

# An Unusual Culinary Column: Holiday Sweets

By Karen Kain

Happy Holidays folks! I have been doing lots of dedicated research and think I have found some fabulous desserts to share with you. It is quite possible that I have gained weight from just writing this column.

My first recipe is an amazingly decadent, delicious, and dangerously addicting chocolate cake. This is a super easy recipe to make, and if you love chocolate you will love this cake! This cake is like a slap and a kiss. You will love it because it is sinfully delicious but hate it because you will want to devour every morsel, even if it means that you will be up all night from a chocolate high. You have officially been warned.

The next few recipes are not so threatening but equally as delicious. The Blueberry Lime Cheesecake takes a bit of planning but is totally worth it. This is a beautiful dessert that I think all of your guests will enjoy. The Peanut Brittle makes great gifts, that is, if you have any left.

I hope you are all staying warm and enjoying this holiday season. I wish you all a joyous season and Happy New Year!

## Fudgy Pecan Cake

### Ingredients:

- ¾ Cup butter melted
- 1½ Cups sugar
- 1½ Teaspoons vanilla
- 3 Egg yolks
- ½ Cup plus 1 tablespoon cocoa
- ½ Cup unsifted all-purpose flour
- 3 Tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3 Tablespoons water



- ¾ Cup finely chopped pecans
- 3 Egg whites, at room temperature
- 1/8 Teaspoon cream of tartar
- 1/8 Teaspoon salt
- Chocolate glaze\*

### Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line the bottom of a 9-inch springform pan with aluminum foil; butter the foil and side of the pan. Set aside. Combine ¾ cup melted butter, the sugar and vanilla in a large mixer bowl; beat well. Add egg yolks, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Blend in the cocoa, flour, oil and water; beat well. Stir in chopped pecans. Beat egg whites, cream of tartar and salt in a small mixer bowl until stiff peaks form. Carefully fold into chocolate mixture. Pour into the prepared pan. Bake at 350° F. for 45 minutes or until top begins to crack slightly. The cake will not test done in the center. Cool for an hour. Cover, chill until firm. Remove side of pan.

Prepare the glaze, the recipe is below. Pour over the cake and allow the glaze to run down the sides. With a narrow metal spatula, spread the glaze

evenly on top and sides. Allow to harden.

### \*Chocolate glaze

#### Ingredients:

- 4 Ounces bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped ¾ cup
- 3 Tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 1 Tablespoons whole milk
- 2 Teaspoons light corn syrup

#### Directions:

Melt the chocolate and butter in a bowl set over a saucepan of simmering water, stirring until smooth. Remove from heat and stir in the milk, and corn syrup. Use immediately.

## Vegan Blueberry Lime Cheesecake

(You must start this the day before, a good one to make a few days ahead)

### Ingredients:

#### Crust:

- ¾ Cup walnuts
- ½ Cup almonds
- 1 Cup medjool dates
- ½ Teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of Himalayan pink salt
- A splash of water for blending

#### Cheesecake:

- 2¼ Cup raw cashews soaked in water overnight
- ¼ to 1/3 Cup maple syrup or honey
- 2 Teaspoons vanilla extract
- ¼ Cup lime juice
- 1/3 Cup coconut oil, melted
- 1 Teaspoon lime zest, more for garnish
- 1 Cup blueberries, more for garnish

#### Directions:

##### For the crust:

Put the crust ingredients into a food processor and puree until you get sticky

crumbles. Add a splash of water if needed. Press the crust into a 7 inch springform pan lined with parchment paper.

#### For the filling:

Soak the cashews in a bowl of water overnight. Drain and rinse. Put the cashews into a food processor and blend until they are smooth. This may take a few minutes. Scrape down the sides as needed. Add the lime juice, ¼ cup of sweetener, the zest, and vanilla then blend. Slowly add in the melted coconut oil and blend until well combined. Taste and add more sweetener, if needed. Pour the filling into the crust to make a 1 inch layer. Put the cheesecake into the freezer for 30 minutes. Add the blueberries and the remaining sweetener to the remaining filling and blend until smooth. Pour the mixture onto the cheesecake. Garnish with a sprinkle of lime zest. Cover and freeze for 3 hours to firm.

## Holiday Peanut Brittle

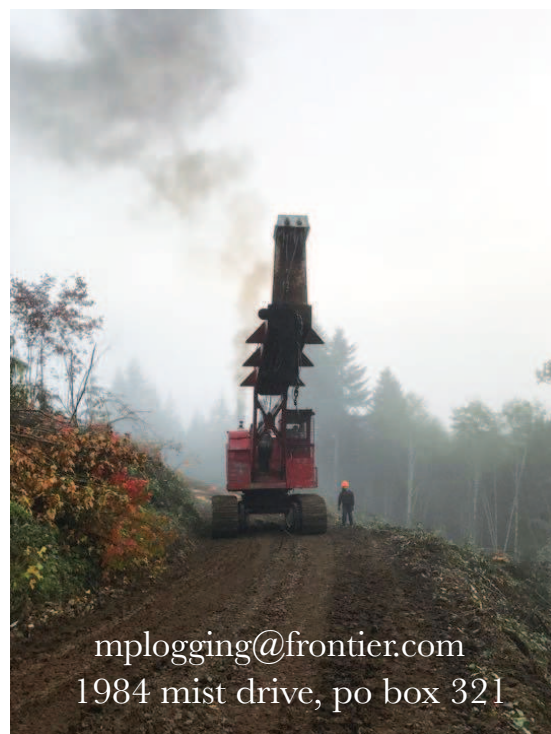
### Ingredients:

- 1½ Teaspoons baking soda
- 1 Teaspoon water
- 1 Teaspoon vanilla
- 1½ Cups sugar
- 1 Cup water
- 1 Cup light corn syrup
- 3 Tablespoons butter
- 1 Pound shelled unroasted peanuts

#### Directions:

Heat the oven to 200° F. Butter two baking sheets. Put the baking sheets into the oven to keep warm. In a small mixing bowl, mix together baking soda, 1 teaspoon water and the vanilla, set aside. In a quart saucepan, mix the sugar, 1 cup water and corn syrup together. Cook over medium heat, stir occasionally. Bring the temperature to 240° F, test with a candy thermometer. The syrup is done when you drop a small amount into ice water and it forms a soft ball that flattens when removed from the water. Stir in the butter and peanuts. Cook, stirring constantly. Bring the temperature up to 300° F. It is ready when you drop a small amount of the mixture into ice water and it separates into hard, brittle threads. You do not want the mixture to burn, so watch carefully. Remove from heat and quickly add the baking soda. Be careful here, the mixture will become light and foamy as you stir. Pour onto the two heated cookie sheets and spread to ¼ inch thick. Cool completely then break into pieces.

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