Make Your Own Christmas Gifts

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Doing things yourself is much more exciting than watching others or merely admiring their work. Why not plan our gifts for this Christmas to encourage each person to get in the swing and "do" something.

If your friends or relatives enjoy music, they would get a world of pleasure from a small instrument with which to play along with friends. Those who like to sing would especially enjoy a ukelele, guitar, or autoharp. For accompaniment to singing or fun musical ensemblet, many enjoy playing flutephones, harmonicas and other inexpensive instruments.

Sports-minded people would appreciate equipment for their sport or perhaps, as in bowling, a series of prepaid opportunities to indulge in their special interest. Those who enjoy crafts are always easy to get presents for because materials or tools for the craft are appreciated.

Homemade game boards are fun for the giver to make and furnish endless hours of enjoyment for young and old. Then, too, if you have friends who enjoy card games a card shuffler may be a real boon. This keeps the cards in better condition as well as furnishes needed assistance to those whose hands cannot manipulate one or several decks.

Even toys for children can be checked to see whether they provide opportunity for the child to "do" something other than wind it up and watch. And don't forget that imagination is one of the big areas in which a child can grow by doing. Toys so realistic as to leave nothing to the imagination can stifle creative impulses.

Potato Chips Go Festive

WEIGHT-WATCHERS DIP

1 cup dry cottage cheese
6 or 7-ounce can white tuna (packed in salt water)
2 teaspoons grated onion
3 tablespoons chopped pimiento
salt and pepper to taste

In an electric blender or high-speed electric mixer, blend cottage cheese until smooth and soft. Drain and flake tuna, combine with cottage cheese and seasonings. (Tell your dieting guests—a whole cup of this delicious dip contains only 165 calories.)

SWEET POTATO SOUFFLE

3 cups riced or mashed cooked sweet potatoes
3 tablespoons melted butter
2 well-beaten eggs
1-3 cup milk
¼ teaspoon salt
dash of nutmeg
1 cup crushed potato chips

Combine all ingredients. Pour into greased casserole and bake 20 to 25 minutes at 350 degrees. Serves six.

HOLIDAY CRUNCH APPLE CAKE

2 cups finely crushed potato chips
½ cup butter or margarine
mixture of 1 cup sugar, 2 teaspoons cinnamon
2½ cups applesauce
1 tablespoon lemon juice

Combine potato chips with melted butter or margarine. In a 9-inch pie pan place 1-3 of chip mixture. Spread ½ of applesauce over chips. Sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar. Add alternate layers of these, ending with chip mixture on top. Bake at 350 degrees about 30 minutes. Serve hot or cold with bits of jelly. Serves six to eight.

ENGLISH TRIFLE

If you like to serve that famous English dessert, Trifle, you can make it easily from sponge cake, fruit and custard sauce. A glass serving dish into which an 8- or 9-inch layer of sponge cake will just fit is perfect for this dessert.

Fruit Cake How TOs

For even more fruit flavor, use grape, pineapple or orange juice as a substitute for the water in the mix recipe.

Before you start mixing, pick out several pieces of red and green candied cherries—save them to decorate the baked fruit cake.

Warm corn syrup, brushed over the top of the fruit cake, right after baking, makes a quick and easy glaze. It will help hold candied fruit garnish in place, too.

To store fruit cake, wrap tightly in aluminum foil and refrigerate.

Fruit cake slices easier when it's cold — let slices warm to room temperature before serving.

New England Fruit Cake Mix may be baked in an 8x4-inch loaf pan, a 9x5-inch loaf pan, or two 1-lb. coffee cans.

Gift-wrap fruit cakes quickly and easily in colorful foil or self-sealing plastic film—add a bow or sprig of holly for a festive touch.

For a delicious holiday dessert, wrap slices of fruit cake in foil and heat at 325 degrees for 20 to 30 minutes. Serve topped with your favorite lemon sauce and whipped cream.

A real New England touch is hard sauce to top your fruit cake. The topping can be chilled in rolls and sliced, or chilled in individual shapes. It's quick and easy to make with a package of Pillsbury One Layer Size Creamy Vanilla Frosting Mix. Beat mix with ¼ cup soft butter until smooth and creamy. Add one egg and one teaspoon rum flavoring; beat until light and fluffy. Chill.

BRIDGE CLUB DISH

Your most creative dish might well be Chicken Avocado Imperial. The combination is simply a can or jar of boned chicken cut into pieces and combined with medium white sauce, a dash of cayenne and 2 or 3 tablespoons chopped chutney. Spoon this mixture into the cavity of length wise halves of peeled avocados; top with flaked coconut. Place in a shallow pan with small amount of water. Bake in moderate oven about 20 minutes to heat and brown coconut. You'll want to rate this among your specialty dishes. Another time try it with canned boned turkey.

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PLEASE SMALL FRY WITH THESE COOKIES

Exchanging samples of Christmas baking with friends who have youngsters? Then, make your part of the exchange these Golden Nugget cookies — they have orange gumdrop pieces in them, a fact that's sure to impress the younger generation. Give them in the most unusual gift box-cookie jar of the year — a snowman so handsome that he's a centerpiece as well.

GOLDEN NUGGETS

Junior winner in Pillsbury's 14th Grand National Recipe and Baking Contest.

2 cups sifted all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon double-acting baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1½ cups cut fruit flavored or orange gumdrops
1 cup flaked or chopped shredded coconut
½ cup walnuts, chopped
3 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 cups firmly packed brown sugar

Sift flour with baking powder and salt into large mixing bowl. Stir in gumdrops, coconut and walnuts. Stir to coat candy. Beat eggs with vanilla until foamy. Gradually add brown sugar; beat until thick. Add to flour mixture; mix well.

Turn into well-greased 15x10-x1 - inch jelly roll pan. Or make a 15x10x1-inch pan from heavy duty aluminum foil and place on a cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes. Cool; drizzle with glaze. Makes 3½ dozen bars.

Orange Glaze: Combine 1½ cups sifted powdered sugar, one tablespoon butter and two to three tablespoons orange juice until the consistency of a glaze.

MOLDING MIXTURE

2 cups salt
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon powdered alum
1-2-3 cups water

Combine all ingredients in saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until mixture is very thick, three to five minutes. Cool slightly.

Spread over can, box or item to be decorated with metal spatula or knife to about ¼-inch thickness. (Leftover mixture may be wrapped and stored in refrigerator.) Place in 200 degree oven for two to three hours to dry or until firm to touch.

To Make Snowman: Use a 1-lb. and ½-lb. coffee can and very small glass jar or metal can. Glue bottom of ½-lb. can to large lid with an all purpose household glue. Glue small jar to small coffee can lid. Cover with Molding Mixture, rounding out sides. Dry in oven two to three hours. Spray paint and decorate. Store cookies in both coffee cans.

Appetizer

You'll be getting Christmas dinner off to a glorious start when you serve as the appetizer chilled "Spicy Fruit Noel."

It's prepared well ahead of time, so that is at least one point in its favor considering the last-minute rush that frequently occurs in the kitchen before the big meal. But even more important is its lovely rosy - pink color and spicy flavor designed to attract both eye and appetite at a Yuletide feast.

Chief ingredient for this simple-to-prepare beauty is canned fruit cocktail — that colorful "Christmas-y" assortment of cling peaches, pears, pineapple, seedless green grapes and red maraschino cherries. The fruit cocktail marinates in a tangy sauce made with cocktail syrup, Rose wine (or cranberry juice cocktail), red cinnamon candies and lemon slices. The result is something to behold at the holiday table. If you like, garnish each serving with yogurt or dairy sour cream and a sprig of holly.

Canned fruit cocktail is one of the most popular convenience foods you can find to bring gaiety to holiday menu-planning. It adds luster and the flavor of five favorite fruits to an array of desserts, meat and poultry sauces, salads and appetizers.

SPICY FRUIT NOEL

1 can (1 lb, 14 oz.) fruit cocktail
4 thin lemon slices, halved
Pinch salt
2 tablespoons red cinnamon candies
¼ cup Rose wine or cranberry juice cocktail

Drain fruit syrup into saucepan. Add lemon slices, salt and cinnamon candies. Cover and bring to a boil; cook, stirring occasionally, until candies are dissolved. Remove from heat and stir in wine. Place fruit cocktail in a large bowl; pour hot syrup mixture over top. Chill. To serve, spoon into shallow dishes. If desired, top with a little yogurt or dairy sour cream and garnish with holly sprigs.

Makes 8 servings.

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