

This Month's Feature

Desserts with NC Goodness baked right in for the Holidays

The holidays are here so enjoy them with any one of these delicious dessert made with fresh ingredients grown or produced right here in North Carolina. We have a variety to choose from so head to your farmers market or look for the "locally grown" sign in your grocery store. Fresh is best and it will make a difference in your holiday cooking. The holidays are all about spending time with friends and family and enjoying traditions and nothing says it like some good cookin'!

Don't forget about all the fresh trees, poinsettia's and wreaths that are available as well! Our #1 tree is the Fraser Fir and for the second year in a row a NC Fraser Fir will grace the White House.

Candy Bar Cake

1 box Swiss Chocolate or German Chocolate Cake Mix
1 small box instant vanilla pudding mix
1 ½ cups milk
3 eggs
¾ cups oil

Mix together and pour into 3 (9 inch) pans that have been sprayed with cooking spray. Bake at 325 for 20-25 minutes.

Icing:

1 (8oz) cream cheese
1 cup powdered sugar
½ cup sugar

Cream together then fold in:

12 oz. cool whip
4 Hershey bars with almonds (chopped)

Put icing between the layers and around the sides. Refrigerate.

PERSONAL Note: For the holidays, I crush up Andes white chocolate mint bars and sprinkle on top and around the sides for a touch of red and white.

Turtle Sweet Potato Pie with toasted Marshmallows

1 pound sweet potatoes, cooked and peeled
1/4-cup butter or margarine
1 (14-ounce) can Eagle Brand Sweetened Condensed Milk (NOT evaporated milk)
1 teaspoon grated orange rind
1-teaspoon vanilla extract
1-teaspoon ground cinnamon
1-teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4-teaspoon salt
2 eggs
¼ cup caramel ice cream topping
½ cup pecan pieces
½ cup miniature marshmallows

1 (9-inch) unbaked pie crust or just unroll crust into a 9-inch pie plate

Preheat oven to 350°F. Place crust into pie plate and shape. Drizzle bottom of crust with caramel and scatter pecans on top of caramel. In large bowl, beat sweet potatoes and butter until smooth. Add Eagle Brand, orange rind, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg, salt and eggs; mix well. Pour into crust. Bake 40 minutes or until golden brown. Top with marshmallows and broil until just toasted. Cool. Garnish as desired. Store leftovers covered in refrigerator.

PERSONAL Note: Place foil around the edges of your crust before baking then take the foil off about 10 minutes before cooking is complete. Also, for best results, use fresh NC sweet potatoes. You can bake them or boil them and then the skin will peel right off. It's so easy and it gives the pie a better texture.

Apple Pecan Cheesecake Bars

1-1/2 cups Graham Cracker Crumbs

1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter, melted

2 Tbsp. brown sugar

4 pkg. (8 oz. each) Cream Cheese, softened

1-1/2 cups packed brown sugar, divided

1 tsp. vanilla

1 cup Sour Cream

4 eggs

4 cups apples, peeled, chopped (about 3 NC apples)

3/4 cup chopped NC Pecans

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

Heat oven to 325°F. Line 13x9-inch baking pan with foil, with ends of foil extending over sides of pan. Mix graham crumbs, butter and 2 Tbsp. brown sugar; press onto bottom of prepared pan.

Beat cream cheese, 1-cup brown sugar and the vanilla in large bowl with electric mixer until well blended. Add sour cream; mix well. Add eggs, one at a time, mixing on low speed after each addition just until blended. Pour over crust. Mix remaining 1/2 cup brown sugar, the apples, pecans and cinnamon; spoon evenly over cheesecake batter.

Bake 55 min. or until center is almost set. Cool completely. Refrigerate 4 hours. Use foil handles to lift cheesecake from pan before cutting to serve.

PERSONAL Note: This recipe is from Kraft Foods 2008. We used NC Gala apples but I'm sure NC Granny Smith or NC Fuji would be good too.