



Ontario Home Economics Association

C O M M U N I Q U É

Ask A Professional Home Economist

For Immediate Release

Holiday Family Favourites

by Mary V. Carver, OHEA PR Co-ordinator

A familiar tune reminds us that “chestnuts are roasting on an open fire”, yet most don't experience such an event as we scramble to write cards, wrap gifts, host parties, prepare food, and create our own memories. Despite all the preparations we make for the “perfect” holiday season, many times the best part really does begin in the kitchen. Foods served at this festive time can become family favourites, creating wonderful traditions and warm memories to pass along to other generations. If you don't have seasonal food traditions at your house, it's never too late to start some. And a gift from the kitchen comes from the heart and is always in good taste!

Professional Home Economists were asked to share some of their favourite family recipes. Here are a few that we think you will enjoy, year after year. Much of the fun is sharing “family time” in the kitchen, so grab a partner and cook up some culinary memories this holiday season.

SPINACH SALAD

From: *“The Ultimate Healthy Eating Plan that Still Leaves Room for Chocolate!”* by Home Economist Mairlyn Smith and Liz Pearson, RD. (*This cookbook makes a great gift!*). This wonderfully colourful salad is a cinch to make for Christmas Dinner. It's also a powerhouse of nutrients, giving you 2 1/2 servings of fruits and vegetables per salad. It tastes so great – don't tell them it's good for them!

(more)

8 cups baby spinach
2 red peppers – julienne
1 large Granny Smith apple – chopped into 16 slices
1/2 cup walnuts – chopped

Dressing:

2 tbsp. low-fat mayonnaise
2 tbsp. low-fat plain yogurt
2 tbsp. cider vinegar
1 tbsp. maple syrup

1. Wash and spin-dry the spinach, or do what I do and buy a package of pre-washed baby spinach greens.
2. Whisk together the dressing ingredients. Toss the spinach, red pepper, and apple with the dressing.
3. Divide the salad equally between 4 plates. Sprinkle each plate with 2 tbsp. of the walnuts. Serve to raves.

MACAROON BARS

From: Barb Holland, P.H.Ec., Professional Home Economist and food writer. A regular columnist for the Toronto Star's *Food Section*, and *Homemakers Magazine*, Barb writes for other publications too and has done countless TV food demonstrations. She enjoys these delicious Macaroon Bars, which are drizzled with melted chocolate, both dark and white.

Base:

1/2 cup butter, softened
2 tbsp. granulated sugar
1 cup all-purpose flour

Filling:

1/4 cup butter, softened
3/4 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup corn syrup
2 eggs
pinch salt
1 tsp. vanilla
2 tsp. white vinegar
1 cup shredded coconut

Glaze:

1 square (30 g) semi-sweet chocolate
1 square (30 g) white chocolate
1 tsp. vegetable shortening, divided

1. Preheat oven to 350F. Line an 8 inch square baking pan with parchment paper.
2. To make base, in bowl cream butter and sugar with a wooden spoon; blend in flour until crumbly. Press into pan and bake 12 to 15 minutes or until very lightly browned.

3. For filling, in bowl cream butter, brown sugar and corn syrup with a wooden spoon. Add eggs, beat well. Stir in vanilla, vinegar and coconut. Pour over base. Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until almost set (topping will firm up when cool). Cool on wire rack to room temperature.
4. In separate small bowls, melt semi-sweet chocolate and white chocolate, each with 1/2 tsp. shortening, in microwave, at medium 2 to 3 minutes, stirring often to help melting. Drizzle both chocolates over pan, in opposite directions (be creative). When cool and set, cut into squares. Makes about 25 squares.

WINTER TRAIL MIX

From: *“Canada’s Best Slow Cooker Recipes”* by Donna-Marie Pye, P.H.Ec. (*Another great gift book!*). A Professional Home Economist and cookbook author, Donna-Marie is also the mother of two. Her Winter Trail Mix is made in a slow cooker with chunks of caramelized pecan crunch combined with dried apricots and cherries to make an irresistible snack, or hostess gift. (*Measuring ingredients is a fun way to involve the children*)

1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 tbsp. melted butter or margarine
1 1/2 tbsp. water
1/2 tsp. vanilla
1 1/2 cups pecan halves
1 cup whole almonds
2 tsp. finely grated orange zest
1 1/2 cups sesame sticks or pretzel sticks
1 cup dried apricots

1. In a small glass measure, combine sugar, butter, water and vanilla. Place pecans and almonds in a slow cooker; pour butter mixture over nuts and toss to coat. Cover and cook on **HIGH**, stirring frequently for 2 to 3 hours or until sugar mixture is golden brown and nuts are toasted. Stir in orange zest; toss to coat and turn out onto prepared baking sheet. Set aside to cool.
2. In a large bowl or airtight storage container, combine nut mixture with sesame sticks, apricots and cherries. Store in a tightly sealed plastic container and it will keep fresh for up to 1 week. Makes about 6 cups

BRANDIED CRANBERRY CONSERVE

From: Ellie Topp, P.H.Ec. is a Professional Home Economist working in Ottawa as a food consultant and writer. Author of six cookbooks, she writes a monthly column, 'Food Bits', for *Forever Young*. Her latest books are *The Complete Book of Year- Round Small Batch Preserving* by Topp & Howard (Firefly, 2001) and *Savoury Wisdom – Delicious, Healthy Recipes for Two* (Prentice Hall, 2001), co-authored with Suzanne Hendricks, RD. This spirited conserve with the bright taste of cranberries, processed in decorative jars, makes an elegant holiday gift for family and friends.

1 small orange
1 cinnamon stick, about 4 inch (10 cm) long
3 whole cloves
1/2 cup water
1 tbs. lemon juice
3 cups cranberries, fresh or frozen (12 oz/340 g pkg.)
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
1/3 cup brandy
1/4 cup slivered almonds

1. Partially fill a boiling water canner with hot water. Place clean mason jars in canner and begin to bring water to a boil. Cover and boil for at least 10 minutes to sterilize jars.
2. Finely chop orange in a food processor until fine. Combine orange, cinnamon stick, cloves, water and lemon juice in a medium stainless steel or enamel saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, reduce heat, cover and boil gently for 10 minutes. Remove cinnamon and cloves.
3. Add cranberries and sugar. Return to a boil, reduce heat and boil gently, uncovered, until berries pop and mixture forms a light gel, about 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Remove from heat and cool slightly; stir in brandy and almonds.
4. Meanwhile, place snap lids in boiling water according to manufacturer's directions.
5. Remove jars from canner and ladle conserve into jars to within 1/2 inch (1 cm) of top rim (head space). Remove air bubbles by sliding a clean small wooden or plastic spatula between glass and food; re-adjust head space to 1/2 inch (1 cm). Wipe jar rim to remove any stickiness. Centre snap lid on jar; apply screw band just until fingertip tight. Place jars in canner and adjust water level to cover jars by 1/2 inches (2.5 - 5 cm). Cover canner and return water to a boil. Process for 5 minutes at altitudes up to 1,000 feet (305 m).
6. Remove jars from canner and cool for 24 hours. Check jar seals (sealed lids curve downward). Wipe jars, label and store in a cool, dark place. Makes 3 1/2 cups.

CHRISTMAS SHORTBREAD

From: Diane O'Shea, P.H.Ec., Professional Home Economist, Family Studies Teacher, mother of four, and partner in O'Shea's Family Farm, Granton, Ontario. Diane claims Christmas would not be Christmas without shortbread – made with butter, of course!

1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup cornstarch
1/2 cup icing sugar
1 cup butter

1. Combine all dry ingredients.
2. Cut butter into dry mixture.
3. Knead into a ball, adding a little flour as necessary.
4. Roll into 1/2 inch thick disc. Cut into assorted shapes using cookie cutters. Small stars, rounds and diamond shapes work best. (*This is where you can easily involve the kids*).
5. Decorate with small bits of maraschino cherries.
6. Bake at 300 degrees F for about 15 minutes.

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The Ontario Home Economics Association, a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists, promotes high professional standards among its members so that they may assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life

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