Thanksgiving desserts are always a favorite.
This week, we look at some great options to consider for your menu.

Maple-Pecan Mini Pound Cakes

Prep Time: 30 min.
Cook Time: 20 min.
Total Time: 50 min.
Servings: 6

Mini Cakes
1 C. all-purpose flour
1 T. all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. baking soda
1/8 tsp. ground nutmeg
1/2 C. unsalted butter, softened
1/2 C. pure maple syrup
3 T. firmly packed dark brown sugar
3 lg. eggs, room temperature
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 tsp. maple extract
1/4 C. buttermilk, room temp.
2/3 C. chopped pecans

Maple Cream Cheese Frosting
1 (3 oz.) package cream cheese, room temperature
1 T. unsalted butter
3/4 C. powdered sugar
3 T. pure maple syrup
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
1/2 tsp. maple extract
1/8 tsp. salt
3 T. heavy cream
1/4 C. chopped pecans, or as needed

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease and flour a mini Bundt® pan.

Whisk together 1 C. plus 1 T. flour, salt, baking soda, and nutmeg in a small bowl.

Mix together butter, maple syrup, and brown sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer until well combined. Mixture will look curdled; this is normal. Add in eggs, 1 at a time, mixing well after each addition. Mix in vanilla and maple extracts. Add in half of the flour mixture and mix until combined. Pour in buttermilk and mix until combined. Add in remaining flour mixture and mix until just combined. Batter will be thin. Stir in pecans. Divide batter evenly amongst the cavities of the prepared pan.

Place pan into the preheated oven and bake until the bottom of the cakes spring back lightly when touched, 18 to 22 min. Cool cakes in the pan for 5 min. before removing to a wire rack to cool completely.

Frosting: mix cream cheese and butter together with an electric mixer until smooth. Add in powdered sugar, maple syrup, vanilla extract, maple extract, and salt; beat until mixture is completely smooth. Pour in heavy cream and mix until well incorporated. Frost mini cakes as desired, and sprinkle additional chopped pecans on top.

Pumpkin Crumb Cake

Prep Time: 15 min.
Cook Time: 40 min.
Total Time: 55 min.
Servings: 18

Crust
1 (15.25 oz.) package yellow cake mix, divided
1/2 C. unsalted butter, melted
1 lg. egg, beaten

Pumpkin Layer
1 (15 oz.) can pumpkin purée
1/2 C. white sugar
3 lg. eggs, beaten
1/4 C. packed brown sugar
1-1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon

Topping
1/2 C. white sugar
3 T. unsalted butter, softened
1/2 C. chopped walnuts

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease a 9x13-inch baking pan.

Reserve 1 C. of the cake mix in a medium bowl. Combine remaining cake mix, butter, and egg in a large bowl until well combined; press into the bottom of the prepared pan.

Mix pumpkin, white sugar, eggs, brown sugar, and cinnamon together in the large bowl until well combined. Pour over crust.

Stir sugar and butter into reserved cake mix until crumbly; sprinkle over pumpkin layer. Scatter walnuts over top.

Bake in the preheated oven until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, 40-45 min. Cool completely in the pan on a wire rack before slicing.

Butterscotch Brownies

Prep Time: 20 min.
Cook Time: 30 min.
Additional Time: 25 min.
Total Time: 1 hr. 15 min.
Servings: 36

Butterscotch Bars
2 C. all-purpose flour
1-1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
1 C. unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly
2 C. packed light brown sugar
2 tsp. vanilla extract
3 lg. eggs
1 C. chopped walnuts

Coffee Frosting
2 tsp. instant coffee granules
2 T. water
3 C. sifted confectioners' sugar
1/2 C. unsalted butter, softened

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease a 7x11-inch baking pan. Sift flour, baking powder, and salt together in a bowl.
Bars: Beat brown sugar and melted butter until well combined. Beat in eggs and vanilla, then gradually stir in flour mixture. Fold in walnuts until well combined. Spread batter into the prepared pan.
Bake in the preheated oven until light golden brown, 30-35 min. Cool in the pan for 10 min., then turn out of the pan and finish cooling on a wire rack, 15 to 20 min.
Frosting: Dissolve coffee in water in a small bowl.
Beat confectioner's sugar and butter in a mixing bowl with an electric mixer until light and fluffy. Beat in coffee mixture until incorporated.
Spread frosting over cooled bars. Let frosting set before cutting into 36 squares.

Cranberry Crumble Cheesecake Bars

Prep Time: 15 min.
Total Time: 2 hr.
Servings: 16

Crust
12 graham crackers
6 T. unsalted butter, melted
1/4 C. granulated sugar
1/4 tsp. kosher salt
Cooking spray

Cranberry Compote
12 oz. fresh cranberries
3/4 C. granulated sugar
1 tsp. finely grated orange zest, plus 1/4 C. fresh orange juice
1/2 tsp. pure vanilla extract

Cream Cheese Filling
2 lg. eggs
2 - 8 oz. blocks of cream cheese, room temperature
1/3 C. granulated sugar
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1/4 tsp. kosher salt

Crumble Topping
1/2 C. all-purpose flour
3 T. packed dark brown sugar
1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/4 tsp. kosher salt
1/3 C. coarsely chopped raw pecans
4 T. unsalted butter, melted

Crust: Arrange a rack in center of oven; preheat to 350°F. Lightly grease a 9" x 9" baking pan with cooking spray. Line bottom with parchment, leaving a 2" overhang on 2 opposite sides. Grease parchment with cooking spray.
Place crackers in a large resealable bag or food processor. Crush with a heavy skillet or pulse until fine crumbs form (you should have about 1-1/2 cups). Transfer to a medium bowl. Add butter, granulated sugar, and salt and stir until mixture resembles wet sand. Press evenly into bottom of prepared pan.
Bake crust until golden brown, 10-12 min. Transfer pan to a wire rack and let cool.
Cranberry Compote: In a medium pot over medium heat, bring cranberries, granulated sugar, orange juice, and 3/4 C. water to a simmer. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring, until liquid has reduced and cranberries have burst and thickened, about 15 min.
Remove from heat. Stir in orange zest and vanilla.
Cream Cheese Filling: In a large bowl, using a handheld mixer on medium-high speed, beat eggs, cream cheese, granulated sugar, vanilla, and salt until combined and smooth.
Crumble Topping: In a medium bowl, whisk flour, brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Add pecans and butter and stir until mixture becomes crumbly.
Spread cream cheese filling over crust. Evenly dot surface with cranberry compote. Sprinkle with crumble topping.

Bake cheesecake until puffed and just set in the center, about 35 min. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool.
Cover pan and refrigerate bar until set, at least 1 hour and up to 5 days.
Using parchment overhang, lift out bar and transfer to a cutting board. Cut into squares.

Buttery Cinnamon Cake

Prep Time: 30 min.
Cook Time: 45 min.
Additional Time: 20 min.
Total Time: 1 hr. 35 min.
Servings: 14

Cake
2 C. all-purpose flour
1 T. baking powder
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
3/4 tsp. salt
1-1/3 C. white sugar
2/3 C. shortening
1-1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
3 lg. eggs
2/3 C. milk

Cinnamon Syrup
1/2 C. white sugar
1/3 C. water
6 T. butter
1 tsp. vanilla extract
3/4 tsp. ground cinnamon

Preheat the oven to 350°F Grease and lightly flour a 10-inch Bundt® pan.
Beat sugar, shortening, and vanilla in a large bowl with an electric mixer until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating for at least 1 min. after each addition.
Beat in flour mixture alternately with milk. Pour batter into the prepared pan.
Bake in the preheated oven until a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean, 40 to 45 min.
Syrup: Combine sugar, water, butter, vanilla, and cinnamon in a saucepan over medium-low heat. Cook and stir until butter melts; keep warm.
Remove cake from the oven and let cool in the pan for 10 min. Invert warm cake carefully onto a serving plate or cooling rack.
Use a fork to poke holes around the top of the cake.
Pour warm syrup over the top and sides, making sure it goes into the holes. Serve after about 30 min., while still warm.

Carmelitas

Prep Time: 15 min.
Total Time: 1 hr.
Servings: 12

2 C. all-purpose flour
2 C. old-fashioned oats
1-1/2 C. unsalted butter, softened
1-1/2 C. packed light brown sugar
2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1/4 tsp. kosher salt
1 (11-oz.) bag soft caramels
1/4 C. whole milk
Pinch of flaky sea salt
2 C. semi-sweet chocolate chips
Cooking spray

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease a 13” x 9” baking pan with cooking spray, then line pan with parchment.
In a large bowl, mix flour, oats, butter, brown sugar, vanilla, and kosher salt until just crumbly and combined. Press half of oat mixture into prepared pan; reserve remaining oat mixture.
Bake crust until just beginning to turn golden brown, about 12 min. Let cool 10 min.
Meanwhile, in a small saucepan over low heat, cook caramels and milk, stirring occasionally, until caramels have melted, about 12 minutes. Stir in sea salt.
Scatter chocolate chips over crust. Pour caramel over chips. Gently spread caramel to cover chocolate. Top caramel with reserved oat mixture, flattening out oats.
Bake carmelitas until oat crumble is golden and caramel is bubbling around the edges, about 25 minutes. Let cool in pan. Slice into squares.

Sweet Potato Pie Bars

Prep Time: 20 min.
Total Time: 3 hr.
Servings: 12

2 lb. sweet potatoes
56 Ritz® crackers
1/2 C. unsalted butter, softened, plus 6 T. melted
1-1/3 C. plus 2 T. granulated sugar, divided
1 lg. egg

3 lg. egg yolks
1/2 C. heavy cream
1 T. ground cinnamon
1 tsp. ground nutmeg
2-1/4 tsp. pure vanilla extract, divided
3 lg. egg whites
1/4 tsp. cream of tartar
Cooking spray

Preheat oven to 400°F. Grease an 8" x 8" baking dish with cooking spray, then line with parchment, leaving an overhang on all sides.

Using a fork, poke holes all over potatoes and arrange on a baking sheet. Roast until tender, 45 to 60 min. Let cool slightly.

Meanwhile, in a food processor, pulse crackers until fine crumbs form. Add 6 T. melted butter and 2 T. sugar. Pulse until combined and mixture starts to stick together. Press cracker mixture into prepared dish in an even layer. Wipe out food processor.

Peel potatoes with your hands—the skin will be easy to remove. Transfer flesh to food processor. Add egg, egg yolks, cream, cinnamon, nutmeg, 1 C. sugar, 1/2 C. softened butter, and 2 tsp. vanilla and pulse until smooth.

Reduce oven temperature to 350°F. Bake crust until fragrant and darkened in color, about 10 min. Let cool slightly.

Pour potato mixture into crust. Bake bar until center is set and slightly wobbly, 45-60 min. Let cool in pan.

Meanwhile, in the large bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat egg whites, cream of tartar, and remaining 1/2 tsp. vanilla on medium-high speed until stiff peaks form. With the motor running, slowly pour in remaining 1/3 C. granulated sugar and beat until meringue is shiny and glossy.

Spread meringue over bar in a swirling pattern. Continue to bake until meringue is set, about 5 min. more. Turn on broiler. Broil, watching closely, until top is golden brown, 2 -4 min.

Using parchment overhang, lift out bar and transfer to a cutting board. Cut into squares.

Quote of the Week:

"In November, the earth is growing quiet. It is making its bed, a winter bed for flowers and small creatures."

~ Cynthia Rylant