

Szalai Nóra

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Christmas treats from
around the world

- Karácsonyi finomságok a nagyvilágból

6 mesés karácsonyi sütemény

TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS PUDDING

The Christmas pudding known today began life as Christmas porridge called Frumenty, a dish made of wheat or corn boiled up in milk. As time went on, other ingredients, such as dried plums or prunes, eggs, and lumps of meat were added to make it more interesting. When cooked, it was poured into a dish. This pudding was called Plum Pudding. The name 'Plum Pudding' continued to be used even when people used raisins, currants, and sultanas instead of prunes.

Ingredients:

- 225g golden caster sugar
- 225g vegetarian suet
- 340g sultanas
- 340g raisins
- 225g currants
- 120g chopped candied peel
- 120g plain flour
- 120g fresh white breadcrumbs
- 60g flaked almonds
- zest of 1 lemon
- 5 eggs, beaten
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp mixed spice
- 1 tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- pinch of salt
- 150ml oz brandy or rum

Preparation:

1. Mix together all the dry ingredients. Stir in the eggs and brandy and mix through well.
2. Turn the mix into 4x1 pint or 2x2 pint lightly-greased pudding basins. Put a circle of baking parchment and foil over the top of each basin and tie securely with string. Make a string handle from one side of the basin to the other so it's easier to pick the basin out of the pan after cooking.
3. Put the basins in a large steamer of boiling water and cover with a lid. Boil for 5-6 hours, topping the boiling water up from time to time if necessary. If you don't have a steamer, put the basins in a large pan on inverted saucers on the base. Pour in boiling water to come a third of the way up the sides of the pudding bowls. Cover and steam as before. Cool.
4. Change the baking parchment and foil covers for fresh ones and tie up as before. Store in a cool cupboard until Christmas Day.
5. To serve the pudding on Christmas Day, steam for 2 hours and serve with brandy butter, rum sauce, cream or home-made custard.



MINCE PIE

A mince pie (sometimes also minced, minced meat, or mincemeat pie) is a British festive sweet pastry, traditionally consumed during the Christmas and New Year period and also for Thanksgiving in America. Mince pies normally have a pastry top, but versions may also be found without the top in which case they are known as mince tarts. The mince pie dates back to the Middle Ages, it originally contained spices and dried fruit to help preserve the commonplace meat. King Henry V was served a mincemeat pie at his coronation in 1413. During the reign of Oliver Cromwell mince pies were banned along with other traditions and acts associated with Christmas. When they were reintroduced to Britain their size was again reduced, to the size as they are today, so that they could be served individually, especially to guests. They were named Wayfarer Pies.

Ingredients:

- 350g high quality mincemeat
- 200g plain flour, sifted
- 40g golden caster sugar
- 75g ground almonds
- 125g/4½oz unsalted butter, diced
- 1 large free-range egg, beaten
- milk, to glaze

Preparation:

1. Lightly butter a 12-hole pie or patty tin. Tip the mincemeat into a bowl and stir so that the liquid is evenly distributed.
2. Place the flour, sugar, almonds and butter in a food processor and process briefly until resembling breadcrumbs, then slowly add the egg through the feeder tube. (Or rub the butter into the dry ingredients by hand and stir in the egg.)
3. Bring the mixture together with your hands, wrap in clingfilm and chill for an hour or so. Thinly roll out the pastry on a floured surface. Cut out 12 circles with a fluted pastry cutter, large enough to fill the base of the prepared tin. Press gently into each hole, then fill with the mincemeat.
4. Cut out another 12 slightly smaller discs and use to cover the mincemeat. Press the edges together to seal. Make a small slit in the top of each, then brush lightly with milk. Chill for about 30 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6.
5. Bake the pies for 20 minutes until golden brown. Remove to a wire rack and serve warm.



CHOCOLATE-RED BERRY MARSHMALLOW CUPCAKES

What makes these pretty cupcakes unique is that the cupcake batter uses both unsweetened chocolate and unsweetened cocoa powder to achieve its rich chocolate flavour and colour. Unsweetened chocolate is also known as baking, plain or bitter chocolate. This is chocolate in its rawest form and contains no sugar so it has a strong, bitter taste that is used in cooking and baking but is never eaten out of hand.

Ingredients (makes about 15 regular-sized cupcakes):

- 60 grams unsweetened chocolate, chopped
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/2 cup boiling water
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons all purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- 200 grams granulated white sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup milk
- red berries to decorate

for the Marshmallow Cream Frosting

- 1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 200 grams of marshmallow crème
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar (icing or powdered sugar), sifted
- 2-4 tablespoons light cream



How to prepare home-made Marshmallow Crème?

Ingredients (makes about 5 cups):

- 3 large egg whites
- 1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 2/3 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar
- 3/4 cup light corn syrup
- 2/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Preparation:

1. In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat egg whites and cream of tartar together until light and frothy. With the mixer running, slowly pour in 2 tablespoons sugar; beat until soft peaks form. Set aside.
2. In a small saucepan, combine 1/3 cup water, corn syrup, and remaining 2/3 cup sugar. Place over medium heat and cook until boiling. Cook, stirring, until mixture reaches the firm-ball stage, about 242 to 248 degrees on a candy thermometer, about 6 minutes. Immediately remove from heat.
3. With the mixer on low, slowly add hot syrup to egg-white mixture. Increase mixer speed to high and continue beating for 5 minutes. Add vanilla and continue to beat until mixture looks like marshmallow cream, about 1 minute more.

1. Preheat oven to 180 degrees C and place rack in centre of oven. Line 15 muffin cups with paper liners.
2. In a stainless steel or heatproof bowl place the chopped unsweetened chocolate and cocoa powder. Pour the boiling water over the chocolate and cocoa powder and stir until they have melted. Set aside to cool while you make the batter.
3. In a separate bowl, whisk to combine, the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.
4. In the bowl of your electric mixer, or with a hand mixer, beat the butter until smooth and creamy. Gradually add the sugar and continue beating until the mixture is fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed. Add the vanilla extract and melted chocolate mixture and beat to combine.
5. Add the milk and flour mixtures in three additions, beginning and ending with the flour mixture. Beat only until the ingredients are incorporated.
6. Evenly divide the batter among the muffin cups, and bake for about 18 - 23 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the centre of a cupcake comes out clean. Remove from oven and place on a wire rack to cool. Pipe or spread frosting on each cupcake. Decorate them with fresh red berries.

Marshmallow Cream Frosting: In the bowl of your electric mixer, or with a hand mixer, beat the butter until smooth and well blended. Beat in the vanilla extract and marshmallow crème. With the mixer on low speed, gradually beat in the sugar. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed. Add the cream and beat to combine. Then, on high speed, beat frosting until it is light and fluffy (about 3-5 minutes). Add more cream or confectioners' sugar if necessary to get the right piping consistency.

PEPPERMINT BARK

Peppermint bark is a chocolate confectionery dotted with peppermint candy pieces. It is especially popular around Christmas. American companies known for selling it seasonally include Williams-Sonoma and Ghirandelli.

This traditional and quintessential Christmas treat is ridiculously easy to prepare and can be done in a few minutes. Sweet white or dark chocolate holds in place broken chunks of peppermint candy. Eat it straight, place it in a bag or tin and make it a gift, or break it up into chocolate cupcakes or chocolate cookies.

Ingredients:

- 12 oz. of high-quality white chocolate chips or dark chocolate chips
- 5 regular sized candy canes, crushed up
- 1/2 teaspoon of peppermint extract

Preparation:

1. Break up peppermint candy into little pieces. Melt the chocolate according to the manufacturer's instructions. Once melted, add the peppermint extract and stir.
2. Pour the melted chocolate out onto a cookie sheet lined with wax paper and spread out with a spatula or wooden spoon. Sprinkle the peppermint candy chunks on to the chocolate and gently press them in with your hands.
3. Place in the freezer for 5 minutes or until hardened. Break into pieces and serve or store in the fridge in an airtight container.



Almond Biscotti

Almond Biscotti is an Italian specialty that has become very popular all over the world. They are crisp and crunchy in texture and their long curved shape make them instantly recognizable.

Ingredients:

- 145 grams blanched whole almonds, toasted and chopped coarsely
- 5 grams baking powder
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 260 grams all-purpose flour
- 150 grams granulated white sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon pure almond extract

Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 180 degrees C. Toast almonds for 8-10 minutes or until lightly browned and fragrant. Let cool and then chop coarsely. Set aside.
2. Reduce oven temperature to 150 degrees C and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
3. In a small bowl lightly beat the eggs and extracts together. Set aside.
4. In the bowl of your electric mixer (or with a hand mixer) combine the flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Beat until blended (about 30 seconds). Gradually add the egg mixture and beat until a dough forms, adding almonds about halfway through. On a lightly floured surface roll dough into a log about 35 cm long and 8 - 10 cm wide. Transfer log to the prepared baking sheet and bake for 30-40 minutes, or until firm to the touch (log will spread during baking).
5. Remove from oven and let cool on a wire rack for about 10 minutes.
6. Transfer log to a cutting board and, using a serrated knife, cut log into slices 1.25 cm thick on the diagonal. Arrange evenly on baking sheet. Bake 10 minutes, turn slices over, and bake another 10 minutes or until firm to the touch. Remove from oven and let cool. Store in an airtight container.



Gingerbread Man Cookies

The gingerbread man allegedly first appeared in the court of Queen Elizabeth I, who presented courtiers with gingerbread likenesses of themselves. The Queen's habit of jesting with her court gives this tale some credence. This example of the gingerbread man was probably darker and more savoury than the version we are accustomed to, as well as thicker and more cake-like. Elizabeth's cooks relished opportunities for lavish decoration, and the gingerbread men she handed out may have included gold leafing and other outlandish decorative touches.

Ingredients:

Cookies (makes 16 13-cm cookies)

- 3 1/4 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 3/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter (room temperature, softened)
- 1/2 cup dark-brown sugar, packed
- 1 tbsp ground ginger
- 1 tbsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoons ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon finely ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 cup unsulfured molasses
- Optional raisins, chocolate chips, candy pieces, frosting

Royal Icing

- 1 egg white
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 3/4 cup confectioners' sugar (powdered sugar)

Preparation:

1. In a large bowl, sift together flour, baking soda, and spices. Set aside.
2. In an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the butter. Add sugar and beat until fluffy. Mix in eggs and molasses. Gradually add the flour mixture; combine on low speed. (You may need to work it with your hands to incorporate the last bit of flour.) Divide dough in thirds; wrap each third in plastic. Chill for at least 1 hour or overnight. Before rolling out, let sit at room temperature for 5-10 minutes. If after refrigerating the dough feels too soft to roll-out, work in a little more flour.
3. Heat oven to 350°. Place a dough third on a large piece of lightly floured parchment paper or wax paper. Using a rolling pin, roll dough 1/8 inch thick. Refrigerate again for 5-10 minutes to make it easier to cut out the cookies. Use either a cookie cutter or place a stencil over the dough and use a knife to cut into desired shapes. Press raisins, chocolate chips, or candy pieces in the centre of each cookie if desired for "buttons".
4. Transfer to ungreased baking sheets. Bake until crisp but not darkened, 8 to 10 minutes.
5. Remove from oven. Let sit a few minutes and then use a metal spatula to transfer cookies to a wire rack to cool completely. Decorate as desired.

Royal Icing

Beat egg whites and lemon juice together, adding the powdered sugar until the mixture holds stiff peaks. If the icing is too runny, add more powdered sugar until you get the desired consistency. Fill a piping bag with the icing to pipe out into different shapes. Keep the icing covered while you work with it or it will dry out.