

The official start to the holidays is here!

Time for all the parties, meal prep, and at-home meals. These meals are often exciting, delicious, and a lot of work!

The easiest way to get through preparing for your holiday meals is to "Be Prepared" and by starting early!

Ready or not - here we go!

Red Velvet Cinnamon Rolls

*Prep: 1 hr.
Cook: 15 min.
Servings: 12*

1 pkg. red velvet cake mix
2-1/2 to 3 C. all-purpose flour
1 pkg. (1/4 oz.) active dry yeast
1-1/4 C. warm water (110°-115°)
1/2 C. packed brown sugar
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/4 C. butter, melted

Icing:

2 C. confectioners' sugar
2 T. butter, softened
1 tsp. vanilla extract
3 to 5 T. 2% milk

Combine cake mix, 1 cup flour and yeast. Add water; beat on medium speed 2 min. Stir in enough remaining flour to form a soft dough (dough will be sticky). Turn onto a lightly floured surface; knead gently 6-8 times. Place in a greased bowl, turning once to grease the top. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 2 hrs. Meanwhile, in another bowl, mix brown sugar and cinnamon.

Punch down dough. Turn onto a lightly floured surface; roll dough into an 18x10-in. rectangle. Brush with melted butter to within 1/4 in. of edges; sprinkle with sugar mixture.

Roll up jelly-roll style, starting with a long side; pinch seam to seal. Cut crosswise into 12 slices. Place cut sides up in a greased 13x9-in. baking pan. Cover with a kitchen towel; let rise in a warm place until almost doubled, about 1 hr.

Preheat oven to 350°. Bake until puffed and light brown, 15-20 min. Cool slightly.

Beat confectioners' sugar, butter, vanilla and enough milk to reach a drizzling consistency. Drizzle icing over warm rolls.

Cranberry and Bacon Swiss Cheese Dip

*Prep: 20 min.
Cook: 25 min.
Servings: 3 Cups*

2/3 C. mayonnaise
1/3 C. spreadable chive and onion cream cheese
1 T. stone-ground mustard
1/4 tsp. garlic pepper blend
3 C. shredded Swiss cheese
1 package (10 oz.) frozen chopped onions, thawed and patted dry
8 pieces ready-to-serve fully cooked bacon, chopped
1/2 C. sliced almonds, divided
1/3 C. dried cranberries, chopped
Slices French bread baguette (1/4 inch thick), toasted

Preheat oven to 325°. In a large bowl, combine mayonnaise, cream cheese, mustard and garlic pepper blend. Add Swiss cheese; mix well. Stir in onions, bacon, 1/4 C. almonds and the cranberries. Spread into a greased 1- or 2-qt. baking dish. Sprinkle with remaining 1/4 C. almonds. Place on a baking sheet.

Bake, uncovered, until bubbly, 25-30 min. Serve warm with baguette slices.

Dill Pickle Dip

*Prep: 10 min.
Servings: 3 Cups*

1 pkg. (8 oz.) cream cheese, softened
1 C. sour cream
1/4 C. dill pickle juice
1 C. chopped dill pickles
1 tsp. garlic pepper blend
Optional: Ridged potato chips or pretzels

In a small bowl, beat the cream cheese, sour cream and pickle juice until smooth. Stir in pickles and pepper blend. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to 4 hrs. If desired, serve with chips or pretzels.

Grinch Punch

Prep Time: 15 min.

Total Time: 15 min.

Servings: 12

2 qts. lime sherbet, sitting at room temperature for a few minutes to soften
1 (1 liter) bottle chilled lemon-lime soda (such as Sprite®)
8 C. (1/2 gal) chilled Hawaiian Punch® Green Berry Rush® juice drink
2 C. chilled pineapple juice, plus more for coating glass rims
1 glass red sanding sugar, for coating glass rims

Scoop softened lime sherbet into the bottom of a large punch bowl.

Pour the lemon-lime soda, Hawaiian Punch®, and 2 cups pineapple juice over the sherbet and stir.

Place red sanding sugar in a shallow dish, and some additional pineapple juice in a separate shallow dish. Dip the rims of your serving glasses in the pineapple juice, then in the sanding sugar to coat the rims generously.

Ladle the punch into the prepared glasses.

Taco Noodle Casserole

Prep: 20 min.

Cook: 10 min.

Servings: 8

2 C. uncooked wide egg noodles
2 lbs. ground beef
1 can (8 oz.) tomato sauce
1/2 C. water
1 can (4 oz.) chopped green chiles
1 envelope taco seasoning
1 tsp. onion powder
1 tsp. chili powder
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1 C. shredded cheddar cheese
2 C. shredded lettuce
1 C. diced fresh tomatoes
1/3 C. sliced ripe olives, drained
1/2 C. taco sauce
1/2 C. sour cream

Preheat oven to 350°. Cook noodles according to package directions.

Meanwhile, in a large skillet, cook beef over medium heat until no longer pink; drain. Stir in tomato sauce, water, green chiles, taco seasoning, onion powder, chili powder and garlic powder. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, 5 min.

Drain noodles; place in a greased 11x7-in. baking dish. Spread with beef mixture; sprinkle with cheese. Bake, uncovered, until cheese is melted, 10-15 min. Let stand 10 min.

Top with lettuce, tomatoes, olives and taco sauce. Garnish with sour cream.

Sausage Manicotti

Prep: 15 min.

Cook: 1 hr. 5 min.

Servings: 7

1 lb. uncooked bulk Italian sausage
2 C. 4% cottage cheese
1 pkg. (8 oz.) manicotti shells
1 jar (24 oz.) marinara sauce
1 C. shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese

In a large bowl, combine sausage and cottage cheese. Stuff into uncooked manicotti shells. Place in a greased 13x9-in. baking dish. Top with marinara sauce.

Cover and bake at 350° until a thermometer inserted into the center of a shell reads 160°, 55-60 min.

Uncover; sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Bake until cheese is melted, 8-10 min. longer. Let stand for 5 min. before serving.

Spinach Salad with Goat Cheese and Beets

Prep: 10 min.

Cook: 35 min.

Servings: 10

1-1/4 lbs. fresh beets

1 T. balsamic vinegar
1-1/2 tsp. honey
1-1/2 tsp. Dijon mustard
1/4 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
1/4 C. olive oil
5 C. fresh baby spinach
2 oz. fresh goat cheese, crumbled
1/2 C. chopped walnuts, toasted

Scrub beets and trim tops to 1 in. Place in a Dutch oven and cover with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer until tender, 30-60 min. Remove from the water; cool. Peel beets and cut into 1-in. pieces.

In a small bowl, whisk the vinegar, honey, mustard, salt and pepper. Slowly whisk in oil until blended.

Place spinach in salad bowl. Drizzle with dressing; toss to coat. Top with beets, goat cheese and walnuts. If desired, sprinkle with additional pepper.

Reindeer Snack Mix

Prep: 10 min.

Cook: 1 hr.

Servings: 12

2 C. Bugles®
2 C. pretzel sticks
2 C. cheese-flavored snack crackers
1 C. bite-sized shredded wheat
1 C. Corn Chex®
1 C. pecan halves
1/2 C. butter, cubed
1 T. maple syrup
1-1/2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
3/4 tsp. Cajun seasoning
1/4 tsp. cayenne pepper

Preheat oven to 250°. Place first 6 ingredients in a large bowl. In a microwave, melt butter; stir in remaining ingredients. Drizzle over snack mixture; toss to combine. Transfer to an ungreased 15x10x1-in. pan.

Bake 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes. Cool completely before storing in an airtight container.

Layered Candy Cane Dessert

Prep: 25 min.

Servings: 24

1 pkg. (14.3 ounces) Oreo cookies
6 T. butter, melted
1 pkg. (8 oz.) cream cheese, softened
1/4 C. sugar
2 T. 2% milk
1 carton (12 oz.) frozen whipped topping, thawed, divided
3/4 C. crushed candy canes (about 7 regular size), divided
2 pkg. (3.3 oz. each) instant white chocolate pudding mix
2-3/4 C. cold 2% milk

Pulse cookies in a food processor until fine crumbs form. Add melted butter; pulse just until combined. Press onto bottom of a 13x9-in. dish. Refrigerate while preparing filling.

Beat cream cheese, sugar and milk until smooth. Fold in 1 cup whipped topping and 1/2 cup crushed candies. Spread over crust.

Whisk pudding mix and milk 2 minutes; spread over cream cheese layer. Spread with remaining whipped topping. Refrigerate, covered, 4 hrs. Sprinkle with remaining candies just before serving.

Quote of the Week:

“They fought together as brothers-in-arms. They died together, and now they sleep side by side. To them, we have a solemn obligation.”

~ Admiral Chester Nimitz, after accepting the

Japanese surrender