



Celebrate the Season: Christmas



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Gooseberry Patch

Keep it simple. Make it special.

Gooseberry Patch cookbooks are created with today's time-strapped, budget-conscious cooks in mind.

Each is filled with treasured recipes that have been shared by home cooks across the country, along with the stories that make these tried & true dishes favorites in their families.

We couldn't make our cookbooks without you, and your most cherished recipes and memories make for some of our most cherished books. There's nothing better than seeing one of your very own recipes in a published book...plus, you'll receive a FREE copy of the cookbook!

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Christmas...

It's the Christmas season...what an exciting time of year! The days are flying by and we're all busy baking cookies, stuffing stockings, decorating the tree and shopping for the perfect presents.

Giving special handmade gifts this year? You'll love our easy gifts from the kitchen and wrapping ideas. There's nothing more special than a gift from the heart! Hosting a holiday open house or a houseful of family? Our tried & true recipes will make your festive gatherings a little more special. It's our way of sending a holiday hug from our family to yours.

We hope this Christmas Preview will spark your creativity and make your holiday celebrations the merriest yet!





Easy Gifts from the Kitchen

There's no better place to shop for personalized gifts than your own kitchen. Here are a few of our favorite ways to give homemade at the holidays.



Baking a batch of your famous Christmas cookies to share? Slip a big one inside a paper DVD envelope. You can find them in all colors at your office supply store and the cello window in the center is just right for showing off the goodies!



Surprise your office mates with a cup of cheer this time of year! Bake a batch of biscotti and tuck a few pieces down into a new coffee mug. Tie on a tag that lets them know how much they're appreciated.



Pull out the best homemade salsa, tomato sauce or other concoctions from your pantry and they're nearly ready to give. Add a square of fabric under the ring, tie on tags with bakers' twine and take 'em along to your annual holiday party...delicious!



Whip up your favorite banana bread or classic fruitcake, then wrap in a pretty personalized tea towel. Drop off to neighbors, a much-appreciated teacher and even your hairdresser...everyone loves a treat baked just for them.





Holiday Stuffed Mushrooms

- 1 lb. bacon, crisply cooked and crumbled
- 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1 T. dried, minced onion
- 2 t. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 lb. mushrooms, stems removed

With an electric mixer set to medium-high speed, thoroughly combine cream cheese, onion and Worcestershire sauce. Stir in bacon; fill mushroom caps with mixture. Arrange on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for 15 minutes, or until tops of mushrooms are golden. Makes 6 to 8 servings.



Jo Ann's Holiday Brie

- 13.2-oz. pkg. Brie cheese
- 1/4 c. caramel ice cream topping
- 1/2 c. sweetened dried cranberries
- 1/2 c. dried apricots, chopped
- 1/2 c. chopped pecans
- 1 loaf crusty French bread, sliced, toasted and buttered

Place cheese on an ungreased microwave-safe serving plate; microwave on high setting for 10 to 15 seconds. Cut out a wedge to see if center is soft. If center is still firm, return to microwave for another 5 to 10 seconds, until cheese is soft and spreadable. Watch carefully, as center will begin to melt quickly. Drizzle with caramel topping; sprinkle with fruits and nuts. Serve with toasted slices of crusty French bread. Makes 6 to 8 servings.



Ham for a Houseful

- 2 20-oz. cans crushed pineapple, drained
- 2 c. brown sugar, packed
- 1/4 c. honey
- 1 T. dry mustard
- 1 t. ground cloves
- 2 4 to 5-lb. fully cooked boneless hams

Combine all ingredients except the hams in a large saucepan; heat over medium heat until sugar dissolves, about 5 minutes. Stirring constantly, heat until liquid reduces and mixture thickens, about 10 additional minutes; remove from heat to cool. Score surface of hams in a diamond pattern; insert meat thermometer into center of each ham. Place hams in a roasting pan; cover and bake at 325 degrees for one hour. Uncover; spoon glaze over hams. Bake 45 minutes to one hour longer or until meat thermometer reads 140 degrees, basting every 15 minutes. Both hams together make about 32 servings.



Oh-So-Easy Slow-Cooker Lasagna

- 1 lb. ground beef, browned and drained
- 1 t. Italian seasoning
- 8 lasagna noodles, uncooked and broken into thirds
- 28-oz. jar spaghetti sauce
- 1/3 c. water
- 4-oz. can sliced mushrooms, drained
- 15-oz. container ricotta cheese
- 8-oz. pkg. shredded mozzarella cheese
- Garnish: shredded Parmesan cheese

Combine ground beef and Italian seasoning. Arrange half of the lasagna noodles in a greased slow cooker. Spread half of the ground beef mixture over noodles. Top with half each of remaining ingredients except Parmesan cheese. Repeat layering process. Cover and cook on low setting for 5 hours. Garnish with Parmesan cheese. Serves 10.





Easy Wrapping Ideas

When you're giving a gift to someone special, the outside is just as important as what's inside, right? Here are 8 of our favorite ways to kick up the cute on your Christmas packages!

-  Keep it simple. Buy several rolls of wrapping paper in solid red, green or silver and wrap all your gifts in the same color. Dress them up with ribbons and bows in one complementary color. Chipboard initials are a fun alternative to gift tags too!
-  Add something sweet! Wrap packages in plain red wrapping paper and then glue a row or 2 of wrapped red & white peppermints all across the top, forming a "ribbon" of treats. Candy canes are cute too...glue two together to make a heart to go on top.
-  Another idea for solids or classic patterns: use a different design for each member of the family, but keep the colors secret 'til it's time to unwrap gifts. Dress them up with fabric ribbon, paper raffia, bakers' twine or even washi tape!
-  Table linens or tea towels are terrific for wrapping gifts and the wrapping becomes a lasting present too. Perfect for gifts from (or for!) the kitchen.
-  Wrapped in love! Ask the kids to draw something special for the recipient and then use it as a tag or even the wrapping itself. Perfect for grandparents, aunts & uncles and teacher gifts.
-  Have some paper doilies tucked away in your craft room? They're a lacy way to dress up a solid wrapping paper...just spray with a little adhesive and stick in place.
-  Brown butcher paper is one of our favorite ways to wrap gifts. It's so easy to add a bright twist of ribbon, a spot of glued-on confetti or to stamp a message right onto the box. Keep a roll handy for last-minute gifts and when you add a pretty flower or sprig of greenery in the ribbon, it sure won't look last minute.
-  Wrapping a gift for him? Try using a square of flannel fabric cut to fit and top it off with a real bow tie.

And our secret to enjoying it all?

Wrap gifts as you purchase them. It sounds like too much work, we know – but trust us. Without the mad rush to wrap them all on Christmas Eve, you can take your time and enjoy it!



Old-Fashioned Gingerbread Torte



Cake:

3 c. all-purpose flour
3/4 t. baking soda
3/4 t. salt
1 T. ground ginger
1-1/2 t. cinnamon
1-1/2 c. light molasses
1 c. water
3/4 c. butter, softened
3/4 c. sugar
2 eggs

Buttercream Frosting:

1 c. butter, softened
6 to 7 c. powdered sugar
6 to 9 T. milk
2 t. vanilla extract
1/4 t. salt
1/2 c. white chocolate chips, melted and cooled

Stir together flour, baking soda, salt and spices in a bowl; set aside. Whisk together molasses and water in another bowl; set aside. In a large bowl, beat butter and sugar with an electric mixer on low speed until blended. Increase speed to high; beat until creamy, about 2 minutes. Reduce speed to low; add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each. Add flour mixture alternately with molasses mixture; beat until blended. Line bottoms of three 8" round cake pans with wax paper; grease and flour pans. Spread batter in pans. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes, until a toothpick tests clean. Cool in pans on wire racks for 10 minutes; turn cakes out onto racks and cool completely. Discard wax paper. **For Buttercream Frosting:** Beat butter until very fluffy. Add sugar and milk in small batches, beating after each addition, until very fluffy. Stir in vanilla, salt and melted chocolate. Use immediately. Assemble cake with Buttercream Frosting; chill until serving time. Makes 16 servings.

Candy Cane Thumbprints

Cookies:

2/3 c. butter, softened
1/2 c. sugar
1/4 t. salt
1 egg, beaten
1 t. vanilla extract
1-1/2 c. all-purpose flour
Garnish: finely crushed
peppermint candies

Filling:

1/4 c. butter, softened
1/4 t. peppermint extract
1-1/2 c. powdered sugar
2 to 3 t. milk

Blend butter, sugar and salt with an electric mixer on low speed. Mix in egg and vanilla. Beat in as much flour as possible; stir in remaining flour. Cover; chill for one hour. Shape dough into one-inch balls; place 2 inches apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake at 375 degrees for 8 to 10 minutes, until lightly golden around edges. Remove from oven; make a thumbprint in each cookie with thumb. Cool. **For Filling:** blend butter and extract. Gradually add powdered sugar and milk to a piping consistency. Pipe filling into centers; sprinkle with crushed candy. Makes about 3 dozen.



Chocolate Eggnog

2 qts. eggnog
16-oz. can chocolate syrup
Optional: 1/2 c. light rum
1 c. whipping cream
2 T. powdered sugar
Garnish: baking cocoa

Combine eggnog, chocolate syrup and rum, if using, in a punch bowl, stirring well. Beat whipping cream with an electric mixer on high speed until foamy. Add powdered sugar; continue beating until stiff peaks form. Dollop whipped cream over eggnog; sift cocoa over top. Serve immediately. Makes 3 quarts.

Printable Gift Tags

Print these gift tags on cardstock and cut them out...a sweet touch to your holiday gifts!

