

the party before Christmas

*'Twas some time before Christmas
and all through the kitchen,
All the children were busy,
cookies a-mixin'.
The cookies were decorated
and put out to eat,
In hopes that the children
would find them a treat.
The Santa cups brimmed
to their tops with the punch,
Enough for a party,
invite the whole bunch.*

Christmas—'tis the season to bake and decorate cookies, enjoy punch from special cups, wrap presents and trim the tree. 'Tis the season when children's joy and anticipation are part of the Christmas spirit. 'Tis the season to give a Christmas party for your children. Invite neighborhood friends, school chums or young relatives.

For the youngsters' holiday entertaining, just fill a punch bowl with cheery Cranberry Sparkler and serve Santa-sized cookies. The bright red punch is made with Kool-Aid brand soft drink mix, cranberry juice cocktail and lemon-lime carbonated beverage.

The Santa-sized cookies will delight the kids. Giant sugar cookies can be made by cutting shapes freehand or by using a cardboard stencil. Delicious jumbo chocolate chip cookies have the surprise ingredient of cereal for extra nutrition. Mothers will like these cookies, too, because they can be made ahead of time, wrapped and frozen, then decorated when needed.

Make an occasion of the decorating. It can be done a day ahead or as part of the party fun. Cookies can be covered with sugar glaze, then decorated with a butter frosting made colorful with unsweetened soft drink mix for large areas of color. Use convenient tube frosting for outlines and other details. These merry Christmas cookies can be decorated with a tree, red-nosed reindeer, a wreath or a brightly wrapped package.

While children are drinking their punch and enjoying their cookies, let them be creative by making their own Christmas decoration. Provide styrofoam balls for each child to make tree ornaments. Put out pins, scissors, glue and a selection of sequins, beads, rickrack, stars, Christmas stickers, yarn, ribbons and scraps of fabric. Children can make their own tree-trimmers with relatively little supervision. Let them decide to keep their creations, give them away, hang them on a special tree or swap with each other.

For practical party favors, give away Christmas canisters that the children decorate themselves. Start with empty soft drink canisters. Cover each with construction or wrapping paper. Then let the children paste on appliques made from paper, felt, ribbons, pictures clipped from magazines or old greeting cards or other decorative bits. Each canister can be labeled with the child's name, a pet's name or just "cookies" or "candy." This special Christmas canister is just right for a child's treasures, whether they are candy or his own Christmas cards.

There are games to be played at Christmas parties, too. Using more empty soft drink canisters, decorated for the occasion, and plain white styrofoam balls, play Snowball Tenpin Toss. Start with ten canisters arranged in a triangle, with sides touching, as for bowling. Each child stands behind a line and tosses three balls, trying to get them into the canisters. If a child gets all three balls into the canisters, let him throw another ball. Each ball in a canister counts 1 point. Children take turns tossing the balls, and the one with the highest number of points wins. After a predetermined number of rounds, award prizes such as a Christmas card address book, a calendar, a red pen or a pocket-sized game. Everyone should be a winner!

Don't forget to send them home with some extra cookies, their Christmas canisters and lots of smiles.

*And you'll hear them exclaim
as they leave for the night,
"Merry Christmas to you,
thank you, good night!"*

CRANBERRY SPARKLER

2 envelopes (2-quart size) strawberry, cherry, raspberry or orange flavor sugar-sweetened soft drink mix*
2 bottles (16 oz. each) cranberry juice cocktail or cranberry-apple drink
2 cups water
2 quarts lemon-lime carbonated beverage

*Or use 2 envelopes strawberry, cherry, raspberry or orange flavor unsweetened soft drink mix and add 1 cup sugar.

Combine all ingredients in nonmetal punch bowl or large pitcher, stirring until soft drink mix is dissolved. Chill and add ice cubes, if desired. Makes about 4 quarts or 32 servings.



JUMBO CHOCOLATE CHIP CEREAL COOKIES

2 cups unsifted all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup softened butter or other shortening
1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
1-1/2 cups crunchy nutlike cereal nuggets
4 squares semi-sweet chocolate, chopped*

*Or use 2 cups semi-sweet chocolate flavored baking chips.

Mix flour with baking soda and salt. Cream butter; gradually beat in sugars. Add eggs and vanilla; blend well. Add flour mixture. Stir in cereal and chocolate. Using 1/4 cup dough for each cookie, drop 3 inches apart onto greased baking sheets and press with fork into 3-inch rounds. Bake at 375° for 13 to 15 minutes, or until lightly browned. Cool 1 minute before removing from baking sheets. Makes about 16.

Note: Cookies may be wrapped and frozen.

GIANT SUGAR COOKIES

3-1/4 cups unsifted all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons double-acting baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup butter or other shortening
1-1/2 cups sugar
2 eggs
1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla
1 tablespoon milk

Mix flour with baking powder and salt. Cream shortening. Gradually beat in sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating thoroughly after each. Stir in vanilla. Add flour mixture alternately with milk, mixing well after each addition. Chill 3 or 4 hours or overnight. Roll dough 1/8-inch thick on lightly floured board. Cut 6-inch cardboard patterns (angel, tree, star, bell); place on rolled dough and cut with sharp knife. Transfer with wide spatula to ungreased baking sheets. Bake at 350° for 10 to 12 minutes. Makes 15.

Confectioners Sugar Glaze. Gradually add 1-1/2 tablespoons (about) hot milk or water to 1-1/4 cups confectioners sugar in a bowl; blend well. Makes 2/3 cup.

Colorful Butter Frosting. Sift 1 teaspoon unsweetened soft drink mix, any flavor, with 4-1/2 cups unsifted confectioners sugar. Cream 1/2 cup butter or margarine. Add sugar mixture, alternately with 6 tablespoons (about) hot water; blend until smooth. Makes 2-1/2 cups. (Recipe may be halved; prepare twice with 2 different soft drink mix flavors, if desired.)

Three to make

COUNT THEM NOW.....

the many delicious dessert ways of extending a warm welcome and season's greetings to family and friends. From the simplest informal get-together to the most elaborate open house you've blueprinted all year long, pies are candidates for any celebration. This trio of fluffy-textured "dream pies" will pamper company. They're beautiful to see and deceptively simple to make.

Today's inspiration for these spectacular light and fluffy pies comes from our American heritage. Apples, cranberries and mincemeat — the mainstays of Early American cookery — are the very essence of familiar tastes in these light-as-air pies. The key ingredient shared in the recipes for this dessert trio is Dream Whip whipped topping mix. It's the prepared whipped topping mix that adds a marvelous fluffy texture to a mixture when it's whipped with instant pudding and pie filling.

Do you anticipate the annual family tree-trimming countdown? Then, you know very well a creamy

dream pie will help celebrate a job well done. This is the ideal occasion for a Fluffy Cinnamon Apple Pie to join the cozy family party. You'll revel in the ease of putting this great family-style pie together.

What about a reunion of a few longtime friends? Count on the Fluffy Mincemeat Pie to create eating excitement for an elegant dessert and coffee party; or, it may be the final note to an informal buffet evening meal. This second dream of a pie has just a touch of brandy added to the prepared whipped topping mix. Whisk the chilled pie from the refrigerator just before

serving and garnish with candied cherries to simulate poinsettia motif.

Are you ready for open house? Surely the unmistakable sign of holidays will be a punch bowl along with an array of sandwiches, cheese board and other finger foods. Let guests graduate to a great serve-yourself dream dessert — a light-textured Fluffy Cranberry-Orange Pie with just a hint of grated orange rind.

Newer than today and tomorrow — this trio of holiday dream pies adapts traditional time-honored flavor combinations to contemporary entertaining.

It's time to make merry!

FLUFFY MINCEMEAT PIE

2 envelopes whipped topping mix
2-3/4 cups cold milk
2 packages (4-serving size) French vanilla flavor instant pudding and pie filling
2 tablespoons brandy*
1 cup moist mincemeat
1 baked 9-inch pie shell, cooled
*Or use 1 teaspoon brandy flavoring.

Prepare whipped topping mix with 1 cup of the milk as directed on package, using large mixer bowl. Add remaining 1-3/4 cups milk, pie filling mix and brandy. Blend, then beat at high speed for 2 minutes, scraping bowl occasionally. Spread mincemeat over bottom of pie shell. Spoon filling over mincemeat. Chill at least 4 hours. Garnish with candied cherries, if desired.

FLUFFY CINNAMON APPLE PIE

2 envelopes whipped topping mix
2-3/4 cups cold milk
2 packages (4-serving size) vanilla flavor instant pudding and pie filling
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
2 cups finely chopped peeled apples
1 baked 9-inch graham cracker crumb crust, cooled

Prepare whipped topping mix with 1 cup of the milk as directed on package, using large mixer bowl. Add remaining 1-3/4 cups milk, pie filling mix and cinnamon. Blend, then beat at high speed for 2 minutes, scraping bowl occasionally. Fold in apples and spoon into pie crust. Chill at least 4 hours. Garnish with apples slices, if desired.

FLUFFY CRANBERRY-ORANGE PIE

1 jar (14 oz.) cranberry-orange relish
1 baked 9-inch pie shell, cooled
2 envelopes whipped topping mix
2-3/4 cups cold milk
2 packages (4-serving size) vanilla flavor instant pudding and pie filling
1 tablespoon grated orange rind

Spread relish in bottom of pie shell. Prepare whipped topping mix with 1 cup of the milk as directed on package, using large mixer bowl. Add remaining 1-3/4 cups milk, pie filling mix and orange rind. Blend, then beat at high speed for 2 minutes, scraping bowl occasionally. Spoon over relish in pie shell. Chill at least 4 hours. Garnish with orange sections, if desired.