

A TEXAS CHRISTMAS KITCHEN

Yule LOVE IT

Holiday recipes from our table to yours

PETER & VICKY ROYSTER

THE MOVE LIVE LOVE TX TEAM™

Merry Christmas,

from our table to yours

Some of the best moments of the year happen around a kitchen table, with too many people, too much food, and somebody asking for the recipe.

So here they are. A few come straight from our own family, like Gram's banana pudding and Great Grandma Anne's fattigmann. The rest are the Texas and Southern classics we think every holiday table deserves: the glazed ham, the cornbread dressing, the pecan pie.

Make a mess. Make extra. Make room for one more chair.

With love and a full plate,

Peter & Vicky



Peter & Vicky

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Gather 'round

Party Bites

- Cowboy Caviar
- Jalapeño Popper Dip
- Hot Corn Dip
- Pecan Cheese Ball
- Deviled Eggs, Three Ways
- Christmas Eve Savory Snack Mix

PARTY BITES

Cowboy Caviar

Beans, corn and peppers in a bright lime dressing. It gets better the longer it sits, so make it in the morning and it's ready when the doorbell starts ringing. Serve with tortilla chips.

SERVES	PREP	CHILL
10 to 12	20 minutes	1 hour

INGREDIENTS

- 1 can (15 oz) black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
- 1 can (15 oz) black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1½ cups corn (frozen and thawed, or canned and drained)
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- ½ red onion, finely diced
- 2 Roma tomatoes, seeded and diced
- 1 to 2 jalapeños, seeded and minced
- ⅓ cup chopped cilantro
- 1 avocado, diced (add right before serving, optional)

DRESSING

- ⅓ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Add the peas, beans, corn, bell pepper, onion, tomatoes, jalapeño and cilantro to a large bowl.
2. Whisk the dressing ingredients together and pour over the top. Toss well.
3. Cover and chill at least 1 hour, or up to a day. Stir in the avocado just before serving.

PARTY BITES

Jalapeño Popper Dip

Everything you love about a jalapeño popper, in a dish you can scoop. Use fresh jalapeños for a bit of heat or canned for a milder dip.

SERVES	PREP	BAKE
8 to 10	15 minutes	25 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 8 oz cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1½ cups shredded sharp cheddar
- ½ cup shredded mozzarella
- 4 to 5 fresh jalapeños, seeded and diced (or 1 can, 4 oz, diced jalapeños)
- 6 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled

TOPPING

- ½ cup panko breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 375°F.
2. Beat the cream cheese, mayonnaise and sour cream until smooth. Stir in the cheddar, mozzarella, jalapeños and most of the bacon.
3. Spread in a 1½-quart baking dish or 9-inch pie plate.
4. Mix the panko, Parmesan and melted butter and sprinkle over the top.
5. Bake 20 to 25 minutes, until bubbling and golden. Top with the rest of the bacon. Serve with tortilla chips, crackers or celery.

PARTY BITES

Hot Corn Dip

Warm, bubbly and gone in minutes. The secret is browning the corn in a skillet first instead of stirring it in raw. Serve with corn chips, crackers or veggie sticks.

Serves a crowd	BAKE 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 4 ears corn, cut off the cob (or 1 lb frozen corn)
- 4 teaspoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 large red bell pepper, diced
- 1 large green bell pepper, diced
- 1 red onion, finely chopped
- 8 oz shredded Monterey Jack (or your favorite cheese), divided
- 1 jalapeño, finely chopped
- 8 oz cream cheese, softened
- ¾ cup sour cream
- ¾ cup mayonnaise
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1 can (4 oz) chopped green chiles
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced
- Optional garnish: chopped cilantro, sliced jalapeño or green chiles

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 350°F. If using frozen corn, no need to thaw.
2. Melt 1 tablespoon butter with 2 teaspoons oil in a skillet over high heat. Cook half the corn with half the garlic about 3 minutes, stirring, until golden. Move to a large bowl and repeat with the rest.
3. Cook the bell peppers and onion in the same skillet 2 minutes, until soft, and add to the bowl.
4. Stir in half the cheese, then everything else. Spread in a 9x13-inch (or 2½-quart) baking dish and top with the rest of the cheese.
5. Bake 30 minutes, until golden and bubbling. Garnish and serve hot.

> *Tip: don't skip browning the corn. It's where all the flavor comes from.*

PARTY BITES

Pecan Cheese Ball

A Southern holiday table isn't complete without one. Make it up to 2 days ahead and roll it in the pecans the day of the party so they stay crunchy.

SERVES	PREP	CHILL
12	15 minutes	2 hours

INGREDIENTS

- 16 oz cream cheese, softened
- 2 cups shredded sharp cheddar
- ¼ cup finely sliced green onions
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 cup pecans, toasted and finely chopped

DIRECTIONS

1. Beat the cream cheese until smooth. Mix in the cheddar, green onions, Worcestershire, garlic powder and paprika.
2. Scoop onto plastic wrap, shape into a ball, wrap tight and chill at least 2 hours.
3. Roll the ball in the chopped pecans, pressing so they stick. Serve with crackers and apple slices.

PARTY BITES

Deviled Eggs, Three Ways

One batch of filling, three flavors on one platter: classic, jalapeño bacon and pimento cheese. Watch which plate empties first.

MAKES	PREP
24 halves	30 minutes

BASE

- 12 large eggs
- ⅓ cup mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- Salt and pepper
- **Classic (8 halves):** 1 tablespoon sweet pickle relish, paprika for the top
- **Jalapeño bacon (8 halves):** 1 tablespoon minced pickled jalapeños, 2 slices crumbled bacon
- **Pimento cheese (8 halves):** 2 tablespoons finely shredded sharp cheddar, 1 tablespoon diced pimentos

DIRECTIONS

1. Put the eggs in a pot and cover with cold water by an inch. Bring to a boil, cover, turn off the heat and let sit 12 minutes. Move to an ice bath for 10 minutes, then peel.
2. Halve the eggs lengthwise and pop the yolks into a bowl. Mash with the mayonnaise, mustard, vinegar, salt and pepper until smooth.
3. Divide the filling into three bowls. Stir the relish into one, the jalapeños and most of the bacon into another, and the cheddar and pimentos into the third.
4. Spoon or pipe each filling into 8 whites. Dust the classics with paprika and top the jalapeño ones with the rest of the bacon. Chill until serving.

> *Make ahead: cook and peel the eggs up to 2 days early. Fill them the day of.*

PARTY BITES

Christmas Eve Savory Snack Mix

Cereal, pretzels, nuts and cheese crackers baked low and slow in a garlicky herb butter, then tossed with Parmesan. Made for the couch on Christmas Eve.

MAKES	PREP	TOTAL
about 16 servings	10 minutes	1 hour 25 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 6 cups square wheat cereal (Shreddies or Wheat Chex)
- 4 cups mini pretzels
- 2 cups salted mixed nuts
- 3 cups cheese crackers
- ½ cup butter, melted
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 3 teaspoons dried parsley
- ½ teaspoon red chili flakes
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup finely grated Parmesan

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 250°F and line a large baking sheet with foil. Spread the cereal, pretzels, nuts and crackers on it and toss gently.
2. Whisk the melted butter and olive oil together. Whisk in both vinegars, the Worcestershire and all the seasonings.
3. Pour it evenly over the mix and toss well to coat.
4. Bake 1 hour 15 minutes, pulling the pan out every 15 minutes to toss.
5. Let it sit 5 minutes, then sprinkle with the Parmesan and toss.
6. Serve warm or at room temperature. Store in a zip-top bag on the counter.

The main event

The Christmas Dinner

Brown Sugar and Bourbon Glazed Ham

Herb-Roasted Turkey Breast

Standing Rib Roast with Horseradish Cream

Cornish Hens with Citrus and Rosemary

Holiday Beef Brisket

Cheesy Beefy Enchilada Casserole

THE CHRISTMAS DINNER

Brown Sugar and Bourbon Glazed Ham

A spiral ham is already cooked, so your only job is warming it through without drying it out and giving it a sticky, shiny glaze. Low oven, foil on, glaze at the end.

SERVES	PREP	BAKE
12 to 16	15 minutes	about 2½ hours

INGREDIENTS

- 1 bone-in spiral-cut ham, fully cooked (8 to 10 lb)
- ½ cup water

GLAZE

- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ cup bourbon (or apple juice)
- ¼ cup Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons honey
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 325°F. Set the ham cut side down in a roasting pan, pour the water in the pan and cover tightly with foil.
2. Bake about 12 to 15 minutes per pound, until a thermometer in the thickest part reads 120°F.
3. While it bakes, simmer the glaze ingredients in a small pot 3 to 4 minutes, until syrupy.
4. Take off the foil and turn the oven up to 400°F. Brush the ham all over with glaze, getting it between the slices.
5. Bake 15 to 20 minutes more, brushing once or twice, until the outside is glossy and caramelized and the center reaches 140°F. Rest 15 minutes before serving.

THE CHRISTMAS DINNER

Herb-Roasted Turkey Breast

All the turkey flavor without wrestling a whole bird. Herb butter under the skin keeps it juicy, and it fits in the oven next to everything else.

SERVES	PREP	ROAST
6 to 8	15 minutes	about 1¾ hours

INGREDIENTS

- 1 bone-in turkey breast (6 to 7 lb), thawed and patted dry
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1 tablespoon each chopped fresh rosemary, thyme and sage
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 onion, cut in wedges
- 1 cup chicken broth

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 425°F. Mix the butter, herbs, garlic, lemon zest, salt and pepper.
2. Loosen the skin with your fingers and spread about two thirds of the butter underneath. Rub the rest over the outside.
3. Set the onion wedges in a roasting pan, put the turkey on top and pour in the broth.
4. Roast 20 minutes, then lower the oven to 350°F. Roast another 1¼ to 1½ hours, until a thermometer in the thickest part reads 165°F. Tent with foil if the skin browns too fast.
5. Rest 20 minutes before carving. Save the pan juices for the gravy.

THE CHRISTMAS DINNER

Standing Rib Roast with Horseradish Cream

The showstopper. Get a good roast, season it well, and trust your thermometer instead of the clock.

SERVES	PREP	ROAST
8 to 10	15 minutes plus 2 hours on the counter	about 2 hours

INGREDIENTS

- 1 standing rib roast, 3 bones (6 to 8 lb)
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon coarse black pepper
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

HORSERADISH CREAM

- 1 cup sour cream
- ¼ cup prepared horseradish
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- Pinch of salt
- 1 tablespoon chopped chives

DIRECTIONS

1. The day before, rub the roast all over with the salt and refrigerate uncovered. Short on time? Salt it when you take it out in step 2.
2. Take it out 2 hours before cooking. Heat the oven to 450°F.
3. Mix the pepper, garlic, rosemary and oil and rub over the fat cap and sides.
4. Set it bone side down in a roasting pan. Roast 20 minutes, then lower the oven to 325°F.
5. Roast until the center reads 120 to 125°F for medium-rare, about 13 to 15 minutes per pound. Want it more done? Go to 135°F for medium.
6. Rest 30 minutes. The temperature keeps climbing about 5 degrees as it rests.
7. Stir the horseradish cream ingredients together and chill until serving. Slice the roast between the bones and serve the cream on the side.

THE CHRISTMAS DINNER

Cornish Hens with Citrus and Rosemary

One little bird per guest (or half for lighter eaters) makes a small Christmas dinner feel special. Great for a table of four.

SERVES	PREP	ROAST
4 to 8	15 minutes	about 50 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 4 Cornish hens (about 1½ lb each), patted dry
- 3 tablespoons butter, melted (or olive oil)
- Zest and juice of 1 orange
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary, plus 4 sprigs
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 orange and 1 lemon, cut in wedges, for the cavities

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 425°F. Mix the butter, citrus zest and juice, chopped rosemary, garlic, salt and pepper.
2. Tuck a few citrus wedges and a rosemary sprig inside each hen. Tie the legs with twine and set in a roasting pan.
3. Brush the hens all over with the citrus butter.
4. Roast 45 to 55 minutes, basting with the pan juices halfway, until the skin is golden and a thermometer in the thigh reads 165°F.
5. Rest 10 minutes. Serve whole or cut in half with kitchen shears.

THE CHRISTMAS DINNER

Holiday Beef Brisket

Three ingredients and a slow cooker. The cranberry and onion turn into a sweet, savory sauce, and the brisket comes out fork tender. Cook it a day ahead: it slices cleaner cold and tastes even better reheated.

SERVES	PREP	SLOW
8	10 minutes	cooker 8 hours, plus chilling

INGREDIENTS

- 1 flat-cut beef brisket (4 to 5 lb)
- Salt and pepper
- 1 packet Lipton Onion Soup Mix
- 1 can (14 oz) cranberry sauce or jelly

DIRECTIONS

1. Season the brisket with salt and pepper and set it in a large slow cooker.
2. Sprinkle the onion soup mix evenly over the top.
3. Cut the cranberry sauce into chunks and scatter it over the brisket.
4. Cook on low 8 hours, until fork tender or falling apart.
5. Move the brisket to a plate. Once it cools, wrap it tightly in foil and refrigerate. Pour the cooking juices into a tight-lidded container and refrigerate too.
6. When you're ready to serve, slice the cold brisket against the grain and lay the slices in an oven-safe dish. Lift the hardened fat off the juices and pour the juices over the beef. Cover with foil.
7. Heat in a 350°F oven until hot and bubbly, about 30 to 40 minutes.

THE CHRISTMAS DINNER

Cheesy Beefy Enchilada Casserole

Our Tex-Mex Christmas. Seasoned beef and cheese rolled up in flour tortillas, then smothered in chili and more cheese. It's easy, it feeds a crowd, and it's always the first pan scraped clean.

SERVES	PREP	BAKE
6 to 8	20 minutes	20 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb ground beef
- 1 can (10 oz) Rotel diced tomatoes and green chiles, drained
- ⅓ cup picante sauce
- 1 package flour tortillas (H-E-B's are the best)
- 2 cans (15 oz each) chili
- Shredded cheese, about 3 cups (cheddar or a Mexican blend)

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 325°F.
2. Brown the beef and drain it. Stir in the Rotel and picante sauce and let it simmer a few minutes.
3. Spoon some of the meat and a little cheese down the middle of each tortilla and roll it up.
4. Lay the rolls seam side down in a 9x13-inch casserole dish. Cover with the chili and the rest of the cheese.
5. Bake about 20 minutes, until hot and the cheese is melted and bubbly.

Pass the dish, please

On the Side

- Cornbread Dressing
- Sweet Potato Casserole with Pecan Crumble
- Green Bean Casserole from Scratch
- Baked Mac and Cheese
- Jalapeño Corn Casserole
- Cranberry Orange Relish
- Giblet Gravy

ON THE SIDE

Cornbread Dressing

The heart of a Southern Christmas plate. Bake the cornbread a day or two ahead so it has time to dry out. That's what keeps the dressing tender instead of mushy.

SERVES	PREP	BAKE
10 to 12	30 minutes	45 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 batch Skillet Cornbread (from The Bread Basket), baked 1 to 2 days ahead and crumbled, about 6 cups
- 4 slices white bread, torn and left out to dry (or 3 day-old biscuits)
- ½ cup butter
- 1½ cups chopped onion
- 1½ cups chopped celery
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh sage (or 2 teaspoons rubbed sage)
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 3½ to 4 cups chicken broth
- 2 eggs, beaten

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 375°F and butter a 9x13-inch baking dish.
2. Put the crumbled cornbread and torn bread in a large bowl.
3. Melt the butter in a skillet over medium. Cook the onion and celery 8 to 10 minutes, until soft. Stir in the sage, thyme, salt and pepper.
4. Add the vegetables and every bit of butter to the bread. Pour in 3½ cups broth and toss. It should be very moist, like a thick batter. Add more broth if it looks dry.
5. Taste for salt, then stir in the eggs.
6. Spread in the dish and bake 40 to 45 minutes, until golden on top and set in the middle (165°F).

> *Make ahead: assemble without the eggs up to a day early and refrigerate. Stir in the eggs right before baking and add about 10 minutes.*

ON THE SIDE

Sweet Potato Casserole with Pecan Crumble

Creamy, lightly spiced sweet potatoes under a brown sugar pecan crumble. It walks the line between side dish and dessert, and nobody complains.

SERVES	PREP	BAKE
10 to 12	30 minutes	35 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 3 lb sweet potatoes (4 to 5 medium), peeled and cubed
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 eggs, beaten
- ½ cup milk
- ⅓ cup butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon salt

PECAN CRUMBLE

- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- ⅓ cup butter, melted
- 1 cup chopped pecans

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 350°F and grease a 9x13-inch dish.
2. Boil the sweet potatoes in salted water about 15 minutes, until very tender. Drain and mash smooth.
3. Beat in the sugar, eggs, milk, butter, vanilla, cinnamon and salt. Spread in the dish.
4. Stir the crumble ingredients together and scatter over the top.
5. Bake 30 to 35 minutes, until the topping is browned and set.

> *Make ahead: assemble without the crumble up to a day early and refrigerate. Add the topping and bake 10 minutes longer.*

ON THE SIDE

Green Bean Casserole from Scratch

Fresh beans and a real mushroom cream sauce, still crowned with crispy onions. It tastes like the one you grew up with, only better.

SERVES	PREP	BAKE
8	25 minutes	25 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ lb fresh green beans, trimmed and cut in 2-inch pieces
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 8 oz mushrooms, sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 cup half-and-half
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- Pinch of nutmeg
- 1½ cups crispy fried onions, divided

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 375°F. Boil the beans in salted water 5 minutes, then drain and rinse with cold water.
2. Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium-high. Cook the mushrooms 6 to 8 minutes, until browned. Add the garlic for 30 seconds.
3. Sprinkle in the flour and stir 1 minute. Slowly whisk in the broth, then the half-and-half. Simmer 3 to 4 minutes, until thick. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg.
4. Stir in the beans and half the onions. Spread in a 2-quart baking dish.
5. Bake 20 minutes. Top with the rest of the onions and bake 5 minutes more.

ON THE SIDE

Baked Mac and Cheese

The real-deal, baked-in-a-dish kind with a golden cheesy top. Shred your own cheese. The bagged kind doesn't melt as smooth.

SERVES	PREP	BAKE
10 to 12	25 minutes	30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb elbow macaroni
- 4 tablespoons butter
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 3 cups whole milk
- 1 cup half-and-half
- 1 teaspoon mustard powder
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 4 cups shredded sharp cheddar, divided
- 2 cups shredded Monterey Jack or Gruyère, divided

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 350°F and grease a 9x13-inch dish. Cook the macaroni 2 minutes short of the package time. Drain.
2. Melt the butter in a large pot over medium. Whisk in the flour and cook 1 minute.
3. Slowly whisk in the milk and half-and-half. Simmer, whisking, 5 minutes, until it coats a spoon. Add the mustard, paprika, salt and pepper.
4. Off the heat, stir in 3 cups cheddar and 1½ cups Jack until melted. Fold in the macaroni.
5. Pour into the dish and top with the rest of the cheese.
6. Bake 25 to 30 minutes, until bubbling and golden. Rest 10 minutes before serving.

ON THE SIDE

Jalapeño Corn Casserole

Somewhere between cornbread and corn pudding, with a little Texas kick. Five minutes of stirring and the oven does the rest.

SERVES	PREP	BAKE
8 to 10	10 minutes	50 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 can (15 oz) whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 can (14.75 oz) cream-style corn
- 1 box (8.5 oz) corn muffin mix
- 1 cup sour cream
- ½ cup butter, melted
- 1 cup shredded cheddar, divided
- 1 to 2 jalapeños, seeded and diced

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 350°F and grease a 2-quart (or 9x9-inch) baking dish.
2. Stir together both corns, the muffin mix, sour cream, butter, ½ cup cheddar and the jalapeños.
3. Spread in the dish and top with the rest of the cheese.
4. Bake 45 to 55 minutes, until golden and set in the center. Rest 10 minutes.

ON THE SIDE

Cranberry Orange Relish

No cooking at all. Fresh cranberries and a whole orange pulsed together into a bright, tart relish that cuts right through a rich holiday plate.

MAKES	PREP	CHILL
about 3 cups	10 minutes	4 hours

INGREDIENTS

- 12 oz fresh cranberries, rinsed
- 1 navel orange, peel on, cut in chunks
- ½ to ¾ cup sugar, to taste
- Pinch of salt
- ½ cup chopped pecans (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Pulse the cranberries and orange in a food processor until finely chopped but not mushy.
2. Stir in ½ cup sugar and the salt. Taste and add more sugar if you like.
3. Stir in the pecans, if using. Cover and chill at least 4 hours, or up to 3 days, so the flavors come together.

ON THE SIDE

Giblet Gravy

Old-school Southern gravy with chopped giblets and hard-boiled egg. Roasting a turkey breast instead of a whole bird? Most grocery stores sell turkey necks and giblets on their own.

MAKES	PREP	COOK
about 4 cups	10 minutes	about 1¼ hours

INGREDIENTS

- Turkey neck, heart, gizzard and liver
- 5 cups water or low-sodium chicken broth
- ½ onion
- 1 celery rib
- 1 bay leaf
- ¼ cup turkey pan drippings or butter
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- ¼ teaspoon rubbed sage
- Salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Put the neck, heart and gizzard in a pot with the water, onion, celery and bay leaf. Simmer gently 1 hour. Add the liver for the last 15 minutes.
2. Strain and keep 3 cups of the broth. Pull the meat off the neck and finely chop it with the giblets.
3. In a skillet, heat the drippings or butter over medium. Whisk in the flour and cook 3 to 4 minutes, until light brown.
4. Slowly whisk in the 3 cups of broth (and any juices from the roasting pan). Simmer 5 to 10 minutes, until thick.
5. Stir in the chopped giblets, eggs and sage. Season with salt and plenty of pepper.

Warm from the oven

The Bread Basket

Yeast Dinner Rolls

Skillet Cornbread

Cinnamon Pull-Apart Bread

THE BREAD BASKET

Yeast Dinner Rolls

Soft, buttery, pull-apart rolls. There is nothing better on a holiday table and nothing that makes a house smell more like home.

MAKES	PREP	RISE	BAKE
15	25 minutes	about 1½ hours	20 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup warm milk (about 110°F)
- 1 packet (2¼ teaspoons) instant or active dry yeast
- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ cup butter, melted, plus 2 tablespoons for brushing
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more as needed

DIRECTIONS

1. If using active dry yeast, stir it into the warm milk with a pinch of the sugar and let it foam 5 minutes. (Instant yeast can skip this.)
2. In a large bowl, mix the milk, yeast, sugar, melted butter, egg and salt. Add the flour a cup at a time until a soft dough forms.
3. Knead 5 to 7 minutes, by hand or with a dough hook, until smooth and slightly tacky. Cover and let rise in a warm spot about 1 hour, until doubled.
4. Grease a 9x13-inch pan. Divide the dough into 15 pieces, roll into balls and set them in the pan.
5. Cover and let rise 30 to 45 minutes, until puffy. Heat the oven to 375°F.
6. Bake 18 to 20 minutes, until golden. Brush with the remaining butter right out of the oven.

THE BREAD BASKET

Skillet Cornbread

Crispy edges from a screaming hot cast iron skillet, tender inside. This is also the base for a good cornbread dressing.

SERVES	PREP	BAKE
8	10 minutes	22 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons bacon drippings or butter, for the skillet
- 1½ cups yellow cornmeal
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar (optional)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs
- 1½ cups buttermilk
- ¼ cup butter, melted

DIRECTIONS

1. Put the drippings in a 10-inch cast iron skillet, set it in the oven and heat the oven to 425°F.
2. Whisk the cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a bowl.
3. In another bowl, whisk the eggs, buttermilk and melted butter. Stir into the dry ingredients just until mixed.
4. Carefully pull out the hot skillet, swirl the drippings to coat and pour in the batter. It should sizzle.
5. Bake 20 to 25 minutes, until golden and a toothpick comes out clean.

THE BREAD BASKET

Cinnamon Pull-Apart Bread

Sticky, gooey monkey bread made with canned biscuits, so the kids can help. Turn it out on a platter and let everyone pull off a piece.

SERVES	PREP	BAKE
10 to 12	15 minutes	40 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cans (16.3 oz each) refrigerated biscuits
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- ½ cup chopped pecans (optional)
- ½ cup butter
- 1 cup packed brown sugar

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 350°F and grease a 12-cup Bundt pan well.
2. Mix the sugar and cinnamon in a large zip-top bag. Cut each biscuit into quarters, drop them in the bag a handful at a time and shake to coat.
3. Layer the pieces in the pan, scattering pecans between the layers.
4. Melt the butter and brown sugar in a small pot and boil 1 minute. Pour evenly over the biscuits.
5. Bake 35 to 40 minutes, until deep golden and no longer doughy in the middle.
6. Cool 10 minutes in the pan, then flip onto a platter. Serve warm.

Before the wrapping paper flies

Christmas Morning

Christmas Breakfast Sausage Casserole

Kolaches

Biscuits and Sausage Gravy

CHRISTMAS MORNING

Christmas Breakfast Sausage Casserole

Put it together on Christmas Eve and let it chill overnight. In the morning, all you do is turn on the oven and open presents while it bakes.

SERVES		BAKE
8	Chill overnight	about 1½ hours

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb ground breakfast sausage
- 1 teaspoon mustard powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 2 cups milk
- 6 slices white bread, toasted and cubed
- 8 oz mild cheddar, shredded

DIRECTIONS

1. Brown the sausage in a skillet over medium heat, breaking it up as it cooks. Drain.
2. In a bowl, whisk the mustard powder, salt, eggs and milk.
3. Stir in the sausage, bread and cheese until everything is coated.
4. Pour into a greased 9x13-inch dish. Cover and refrigerate at least 8 hours or overnight.
5. Heat the oven to 350°F. Bake covered 45 to 60 minutes.
6. Uncover, lower the oven to 325°F and bake about 30 minutes more, until a knife in the center comes out clean (160°F).

CHRISTMAS MORNING

Kolaches

Soft, slightly sweet yeast pastries with a fruit or cream cheese center, brought to Texas by Czech families and now a breakfast staple. (The sausage-filled ones Texans also call kolaches are properly klobasniky.) Make the dough Christmas Eve and let it rise slowly in the fridge overnight.

MAKES	PREP	RISE	BAKE
24	45 minutes	about 2 hours	15 minutes

DOUGH

- 1 cup warm milk (about 110°F)
- 1 packet (2¼ teaspoons) instant or active dry yeast
- ⅓ cup sugar
- ½ cup butter, melted and cooled
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 cups all-purpose flour, plus more as needed
- 1 egg beaten with 1 tablespoon milk, for brushing

CREAM CHEESE FILLING

- 8 oz cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 egg yolk
- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest

FRUIT FILLING

- About 1 cup thick apricot, cherry or peach preserves (or pie filling)

STREUSEL TOPPING (POSIPKA)

- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons cold butter

CHRISTMAS MORNING

Kolaches *continued*

DIRECTIONS

1. Mix the milk, yeast, sugar, butter, eggs and salt. Add the flour a cup at a time until a soft, slightly sticky dough forms. Knead 5 minutes.
2. Cover and let rise about 1 hour, until doubled (or refrigerate overnight).
3. Line two baking sheets. Divide the dough into 24 balls and set them 2 inches apart. Flatten each a little, cover and let rise 30 to 45 minutes. If the dough was chilled overnight, shape it cold and let the balls rise 60 to 90 minutes, until puffy.
4. Beat the cream cheese filling ingredients until smooth. Rub the streusel ingredients together into crumbs.
5. Heat the oven to 375°F. Press a deep well in the center of each kolache with two fingers, leaving a thick rim. Brush the rims with egg wash.
6. Fill each well with about 1 tablespoon cream cheese or fruit filling and sprinkle with streusel.
7. Bake 15 to 18 minutes, until golden. Cool on a rack.

CHRISTMAS MORNING

Biscuits and Sausage Gravy

Tall, flaky buttermilk biscuits smothered in peppery sausage gravy. Christmas morning in Texas, on a plate.

SERVES	PREP	COOK
6	15 minutes	25 minutes

BISCUITS

- 2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for the counter
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ cup (1 stick) cold butter, cubed
- ¾ to 1 cup cold buttermilk

SAUSAGE GRAVY

- 1 lb breakfast sausage
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 3 cups whole milk
- ½ teaspoon black pepper, plus more to taste
- Salt and a pinch of cayenne

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 450°F. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and sugar.
2. Cut in the cold butter with a pastry cutter or your fingers until it looks like coarse crumbs with some pea-size pieces.
3. Stir in ¾ cup buttermilk until a shaggy dough forms, adding a splash more if it’s dry.
4. Pat the dough 1 inch thick on a floured counter. Fold it in half, pat out again, and repeat twice for layers. Cut with a 2½-inch cutter, pressing straight down without twisting.
5. Set the biscuits touching on a baking sheet and bake 12 to 15 minutes, until tall and golden.
6. For the gravy, brown the sausage in a large skillet over medium-high, breaking it up. Don’t drain it. (If the sausage is lean, add a tablespoon of butter.)
7. Sprinkle the flour over the sausage and stir 1 to 2 minutes.
8. Slowly pour in the milk, stirring. Simmer 5 to 8 minutes, until thick. Season with the pepper, salt and cayenne.
9. Split the biscuits and spoon the gravy over the top.

Save room

Sweet Endings

Texas Pecan Pie

Apple Pie

Mini-Piecakens

Texas Sheet Cake

Red Velvet Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting

Gram's Low Sugar Banana Pudding

Strawberry Cheesecake Shooters

Fattigmann (Norwegian Christmas Cookies)

Sugar Cookies with Icing

The Original Fantasy Fudge

Texas Pecan Pralines

SWEET ENDINGS

Texas Pecan Pie

The pie every Texas holiday table needs. A homemade crust, a scatter of pecans, and a simple sweet filling poured right over the top.

SERVES	PREP	BAKE
8	25 minutes	50 minutes

CRUST

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅓ cup shortening
- 3 tablespoons cold water

FILLING

- 1¼ cups chopped pecans
- 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon light corn syrup
- 3 large eggs
- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 350°F. Combine the flour and salt in a bowl and cut in the shortening until crumbly. Add the cold water a little at a time, tossing with a fork, until a ball forms.
2. Roll the dough to fit a 9-inch pie plate and ease it in. Trim to ½ inch past the rim and flute the edge. Sprinkle the pecans over the bottom.
3. Beat the corn syrup, eggs, sugar, vanilla and salt until well blended. Pour over the pecans.
4. Bake 45 to 50 minutes, until a knife in the center comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack.

SWEET ENDINGS

Apple Pie

A tall, double-crust apple pie with a little tart and a little sweet. Mixing two kinds of apples gives you slices that hold their shape and a filling that isn't one note.

SERVES	PREP	BAKE	COOL
8	40 minutes	about 1¼ hours	3 hours

INGREDIENTS

- Pastry for a double-crust 9-inch pie (homemade or store-bought)
- 3 lb apples (6 to 7), half Granny Smith and half Honeycrisp, peeled and sliced ¼ inch thick
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1½ teaspoons cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons butter, cut in small pieces
- 1 egg beaten with 1 tablespoon milk, and coarse sugar, for the top

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 425°F with a rack in the lower third. Line a 9-inch pie plate with one crust.
2. Toss the apples with both sugars, the flour, lemon juice, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt.
3. Pile the apples into the crust, mounding them in the middle. Dot with the butter.
4. Lay the second crust on top (whole or as a lattice). Trim, fold the edges under and crimp. Cut a few vents if using a whole top.
5. Brush with egg wash and sprinkle with coarse sugar. Set the pie on a baking sheet.
6. Bake 20 minutes, then lower the oven to 375°F. Bake 45 to 55 minutes more, until the crust is deep golden and the juices bubble through the vents. Cover the edges with foil if they brown too fast.
7. Cool at least 3 hours so the filling sets before slicing.

SWEET ENDINGS

Mini-Piecakens

Can't pick between pie and cake? You don't have to. A little cranberry pie bakes inside each pumpkin spice cupcake, then gets topped with whipped cream and a sugared crust "lid." They take a little time, but they're the first thing gone from the dessert table.

MAKES	PREP	TOTAL
12	20 minutes	1 hour 40 minutes

MINI CRANBERRY PIES

- Cooking spray
- 12 oz fresh or frozen cranberries
- ⅓ cup fresh orange juice
- ¼ cup water
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ cup granulated sugar, divided
- Flour, for rolling
- 1 batch pie dough (homemade or store-bought)

PUMPKIN CUPCAKES

- Cooking spray
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup pumpkin puree
- ¾ cup light brown sugar
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup all-purpose flour

WHIPPED CREAM

- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 3 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

SWEET ENDINGS

Mini-Piecakens *continued*

MAKE THE MINI PIES

1. Spray a 24-cup mini muffin pan. In a small pot, bring the cranberries, orange juice, water, salt and 7 tablespoons of the sugar to a boil, stirring now and then. Turn the heat to medium-low and simmer 3 to 4 minutes, mashing the berries as they pop, until thick. Cool completely.
2. Roll the dough ⅛ inch thick on a floured counter. Cut 12 rounds with a 3-inch cutter and 12 small rounds with a 1½-inch cutter.
3. Press the large rounds into 12 mini muffin cups to make little crusts. Lay the small rounds flat in the other 12 cups. Chill 10 minutes.
4. Heat the oven to 400°. Spoon 1 tablespoon cranberry filling into each crust and save the rest. Sprinkle the small rounds with the last tablespoon of sugar.
5. Bake about 8 minutes, until the small rounds are golden and crisp, and lift them out to a rack with a fork. Bake the filled pies 7 to 9 minutes more, until the edges brown. Cool 10 minutes in the pan, ease them out with a thin spatula, and cool completely on a rack.

MAKE THE CUPCAKES

1. Heat the oven to 350°. Spray a standard 12-cup muffin pan.
2. Whisk the eggs, pumpkin, brown sugar, oil, vanilla, spices and salt in a large bowl. Add the baking powder and baking soda and whisk a good 45 seconds so they spread evenly. Whisk in the flour just until it disappears.
3. Spoon a heaping tablespoon of batter into each cup, set a mini pie in the middle, and cover with the rest of the batter.
4. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, until risen and firm when you press the top. Cool completely in the pan.

FINISH

1. Whip the cream, powdered sugar and vanilla to soft peaks.
2. Pipe or spoon cream on each piecaken, add a little of the saved cranberry filling, and top with a sugared crust round.

> *Make ahead: the mini pies keep 1 day, covered, in the refrigerator.*

SWEET ENDINGS

Texas Sheet Cake

Thin, fudgy chocolate cake with a warm pecan frosting poured right over the top. It feeds a crowd and travels well in the pan.

SERVES	PREP	BAKE
24	20 minutes	20 minutes

CAKE

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon (optional)
- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup water
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- ½ cup buttermilk
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

FROSTING

- ½ cup butter
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 6 tablespoons milk
- 1 lb (about 3¾ cups) powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup chopped pecans

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 350°F. Grease an 18x13-inch half sheet pan.
2. Whisk the flour, sugar, baking soda, salt and cinnamon in a large bowl.
3. Bring the butter, water and cocoa to a boil in a saucepan. Pour over the dry ingredients and stir.
4. Whisk in the buttermilk, eggs and vanilla until smooth. Pour into the pan.
5. Bake 18 to 20 minutes, until a toothpick comes out clean.
6. About 5 minutes before the cake is done, bring the frosting butter, cocoa and milk to a boil. Take it off the heat and whisk in the powdered sugar and vanilla, then the pecans.
7. Pour the warm frosting over the warm cake and spread. Cool before cutting.

SWEET ENDINGS

Red Velvet Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting

A tall, red-as-Christmas layer cake with a mild cocoa flavor and plenty of tangy cream cheese frosting. Press chopped pecans on the sides for a Southern finish.

SERVES	PREP	BAKE
12 to 16	30 minutes	30 minutes

CAKE

- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups sugar
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups vegetable oil
- 1 cup buttermilk, at room temperature
- 2 eggs, at room temperature
- 2 tablespoons (1 oz) red food coloring
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar

FROSTING

- 16 oz cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 4 cups powdered sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 cup chopped pecans (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 350°F. Grease two 9-inch round pans and line the bottoms with parchment.
2. Whisk the flour, sugar, cocoa, baking soda and salt.
3. In another bowl, whisk the oil, buttermilk, eggs, food coloring, vanilla and vinegar. Stir into the dry ingredients until smooth.
4. Divide between the pans. Bake 25 to 30 minutes, until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes, turn out and cool completely.
5. Beat the cream cheese and butter until smooth. Beat in the powdered sugar and vanilla until fluffy.
6. Frost between the layers, then the top and sides. Press the pecans onto the sides, if using. Chill 30 minutes before slicing.

SWEET ENDINGS

Gram's Low Sugar Banana Pudding

Gram's banana pudding, straight from her recipe card. Layers of vanilla wafers, ripe bananas and creamy vanilla pudding, "frosted" with whipped topping. Lighter on sugar, and nobody can tell.

	PREP
No bake	15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 4 to 5 ripe bananas, sliced
- 1 box vanilla wafers
- 1 large box instant sugar-free vanilla pudding
- 3 cups cold low-fat milk
- 1 carton (8 oz) sugar-free Cool Whip, thawed

DIRECTIONS

1. Line the bottom of your bowl with vanilla wafers and a layer of bananas.
2. Mix the pudding with the milk and ⅔ of the Cool Whip until well blended and smooth.
3. Pour about ⅓ of the pudding mixture over the bananas.
4. Add another layer of wafers, then bananas, and pour on another ⅓ of the pudding.
5. Add one more layer of wafers and bananas, then top with the rest of the pudding.
6. "Frost" the top with the remaining Cool Whip. Enjoy!

> *From Gram's recipe card.*

SWEET ENDINGS

Strawberry Cheesecake Shooters

Little layered cups of graham crust, cheesecake and fresh strawberries. Make them the day before and pull them out of the fridge when it's time for dessert.

MAKES		CHILL
8 to 12	No bake	1 to 2 hours

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup graham cracker crumbs
- 3 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 box no-bake cheesecake mix (such as Jell-O No Bake Real Cheesecake), plus the milk the box calls for
- 1 to 2 cups fresh strawberries, diced, plus a few whole or halved for the tops
- Fresh mint leaves (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Mix the graham crumbs and butter. Press about 1 tablespoon into the bottom of each small cup, shot glass or mini mason jar.
2. Make the cheesecake filling following the box.
3. Spoon it into a piping bag or a zip-top bag with the corner snipped. Pipe a thick layer over each crust.
4. Add a layer of diced strawberries. Repeat the filling and berries if your cups are tall enough.
5. Finish each one with a little filling and a strawberry or a mint leaf. Chill 1 to 2 hours before serving.

SWEET ENDINGS

Fattigmann (Norwegian Christmas Cookies)

A family treasure from Great Grandma Anne. Fattigmann means "poor man" cookies: light, crisp knots of cardamom dough, fried golden and snowed under powdered sugar.

MAKES		FRY
about 30	Make the dough a day ahead	about 2 minutes per batch

INGREDIENTS

- 6 egg yolks
- 6 tablespoons granulated sugar
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons cognac or brandy
- About 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 16 oz lard or vegetable oil, for frying
- Powdered sugar, for sprinkling

DIRECTIONS

1. Make the dough a day ahead (or at least a couple of hours). Whisk the egg yolks and sugar until light and fluffy, then add the cognac.
2. Whip the cream until firm and fold it into the egg mixture.
3. Blend in the flour and cardamom. Dust the dough with a little flour, cover and refrigerate overnight.
4. When you're ready to fry, heat the lard or oil in a large, deep saucepan to 355°F. Keep the fat no more than halfway up the pan.
5. Roll the dough very thin on a lightly floured counter. Cut it into diamonds with a pastry wheel or dull knife and cut a small slit in the middle of each. Pull one end of the diamond through the slit to make a knot.
6. Fry a few at a time, turning once after about a minute, until golden brown. Drain on paper towels set on a rack.
7. Sprinkle generously with powdered sugar.

> *Keeps in an airtight tin, or freeze them for later. From Great Grandma Anne's recipe.*

SWEET ENDINGS

Sugar Cookies with Icing

Cut-out cookies that hold their shape, with a simple icing that dries smooth and shiny. Set out sprinkles and let the kids decorate.

MAKES	PREP	CHILL	BAKE
about 30	30 minutes	1 hour	10 minutes

COOKIES

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ teaspoon almond extract
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt

ICING

- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 4 teaspoons milk, plus more as needed
- 4 teaspoons light corn syrup
- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- Food coloring and sprinkles

DIRECTIONS

1. Beat the butter and sugar until fluffy. Beat in the egg, vanilla and almond extract.
2. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt, then mix into the butter just until a dough forms.
3. Divide in two, flatten into disks, wrap and chill at least 1 hour.
4. Heat the oven to 350°F and line baking sheets with parchment.
5. Roll the dough ¼ inch thick on a floured counter and cut into shapes. Space 1 inch apart.
6. Bake 8 to 10 minutes, just until the edges set and before they brown. Cool completely.
7. Stir the icing ingredients until smooth and thick enough to spread, adding milk a few drops at a time. Tint with coloring.
8. Spread or pipe onto the cookies and add sprinkles. Let set 2 to 4 hours before stacking.

SWEET ENDINGS

The Original Fantasy Fudge

The marshmallow creme fudge most of us grew up on, made the original way. Cut it small. It's rich.

MAKES	ABOUT
a 9x13 pan	20 minutes plus cooling

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups sugar
- ¾ cup butter
- ⅔ cup evaporated milk
- 2 cups semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 jar (7 oz) marshmallow creme
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Chopped nuts (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Line a 9x13-inch pan with parchment.
2. Combine the sugar, butter and evaporated milk in a heavy 3-quart saucepan.
3. Bring to a full boil over medium heat, stirring the whole time so the sugar doesn't scorch, and boil exactly 5 minutes (or until a candy thermometer reads 234°F).
4. Take it off the heat and stir in the marshmallow creme and chocolate chips until melted and smooth.
5. Stir in the vanilla and nuts, if using.
6. Pour into the pan and let it cool completely before cutting.

> *Tip: keep stirring through the full 5-minute boil. That step decides whether your fudge sets.*

SWEET ENDINGS

Texas Pecan Pralines

Creamy, sugary pecan candy that melts in your mouth. A candy thermometer makes it foolproof. Pick a dry day if you can, because Houston humidity can keep them from setting.

MAKES	PREP	COOK
about 24	5 minutes	15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- ¾ cup packed light brown sugar
- ½ cup evaporated milk
- 6 tablespoons butter
- Pinch of salt
- 1½ cups pecan halves
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

DIRECTIONS

1. Line two baking sheets with parchment.
2. In a heavy saucepan, combine both sugars, the evaporated milk, butter and salt. Cook over medium, stirring, until the sugar dissolves.
3. Add the pecans and keep cooking, stirring often, until a candy thermometer reads 238°F (soft ball stage).
4. Take it off the heat and stir in the vanilla. Keep stirring 1 to 2 minutes, until the mixture thickens, turns creamy and loses its shine.
5. Working fast, drop tablespoons onto the parchment. If it hardens in the pot, stir in a teaspoon of hot water.
6. Let set about 30 minutes. Store airtight between layers of parchment.

Cheers, y'all

Holiday Sips

Peppermint Bark Slow Cooker Hot Chocolate

Holiday Sangria Mocktail

Santa Clausmopolitan

HOLIDAY SIPS

Peppermint Bark Slow Cooker Hot Chocolate

Load the slow cooker, walk away, and let the house smell like Christmas. It stays warm all party long, so guests can help themselves. Leave out the liqueur and it's a kids' favorite too.

SERVES	TOTAL TIME
12	2 hours

INGREDIENTS

- 8 cups whole milk
- 1 can (14 oz) sweetened condensed milk
- 3 cups bittersweet or semisweet chocolate chips
- ¼ cup creme de menthe or vodka (optional)
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon peppermint extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Whipped cream and crushed candy canes, for topping

DIRECTIONS

1. Add the milk, condensed milk, chocolate chips, creme de menthe or vodka if using, vanilla, peppermint extract and salt to a 7-quart slow cooker.
2. Cover and cook on high about 2 hours, until smooth. Whisk hard about halfway through so the chocolate melts all the way.
3. Turn the cooker to warm. Set out whipped cream and crushed candy canes next to the mugs.

HOLIDAY SIPS

Holiday Sangria Mocktail

All the cinnamon, orange and cranberry of a holiday sangria, with nothing in it the designated driver or the kids can't have.

SERVES	PREP
about 8	10 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups cranberry juice
- 2 cups brewed black tea, cooled (an orange-spice tea works well)
- 1 bottle (750 ml) sparkling red grape juice
- 1 orange, sliced
- 1 cup fresh cranberries
- 5 cinnamon sticks
- Ice

DIRECTIONS

1. Fill a pitcher with ice. Pour in the cranberry juice, tea and sparkling grape juice, and stir.
2. Add the orange slices, cranberries and cinnamon sticks. Stir once more.
3. Pour over ice and garnish each glass with an orange slice, a few cranberries and a cinnamon stick.

HOLIDAY SIPS

Santa Clausmopolitan

For the night the last present is finally wrapped. Tart, cold and pink, with a sugared rim that looks like fresh snow.

SERVES	TOTAL TIME
4	5 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- Lime wedge and white sanding sugar, for the rims
- 1 cup vodka
- 1½ cups cranberry juice
- ¼ cup triple sec
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- ½ cup fresh cranberries, for garnish

DIRECTIONS

1. Rub a lime wedge around the rim of each glass, then dip it in sanding sugar.
2. Working in two batches, fill a shaker with ice, add half the vodka, cranberry juice, triple sec and lime juice, and shake until the shaker feels ice cold.
3. Strain into the sugared glasses and drop in a few cranberries.

> *Please enjoy responsibly.*

Merry Christmas

and a happy, healthy New Year

Thinking about a move in the new year, or just curious what your home is worth? We're always happy to talk, anywhere from Galveston to Conroe.

START A CONVERSATION

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