

This hot cocktail is soothing and comforting on a cold day

The Culinary Institute of America

After a snowy walk or long day on the slopes, there’s nothing like curling up under a warm blanket. Maybe you have a fire going and the dog asleep at your feet, with a good book just within reach.

But before you can relax, you need to warm up those cold hands and chilled bones. Before you settle in for your long winter’s nap, stir up this hot cider cocktail, featured at The Tavern at American Bounty at our campus in Hyde Park, New York.

Hot cocktails are inspired by the classic hot toddy, a curative mixture dating back centuries that includes whiskey, rum, or brandy with hot water, a sweetener, and sometimes some spicing.

However you like your hot toddy, it should be soothing and comforting on a cold day. In fact, hot toddies made with spirits, honey, and lemon juice are often used to ease the symptoms from our seasonal colds and coughs.

Our cider cocktail recipe begins with almond-flavored amaretto and hot apple cider. Bitters are added to help balance the sweetness from the cider (and the caramel sauce and whipped cream we’ll add later). Bitters are a blend of naturally sour or bitter botanical flavors — like orange peel or herbs. In cocktails, they add a concentrated dose of bitterness without diluting the primary flavors in the drink.

There are no rules when it comes to a hot cocktail, and this recipe can be reformulated to suit your mood or the contents of your liquor cabinet. In place of amaretto, you can use any of your favorite spirits, like whiskey or apple brandy. If you like infused spirits or syrups (a great make-at-home holiday gift), a hot cocktail is the perfect way to show them off. Cinnamon-infused bourbon or cardamom-infused simple syrup are great starts to making this recipe your own.

Hot cocktails are the perfect treat



Phil Mansfield/The Culinary Institute of America via AP

Hot cider cocktail

for a little bit of quiet time, but they are also an excellent make-ahead recipe when you are hosting winter parties. They can be mixed and kept warm in a crock pot or on the stovetop over a very low flame. Be sure to put some of the hot apple cider aside before adding the amaretto, for children and guests who choose not to partake. Garnish your party drinks with freshly made

whipped cream, our caramel sauce, and a cinnamon stick for a particularly Instagram-worthy presentation.

This article was provided to The Associated Press by The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. This recipe also can be found in The Culinary Institute of America’s cookbook, “Baking at Home.”

HOT CIDER COCKTAIL

Start to finish: 20 minutes
Makes one drink

- 2 ounces amaretto
- 6 ounces warm apple cider
- 1 dash bitters
- Whipped Cream, as needed (recipe follows)
- Caramel Sauce, as needed (recipe follows)
- Combine amaretto, warm cider, and bitters in an Irish coffee mug or regular coffee mug. Top with fresh whipped cream and caramel sauce.

CARAMEL SAUCE

Makes about 2 cups

- 1 ½ cups heavy cream
- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ cup light corn syrup
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter

Prepare an ice bath. Bring the cream to a boil in a saucepan over medium heat. Remove from the heat. Combine the sugar and corn syrup in a heavy saucepan over low heat and stir until the sugar dissolves. Slowly cook to a golden brown without stirring, 8 to 9 minutes. Remove from the heat and put the saucepan in the ice bath for 20 seconds to stop the cooking. Remove from the ice bath and stir in the butter.

Carefully stir in the hot cream, mixing until fully blended. To store the caramel sauce, transfer it to a clean bowl or jar, cover tightly, and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks. Reheat the sauce over low heat or in the microwave before serving.

WHIPPED CREAM

Makes about 2 cups

- 1 cup heavy cream, chilled
- ¼ cup confectioners’ sugar
- ½ teaspoons vanilla extract

Chill a stainless-steel bowl and the beaters of a handheld mixer, the whisk attachment of a stand mixer, or a balloon whisk.

Pour the cream into the chilled bowl and whip on medium speed until thickened, about 3 minutes. Increase the speed to high and gradually add the confectioners’ sugar while whipping. Add the vanilla extract and continue to whip until the cream has the desired peak according to its intended use. Soft peaks are good for dolloping cream, while firmer peaks are better if the cream is to be piped, used for topping, or folded into another mixture.

Note: If your cream starts to turn slightly yellow while you are whipping, it is close to being overwhipped and turning into butter. Fold in a small amount of unwhipped cream, if you have it, to rescue the texture.

Nutrition information per serving of the cocktail without cream or caramel sauce: 310 calories; 0 calories from fat; 0 g fat (0 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 19 mg sodium; 56 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 19 g sugar; 0 g protein.



AP Photo/Matthew Mead, File

This Oct. 2015 file photo, shows spicy cheese crackers in Concord, N.H. The ingredients and technique for making these crackers are similar to those used to make pie dough. Butter and flour (with added flavorings) are its bones.

SPICY CHEESE CRACKERS

Start to finish: 2 hours 10 minutes (40 minutes active)

- Makes** about 50 crackers
- ½ pound extra-sharp cheddar, coarsely grated
 - 5 ounces finely grated Parmesan cheese, divided
 - 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
 - ½ cup (1 stick) cold unsalted butter, cut into chunks
 - 1 ½ teaspoons Colman’s Mustard powder, divided
 - ½ teaspoon table salt
 - 1 ¼ teaspoons cayenne, divided
 - 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
 - 2 tablespoons ice water

In a food processor, combine the cheddar and 4 ounces of the Parmesan. Pulse until the cheddar is finely chopped. Add the flour, butter, ½ teaspoon of the mustard, the salt and ¼ teaspoon of the cayenne. Pulse until the mixture looks like small pellets. Add the Worcestershire sauce and ice water, then pulse until just combined.

Pour the dough onto the counter, divide it into two mounds, then use the palm of your

hands to smear each mound across the counter several times, or until it comes together quickly when you press it with your fingers.

Transfer each half of the dough onto a 16-inch-long sheet of plastic wrap. Shape into a 12-inch log (about 1 ½ inches around), using the plastic as needed, then wrap tightly in the plastic. Chill for at least 1 hour.

When ready to bake, heat the oven to 325 F. Line two sheet pans with kitchen parchment and position one of the oven racks in the center of the oven.

On a large plate, combine the remaining 1 teaspoon of mustard and 1 teaspoon of cayenne. Remove one of the cylinders from the refrigerator. Unwrap the dough, then roll it in the spice mix, rubbing off the excess spice. Slice the dough crosswise about 1/3 inch thick. Arrange the dough rounds on the prepared sheet pans, about ½ inch apart.

Sprinkle each round with a pinch of the additional Parmesan cheese and bake on the oven’s middle and bottom shelves, switching places halfway through, until dark golden brown, 25 to 30 minutes. Transfer to a rack to cool.

Six ways to score deals, discounts on ski trips this winter

By **BETH J. HARPAZ**
AP Travel Editor

Want to bust your winter vacation budget? Buy a one-day lift ticket at a ski resort on a holiday weekend.

That’s “the most expensive way to go skiing. And that’s what people hear about — the \$140 lift tickets,” said Mary Jo Tarallo, executive director of Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month.

Don’t get fleeced wearing your fleece. Here are six ways to score deals and discounts on ski trips this winter.

ONLINE DEALS

Buy tickets online, not at the window. Check out ticket prices and deals at GetSkiTickets.com, Liftopia.com and Ski.com. Consider renting gear and clothing from GetOutfitted.com .

PROGRAMS WITH BENEFITS

January is Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month , when many resorts offer deals that typically include a lesson, gear rental and a lift ticket to the beginner slopes. Another program, Bring A Friend, offers incentives to pass-holders and other frequent skiers for introducing newcomers to the sport. Together, Learn to Ski and Bring A Friend programs have more than 200 resort partners in 34 states, according to Tarallo.

Some states also have “ski passport” programs that offer bargains at participating ski areas for kids in



AP Photo/Jim Cole

Skiers get ready to take the first run of the season on top of the mountain on opening day at Loon Mountain ski resort Nov. 23, in Lincoln, N.H. Many ski areas in Northern New England plan to open for the Thanksgiving weekend.

fourth, fifth and sixth grades.

COUPONS AND DISCOUNTS

Many regional ski areas distribute coupons through grocery stores, sporting goods stores, chains like Costco and even local eateries.

And don’t forget the usual discounts offered at many resorts for AAA, kids, students, members of the military and seniors.

PASSES

If you have a favorite resort, season passes save a bundle. But they’re cheapest when purchased in spring for the following winter.

If you like to vary your ski destinations, consider passes that

offer access to different resorts. The MaxPass can be used at 39 mountains in North America. The Epic Pass can be used at 44 ski resorts around the world, from Colorado and Utah to the European Alps.

DESTINATION STRATEGIES

Drive-to regional ski areas are usually cheaper than big-name resorts. And if you can drive or take a bus to the slopes, you’ll save on food by packing lunch and snacks. At Caberfae Peaks in Michigan, skiers bring slow-cookers and let their meals cook indoors while they’re on the slopes.

If you’re flying to major ski

regions like the Rockies, be flexible on destinations and timing for best deals, according to Ski.com. Flights to small mountain airports fill quickly, especially at peak times like holiday weekends. Consider flying into big airports like Denver and driving from there. But be sure to check car rental rates, which can be steep, and weigh the potential downside of snowy roads if your drive is far.

Among the most affordable ski destinations in the Western U.S., according to Ski.com, are:

- Winter Park, Colorado, with January lodging under \$100 a night.
- Salt Lake City, where the Salt

Lake Super Pass offers a choice of skiing at Alta, Brighton, Snowbird, and Solitude.

- Heavenly, in South Lake Tahoe, California (fly into Reno, Nevada and stay in a casino-hotel off-hill for under \$100 a night).
- Banff and Lake Louise, Alberta, Canada, where the U.S. dollar is worth \$1.35 Canadian.
- Schweitzer Mountain in Idaho, which offers free skiing on arrival day if you show a boarding pass from flights into nearby Spokane, Washington.

Ski.com also advises comparing ski rental fees with airline baggage fees for transporting your equipment. Some package deals include equipment rentals.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Midweek is cheaper than weekend skiing. Holidays are expensive and crowded.

Ski.com analyzed weather data, costs and arrivals using 25,000 reservations, and came up with Jan. 9-14, 2017, as the best week for a ski or snowboard trip. Crowds are down, snow conditions are likely good and costs are 45 percent cheaper at top resorts compared to Christmas week, spring break or Presidents Day week, Ski.com found.

For example, a five-night trip for two to Telluride, Colorado, that week costs \$1,154 per person for a room at Hotel Columbia and lift tickets, according to Ski.com. The same trip during March spring break runs \$1,889.