

An Unusual Culinary Column: Last Minute Holiday Goodies

By Karen Kain

With Christmas less than two weeks away I thought it would be fun to share with you a few recipe gift ideas.

I have included a few spiced nut recipes that are definitely considered to be a healthier treat. The Curried Cashews have zero sugar and the Spicy Pecans have only 1 teaspoon of brown sugar. These nut recipes are super easy to make and really delicious. I love both recipes but found myself dangerously snacking on the cashews.

My next share is full of sugar gooeey sweetness and just plain addicting. I have never made salted caramel anything before and after preparing a batch of these Salted Caramel Treats I probably will never make them again because I could not stop eating them.

I had fun making and eating all these treats and I hope that I have given you some new ideas. Stay warm and enjoy all the cheer this season brings.

Curried Cashew Nuts

Ingredients:

6 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice
6 Tablespoons curry powder
4 Teaspoons kosher salt
6 Cups unsalted cashews

Directions:

Put your oven racks on the upper and lower thirds of the oven. Preheat the oven to 250° F. Whisk together the lemon juice, curry and salt. Add the ca-

shews and toss to fully coat. Separate the nuts between two large baking sheets, spreading out in an even layer. Bake for 45 minutes stirring every 15 minutes. Cool completely then store in an airtight container for up to 3 weeks.

Spicy Pecans

Ingredients:

1½ Tablespoons chili powder
1½ Teaspoons ground cumin
1 Teaspoon ground coriander
1 Teaspoon paprika
1 Teaspoon brown sugar
½ Teaspoon garlic powder
2 Cups pecan halves
2 Tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
½ Teaspoon salt

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 275° F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a small bowl add the chili powder, cumin, coriander, paprika, brown sugar and garlic powder together. Toss the pecans in

a separate mixing bowl with the Worcestershire sauce. Sprinkle the spice mixture over the pecans fully coating. Spread them out onto the baking sheet and bake for 35 minutes, tossing every 8 minutes. Sprinkle with salt and let cool. They store in an airtight container for up to a week, in the refrigerator for a month.

Salted Caramel Treats

Ingredients:

For the Crust:

10 Tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
½ Cup white sugar
½ Teaspoon kosher salt
1 Egg yolk, whisked
1⅔ Cups all-purpose flour

For the Salted Caramel Layer:

1 Cup unsalted butter
1 Cup light brown sugar
¾ Cup light corn syrup
2 Teaspoons sea salt
4 Tablespoons white sugar
4 Tablespoons heavy cream
1 ½ Teaspoons pure vanilla extract
Sea salt flakes to garnish

Directions:

For the Crust:

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line a 9x13 inch pan (I used a lasagna pan), with parchment paper leaving enough paper to hang over the sides, this will help in removing the bars. Using a mixer, combine the butter,



sugar and salt. In a small bowl, beat the egg yolk with a fork and add to the mixture to fully combine. Add the flour then beat until the dough is flaky. Transfer the dough into the parchment-lined pan and press down with your hands making a flat and even surface. Refrigerate for 30 minutes. Bake the crust for 25 minutes until lightly browned. Set aside to cool.

For the Salted Caramel Layer:

In a medium saucepan combine the butter, brown sugar, corn syrup, salt, sugar and cream. Bring to a boil. Stir for about 5-10 minutes until it's thick and bubbly. If you have a candy thermometer, the caramel should be about 230° F. Remove from heat and stir in the vanilla extract (be careful, it may bubble up here). Stir to fully combine then pour the caramel mixture on top of the shortbread. Let chill in the refrigerator for at least 5 hours. Sprinkle with the sea salt and serve.

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