

Fresh ingredients are a 'must have' when baking

(NAPSA)—Get ready. Get set. Begin baking. But before creating those memorable morsels, check to see that you have all the fresh ingredients you need.

Choose a fall day as your annual day to replace older baking ingredients. Mark the day on your calendar so you'll remember and make a list of the basics. Your list will probably include:

- Baking powder. This recipe powerhouse may be the least expensive ingredient ounce for ounce in many recipes but if it doesn't work, your recipe may fail.

Even if the expiration date on the can hasn't passed, an open can should probably be replaced.

- Baking soda (one for baking, one for cleaning)
- Cornstarch
- Spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg, mace and ginger
- Nuts such as almonds, pecans and walnuts
- Flours, including cake flour, whole wheat and all-purpose
- Baking chocolate

- Canned fruits, pumpkin, milks
- Dried fruits such as raisins, cranberries and apricots

Remember to always mark the purchase date on the bottom of new ingredients, so you know whether they need to be replaced before

the baking season starts. You needn't replace each item in your pantry every year, but marking dates will help you decide what to throw out.

Once you're sure you have everything you need, this delicious recipe can help start your

baking season with a smile.

Pecan Chocolate Chip Cookies

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 1/2 cup sugar

- 1 cup brown sugar, packed
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- 1 cup white chocolate chips
- 1 cup pecans, chopped

In a large bowl, cream butter, shortening, sugars, eggs and vanilla; set aside. In a separate bowl, sift together flour and baking powder. Stir flour mixture into creamed mixture until combined. Add chocolate chips, white chocolate chips and pecans. Mix thoroughly.

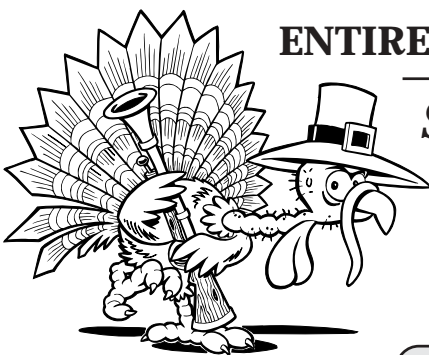
Drop by tablespoonfuls onto greased cookie sheet. Bake at 375° F for 8 to 10 minutes. Cool on wire rack. Makes about 2 1/2 dozen cookies.

For more recipes and baking tips, visit www.homebaking.org.



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Appetizers are scrumptiously small, but big in taste

(NAPSA) — Whether you call them appetizers, hors d'oeuvres, finger foods or canapés, they are the scrumptious small portions showing up at almost every celebration this year. In fact, appetizers are beginning to function as the primary food at most parties because they are simple, quick and add variety for guests.

Appetizers are perfect to make when you get a visit from old friends or need to bring something last-minute to a party.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when deciding what to serve or bring:

- Choose recipes like dips and spreads that are full of flavor, but have a quick prep time—20 minutes or less. This way you can spend more time celebrating with guests and less time in the kitchen.
- Plan ahead in case your guests are hungry. The amount you'll need will depend upon the number of guests, the type of food, and the time of day. For example, around dinnertime—when appetites are greater—you should plan on about 12 bite-size servings per person.
- Make your appetizer the day before so you don't have to run around at the last minute. You'll find that many can be prepared, frozen, and then thawed and reheated on party day. Dips are even more flavorful if allowed to refrigerate before serving.
- Prepare at least some nutritious recipes that allow for healthy alternatives for great taste without unnecessary calories, sodium and fat.

For a fast, festive appetizer, try the following Roasted Red Pepper Dip, found on the Mrs. Dash Web site (www.mrsdash.com). With a prep time of only five minutes, this recipe is incredibly easy—just toss the ingredients into a blender or food processor and it's done.

Roasted Red Pepper Dip

Serves 8
2 Tbsp. Mrs. Dash Garlic & Herb Season-

ing Blend
8 oz. reduced fat cream cheese, softened, at room temperature
1/2 cup roasted red peppers, from a bottle, well drained
2 Tbsp. olive oil

Directions: Add cream cheese, Mrs. Dash Garlic & Herb, red peppers, and olive oil to a blender or food processor. Blend or process until smooth. Chill for 1-2 hours. Serve with crackers, tortilla chips or vegetables.

Nutritional Information Per Serving:
Calories: 98; Total Fat: 8 g; Saturated Fat: 4 g; Unsaturated Fat: 4 g; Trans Fat: 1 g; Cholesterol: 16 mg; Sodium: 110 mg; Potassium: 47 mg; Carbohydrates: 2 g; Fiber: 0 g; Protein: 3 g.



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Lava cakes are hot for the holidays

(NAPSA) — The holidays are made for dazzling desserts.

When the candles are twinkling on your party table and you've just served a fabulous dinner, impress your guests with this year's most decadent dessert, Warm Chocolate Lava Cakes.

Popular in trendy restaurants, these individual cakes in special dessert-sized single servings are tender on the outside with rich, molten centers on the inside.

Until recently, recipes for these cakes were complicated and had to be made from scratch.

Now, however, a delicious new recipe starts with a gourmet double-chocolate brownie mix, making it easy to achieve such elegance.

When your spoon dips into the lush, warm chocolate goodness and you savor your first bite, you'll find a true moment of holiday bliss.

Warm Chocolate Lava Cakes

Filling:
2/3 cup chocolate chips
1/3 cup whipping cream

Cake:
1/3 cup water
1/3 cup vegetable oil
1 egg
1 package Ghirardelli Brownie Mix

Preheat oven to 325°F. Lightly grease eight, 6-oz. ramekins or oven-safe custard cups.

For Filling: Place chocolate chips in a bowl. Heat cream just until low boil and pour over chocolate chips. Stir until chocolate chips have melted and mixture is smooth. Refrigerate until firm.

For Cake: Blend water, oil and egg in medium bowl.

Add brownie mix and stir until moistened. Place scant 1/4 cup batter into each prepared ramekin. Spoon rounded tablespoon filling gently over batter in each ramekin. Spoon

remaining batter over filling. Bake 30-35 minutes. Garnish with powdered sugar and fresh raspberries, if desired. Serve warm. Makes 8 servings.



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Make your own holiday traditions

(NAPSA) — While the holidays are a time for family and friends to gather, celebrate and revel in the time-honored traditions of the past, you can establish a few memorable holiday traditions of your own.

An easy place to start is with the undisputed icon of the holiday table—cranberries.

The versatile cranberry adds festive flair to all kinds of recipes from traditional to non-traditional and can be teamed with flavors from savory to sweet. Cranberries are easier to use than you may think—just rinse and add to your favorite recipe.

Or in the event you don't have fresh cranberries, sprinkle in some Craisins(r) Sweetened Dried Cranberries. Their soft, moist texture, vibrant red color and sweet, tangy taste livens up any recipe.

Making homemade cranberry sauce is as easy as 1,2,3. Add a new twist to your basic cranberry sauce by combining several flavors like Tex-Mex, cranberry orange or Waldorf flavor with apples and raisins. The possibilities are almost endless. Although Ocean Spray(r) Fresh Cranberries are available in stores from only September through December, they can be refrigerated for up to two weeks and frozen for up to a year. And because they're so versatile, be sure to stock up this season for cranberry cookery all year long.

Homemade Cranberry Sauce

1 cup sugar
1 cup water
1 12-ounce package Ocean Spray® Fresh or Frozen Cranberries, rinsed and drained

Bring water and sugar to a boil in a medium saucepan. Add cranberries and return to a boil. Reduce heat and boil gently for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Pour sauce into a bowl, cover and cool completely at room temperature. Refrigerate until serving time.

Makes 2 1/4 cups.
Infuse traditional dishes with the festive flair and effortless ease of today's cooking.

Rosemary Hazelnut Cranberry Bread

Add a slice of life to your breadbasket with this sophisticated combination of rosemary, hazelnuts, cranberries and lemon peel.

1 2/3 cups sugar
2/3 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup buttermilk
4 eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla
1 tablespoon grated lemon peel
3 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons dried rosemary, crushed
1 1/2 cups Ocean Spray(r) Fresh or Frozen cranberries, coarsely chopped

OR
1 cup Craisins® Sweetened Dried Cranberries
1/2 cup chopped hazelnuts

Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease 9x5-inch loaf pan.

Combine sugar, vegetable oil, buttermilk, eggs, vanilla, and lemon peel in a large bowl until well blended. Combine flour, baking soda, salt and rosemary in a separate mixing bowl. Add dry ingredients to liquid mixing just until dry ingredients are moistened. Gently stir in cranberries and hazelnuts. Spoon batter into prepared pan.

Bake 1 1/2 hours or until toothpick inserted into bread comes out clean. Cool in pan for 10 minutes; let cool completely on wire rack for at least 2 hours.

Makes 15 servings.

Wild Rice Cranberry Stuffing

Combine cranberries, wild rice and cornbread for a unique, hearty stuffing.

2 slices bacon, chopped
2 tablespoons butter or margarine
1/2 cup chopped onion
1/2 cup chopped celery
1/2 cup peeled, chopped carrot
1 cup sliced mushrooms
1 cup of Ocean Spray(r) Fresh or Frozen cranberries OR
3/4 cup Craisins(r) Sweetened Dried Cranberries
2 cups chicken broth
4 cups cornbread stuffing
1 16-ounce package wild rice, cooked according to package directions

Cook bacon over medium heat in a stockpot until crisp. Remove bacon and set aside.

Add butter to pan and melt over medium heat. Add onion, celery, carrot and mushrooms. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 8 to 10 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

Add cranberries and chicken broth; bring to a boil over high heat. Remove from heat and add stuffing, wild rice and bacon. Serve immediately.

Makes 14 1/2-cup servings.

And remember, Ocean Spray offers around-the-clock help with your holiday needs. Visit www.oceanspray.com for a variety of recipes, pre-set menus, planning guides and tips. Consumer Helpline representatives are also available to take your calls, even on Thanksgiving Day at 1-800-662-3263, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. EST.

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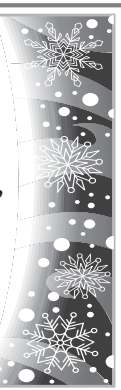
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