

Foods and Fancies

Christmas Baking Builds 'Traditions to Remember'

By EDIE EULANE
Of the Register-Guard

The sweet, warm fragrance of Christmas baking takes us back through the years to all those other Christmases we've loved and builds traditions for the youngsters to remember years hence.

The pans of cookie Santas, rocking horses and Christmas trees fresh from the oven, the spicy goodness of mince pies, the nut-filled crunchiness of cookie bars. It all blends with the luscious aroma of creamy hard sauce for steamed pudding, the vanilla-chocolately fudge being made for friends with a sweet-tooth, the fondant-stuffed dates. Oh, it's holiday time all right when all this goes on in the kitchen.

Let the children help shell the walnuts cut and decorate the sugar cookies placing chocolate bits on Santa's coat where buttons should be and a shining ball on a cookie tree. This is a time for sharing and what's better than to share the cookie-baking.

Here are ideas to use for filling the holiday cookie jar at home and packing those gift boxes for friends near and far. The first three recipes utilize date bar and coconut and chocolate macaroon mixes. With the rest, you start from the beginning, but they're simple to make and will be fun for the whole family.

Frosted Fruit Bars

Heat oven to 400°.
To 1 package date bar mix add 1/4 cup hot water, 1 egg, 1/2 tsp. each cinnamon, nutmeg, 1 cup seedless raisins, 1 cup mixed candied fruit, and 1/2 cup chopped nuts. Spread in greased 15 x 10" pan.

Bake 15 min. Frost while warm with thin icing made by blending 1 1/2 cups sifted confectioners' sugar, 3 tablespoons cream, and 1 tablespoon vanilla.

Lemon Date Sticks

Heat oven to 375 degrees.
Add 1/2 cup hot water to date filling mixture in date bar mix package. Add crumbly mixture and 1 egg; blend well. Spread in lightly greased oblong pan, 13 x 9 1/2 x 2 in. Bake about 20 minutes. Spread top thinly with Lemon Glaze; 1 1/2 cups sifted confectioners' sugar, 3 tablespoons soft butter, 1 1/2 tablespoons lemon juice and 2 to 3 teaspoons grated lemon rind, blended together. Cut into small sticks.

Neapolitan Slices

Prepare package of chocolate macaroon mix as directed on package. Add 1/2 cup finely chopped nuts. Prepare coconut macaroon mix as directed on package. Add 1/2 teaspoon almond flavoring, 1/4 cup chopped raisins, and 1/4 cup chopped candied cherries.

Pack two layers into loaf pan, 9 x 5 x 3 in., lined with special baking paper in package folding it to fit. Chill overnight. Take from pan.

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Place same paper on baking sheet. Cut dough lengthwise into thirds; slice each third crosswise 1/4 in. thick. Bake 10 minutes.

Christmas Cookies

1/2 cup (1 1/2 sticks) butter or margarine
1/2 teaspoon soda
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
1 1/2 cups light brown sugar
1 egg
3 cups sifted all-purpose flour

Soften butter or margarine and add soda, salt and pure vanilla extract. Mix well. Gradually blend in sugar. Beat in egg. Gradually stir in flour. Chill 1

to 2 hours or until stiff enough to roll.

Roll 1/4 of the dough at a time on a lightly floured board to 1/8-inch thickness. Shape as desired with cookie cutters. Place on lightly greased cookie sheets.

Bake in a pre-heated moderate oven (375 degrees) 10 minutes or until lightly browned around the edges.

Decorate as desired before baking with colored granulated sugar or glaze' fruit or after baking with confectioners' sugar and water icing.

Confectioners' Sugar and Water Icing: Stir 4 teaspoons water and 1/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract into 1 cup sifted confectioners' sugar. Color as desired with red, green or yellow food coloring.

Sugar Cookies
2 1/2 cups sifted cake flour
2 teaspoons double-acting baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 cup butter or margarine
1/2 cup sugar
1 egg

Measure sifted flour, add baking powder, salt, and nutmeg, and sift together three times. Cream shortening and lemon rind. Add sugar gradually and cream together until light and fluffy. Add egg and beat well. Then add flour mixture, a small amount at a time, beating after each addition until smooth.

Chill dough until firm enough to roll. Roll 1/4 inch thick on lightly floured board. Cut with floured cookie cutter. Sprinkle with colored sugar cinnamon-sugar, or chopped nuts. For a glossy sheen brush with unbeaten egg white before sprinkling cookies.

Bake on ungreased baking sheet in hot oven (425 deg. F.) 5 to 7 minutes. Makes about 9 dozen 2 1/4 inch cookies.

Frosted Mocha Brownie Bars

1 1/2 cups sifted cake flour
1 teaspoon double-acting baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup butter or other shortening
3 squares unsweetened chocolate
2 tablespoons instant coffee
4 eggs
2 cups sugar
1 cup chopped walnuts
Golden Butter Icing

Measure sifted flour, add baking powder and salt, and sift again. Melt shortening and chocolate together over hot water. Blend in coffee. Beat eggs well, add sugar gradually, and beat thoroughly. Then add chocolate mixture and blend well. Add flour and mix well; then stir in nuts.

Bake in greased 13x9x2-inch pan in moderate oven (350 deg. F.) 35 to 40 minutes. Cool in pan; then spread with Golden Butter Icing. If desired, mark into bars and place a walnut half in center of each bar. When icing is set, cut into bars with sharp knife.

Golden Butter Icing. Heat 1/4 cup butter or margarine in heavy saucepan until light brown and frothy, stirring constantly to prevent burning. Remove from heat. Beat in 3 cups sifted confectioners' sugar gradually. Then blend in 3 tablespoons light cream and 1 teaspoon vanilla. Makes about 2 cups.

Banana's Name

How did the banana get its name? The word "banana" is undoubtedly of West African origin, being found in various forms along the Gulf of Guinea and derived from the languages of that region. The name "banana" came into rather general use because the Portuguese—who were great navigators—carried this and other plants around the world.



Cookie Tray

Simple yet elegant—ideal formula for holiday entertaining. So make these Frosted Fruit Bars and tangy Lemon Date Sticks from date bar mix. Add Neapolitan Slices from macaroon mix. When company comes, you just brew the coffee!



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