

Got to Be an NC Christmas

Christmas is here once again and that means lots of holiday goodies to enjoy! North Carolina and the holidays go hand in hand. I just love the smell of that fresh tree in the house, not to mention all the beautiful varieties of poinsettia's we grow. North Carolina has everything fresh you need to decorate. And we can't forget the smell of all the delicious food made with fresh ingredients grown or produced right here. So let North Carolina awaken all your senses this holiday season.

Caramel Apple Cinnamon Breakfast Rolls

1 loaf frozen dough white or wheat (Rhodes), thaw as directed, let rise until doubled, then punch down and let rest 10 minutes.

2 cups North Carolina apples, thinly sliced (Honey Crisp were used in the winning recipe)

Cinnamon filling:

1/4 cup butter, room temperature

1/2 cup sugar

2 teaspoons cinnamon

1/3 cup chopped walnuts

Caramel Sauce:

18 caramels

2 Tablespoon half and half

Thaw bread as directed, let rise until doubled, punch down and let rest for 10 minutes. On a flat surface sprinkled with flour, roll out dough to make a 12 x 8 inch rectangle. Stir together the cinnamon filling ingredients and sprinkle onto the dough. Top with a single layer of apples. Roll the dough to make a 12" log. Then slice into 2" sections. Place the 8 cinnamon rolls into a greased 9 inch round pan and bake at 350 degrees for 30-45 minutes. While the rolls cool slightly, combine the caramels with the half and half and place in the microwave. Heating at 20 second intervals and stirring in between until melted. Pour caramel sauce over the rolls and enjoy.

Lisa's Notes: This winning recipe is from the North Carolina Apple Growers Association Apple Recipe Contest at this year's NC State Fair. Mary Boury of Knightdale took home the blue ribbon with these easy and delicious cinnamon rolls filled with NC Apples.

Malted Milk Ball and Cashew Butter Pie

Pillsbury Pet-Ritz Pie Crust – 1 regular, 9” (10oz)

8 ounce package of cream cheese, softened
1/4 cup cashew butter
3 Tbsp. fudge ice cream topping
1 cup heavy whipping cream
1/2 jar puffed marshmallow crème
5 oz. pack malted milk balls, divided – chop fine 3oz and half the remainder to be added to top of the pie.
1 bottle cool hardening chocolate fudge

Prepare crust according to the directions and let cool.

Beat cream cheese, cashew butter and fudge topping together until smooth. Then whip heavy whipping cream until peaks form. Fold the heavy whipping cream into the cream cheese/cashew butter mixture along with the marshmallow crème and the finely chopped malted milk balls. Spoon the cashew butter mixture into the crust with a layer about 1 inch thick. Spread until smooth along the bottom of the crust. Spread a layer of cool hardening chocolate fudge over the cashew butter mixture and place in the freezer for 10 minutes. Add another layer of the cashew butter mixture and spread smooth. Spread the cool hardening chocolate fudge again and freeze for 10 more minutes. Finally, add the remaining cashew butter mixture, top with halved malted milk balls, create a design with remaining cool hardening chocolate fudge and place in freezer at least 1 hour. Remove at least 15 minutes before serving to allow it to slightly soften.

Lisa's notes: This recipe by Domino Ireland won first place in the Pillsbury Pet-Ritz Pie Baking Championship at the Fair. You can make as many or as few layers as you would like with this pie. The Cashew Butter can be found at Whole Foods or locally made at www.porchrockin.com

Mama's Spiced Cider

1 Quart NC Apple Cider
¼ cup sugar
Dash of salt
12 whole cloves
2 cinnamon sticks
8 whole Allspice

Combine all ingredients in a 2 quart saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Cool and refrigerate covered for several hours. Just before serving, strain to remove the spices and reheat slowly. Makes 4 servings.

Lisa's Notes: This recipe is one that my grandmother, Willa McCauley served during the holidays. The smell brings back all those wonderful memories. This also makes a great gift. Just combine all your dry ingredients into a container and attach the recipe. You could also include a mug and the cider. This is an easy gift for children to make as well.

Cheesy Pecan Cranberry Crisps

2 cups Asiago cheese, shredded

1 cup butter

Dash of cayenne pepper

1 teaspoon baking powder

2 cups flour

1 ½ cups pecans, chopped and toasted

¾ cup dried cranberries

Cream the cheese and butter until thoroughly mixed. In a small bowl combine the flour, baking powder and cayenne pepper. Mix into butter/cheese mixture until smooth. Add chopped pecans and cranberries. Form into a log and wrap in plastic wrap – let rest in refrigerator for 1 hour. When ready to bake, preheat oven to 350 degrees. Un-wrap the dough and slice into 1/3 inch rounds and place on parchment paper lined baking sheets. Bake for 12-15 minutes until lightly browned.

Lisa's Notes: Gail Fuller from Raleigh won the NC Pecan Competition with these delicious Cheesy Pecan Cranberry Crisps. If you love cheese straws, then you will enjoy this twist. Sweet and nutty with that rich cheese flavor. Great recipe for the holidays and you can get 40-50 crisps out of one batch.