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COMMENT

Tips for less stressful Christmas dinner

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What's Cookin'

Merry Christmas! I hope that you have been and still are enjoying the holiday season. For many, this seems to be a stressful time of the year, with shopping to do, house to clean, tree to decorate, work to complete, events to attend, cooking to be done.

But, this is supposed to be a joyful time of the year. We are supposed to be enjoying our friends and family. There are so many more important things to do than clean the house! And meals can be made simpler. Potluck is a great idea— why not — everyone brings something for the big meal and the host doesn't have to do all the work. I was checking out at the grocery store and the lady in front of me was stocking up on paper plates, napkins, etc. I commented how pretty they were and she said that was what she was using for Christmas dinner so that there was less cleanup afterwards and they could spend time together. Martha

would be horrified, but I think it's a great plan! I'd much rather play a game of Cattan with the kids than do dishes!

There are tons of things you can do in advance of your big meal to save some time too. Peel your potatoes the day before. Store in cold water in the fridge. Change the water before boiling the next day. Peel and chop all your veggies the day before and store either in Ziploc bags as is, or tossed in olive oil and then in bags— depending on what you are doing with them. Or use frozen veggies. Make the dessert in advance— serve something that doesn't have to be heated or fussed with on the day of. A selection of cookies and squares is always a hit— and doesn't require a plate and fork!

Gerry and I wish you and your families and wonderful Christmas! Have fun and keep cooking!

Bakewell Tart

SERVES 8-12

INGREDIENTS

- 200g all purpose flour
- 1 tbsp icing sugar
- 125 g unsalted butter, cold
- zest of 1 lemon
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 1 tbsp cold water
- 175 g unsalted butter, softened
- 175 g icing sugar
- 3 eggs, slightly beaten
- 175 g ground almonds
- 1 tsp almond extract
- 200g seedless raspberry jam



METHOD

1. In a food processor, pulse the flour, 1 tbsp icing sugar, cold butter and lemon zest together until the mixture resembles coarse meal. Add 1 egg and 1 tbsp water. Pulse only until dough starts to come together.

2. Remove dough to countertop and gently bring dough together into a ball (adding a touch more water if required), then flatten into a disk, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

3. Sprinkle counter with flour and roll out pastry dough (reserving a small amount of dough to garnish top of tart with) to about one-eighth inch thickness. Spray a fluted removable bottom pan with non-stick spray and then place pastry in pan. Press gently into the corners. Trim top. Prick base with fork all over, then freeze until firm (approx 15 minutes).

4. Once firm, immediately place tart shell in oven at 350 degrees F. and bake for 10 to 15 minutes until pastry is lightly golden. Set aside to cool.

5. Meanwhile, mix softened butter and icing sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time with 1 tbsp ground almonds each time, then stir in remaining almonds and almond extract.

6. Spread jam across the bottom of the pastry. Pour batter over top. Using remaining bit of pastry, roll long, thin snakes and criss-cross ovetop of tart. Bake in preheated 350 degree oven for approximately 45 minutes until golden and toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Once baked, remove from pan and cool. Serve with whipped cream.



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