

Happy Valentine's Day!

This year, give the gift of a special homemade meal. Or better yet, share the time making things together. However you choose to celebrate Valentine's Day - cherish those you love and those that love you!

Strawberry Vanilla Pancakes

Prep Time: 10 min.

Cook Time: 10 min.

Total Time: 20 min.

Servings: 4

1 C. all-purpose flour
2 T. brown sugar
2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt, or to taste
1 C. milk
1 lg. egg
2 T. vegetable oil
2 T. vanilla extract
1 C. chopped fresh strawberries

Stir flour, brown sugar, baking powder, and salt together in a medium bowl. Pour in milk, egg, oil, and vanilla; mix until well blended. Stir in strawberries.

Grease and heat a large skillet or griddle over medium heat.

Drop batter by large spoonfuls onto the griddle and cook until bubbles form and the edges are dry, 2 to 3 min. Flip and cook until browned on the other side, about 2 min. more. Repeat with remaining batter.

Crab-Stuffed Manicotti

Prep Time: 25 min.

Cook Time: 25 min.

Servings: 2

4 uncooked manicotti shells
1 T. butter
4 tsp. all-purpose flour
1 C. fat-free milk
1 T. grated Parmesan cheese
1 C. lump crabmeat, drained
1/3 C. reduced-fat ricotta cheese
1/4 C. shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
1/4 tsp. lemon-pepper seasoning
1/4 tsp. pepper
1/8 tsp. garlic powder
Minced fresh parsley

Preheat oven to 350°. Cook the manicotti shells according to package directions; drain. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, melt butter. Stir in flour until smooth; gradually add milk. Bring to a boil; cook and stir until thickened, about 2 min. Remove from heat; stir in Parmesan cheese.

In a small bowl, combine crab, ricotta, mozzarella, lemon pepper, pepper and garlic powder. Stuff shells with the crab mixture. Spread 1/4 C. sauce in an 8-in. square baking dish coated with cooking spray. Top with stuffed manicotti. Pour the remaining sauce over top.

Bake, covered, for 25-30 min. or until heated through. Just before serving, sprinkle with parsley and, if desired, additional grated Parmesan cheese.

Garlic Herbed Skillet Potatoes

Total Time: 1 hr. 20 min.

Olive Oil
6-7 lg. red potatoes
3-5 T. garlic minced
2 tsp. Italian seasoning
salt and pepper to taste
1/4 C. butter cubed
1/2 C. Parmesan cheese
Chives

Brush the bottom and sides of a cast iron skillet with olive oil.

Slice potatoes crosswise into desired thickness. Arrange potato slices loosely in skillet.

Sprinkle garlic, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper on top of potatoes.

Add small pieces of cubed butter on top of potatoes, spread out.

Cover skillet with foil and bake at 375° oven for 1 hour or until potatoes are tender.

Remove foil, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and bake uncovered for another 15 to 20 min. or until crisp. Top with chives if desired when you remove from oven.

Creamy Garlic Chicken Breast

Prep Time: 15 min.

Cook Time: 20 min.

Total Time: 35 min.

Submitted by Karie Bruder/The Drummer Test Kitchen

For The Chicken:

2-3 boneless chicken breasts large, skinless, halved horizontally to make 4

4 T. flour (all purpose or plain)

4 T. parmesan cheese finely grated, fresh

2 tsp. salt

1 tsp. garlic powder

1/2 tsp. black pepper

For The Sauce:

5 T. olive oil

2 T. butter

1 sm onion finely chopped

1 whole head of garlic peeled and divided into 10-12 cloves

1-1/4 C. chicken broth (stock)

1-1/4 C. heavy cream

1/2 C. parmesan cheese finely grated, fresh

2 T. fresh parsley to serve

Season the chicken with salt, garlic powder and pepper.

In a shallow bowl, combine the flour, parmesan cheese. Dredge chicken in the flour mixture; shake off excess. Heat 2 T. of oil and 1 T. butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Swirl pan to coat evenly.

Fry 2-3 chicken breasts until golden on each side, cooked through and no longer pink (about 4-5 min. each side, depending on the thickness of your chicken). Transfer to a warm plate. Set aside.

Wipe pan over with a sheet of paper towel. Repeat with remaining oil, butter and chicken breasts. When cooked, transfer the chicken onto the same plate.

Reduce heat to medium. Sauté the onion in the remaining oil/juices in the pan until softened.

Smash 6 whole cloves of garlic with the blunt edge of the back of a knife

Add the remaining oil to the pan and heat through, mixing it through the onions. Sauté smashed garlic cloves and whole garlic cloves until fragrant, about 2-3 min. Add the broth to deglaze the pan. Scrape up any browned bits and let simmer and reduce to half, about 5 min.

Reduce heat to medium-low. Pour in the cream. Bring the sauce to a gentle simmer for about 2-3 min., combining all of the flavors together.

Mix in the parmesan cheese. Continue cooking gently for about 2-3 min. until cheese melts, while stirring occasionally. Season with salt and pepper to your taste.

Add the chicken back into the pan and let simmer for a further 2-3 min. to thicken the sauce to your liking. The chicken breast will soak up all of the delicious flavors.

Garnish with parsley and a little black cracked pepper.

Red Velvet Layer Bars

Prep Time: 15 min.

Cook Time: 35 min.

Total Time: 3 hrs.

Servings: 24-30 bars

1-1/4 C. all-purpose flour

1 T. unsweetened cocoa powder

1/2 tsp. baking powder

1/8 tsp. salt

1/2 C. unsalted butter, softened to room temperature

3/4 C. granulated sugar

1 lg. egg

1/2 tsp. pure vanilla extract

1 T. liquid red food coloring

1-1/3 C. sweetened shredded coconut

1 C. semi-sweet chocolate chips

1/2 C. white chocolate chips

1 (14 oz.) can sweetened condensed milk

1 C. chopped pecans

Set your oven rack to the center position and preheat oven to 350°F. Line the bottom and sides of a 9x13-inch baking pan or 11x7-inch baking pan with aluminum foil, leaving an overhang on all sides. Set aside.

Whisk the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, and salt together in a large bowl until combined. Set aside.

In a large bowl using a handheld mixer or stand mixer with paddle attachment, beat the butter for 1 min. on medium speed until completely smooth and creamy. Add the granulated sugar and beat on medium high speed until fluffy and light in color. Beat in egg and vanilla on high speed until combined. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl as needed. Beat in the food coloring until combined. With the mixer running on low speed, slowly mix the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients until combined. The red velvet dough will be quite thick and sticky.

Using a silicone spatula, spread dough in an even layer into the prepared baking pan. It's very sticky, so take your time pushing it to each corner of the pan. Bake for 8 min. Remove from the oven and leave the oven on.

Sprinkle the coconut over the cookie layer, followed by the chocolate chips, then the white chocolate chips. Pour the sweetened condensed milk evenly over the top. Sprinkle with pecans. Bake until set, about 25 min. Cool on a rack for at least 2 hours before cutting into squares.

Sparkle Sweetheart Cookies

Prep Time: 1 hr.

Cook Time: 12 min.

Total Time: 1 hr., 45 min.

Servings: 32 cookies

Submitted by Karie Bruder/The Drummer Test Kitchen

3 C. all-purpose flour
1-1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
1 C. unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
2 oz. full-fat brick cream cheese, softened to room temperature
1 C. granulated sugar
1 lg. egg, at room temperature
2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1/2 tsp. almond extract
3/4 C. sanding sugar, pink and red or assorted colors
32 chocolate hearts, unwrapped

Whisk the flour, baking powder, and salt together until combined. Set aside.

In a large bowl using a hand-held or stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat the butter and cream cheese together on high speed until relatively smooth, about 2 min. Add the granulated sugar and beat until combined and creamy. Add the egg, vanilla extract, and almond extract and beat on high speed until combined, about 1 min. Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl as needed to combine.

Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and mix on low speed until combined. The dough will be thick. Cover dough tightly with aluminum foil or plastic wrap and chill for at least 30-60 min. and up to 3-4 days. If chilling for longer than 2-3 hours, allow the dough to sit at room temperature for at least 30 minutes before rolling and baking because the dough will be quite hard and the cookies may not spread.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats. Set aside.

Pour sanding sugar in a bowl or, if using multiple colors, a few separate bowls.

Roll balls of cookie dough, about 1 T. of dough per cookie, then roll each ball in the sanding sugar to coat. Place each dough ball 2 inches apart on the baking sheets. Using the back of a measuring cup or drinking glass, gently press down on each dough ball to slightly flatten. Bake the cookies for 12-13 min. or until very lightly browned on the edges.

Remove from the oven and allow to cool on the baking sheets for 5 minutes. Press a chocolate heart into each cookie and quickly stick the baking sheet in the freezer or fridge so the warm cookie does not completely melt the chocolate heart. Let the chocolate set (about 15 minutes) on the cookies in the freezer/refrigerator.

Quote of the Week:

“Love is not an affectionate feeling, but a steady wish for the loved person’s ultimate good as far as it can be obtained.”

~ C. S. Lewis