg sodium, 5 g carb., 1 g pro.*

CHEESECAKE BARS

These are a cheesecake-lover's dream come true—decadent richness in the easy-to-hold form of bars. Since each bar is smaller than a slice of cheesecake, you can taste more than one flavor, including eggnog, salted caramel, maple, even a sopaipilla version.

CHOCOLATE-PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE BARS, *page 109*

SALTED TRUFFLE CHEESECAKE BARS, *page 105*

SOPAIPILLA CHEESECAKE BARS

PREP 20 minutes BAKE 30 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 16.3-oz. pkg. (8) refrigerated large flaky biscuits (such as Pillsbury Grands! Flaky Layers)
- 2 8-oz. tubs cream cheese spread with brown sugar and cinnamon (tip, *below right*)
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 tsp. orange zest (optional)
- ¼ cup butter, melted
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- 1½ tsp. ground cinnamon

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. Separate each biscuit in half horizontally. Place half of the biscuits in the bottom of the prepared pan. Press and pinch biscuits together to cover the bottom of the pan.

2. For filling, in a medium bowl beat cream cheese, vanilla, and orange zest with a mixer on medium until smooth. Spread cream cheese filling evenly over biscuit layer in pan. Gently stretch remaining biscuits with your fingers until about ⅛ inch thick. Gently layer biscuits over the filling (biscuits will overlap slightly). Pour the melted butter over the top. In a small bowl stir together granulated sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle evenly over top.

3. Bake 30 minutes or until golden brown. Cool slightly. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. Serve warm or chill and serve within 24 hours. If desired, drizzle with *honey* just before serving. **Makes 32 bars.**

PER BAR *101 cal., 5 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 5 mg chol., 182 mg sodium, 10 g carb., 2 g pro.*

TIP

If you can't find cream cheese spread with brown sugar and cinnamon, substitute two 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese and beat ½ cup packed brown sugar and 1 Tbsp. ground cinnamon into the cream cheese with the vanilla and, if using, orange zest.

SOPAIPILLA CHEESECAKE BARS

SALTED TRUFFLE CHEESECAKE BARS

PREP 35 minutes BAKE 25 minutes at 350°F
CHILL 2 hours

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 8 oz. semisweet chocolate, chopped, or 1⅓ cups semisweet chocolate pieces
- 1 10-oz. pkg. shortbread cookies, crushed (about 2¾ cups)
- ¼ cup butter, melted
- 1 14-oz. pkg. vanilla caramels, unwrapped (50 caramels) (tip, *p. 64*)
- 3 Tbsp. milk
- 2 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- Flaked sea salt (such as Maldon brand)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. In a small bowl microwave chocolate 1 minute or until melted and smooth, stirring every 30 seconds. Cool slightly.
2. In a medium bowl combine crushed cookies and melted butter. Press firmly into bottom of the prepared pan.
3. In a medium bowl combine caramels and milk. Microwave 2 to 2½ minutes or until caramels are melted and smooth, stirring every 30 seconds. Set aside ⅓ cup of the caramel mixture; cover and chill until needed. Drizzle remaining caramel mixture over the crust in the pan (will not coat evenly).
4. In a large bowl beat cream cheese, sugar, and vanilla with a mixer on medium until smooth. Beat in the melted chocolate. Beat in eggs, one at a time, beating on low after each. Spread filling evenly over crust.
5. Bake 25 minutes or until edges are puffed and center is set. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Cover and chill 2 to 24 hours. Just before serving, uncover and reheat reserved caramel mixture in the microwave 30 to 60 seconds or until of drizzling consistency, stirring every 30 seconds. Use foil to lift bars out of pan. Cut into bars; drizzle with caramel mixture and sprinkle with salt.Store in the refrigerator. **Makes 32 bars.**
PER BAR *208 cal., 12 g fat (7 g sat. fat), 36 mg chol., 214 mg sodium, 22 g carb., 3 g pro.*

COCONUT-TANGERINE CHEESECAKE BARS

PREP 40 minutes
BAKE 32 minutes at 350°F
COOL 15 minutes CHILL 2 hours

- 1 cup raw chip coconut or unsweetened shredded coconut
- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1½ cups graham cracker crumbs
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 tsp. tangerine, clementine, or orange zest
- ⅓ cup tangerine, clementine, or orange juice (set aside)
- ½ cup butter, melted
- 2 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- ⅔ cup sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup orange marmalade

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Spread coconut in the prepared pan. Bake, uncovered, 4 to 5 minutes or until toasted, stirring once. Remove coconut from pan; cool. Lightly coat foil in pan with cooking spray.
2. For crust, place ⅓ cup of the coconut in a food processor. Add graham cracker crumbs, ¼ cup sugar, and tangerine zest. Add melted butter to processor and pulse until mixture begins to cling together. Press into the pan. Bake 8 minutes or until light golden brown. Cool 15 minutes on a wire rack.
3. For filling, in a large bowl beat cream cheese, ⅔ cup sugar, and the vanilla with a mixer on medium until combined. Add tangerine juice; beat until smooth. Stir in eggs. Pour filling over baked crust. Bake 20 minutes or just until center is set. Cool on wire rack. Cover and chill at least 2 hours.
4. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Spread with marmalade. Cut into bars. Sprinkle with remaining coconut. Store in the refrigerator. **Makes 32 bars.**
PER BAR *130 cal., 10 g fat (6 g sat. fat), 34 mg chol., 87 mg sodium, 10 g carb., 2 g pro.*

CRÈME BRÛLÉE CHEESECAKE BARS

PREP 30 minutes
BAKE 35 minutes at 350°F
COOL 1 hour CHILL 2 hours

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 3 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla
- 4 eggs, lightly beaten
- ¼ cup sugar

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. In a large bowl beat the butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add 1 cup sugar and 2 tsp. vanilla. Beat until combined. Add 2 cups flour; beat until mixture comes together (may appear crumbly at first). Press evenly into the prepared pan.
2. In a very large bowl beat the cream cheese with the mixer on medium until smooth. Add 1 cup sugar and 2 Tbsp. flour and beat until combined. Beat in sour cream and 1 Tbsp. vanilla on low just until combined. Beat in eggs on low just until combined. Pour cream cheese mixture over crust.
3. Bake about 35 minutes or until edges are puffed and center is nearly set. Cool completely on a wire rack. Cover and chill for at least 2 hours.
4. Just before serving, sprinkle uncut bars evenly with ¼ cup sugar. Use a culinary torch to evenly brown the sugar on uncut bars.* Cut into bars. Store in refrigerator (sugar topping will soften during storage). **Makes 36 bars.**
***TIP** While the caramelizing won't be as even, you can try using the broiler instead of a torch. Preheat the broiler. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars from pan. Place on a baking sheet. Wrap foil up around edges. Broil 5 inches from the heat 3 minutes or until sugar is browned, rotating pan often to brown sugar evenly (watch sugar very carefully to prevent burning); let cool.

PER BAR *200 cal., 13 g fat (7 g sat. fat), 54 mg chol., 109 mg sodium, 19 g carb., 3 g pro.*

TORCHED!
To get the best color and the most evenly caramelized sugar, a culinary torch is a must. You can buy small culinary torches at most kitchen supply stores or online. Until you get the hang of it, keep the lit torch far enough back from the sugar that you don't burn it. Not ready to invest in a torch? Use the broiler (tip, below right) or omit the sugar and instead top the bars with caramel ice cream topping.

CRÈME BRÛLÉE CHEESECAKE BARS

MAPLE-BOURBON CHEESECAKE BARS

MAPLE-BOURBON CHEESECAKE BARS

PREP 30 minutes
BAKE 39 minutes at 350°F
COOL 1 hour CHILL 2 hours

- Nonstick cooking spray
- ¾ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup finely chopped pecans
- 2 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- ¾ cup pure maple syrup
- 2 Tbsp. bourbon
- 1 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 recipe Maple Drizzle

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray.
2. For crust, in a medium bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Beat in powdered sugar until combined. Add 1½ cups flour and beat on low until mixture begins to cling together. Stir in ½ cup pecans. Press firmly into bottom of the prepared pan. Bake 14 minutes or until very light golden.
3. For filling, in a large bowl beat cream cheese with a mixer on medium until fluffy. Beat in maple syrup, bourbon, 1 Tbsp. flour, and salt until combined. Beat in eggs on low just until combined. Pour filling over baked crust.
4. Bake 25 minutes or until edges are puffed and center is set. Cool on a wire rack. Cover and chill for at least 2 hours. Just before serving, use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. Top each bar with Maple Drizzle. Store untopped bars in refrigerator.
Makes 32 bars.

MAPLE DRIZZLE In a small saucepan stir together ½ cup pure maple syrup and 1 Tbsp. bourbon. Bring to boiling. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, 12 minutes or until reduced to ⅓ cup and slightly thickened; cool. Chill, covered, up to 1 week.

PER BAR *169 cal., 11 g fat (6 g sat. fat), 37 mg chol., 103 mg sodium, 16 g carb., 2 g pro.*

BOOZY EGGNOG BARS

SOFT IS BETTER

Soften your cream cheese by letting it stand at room temperature 30 minutes. This makes it easier to beat into other ingredients for a smooth, lump-free batter. In a pinch, microwave cream cheese on the defrost setting for 10 seconds at a time, checking after each interval.

BOOZY EGGNOG BARS

PREP 35 minutes BAKE 25 minutes at 350°F
COOL 1 hour CHILL 4 hours

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1¾ cups finely crushed vanilla wafers
- ¼ cup finely chopped walnuts
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- ⅓ cup butter, melted
- 2 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- ⅔ cup eggnog
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 Tbsp. dark rum or eggnog
- ½ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- Freshly grated nutmeg (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. In a medium bowl stir together crushed wafers, walnuts, 1 Tbsp. sugar, and the butter until evenly coated. Press mixture firmly into the bottom of the prepared pan.
2. In a large bowl beat cream cheese with a mixer on medium until smooth. Beat in eggnog, ½ cup sugar, rum, nutmeg, and vanilla until thoroughly combined. Stir in eggs. Pour cream cheese mixture over crust in pan. If desired, lightly dust with additional freshly grated nutmeg.
3. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until edges are puffed and center is set. Cool completely on wire rack. Chill 4 to 24 hours before serving. To serve, use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator. **Makes 36 bars.**

PER BAR *114 cal., 8 g fat (4 g sat. fat), 36 mg chol., 82 mg sodium, 8 g carb., 2 g pro.*

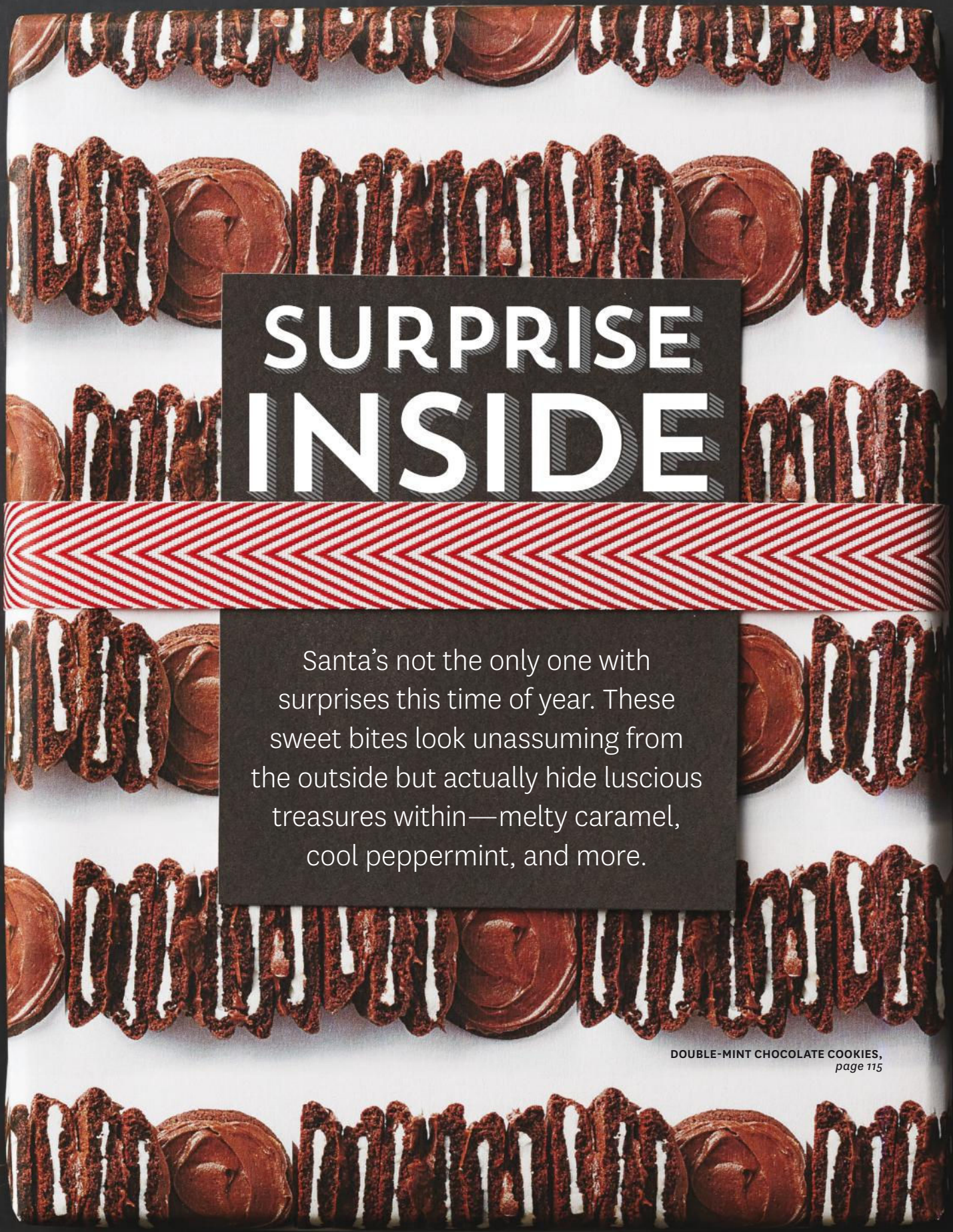
CHOCOLATE-PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE BARS

CHOCOLATE-PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE BARS

PREP 35 minutes
BAKE 35 minutes at 350°F
COOL 1 hour CHILL 2 hours

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1¾ cups (about 35 cookies) finely crushed gingersnaps
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- ⅓ cup butter, melted
- 2 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1½ cups sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 15-oz. can pumpkin
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- ½ tsp. pumpkin pie spice
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ½ cup semisweet chocolate pieces (3 oz.)
- 1 tsp. shortening

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. For crust, in a medium bowl combine gingersnap crumbs and 1 Tbsp. sugar. Stir in melted butter. Firmly pat crumb mixture into the bottom of the prepared pan.
2. For filling, in a large bowl beat cream cheese with a mixer on medium until smooth. Beat in 1½ cups sugar until combined. Add eggs, one at a time, beating on low after each just until combined. Stir in pumpkin, vanilla, pumpkin pie spice, and salt. Spread pumpkin filling evenly over crust.
3. Bake 35 to 40 minutes or until edges are puffed and filling is just set in center. Cool completely in pan on a wire rack.
4. In a small bowl microwave chocolate and shortening 30 to 60 seconds or until melted and smooth, stirring every 30 seconds. Drizzle chocolate over uncut bars. Cover and chill 2 to 24 hours. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars.* Store in refrigerator. **Makes 36 bars.**
***TIP** To cut bars into wedges, cut the 13×9-inch rectangle in half crosswise and in half again lengthwise. Cut wedges from each quarter by cutting pieces at different angles.
PER BAR *146 cal., 8 g fat (4 g sat. fat), 33 mg chol., 112 mg sodium, 17 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*



SURPRISE INSIDE

Santa's not the only one with surprises this time of year. These sweet bites look unassuming from the outside but actually hide luscious treasures within—melty caramel, cool peppermint, and more.

DOUBLE-MINT CHOCOLATE COOKIES, *page 115*

ALMOND PASTRY PILLOWS,
page 113

CARAMEL-STUFFED SNICKERDOODLES

PREP 30 minutes **CHILL** 1 hour
BAKE 10 minutes at 375°F

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1½ cups sugar
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. cream of tartar
- ½ tsp. apple pie spice
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 tsp. apple pie spice
- 20 vanilla caramels, unwrapped

1. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add next five ingredients (through salt). Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in eggs and vanilla until combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour. Cover and chill dough about 1 hour or until easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 375°F. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper. In a shallow dish combine ¼ cup sugar and 2 tsp. apple pie spice. Shape dough into 1½-inch balls (about 2 Tbsp. each). Flatten each ball of dough with the palm of your hand and place a caramel in the center. Wrap the dough completely around the caramel and roll into a ball again. Roll balls in the sugar mixture to coat. Place 2 inches apart on prepared cookie sheets.
3. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until bottoms are light brown. Remove; cool on wire racks. **Makes 20 cookies.**
PER COOKIE *268 cal., 11 g fat (7 g sat. fat), 43 mg chol., 226 mg sodium, 39 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

ALMOND PASTRY PILLOWS

PREP 40 minutes CHILL 1 hour
BAKE 15 minutes at 375°F

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, cut up and softened
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 7- to 8-oz. pkg. or can almond paste
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg white
- 1 egg
- 1 Tbsp. water

1. In a medium bowl beat butter and cream cheese with a mixer on medium until combined. Add flour and salt; beat on low just until combined. Divide dough in half. Cover and chill dough at least 1 hour or until easy to handle.
2. In a medium bowl combine almond paste, granulated sugar, and egg white. Beat with the mixer on medium until nearly smooth.
3. Preheat oven to 375°F. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper. On a floured surface, roll half of the dough to a 14×8-inch rectangle (keep remaining dough chilled). Cut dough into 28 two-inch squares. Arrange squares 1 inch apart on prepared cookie sheets. Spoon rounded measuring teaspoons of almond filling onto centers of squares.
4. In a small bowl lightly beat together egg and the water. Brush edges of squares with egg mixture. Roll remaining dough to a 14×8-inch rectangle and cut into 2-inch squares. Place squares over the filled squares. Lightly press edges together; seal edges with tines of a fork. Brush tops with egg mixture. If desired, sprinkle pillows with *sliced almonds* and/or *coarse sugar*. Bake 15 to 20 minutes or until golden. Remove; cool on wire racks. **Makes 28 cookies.**
PER COOKIE *162 cal., 12 g fat (6 g sat. fat), 32 mg chol., 104 mg sodium, 13 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

CHOCOLATE-HAZELNUT PINWHEELS

PREP 40 minutes CHILL 1 hour 30 minutes
BAKE 9 minutes per batch at 350°F

- ¾ cup butter, softened
- 3 oz. cream cheese, softened
- ⅔ cup sugar
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- ⅔ cup chocolate-hazelnut spread
- 32 whole hazelnuts, toasted (tip, *right*)

1. In a large bowl beat butter and cream cheese with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add sugar, baking powder, and salt. Beat on medium 2 minutes, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg and vanilla until combined. Beat in flour and cocoa powder. Divide dough in half. Cover and chill 1½ hours or until easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F. Roll each half of the dough into a 10-inch square. With a pastry wheel or sharp knife, cut each square into sixteen 2½-inch squares. Place squares 1 inch apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. With a knife, cut 1-inch slits from each corner to center. Spoon 1 tsp. of the chocolate-hazelnut spread in each center. Fold every other tip into center to form a pinwheel. Lightly press a hazelnut into the center where the corners meet.
3. Bake about 9 minutes or until edges are firm and cookies are slightly puffed. Cool on cookie sheet 1 minute. Remove; cool on wire racks. **Makes 32 cookies.**
PER COOKIE *139 cal., 8 g fat (4 g sat. fat), 20 mg chol., 73 mg sodium, 15 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

TIP
To toast hazelnuts, preheat oven to 350°F. Spread hazelnuts in a shallow baking pan. Bake 5 to 10 minutes or until lightly browned, shaking pan once or twice to avoid burning. If desired, rub the warm nuts in a dry dish towel to remove skins.

CHOCOLATE-STUFFED S'MORES COOKIES

PREP 25 minutes
BAKE 12 minutes at 350°F

- ½ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup shortening
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ¾ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- 2 eggs
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla
- 2¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 3 graham cracker rectangles, coarsely broken (1 cup)
- 16 Kisses milk chocolates
- 8 large marshmallows, halved crosswise
- ⅓ cup graham cracker crumbs

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line two cookie sheets with parchment paper. In a large bowl beat butter and shortening with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add brown sugar, baking soda, salt, and baking powder. Beat on medium 2 minutes, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Beat in flour just until combined. Stir in the coarsely broken graham crackers.
2. Shape dough into sixteen 2-inch balls. Make a small, deep indentation in each ball and stuff with a Kiss. Press dough around the Kiss to completely cover, forming into a ball. Place balls 2 inches apart on prepared cookie sheets.
3. Bake 8 minutes. Place marshmallow halves on cookies. Sprinkle the marshmallows with graham cracker crumbs. Bake 4 to 6 minutes more or until marshmallows are softened and edges of cookies are just light brown (cookies may not appear set). Cool cookies completely on cookie sheets.
Makes 16 cookies.
PER COOKIE *307 cal., 15 g fat (6 g sat. fat), 40 mg chol., 294 mg sodium, 40 g carb., 1 g fiber, 4 g pro.*

DOUBLE-MINT CHOCOLATE COOKIES

PREP 1 hour **CHILL** 1 hour
BAKE 10 minutes per batch at 350°F

- ¾ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 egg
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 24 small (1½- to 2-inch) chocolate-covered cream-filled mint patties, unwrapped and chilled
- Melted chocolate, cooled to room temperature (optional)

1. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add both sugars, baking soda, and salt. Beat on medium 2 minutes, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg until combined. Beat in the cocoa powder and as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour. Cover and chill dough about 1 hour or until easy to handle.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Divide dough into 24 equal pieces (about 1½ Tbsp. each). Working with one piece of dough at a time, cut the piece in half. Flatten each piece into a circle, just larger than the mint patty. Put a mint patty on top of one dough circle; place the other circle on top. Press the dough around the patty to seal, making sure there are no openings. Place on prepared cookie sheet. Repeat with remaining dough and patties.
3. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or just until set. Cool on cookie sheets 2 minutes. Remove; cool on wire racks. If desired, spread lightly with melted chocolate. **Makes 24 cookies.**
PER COOKIE *161 cal., 7 g fat (5 g sat. fat), 23 mg chol., 129 mg sodium, 24 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

BLONDIES MADE BETTER

What's a brownie without chocolate? A blondie! Rich, buttery, moist, almost caramel in flavor—the list of decadent descriptors goes on and on. To make this great bar even better, we added fun flavors and layers just right for a holiday celebration.

PUMPKIN-SWIRL BLONDIES, *page 118*

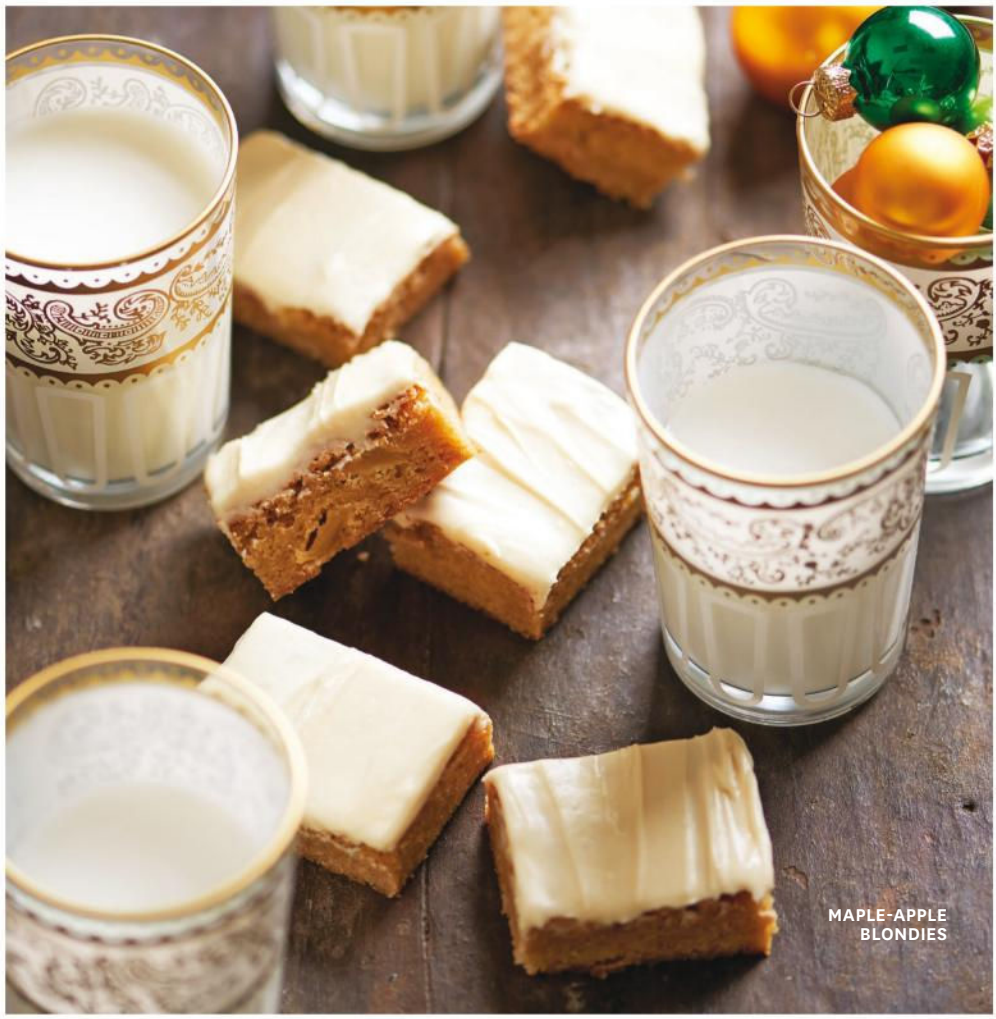
PUMPKIN-SWIRL BLONDIES

PUMPKIN-SWIRL BLONDIES

PREP 25 minutes
BAKE 25 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- ½ 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1¾ cups packed brown sugar
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 3 eggs
- ⅔ cup canned pumpkin
- ¾ cup butter
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- 1 cup almond toffee bits

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. In a medium bowl beat cream cheese, ¼ cup of the brown sugar, and the cinnamon with a mixer on medium until smooth. Beat in one of the eggs. Stir in pumpkin.
2. In a large bowl microwave butter 1 minute or until melted. Stir in remaining 1½ cups brown sugar. Stir in remaining two eggs and the vanilla. Stir in flour, baking powder, and baking soda. Stir in toffee bits. Set aside ½ cup of the dough. Spread remaining dough into the prepared pan. Top dough with spoonfuls of pumpkin mixture; use the back of a spoon to make swirls in the pumpkin mixture. Top with small spoonfuls of reserved dough.
3. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until top is golden and pumpkin mixture appears set. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator.
Makes 32 bars.
PER BAR *174 cal., 7 g fat (5 g sat. fat), 34 mg chol., 118 mg sodium, 23 g carb., 2 g pro.*



MAPLE-APPLE BLONDIES

MAPLE-APPLE BLONDIES

PREP 35 minutes
BAKE 25 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- ¾ cup butter
- 2 medium apples, peeled (if desired), cored, and chopped (1¾ cups)
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup pure maple syrup
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- 1 recipe Maple Icing

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. In a medium saucepan melt 1 Tbsp. of the butter over medium heat. Add apples; cook about 12 minutes or until tender, stirring occasionally. Remove apples from saucepan.
2. In the same saucepan melt remaining butter over medium heat. Remove from heat. Stir in brown sugar, granulated sugar, and maple syrup until smooth. Stir in eggs until combined; stir in vanilla. Stir in flour, baking powder, salt, and baking soda. Stir in cooked apples. Spread batter evenly in the prepared pan.
3. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until evenly browned and edges are puffed. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Spread Maple Icing over uncut bars. Let stand until icing is set. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.
Makes 36 bars.
MAPLE ICING In a small bowl stir together 2 cups powdered sugar, ¼ cup pure maple syrup, and 2 Tbsp. butter, melted. Stir in enough milk (about 2 Tbsp.) to make icing of thin spreading consistency.
PER BAR *152 cal., 5 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 22 mg chol., 97 mg sodium, 27 g carb., 1 g pro.*

BUTTERY BARS TOPPED WITH A SPICED SUGAR SPRINKLE. NEED WE SAY MORE?

SUGAR AND SPICE BLONDIES

PREP 20 minutes
BAKE 25 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice or apple pie spice
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- 2 cups packed brown sugar
- ⅔ cup butter
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. pumpkin pie spice or apple pie spice
- 1 Tbsp. butter, melted

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 9-inch square baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. In a medium bowl stir together the next four ingredients (through baking soda).
2. In a medium saucepan cook and stir brown sugar and the ⅔ cup butter over medium heat until butter is melted and mixture is smooth. Remove from heat; cool slightly. Stir in eggs and vanilla. Stir in flour mixture until combined.
3. Pour batter into the prepared pan, spreading evenly. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool slightly in pan on a wire rack.
4. In a small bowl stir together the granulated sugar and 1 tsp. pumpkin pie spice. Brush warm uncut bars with the 1 Tbsp. melted butter and sprinkle with the sugar-spice mixture; cool completely. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. **Makes 24 bars.**

PER BAR *131 cal., 1 g fat (1 g sat. fat), 18 mg chol., 52 mg sodium, 28 g carb., 2 g pro.*

DIY SPICE

To make 1 tsp. of your own pumpkin pie spice, combine ½ tsp. ground cinnamon, ¼ tsp. ground ginger, ¼ tsp. ground allspice, and ⅛ tsp. ground nutmeg. Or to make it easier, just replace each 1 tsp. pumpkin pie spice with 1 tsp. ground cinnamon for a snickerdoodle effect.

PEPPERMINT BLONDIES

PREP 30 minutes **BAKE** 28 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 12 oz. white chocolate, chopped
- ½ cup butter
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 tsp. peppermint extract
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup miniature semisweet chocolate pieces
- 1 recipe Peppermint Frosting
- Coarsely crushed striped round peppermint candies (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. In a medium saucepan heat and stir white chocolate over low heat until melted and smooth. Remove from heat; stir in butter until melted. Whisk in granulated sugar, eggs, vanilla, and peppermint extract until smooth. Stir in the flour until combined. Spread batter evenly in the prepared pan.

2. Bake 28 to 30 minutes or until top is light brown and sides begin to pull away from pan. Immediately sprinkle semisweet chocolate pieces evenly over bars. Cool in pan on a wire rack.

3. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Spread Peppermint Frosting evenly over cooled bars. If desired, sprinkle with crushed peppermint candies. Cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator up to 3 days. **Makes 32 bars.**

PER BAR *273 cal., 14 g fat (9 g sat. fat), 39 mg chol., 94 mg sodium, 34 g carb., 3 g pro.*

PEPPERMINT FROSTING In a small saucepan heat and stir 6 oz. chopped white baking chocolate over low heat until melted and smooth. Let cool until lukewarm. In a large bowl combine ½ cup butter, softened, and 1¾ cups powdered sugar. Beat with a mixer on low until combined. Beat in ⅓ cup sour cream, ½ tsp. vanilla, ½ tsp. peppermint extract, and ¼ tsp. salt until combined. Beat in 1¾ cups additional powdered sugar. Beat in white chocolate until combined.

STEP-BY-STEP: WHITE CHOCOLATE

There are two cardinal rules to working with white chocolate. First, only use products that list cocoa butter in the ingredient list. (White baking pieces are a completely different product that will yield different results.) Second, slow and steady does it when it comes to melting white chocolate. Here's why.

SLOW MELT
White chocolate is super finicky, so keep the heat very low and stir it constantly until smooth.

TOO FAR!
Overheating white chocolate causes it to seize and get clumpy or grainy. If this happens, discard the white chocolate and start over.

SALTED PEANUT-BUTTER-AND-CHOCOLATE BLONDIES

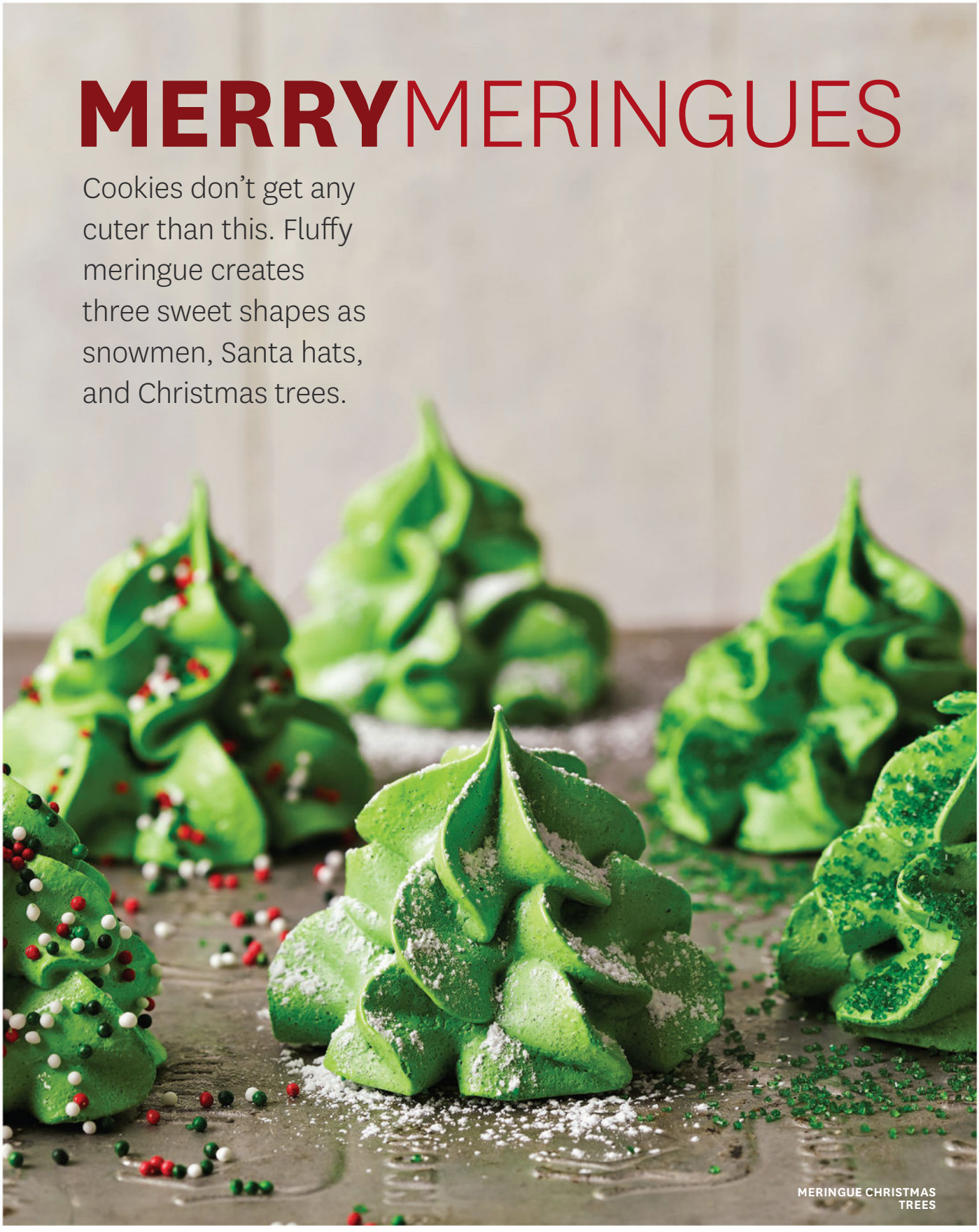
PREP 25 minutes
BAKE 20 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- ½ cup butter
- ⅓ cup creamy peanut butter
- 2 cups packed brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- 1 cup salted and roasted peanuts, chopped
- 1 5.25- to 5.32-oz. pkg. dark 60% cacao chocolate squares (such as Ghirardelli brand), broken into pieces
- Flaked sea salt

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. In a medium saucepan melt butter and peanut butter over medium heat. Stir in brown sugar. Stir in eggs and vanilla until combined. Stir in flour, baking powder, and baking soda. Stir in peanuts. Pat dough evenly into the prepared pan.
2. Bake 18 minutes. Top evenly with broken chocolate squares. Bake 2 minutes more or until evenly brown and edges are puffed. Sprinkle with sea salt. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of the pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. **Makes 36 bars.**
PER BAR *157 cal., 7 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 18 mg chol., 147 mg sodium, 21 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

MERRYMERINGUES

Cookies don't get any cuter than this. Fluffy meringue creates three sweet shapes as snowmen, Santa hats, and Christmas trees.



MERINGUE CHRISTMAS TREES

MERINGUE SNOWMEN

PREP 1 hour BAKE 1 hour at 200°F STAND 30 minutes

- 3 egg whites
- ½ tsp. vanilla or ¼ tsp. almond extract
- ¼ tsp. cream of tartar
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- ¾ cup sugar
- Orange jimmies (optional)
- Melted chocolate (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 200°F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl beat egg whites, vanilla, cream of tartar, and salt with a mixer on medium until soft peaks form (tips curl). Gradually add sugar, about 1 Tbsp. at a time, beating on high until stiff peaks form (tips stand straight).
3. Carefully spoon meringue into a new disposable pastry bag fitted with a large round tip. Pipe meringue into snowmen shapes about 1¼ inches tall, piping two to three balls that are larger at the bottom and get smaller toward the top. If desired, carefully place an orange jimmy in each snowman for a nose. Dip a small spoon or butter knife in hot water and lightly round the snowmen tops.
4. Bake 1 hour or until meringues are set but not quite firm. Turn oven off and let meringue cookies stand in oven 30 minutes. Carefully remove cookies from parchment. Cool on wire racks. If desired, spoon melted chocolate into a pastry bag and snip a very small hole in one of the corners. Pipe dots for eyes and buttons and twiglike arms along the sides. **Makes 50 cookies.**

BIG MERINGUE SNOWMEN Prepare as directed except pipe the meringue into 2¼-inch-tall snowmen. Increase baking time to 1½ hours. **Makes about 25 cookies.**

MERINGUE SANTA HATS Prepare as directed except after all the sugar has been added in Step 2, beat in red food coloring paste or gel (tip, *right*) Spoon meringue into a new disposable pastry bag fitted with a large round tip. Pipe meringue into 1½-inch-tall hat shapes that are wider at the base and narrower at the top, pulling top part to the side to create a hat tip. If desired, sprinkle with red sugar. Bake and cool as directed (if making larger hats, bake 1½ hours as directed for Big Meringue Snowmen). If desired, for headbands and pom-poms, dip tips and bases in melted white chocolate then in white nonpareils.

MERINGUE CHRISTMAS TREES Prepare as directed except after all the sugar has been added in Step 2, beat in green food coloring paste or gel. Spoon meringue into a new disposable pastry bag fitted with a large star or round tip. Pipe meringue into 1½-inch-tall spirals that are wider at the base and narrower at the top. Lightly sprinkle trees with nonpareils, jimmies, or other sprinkles. Bake and cool as directed (if making larger trees, bake 1½ hours as directed for Big Meringue Snowmen). If desired, sift with powdered sugar to create a snowy effect.

TO STORE Layer cookies between sheets of waxed paper in an airtight container; cover. Store at room temperature up to 3 days or freeze up to 3 months.

PER COOKIE *13 cal., 0 g fat, 0 mg chol., 9 mg sodium, 3 g carb., 0 g fiber, 0 g pro.*

RULES, RULES, RULES

The most important rule of meringue: Wash, wash, wash. Even a bit of residual oil on your utensils can deflate meringue, preventing those lovely stiff peaks. So before you start, wash everything with hot soapy water. When piping the meringue, it's best to use a new disposable pastry bag since oils are notorious for hanging out in pastry bags even after thorough washing.

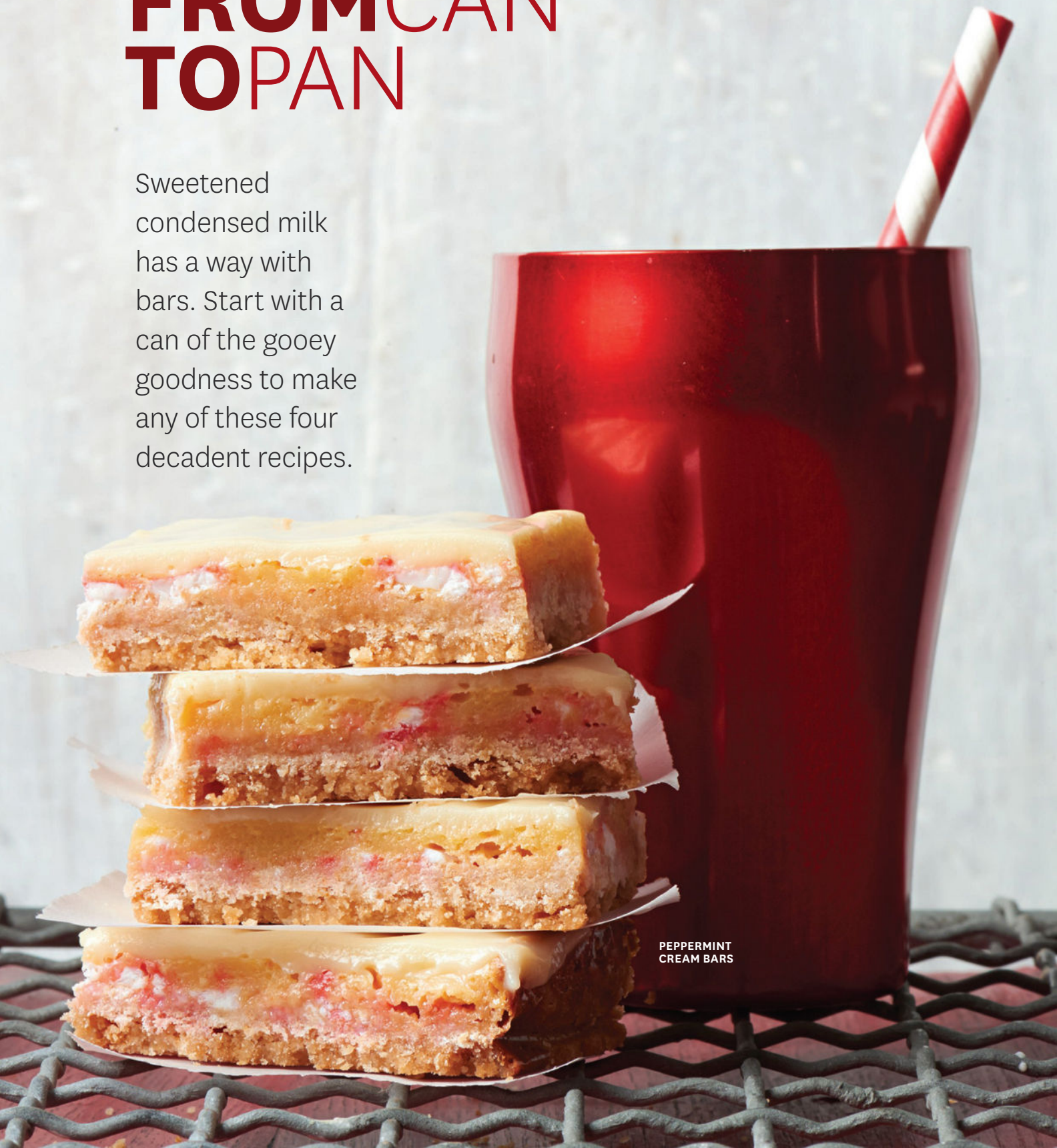
BIG MERINGUE SNOWMEN

You'll need to use quite a bit of red food coloring paste or gel to get a true red color, which can affect the flavor. If desired, look for no-taste red food coloring paste (such as Wilton brand); however, it won't produce the same deep red color.

MERINGUE SANTA HATS

FROMCAN **TO**PAN

Sweetened condensed milk has a way with bars. Start with a can of the gooey goodness to make any of these four decadent recipes.



PEPPERMINT CREAM BARS

PEPPERMINT CREAM BARS

PREP 30 minutes
BAKE 27 minutes at 350°F
COOL 1 hour
CHILL 1 hour 30 minutes

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 17.5-oz. pkg. sugar cookie mix
- 2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- ½ cup butter, cut up
- 4 egg yolks
- 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- ½ tsp. peppermint extract
- ½ cup crushed peppermint candies
- 1 recipe White Chocolate Ganache

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending the foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray.
2. For crust, in a large bowl stir together cookie mix and flour. Using a pastry blender, cut in butter until mixture resembles fine crumbs. Press crumb mixture evenly onto the bottom of the prepared pan. Bake 12 to 15 minutes or until edges are lightly browned.
3. Meanwhile, for filling, in a medium bowl whisk together egg yolks, sweetened condensed milk, and peppermint extract. Stir in crushed candies. Carefully pour filling over hot crust.
4. Bake 15 to 20 minutes more or until filling is set. Cool in pan on a wire rack 1 hour. Cover and chill 30 minutes or until completely cool.
5. Pour White Chocolate Ganache over uncut bars, spreading evenly. Cover and chill about 1 hour more or until firm. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to cutting board. Cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator. **Makes 36 bars.**

WHITE CHOCOLATE GANACHE In a medium saucepan bring ¼ cup heavy cream just to boiling over medium-high heat. Remove from heat. Add 6 oz. chopped white baking chocolate with cocoa butter (do not stir). Let stand 5 minutes. Stir until smooth. Cool 5 minutes.

PER BAR *163 cal., 7 g fat (4 g sat. fat), 34 mg chol., 75 mg sodium, 23 g carb., 0 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

LIME-MACAROON BARS

LIME-MACAROON BARS

PREP 20 minutes
BAKE 40 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 2 limes
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1¾ cups sugar
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 3 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 egg white, lightly beaten
- 1 14-oz. pkg. flaked coconut (5⅓ cups)
- 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray. Remove 1 Tbsp. zest and squeeze 3 Tbsp. juice from the limes.
2. For crust, in a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add sugar, baking powder, salt, and the lime zest. Beat until light and fluffy, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in the three eggs, vanilla, and lime juice until combined. Beat in flour. Spread batter evenly in the prepared pan. Bake about 15 minutes or until set and dry. Remove from oven.
3. Meanwhile, in a large bowl combine egg white, coconut, and condensed milk. Spoon coconut mixture evenly over hot crust. Bake about 25 minutes more or until topping is golden brown. Cool uncut bars in pan on a wire rack. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Place on a cutting board. Cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator. **Makes 48 bars.**

PER BAR *161 cal., 7 g fat (5 g sat. fat), 25 mg chol., 115 mg sodium, 22 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

THE SWEET STUFF

Sweetened condensed milk is a thick, sticky combo of whole milk and up to 50 percent sugar. The mixture is boiled until a good portion of the water is evaporated, making it syruplike in its consistency. Just be sure not to mistake it with evaporated milk, which has no added sugar. Because of its low water content, sweetened condensed milk adds delicious gooey texture to sweet treats.

MARCONA ALMOND-TOFFEE BARS

MARCONA ALMOND-TOFFEE BARS

PREP 15 minutes BAKE 25 minutes at 325°F

- 1½ cups quick-cooking rolled oats
- ½ cup finely crushed graham crackers
- ½ cup butter
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate pieces (6 oz.)
- 1 cup almond toffee bits
- 1 cup chopped Marcona almonds or sliced almonds
- 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk

1. Preheat oven to 325°F. Line a 13×9-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan.
2. For the crust, in a medium bowl stir together oats, graham cracker crumbs, and butter. Press crumb mixture into the bottom of the prepared pan using the back of a large spoon.
3. Sprinkle chocolate pieces, toffee bits, and almonds evenly over crust. Evenly drizzle with sweetened condensed milk.
4. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until center is bubbly and almonds are toasted. Remove from oven and immediately run a thin knife between uncut bars and foil to loosen. Cool in pan on a wire rack. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator. **Makes 48 bars.**

PER BAR *119 cal., 6 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 9 mg chol., 57 mg sodium, 13 g carb., 1 g fiber, 2 g pro.*

GOOEY CHOCOLATE-CARAMEL BARS

PREP 25 minutes
BAKE 35 minutes at 350°F

- Nonstick cooking spray
- ⅔ cup butter, softened
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 egg
- ½ tsp. vanilla
- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup semisweet chocolate pieces
- ¼ cup chopped pecans or walnuts, toasted (tip, *p. 62*)
- 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 5.32-oz. pkg. (10 squares) milk chocolate and caramel squares (such as Ghirardelli brand)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 9-inch square baking pan with foil, extending foil over edges of the pan. Lightly coat foil with cooking spray.
2. In a large bowl beat butter with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Add brown sugar, baking soda, and salt. Beat until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in egg and vanilla until combined. Beat in flour. Stir in chocolate pieces and nuts.
3. Press 2½ cups of the dough into the bottom of the prepared pan, holding foil as you spread. Bake 10 minutes. Pour sweetened condensed milk over top of dough. Arrange chocolate squares over milk layer. Drop remaining dough by teaspoons on the filling.
4. Bake about 25 minutes or until top is golden and milk is bubbly. Cool uncut bars in pan on a wire rack. Use edges of foil to lift uncut bars out of pan. Transfer to a cutting board. Cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator. **Makes 24 bars.**

PER BAR *226 cal., 10 g fat (6 g sat. fat), 28 mg chol., 127 mg sodium, 31 g carb., 1 g fiber, 3 g pro.*

GOOEY CHOCOLATE-CARAMEL BARS

BAKING CLASS
THE BASICS

Christmas cookies are easy to make when you know all the steps. Look here for the top tips and tricks from our Better Homes and Gardens® Test Kitchen—from the right way to measure your flour to fun and creative decorating ideas.

PREPWORK

For the best baking results, follow these preparation tips.

LINING PANS WITH FOIL

There's no doubt about it; the easiest way to get bars, brownies, or fudge out of a pan is to line the pan with foil. The foil also makes cleanup easy. Here's how to do it:

1. Tear a piece of foil larger than the pan. Flip the pan over. Shape the foil around the pan bottom, folding the foil smoothly around the corners and allowing for an overhang on all edges.

2. Turn the pan over; fit the shaped foil into it. Leave an inch overhang for "handles" to lift the bars from the pan.

WORKING WITH CITRUS

To get the most juice out of a citrus fruit, use your hand to firmly press down on the fruit while rolling it back and forth. Rolling breaks apart the inside membranes and allows the juices to release better.

If your recipe calls for citrus zest, the best tool for the job is a rasp grater, *above*. Rub the fruit along the grater, removing the flavorful outside layer but leaving behind the bitter white pith beneath it. Turn and reposition the fruit to evenly remove the zest.

After removing the zest, cut the fruit in half crosswise. Use a reamer, *above*, or other citrus juicer to extract the juice. If you don't have either tool, insert a fork into the middle of a fruit half. Squeeze the fruit while lifting the fork up and down.

MEASURING FLOUR

Unlike brown sugar, flour requires a light hand when measuring. Start by lightly stirring the flour in the bag or canister with a fork to fluff and aerate it. Lightly spoon the flour into a dry measuring cup until it is overflowing. Use the back of a table knife to level off the top. Packing flour into the cup will increase the amount of flour in your recipe and result in dry cookies.

BROWN SUGAR

To measure brown sugar accurately, pack it firmly into a dry measuring cup and level off the sugar even with the top of the cup.

MEASURING LIQUIDS

To measure liquids, get down at eye level with the cup and fill to the measuring line. For easy cleanup, coat the cup with cooking spray before adding sticky molasses or honey.

MELTED VS. SOFTENED BUTTER

Melted butter is sometimes used instead of oil in a recipe or brushed over dough. Microwave butter on 50 percent power for 30 seconds at a time until it melts.

For better blending, let butter stand at room temperature for 30 minutes before beating it. Or microwave it on the defrost setting for 15 seconds at a time until spreadable.

SIFTING

POWDERED SUGAR

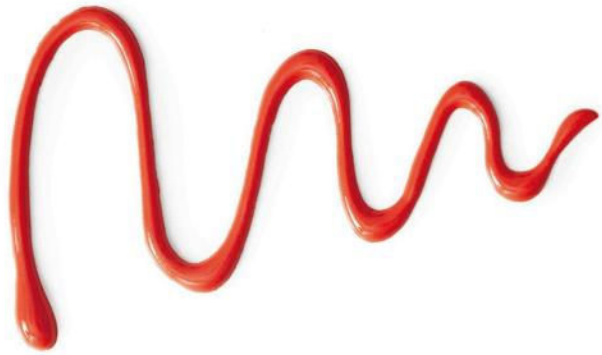
Sifting cookies and bars with powdered sugar creates a lovely topping. Spoon the sugar into a sieve as you hold it over a bowl. Move the sieve over the cookies; tap the sieve gently to dust the cookies. Avoid excessive handling of cookies after sifting.

HOW TO SCRAPE A VANILLA BEAN

To remove the seeds from a vanilla bean pod, use a sharp knife to cut the pod in half lengthwise. Use the tip of the knife blade to scrape out the seeds. Place the spent pod in a sealed jar of sugar for one week to create your own vanilla sugar.

MISE EN PLACE THAT'S THE FRENCH WAY OF SAYING PREP, MEASURE, AND ORGANIZE BEFORE YOU START ANY RECIPE.

FROSTING
RECIPES + TIPS



POWDERED SUGAR ICING

START TO FINISH
10 minutes

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- ¼ tsp. vanilla or almond extract
- 1 Tbsp. milk
- Milk

1. In a small bowl combine powdered sugar, vanilla, and 1 Tbsp. milk. Stir in additional milk, 1 tsp. at a time, until icing reaches drizzling consistency.
Makes about ½ cup.

CHOCOLATE ICING

Prepare as above, except add 2 Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder to the powdered sugar.
PER TBSP. *40 cal., 0 g fat, 0 mg chol., 1 mg sodium, 10 g carb., 0 g fiber, 0 g pro.*

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

The difference between an icing that can be piped with a pastry bag and one that can be spooned on as a glaze is just a few drops of milk. Add your milk very slowly to Powdered Sugar Icing—a small amount goes a long way. If you end up with an icing that is too soft, stir in a small amount of powdered sugar to thicken it.

GLAZE-CONSISTENCY ROYAL ICING

Prepare Royal Icing as directed. Stir in additional warm water, about ½ teaspoon at a time, until icing is the consistency of a thick, spoonable glaze.

ROYAL ICING

START TO FINISH 15 minutes

- 1 lb. powdered sugar (about 4 cups)
- 3 Tbsp. meringue powder (*opposite*)
- ½ tsp. cream of tartar
- ½ cup warm water
- 1 tsp. vanilla

1. In a large bowl stir together powdered sugar, meringue powder, and cream of tartar. Add the warm water and vanilla. Beat with a mixer on low until combined. Beat on high 7 to 10 minutes or until icing is very stiff. If not using immediately, cover bowl with a damp paper towel; cover tightly with plastic wrap (icing will dry out quickly when exposed to air). Chill up to 48 hours. Stir before using.
Makes 3 cups.
PER 2 TBSP. *37 cal., 0 g fat, 0 mg chol., 0 mg sodium, 9 g carb., 0 g fiber, 0 g pro.*

CREAMY FROSTING

START TO FINISH 25 minutes

- 1 cup shortening
- 1½ tsp. vanilla
- ½ tsp. almond extract
- 1 lb. powdered sugar (about 4 cups)
- 3 to 4 Tbsp. milk

1. In a large bowl beat shortening, vanilla, and almond extract with a mixer on medium 30 seconds. Slowly add about half of the powdered sugar, beating well. Add 2 Tbsp. of the milk. Gradually beat in remaining powdered sugar and enough remaining milk to reach spreading consistency. You can freeze this frosting in a freezer container up to 3 months; thaw at room temperature before using.
Makes about 3 cups.
PER 2 TBSP. *151 cal., 9 g fat (2 g sat. fat), 0 mg chol., 2 mg sodium, 19 g carb., 0 g fiber, 0 g pro.*

FOOD COLORING OPTIONS

PASTE There's a lovely range of colors available, but you'll have to visit a hobby store to find this kind of food coloring. A toothpick works best for transferring the paste from the jar to the frosting.

GEL The smooth consistency of gel coloring makes it easy to stir into frosting. AmeriColor is a common brand and can be found on *amazon.com* and in some hobby stores.

LIQUID Found at most grocery stores by the spices, this version comes in only red, blue, green, and yellow. It takes some experimenting, but the colors can be mixed to create new colors.

TIPPEDOFF The two most important pastry bag tips for piping frosting onto cookies are the round tip and the star tip. For cookie decorating, it's best to get tips that have relatively small openings.

SMALL ROUND Use for borders and details such as buttons, faces, and dots.

SMALL STAR
Use for borders and small stars.

THE
CAN PLAN

Purchased frosting is an easy stand-in for Creamy Frosting, or it can be used as a thick glaze. To do this, microwave frosting in a bowl until desired consistency is reached, stirring every 5 to 10 seconds. Spread, drizzle, or dip cookies in frosting. (Frosting won't set up as firmly as Royal Icing after standing.)

MERINGUEPOWDER

Meringue powder is a mixture of pasteurized egg whites, sugar, and edible gums. It is the secret ingredient to making Royal Icing dry quickly with a smooth, hard finish. Look for it in the baking aisle of large supermarkets or in the cake decorating department of hobby and crafts stores.

COLOR
BY THE TUBE

It can take a lot of food coloring to get the deep, rich colors you want in your icings and frostings. If you need the frosting only for smaller accents (such as eyes or outlines), an easy alternative is tubes of already-colored frosting, available at most grocery stores in the baking aisle. This is especially true for black and red frosting; it can be very hard to get those deep, rich colors when stirring in food coloring.

DECORATING TECHNIQUES

SPRINKLE IT ON!

Sugars, glitters, and sprinkles—oh my! Look in hobby stores for a wide range of options or check out the grocery store for the basics.

TOP TO BOTTOM: EDIBLE GLITTER, COLORED SUGAR, PEARLIZED COARSE SUGAR, COARSE SUGAR, NONPAREILS, JIMMIES, SMALL CANDIES

SHAPES WITH SPRINKLES

To create a shape on a frosted cookie, place a cookie cutter on wet icing. Fill inside the cutter with colored sugar or nonpareils. Carefully remove the cutter.

ICING DESIGNS

1. OUTLINE Fill a decorating bag fitted with a small round tip with thick glaze-consistency Royal Icing. Pipe an outline around cookie edges.

2. FLOOD Pipe glaze-consistency Royal Icing into the outline. Use a metal spatula or small paintbrush to spread icing to the piped outline.

3. EMBED Fill a decorating bag fitted with a small round tip with glaze-consistency red Royal Icing. Pipe rows of two red dots each while the white base coat is still wet.

4. DRAG Pull a toothpick through the two dots in each row to create a heart shape.

OMBRÉ EFFECT

Use three or four shades of the same color to create an interesting ombré effect. Outline and flood each section of color as described in "Icing Designs," *opposite*. After adding each shade of icing and before they dry, swirl icings together where two colors meet.

OTHER ICING DESIGNS

Pipe concentric circles in a different color onto the wet base coat, *top left*. Drag a toothpick from center to edge and edge to center to create a spiderweb design, *top right*.

Pipe dots of a second color onto a wet base coat, *above left*. Use a toothpick to swirl the dots into a design, *above right*.

MAKE IT FUN MASTER THESE SIMPLE DECORATING TECHNIQUES AND LET YOUR CREATIVE GENIUS GO.

LUSTER DUST

Add a little shine and shimmer to your cookies with edible luster dust. Look in the cake decorating department of hobby stores to find a range of shades. Use a clean, new artists paintbrush to apply dry dust to dry icing or mix dust with a bit of vodka to make a paste (info, *p. 6*).

OUTLINING **IN SUGAR**

To outline a cookie with colored sugar, start by flooding a cookie with Royal Icing (see "Icing Designs," *opposite*); let cookie stand until icing is dry. Pipe an outline of frosting-consistency Royal Icing around the cookie edges. Sprinkle sugar on wet icing, coating it completely. Tap cookie gently to remove excess colored sugar.

DIANE STEWART

I DID IT!

This loyal *Christmas Cookies* reader shares how she turned her favorite cookies into a profitable business.

Thumbing through the newest issue of *Christmas Cookies* magazine each year is what gets Diane Stewart amped for the holidays. Looking for festive treats her friends and family would love, she bought her first issue back in 1994 (just five years after it was first published in 1989). Over the next 16 years, she collected favorites from each issue and sharpened her skills as a baker, soaking up compliments from family and friends and laughing off suggestions that she start her own bakery.

"I was worried that turning it into a business would take the fun out of baking cookies," she says.

But six years ago, she decided to take the plunge. Her home-based business, Sweet Bites, located in Pittsburgh, has made her realize,

"There's no one who doesn't like cookies!"

"There's no one who doesn't like cookies!"

That statement may be especially true in Pennsylvania, where the cookie table at weddings is almost a necessity, denoting family, good times, fun, and festivity. Cookie tables offer something solitary desserts cannot—variety. "You can eat and sample as many kinds of cookies as you like, rather than eating one big piece of cake or dessert," Diane says. Besides baking for weddings, she uses recipes from *Christmas Cookies* to create platters for just about any event, including birthdays, christenings, graduations, and retirements.

CAFÉ MACCHIATO CUPS

The original Café Macchiato Cups recipe appeared in Christmas Cookies 2008. Yum!

CAFÉ MACCHIATO CUPS

PREP 40 minutes CHILL 1 hour
BAKE 8 minutes per batch at 375°F
COOL 5 minutes

- 1 Tbsp. coffee liqueur or milk
- 1 tsp. instant espresso coffee powder
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup butter, softened
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup butter, softened
- 4 cups powdered sugar
- ¼ cup milk
- 2 tsp. coffee liqueur or 1 tsp. vanilla
- Unsweetened cocoa powder (optional)

1. In a small bowl stir together 1 Tbsp. coffee liqueur, the espresso coffee powder, and vanilla until coffee powder dissolves.
2. In a large bowl beat 1 cup butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add granulated sugar. Beat on medium until combined, scraping bowl as needed. Beat in the egg and liqueur mixture. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in any remaining flour. Divide dough in half. Cover and chill dough about 1 hour or until easy to handle.
3. Preheat oven to 375°F. Shape each dough half into 24 balls. Press balls evenly into bottoms and up sides of 48 ungreased 1¾-inch muffin cups.*
4. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until light brown. Lightly press the bowl of a measuring teaspoon into the center of each shell. Cool in pan on a wire rack 5 minutes. Gently remove shells from pan; cool on wire rack.
5. Meanwhile, for filling, in a medium bowl beat ¼ cup butter with a mixer on medium to high 30 seconds. Add powdered sugar, milk, and 2 tsp. coffee liqueur. Beat until smooth, scraping bowl as needed. Pipe or spoon filling into cooled cookie shells. If desired, sprinkle with cocoa powder. Store in the refrigerator. **Makes 48 cookies.**
***TIP** If you don't have forty-eight 1¾-inch muffin cups, bake cookies in batches, keeping remaining dough chilled until needed.
PER COOKIE *113 cal., 5 g fat (3 g sat. fat), 17 mg chol., 41 mg sodium, 16 g carb., 0 g fiber, 1 g pro.*

CHRISTMAS COOKIE THROWBACKS

Some of her top picks from the magazine over the years are the Festive Thumbprints (2011), Salted Caramel Thumbprints (2012), Dark Chocolate Stars (2013), and Pumpkin-Pecan Cookies (2014). But her favorite cookie of all is the Café Macchiato Cups (2008), which have appeared on many of her platters.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *CHRISTMAS COOKIES* 2011, *CHRISTMAS COOKIES* 2012, *CHRISTMAS COOKIES* 2013, AND *CHRISTMAS COOKIES* 2014.

You can check out all her beautiful work at *bestsweetbites.com*.

CHRISTMAS COOKIES

BARS

93 Apricot-Rosemary Streusel Bars
108 Boozy Eggnog Bars
77 Cherry Crumb Bars
62 Coconut Joy Candy Bars
66 Copycat Musketeer Bars
127 Gooey Chocolate-Caramel Bars
125 Lime-Macaroon Bars
94 Maple-Apple Oat Bars
127 Marcona Almond-Toffee Bars
65 Nestling Butterfinger Bars
90 Oatmeal-Jam Bars
65 Peanut Butter Cup Bars
125 Peppermint Cream Bars
67 Peppermint Cream Bites
22 Pistachio Sugar Cookie Bars
91 Pumpkin Crème Bars
85 Red Plum Shortbread Bars
92 Salted Caramel Revel Bars
63 Salted Peanut Bars
64 Snickerooni Bars
91 Streusel-Berry Bars
94 Triple-Peanut Butter Bars
67 Twixy Bars

BLONDIES & BROWNIES

118 Maple-Apple Blondies
57 Milk Chocolate Stocking Brownies
120 Peppermint Blondies
118 Pumpkin-Swirl Blondies
40 Red Velvet Brownies
121 Salted Peanut-Butter-and-Chocolate Blondies
119 Sugar and Spice Blondies

CHEESECAKE TREATS

108 Boozy Eggnog Bars
109 Chocolate-Pumpkin Cheesecake Bars
105 Coconut-Tangerine Cheesecake Bars
106 Crème Brûlée Cheesecake Bars
107 Maple-Bourbon Cheesecake Bars
38 Red Velvet Cheesecake Bars
105 Salted Truffle Cheesecake Bars
104 Sopaipilla Cheesecake Bars
84 Strawberry Cheesecake Tartlets

CUTOUT COOKIES

113 Almond Pastry Pillows
86 Apricot-Almond Kolaches
78 Chai Pinecones
83 Cherry Pinwheels
113 Chocolate-Hazelnut Pinwheels
45 Fat Molasses Cookies
49 Gingerbread Child + Teddy Bear
48 Gingerbread Cutouts
49 Loving Gingerbread Bears
78 Pistachio Sticks
41 Red Velvet Shortbread Cookies
49 Reindeer Sticks

DROP COOKIES

15 Bittersweet Chocolate-Orange Cookies
12 Butterscotch Spice Cookies
32 Buttery Pumpkin Cookies
31 Caramel Apple Cookies
34 Giant Double-Mint Cookies
53 Jelly-of-the-Month Cookies
33 Oatmeal-Butterscotch Cookies
59 Reindeer Delights
16 Sister Jean's Cookies

MERINGUES

123 Meringue Christmas Trees
123 Meringue Santa Hats
123 Meringue Snowmen

NO-BAKE TREATS

44 Ginger Cookie Butter
55 Grumpy Marshmallow Treats
47 Pumpkin Gingerbread Truffles

SANDWICH COOKIES

51 Candy Cane Elfwiches
29 Cinnamon Ice Cream Sandwiches
82 Ischl Tarts
78 Mint Ganache Sandwiches
37 Red Velvet Whoopie Pies

SHAPED COOKIES

49 Big Ginger Cookies
135 Café Macchiato Cups
112 Caramel-Stuffed Snickerdoodles
70 Cherry-Walnut Balls
72 Chocolate Snowballs
114 Chocolate-Stuffed S'mores Cookies
35 Chocolate-Toffee Cookies
29 Cinnamon-Coffee Cookies
73 Cocoa-Covered Snowballs
73 Coconut-Pecan Snowballs
115 Double-Mint Chocolate Cookies
71 Matcha-Ginger Snowballs
52 Peanutty Butter Cookies
72 Peppermint Snowballs
11 Prince Liam's Peanut Butter Cookies
47 Santa's Gingerbread Cookies
30 Soft Maple Sugar Cookies
71 Surprise Snowballs
34 Triple-Peanut Cookies

SLICED COOKIES

56 Angel Wings
76 Cinnamon Roll Cookies

SPRITZ COOKIES

101 Chocolate-Espresso Spritz
101 Citrus Spritz
101 Neapolitan Spritz Cookies
98 Pumpkin Pie Spritz
99 S'mores Spritz-wiches

SUGAR COOKIE TREATS

25 Butterscotch Sugar Cookies
27 Caramel-Cashew Cookie Cups
25 Chai-Clementine Sugar Cookies
27 Cherry-Almond Cookie Cups
27 Chocolate-Hazelnut Espresso Cookie Cups
27 Chocolate-Peppermint Mousse Cookie Cups
21 Chocolate Sugar Cookie Cutouts
21 Coconut-Lime Sugar Cookie Bars
24 Easy Sugar Cookies
27 Lemon Fluff Cookie Cups
24 Lemon-Poppy Seed Sugar Cookies
25 Lime-Coconut Sugar Cookies
23 Orange Cream Sugar Cookie Bars
22 Pistachio Sugar Cookie Bars
27 Rocky Road Cookie Cups
25 Spicy Sugar Cookies
26 Sugar Cookie Cups
21 Sugar Cookie Cutouts
24 Vanilla Bean Sugar Cookies
25 White Chocolate-Pistachio Sugar Cookies

THUMBPRINT COOKIES

86 Almond-Cherry Thumbprints
86 Citrus-Coconut Thumbprints
86 Linzer Thumbprints
86 PB&J Thumbprints
86 Sprinkle Thumbprints
86 Thumbprints

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