

# It's the season to give a gift from the heart and kitchen

(NAPSA) — Baking is a time-honored tradition that continues to warm hearts in kitchens across the country. In fact, more than 75 percent of Americans are planning to bake more this year compared to last year, according to a recent survey conducted by Impulse Research Group.

The survey found a majority said they bake because they look forward to seeing friends and family enjoy their homemade treats—which is a great reason to give a home-baked gift.

Andrea Swenson, author of "Gifts From the Kitchen for Dummies," offers the following tips for homemade gift giving:

- Give your gift a personal touch by using a festive pan with the decorating "built in," such as the Nordic Ware mini-garland bundt pan. Because these pans are designed with so much detail, remember to use a non-stick baking spray with flour such as Baker's Joy for best results.

- To make gifts extra special, design your own labels using colored paper and decorative ink stamps.

- Because freshness is a big part of a food gift, give gifts shortly after preparing.

Try this recipe, provided by Nordic Ware, for a delicious treat that makes a great homemade gift:

## Hot Cocoa Cake

1/2 cup butter, room temp.  
2 eggs, room temp.

3 egg whites, room temp.  
1 1/3 cups flour  
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
1/4 tsp. baking powder  
1/4 tsp. baking soda  
1/4 tsp. salt  
2 Tbsp. prepared strong hot coffee  
1 1/2 tsp. vanilla  
2 cups sugar  
1/2 cup low-fat sour cream  
5 1/2 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chopped powdered sugar

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray mini-garland bundt pan with Baker's Joy. In medium bowl, mix flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In a small bowl, add vanilla to prepared coffee and set aside.

In large bowl, beat butter on medium speed until fluffy. Gradually add sugar; beat until well combined. Add sour cream. One at a time, add eggs and egg whites, beating well after each addition. Alternately add flour mixture and coffee mixture, beating on low speed until well combined. Stir in chocolate, and pour 1/2 cup batter into each cavity.

Bake for 20-25 minutes or until toothpick inserted near center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pan. Invert onto serving platter and sprinkle with powdered sugar.

For more information and recipes, visit [www.bakersjoy.com](http://www.bakersjoy.com).



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**2002 FORD TAURUS SES** — Power moon roof, rear spoiler, leather, CD, all the extras, gorgeous, 30K  
**2002 PONTIAC GRAND PRIX** — CD, alloy wheel, rear spoiler, super clean, 20K  
**2001 LINCOLN CONTINENTAL (3)** — CD changer and all the

luxury extras, parchment metallic, 15K; autumn red metallic with moon roof, 12K; blue metallic, 52K  
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# Special treat is organic but still tastes magical

(NAPSA)—If your idea of preparing for the holidays involves preheating the oven, you're not alone. The holiday season is one of the most popular times of year for people to bake.

While many of the holiday treats people bake are rich, decadent delights, there are still ways to keep them natural and chemical free. For instance, if you try to feed your family pure, organic foods, you may want to try baking with an organic flour such as the one made by King Arthur Flour—a company that's been around for 200 years. The organic flour is now available in grocery stores and has no bleach added, no bromates or chemicals. It's available in all-purpose and 100 percent whole wheat varieties.

If you're looking for a great new treat for the holidays using organic flour, try this recipe for Magic In The Middles, adapted from The King Arthur Flour Cookie Companion cookbook. They're reminiscent of a chocolate peanut butter cup candy (or a buckeye, if you're familiar with this candy).

## Magic In The Middles

Yield: 26 cookies

Baking temperature: 375° F

Baking time: 7 to 9 minutes

### Dough:

1 1/2 cups (6 1/4 ounces) King Arthur Unbleached 100 percent Organic All-Purpose Flour

1/2 cup (1 1/2 ounces) unsweetened natural cocoa

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup (3 1/2 ounces) sugar

1/2 cup (4 ounces) brown sugar

1/2 cup (1 stick, 4 ounces) unsalted butter

1/4 cup (2 3/8 ounces) smooth organic peanut butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 large egg

### Filling:

3/4 cup (7 1/8 ounces) smooth organic peanut butter

3/4 cup (3 ounces) confectioners' sugar

Preheat the oven to 375° F. Lightly grease (or line with parchment) two baking sheets.

To make the dough: In a medium-size mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt. Set aside.

In another medium-size mixing bowl, beat together the sugars, butter and peanut butter until light and fluffy. Add the vanilla

and the egg, beating to combine, then stir in the dry ingredients, blending well.

To make the filling: In a small bowl, stir together the peanut butter and confectioners' sugar until smooth. With floured hands, roll the filling into 26 1-inch balls.

To shape the cookies: Break off about 1 tablespoon cookie dough, make an indentation in the center with your finger, and press one of the peanut butter balls into the indentation. Bring the cookie dough up and over the filling, pressing it closed; roll the cookie in the palms of your hand to smooth it out. Repeat with the remaining cookie

dough and filling.

Dip the top of each cookie in granulated sugar, and place each on the prepared baking sheets, leaving about 2 inches between cookies. Grease the bottom of a drinking glass, and use it to flatten each cookie to about 1/2-inch thick.

Bake the cookies in a preheated 375° F oven for 7 to 9 minutes, or until they're set. Remove them from the oven and cool on a rack.

For more holiday recipes and baking tips, visit the web site [www.kingarthurflour.com](http://www.kingarthurflour.com).



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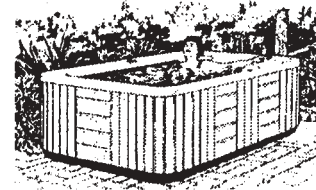
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# Versatile veggie can be eaten anytime of the day

(NAPSA) — The sweet potato, or yam, may be one of the most nutritious, delicious and versatile veggies around. Yams are naturally full of flavor and sweetness, which favors them as the perfect ingredient in savory to sweet recipes. Their versatility, plus the added health benefits, make them a great addition to any meal, anytime of day.

The Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission's Web site, [www.sweetpotato.org](http://www.sweetpotato.org), has many different recipes that can be prepared for breakfast, lunch, dinner or a late-night snack! Sweet Potato Pancakes; Sweet Potato, Apple and Walnut Muffins; Shrimp, Corn and Sweet Potato Soup; Tropical Sweet Potato Salad; Baked Sweet Potato Fries; Yam and Black Bean Wraps; and Yam Trifle are just a few of the delicious dishes featured on the site. Sweet Potato Praline Coffee Cake is a great recipe that can be eaten from breakfast to late afternoon!

## Sweet Potato Praline Coffee Cake

4 Tbsp. butter or margarine  
2/3 cup plus 3 Tbsp. light brown sugar, divided  
2 Tbsp. light corn syrup  
1/2 cup chopped pecans

2 1/2 cups biscuit baking mix  
1 can (15 oz.) sweet potatoes (yams), drained and mashed or 1 cup fresh, mashed sweet potatoes  
1/3 cup skim milk  
1/4 cup dried cranberries

Preheat oven to 400°F. In a 9x9x2 inch square baking pan, melt margarine in the oven. Stir in 2/3 cup brown sugar and corn syrup; spread evenly in pan. Sprinkle with pecans. In a large mixing bowl, beat together biscuit baking mix, sweet potatoes and milk until dough forms a ball. Turn dough onto a surface dusted with baking mix, knead several times and roll or pat into a 12-inch rectangle. Sprinkle with 3 Tbsp. brown sugar and cranberries. Fold dough into thirds, folding each end to center. Cut crosswise into 1" strips and arrange strips sitting on top of pecan mixture in pan. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until golden brown. Immediately turn upside down onto serving plate. Makes 12 servings.

For more recipes, visit the Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission's Web site at [www.sweetpotato.org](http://www.sweetpotato.org) or write to the Louisiana Sweet Potato Commission at P.O. Box 2550, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2550.



# Party planning will make entertaining a breeze

(NAPSA) — It can be easy to throw a holiday party that you have time to enjoy, too. That's good news, because even people with a gift for entertaining sometimes avoid throwing holiday get-togethers, wrongfully assuming they're too much work.

The key is to make two lists and check them twice. Here are some tips:

## To-Do List:

- Two Weeks Ahead-Shop for your party supplies. Make any freezable hors d'oeuvres or desserts.
- One Week Ahead-Shop for all but the most perishable ingredients you'll need.
- Two Days Ahead-Buy fresh produce.
- One Day Before-Freshen the powder room with candles, festive soaps and hand towels.
- An Hour Before-Set out any food that is to be served at room temperature. Open wine that needs to breathe. If you are serving food that needs to be heated, remove it from the refrigerator.

## Shopping List:

- Party Supplies-Be sure to have decorations, cocktail napkins, disposable baking and serving trays, trash bags and foil wraps for leftovers.

• Food-Take advantage of preprepared foods to save time in the kitchen. Use prewashed, cut lettuce, peeled and cut carrot sticks, bottled dips, and artisan rolls from the baker. For an easy appetizer (such as the one pictured above), cut up Hillshire Farm summer sausage and arrange on a tray with precut cheese cubes, crackers and fruit.

Also, prepare a number of favorite holiday recipes that can be made ahead of time and reheated before the party starts. That way you can have an impressive, varied menu without being rushed the day of the get-together.

Delicious dishes, whether you make them yourself or rely on convenience foods, are what really make a holiday party festive. Try this favorite recipe:

## Lit'l Smokies in BBQ Sauce

1 pkg. (16 oz.) Hillshire Farm Lit'l Smokies (any variety)  
1 bottle (12 oz.) BBQ sauce

Pour sauce in baking dish or crock-pot and add Lit'l Smokies. Bake in 350°F oven for 30 minutes or heat in crock-pot for 2 hours. Serve hot.

For more party recipes, visit [www.hillshirefarm.com](http://www.hillshirefarm.com).

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# A new, green holiday tradition is taking shape

(NAPSA)—Traditional decorations, soft twinkling lights, and time-honored dishes are the true stars of each holiday celebration. This year make your holiday a little more special with a simple change.

Substituting canned Italian green beans for ordinary beans can turn your recipes into unexpected culinary creations. Recipe ready right from the can, Italian green beans give dishes a fresh new twist without requiring any extra preparation.

With Italian green beans, traditional dishes like Green Bean Casserole will seem more special. Give this recipe a try and take your traditions to the top.

## Italian Green Bean Casserole

1 can (10.75 oz.) condensed cream of mushroom soup (low fat or fat free can be used)

- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 1/2 tsp. soy sauce
- Pepper to taste
- 2 cans (14.5 oz. each) or 1 can (28 oz.) Allens Cut Italian Green Beans, drained

1 1/3 cups french fried onions, divided

Preheat oven to 350° F. In a 1 1/2-quart casserole, mix together soup, milk, soy sauce, pepper, Italian green beans, and 2/3 cup onions. Bake for 25 minutes, or until heated through. Stir, then sprinkle remaining onions on top. Bake 5 to 10 minutes, until onions are golden. Servings: 6

## Go Beyond Butter for Better Beans

Create an easy yet memorable dish with these simple tips:

- Season with olive oil instead of butter for an authentic Italian twist.
- Add taste and texture by tossing one 14.5-oz. can with 1 to 2 tablespoons of shredded Parmesan or Romano cheese; toasted almonds, pecans, or sesame seeds; bacon bits; or any of your other favorite ingredients.
- Spice things up with a sprinkling of fresh or dried seasonings like basil, marjoram, nutmeg, tarragon or thyme.

For recipes and tips on serving canned Italian green beans, visit [allensitalianbeans.com](http://allensitalianbeans.com).



# ‘Secret weapons’ help with holiday festivities

(NAPSA)—Here’s a hint on keeping your cool during the winter holidays: take a trip down the frozen aisles of your grocery store. There you can find “Secret Weapons” to make holiday entertaining easier and more enjoyable.

Remember to shop early and stock your freezer so you’ll have secret weapons at your fingertips for parties, unexpected company, family and guests.

Try these time-saving, tasty suggestions from the National Frozen and Refrigerated Foods Association (NFRA) that will help you go from the freezer to table in minutes.

• **Appetizer Thoughts:** In the frozen food aisle, all ready to heat and eat are dips, egg rolls, quiche, cheese sticks, meatballs, shrimp and more. Serve on attractive holiday platters and you’re ready to enjoy your guests.

• **Side Dish Suggestions:** Frozen vegetables, potatoes, pastas and breads can help make any holiday meal less work for the cook for more time with family.

• **Brunch Ideas:** A freezer full of frozen

muffins, waffles, pancakes, egg dishes, breakfast bowls, sandwiches, bagels and more can make holiday mornings much more fun

• **Delicious Desserts:** Start with delicious frozen pies, cakes, ice cream and more—then make them your own by adding special touches.

Try this holiday favorite “Secret Weapon.”

## Pumpkin Pie With Ginger Whipped Topping

- 1 frozen pumpkin pie
- 1 cup frozen or refrigerated whipped cream topping
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger

In a medium bowl, mix whipped cream and ginger. Keep chilled until ready to serve. Bake pie according to directions. Serve with dollop of whipped cream topping.

For more recipes, serving suggestions and food safety tips on frozen and refrigerated foods from NFRA, visit [www.BringUsToYourTable.com](http://www.BringUsToYourTable.com).



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