

Unusually delicious Yule desserts from Poland

MARZIPAN (Marcepan)

- 1 pound blanched almonds
- 1 pound confectioners' sugar
- 2 tablespoons orange water or rose water
- Food coloring
- Decorations (colored sugar, dragees, or chocolate shot)

1. Grind almonds very fine. Combine in a saucepan with sugar and flavoring.

Cook until mixture leaves side of pan.

2. Roll almond mixture on flat surface to 1/2-inch thickness. Cut out small heart shapes. Or, shape into small fruits or vegetables.

3. Paint with appropriate food coloring or coat as desired, for example, with red sugar for "strawberries" and cocoa for "potatoes." Decorate with dragees or chocolate shot. Place on waxed paper to dry 2 hours.

2 pounds

LAST MINUTE PARTY TORTE

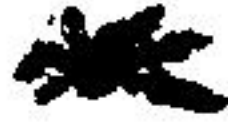
- 1 12-ounce package chocolate chips
- 2 cups sour cream
- 1 pound cake

Melt chocolate chips in a saucepan coated with Silver-Spoon[®] nonstick surface.

Add two cups of sour cream. Mix thoroughly.

Slice the pound cake horizontally into four equal layers.

Spread chocolate mixture between layers and over outside of cake.



Candy is a perennial holiday favorite, and the homemade variety is best of all. If you've never played confectioner before you'll want an informative book to turn to, which supplies not only the tantalizing recipes (that's only half of it!), but which also gives copious background information on candy-making techniques.

One such book is *Candy Recipes and Other Confections* (Dover Publications, Inc.) by May B. Van Arsdale and Ruth Parrish Casa Emellos.

The book outlines cooking temperatures for various confection types, as well as giving an overview of different candy categories, the necessary equipment and basic ingredients.

Recipe chapters tempt the potential confectioner with Fondant; Fudge; Penuchi and Operas; Divinity and Nougat; Maple Candies; and Popcorn Candies, to name a few.

Reprinted below, from *Candy Recipes and Other Confections* are recipes for two sweet treats. Molasses Pop Corn Balls and Caramel Walnut Squares, both perfect

Homemade candy—terrific way to sweeten the season

offerings for Christmas get-togethers.

MOLASSES POP CORN BALLS

LARGE RECIPE

- 1 cup light molasses
- 1 cup dark corn syrup
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 quarts popped corn
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

SMALL RECIPE

- 1/2 cup light molasses
- 1/2 cup dark corn syrup
- 1/2 tablespoon vinegar
- 1 1/2 tablespoons butter
- 1 1/2 quarts popped corn
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Mix molasses, syrup, and vinegar in a saucepan and cook, stirring occasionally to prevent burning, until the temperature 270°F. is reached. After 240°F. is reached, constant stirring will be necessary. When done add butter and stir only enough to mix. Slowly pour the cooked syrup over the salted popped corn and mix well.

Form into balls with the hands, using as little pressure as possible.

Two drops of oil of lemon may be added to the syrup.

Cold water test when syrup reaches 270°F.: slightly brittle.

Yield (large recipe): number of balls — twenty (two and one-half inches in diameter).

CARAMEL WALNUT SQUARES

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons dark caramel syrup
- 2 tablespoons condensed milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 pound confectioners' sugar
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Melt the butter, add the caramel syrup, condensed milk and vanilla. Mix and add the salt and sugar. Knead in the chopped nuts. Press into a lightly buttered pan, cool, remove from pan and cut into squares.

Yield: weight about 1 1/4 pounds.

CARAMEL SYRUP

- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup or more boiling water

In a frying pan or a heavy aluminum saucepan heat the sugar over a very low flame, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until it is melted to a syrup. Remove from the flame and add the water slowly while stirring. Return to flame and allow it to simmer until it is a thin syrup. If there are any lumps add a little more water and boil it until the lumps dissolve.

Caramel syrup may be used for waffles or griddle cakes either as it is or mixed with an equal amount of corn syrup. One-fourth teaspoon of vanilla may be added if desired. If it is to be used for this purpose the water must be added to the melted sugar when it is a very light golden brown. It is also used as a flavoring in candies, frostings, custards, ice cream and other desserts. If it is to be used as a flavoring material the sugar must be heated until it is a deep golden brown before adding the water in order to develop a strong caramel flavor.

When the boiling is finished the product must be a thin syrup. If not to be used immediately, keep it in a covered jar.

Yield: About 1/2 cup.

Sprucing up for holiday bon-appetit

Before we've tasted a single morsel of a meal that's been set before us, we have a preconceived notion of how the food is going to taste, and whether we are going to enjoy it.

For, taste is only one of the factors determining pleasurable eating. Equally important are aroma and appearance, which combine to offer the dinner the manifold joys of anticipation.

First, the scent of the food as it cooks, wafting out of the kitchen to stimulate sluggish appetites. Then, the sight of it, arranged on a platter or on individual plates, set out in an attractive fashion, with an eye for color, shape and pattern.

There are as many ways of presenting food attractively, as there are imaginations. No one way is correct; basically, what looks pleasing, works.

However, there are many variables to keep in mind which do, ultimately, affect the appearance of a dish—among them, the plate or bowl in which it is served (particularly its color, shape and pattern) and its color and shape as well as that of those foods which surround it.

Composing a dish of food is like composing a painting; it takes attention and sensitivity to determine the exact arrangement of form and hue in which everything will show to its best advantage.

Most of us do this instinctively, at least to some degree, when we cook.

What is lacking, however, is the subtlety and refinement of the conscious artist.

Every meal, whether it is the simplest of sandwiches or an elaborate excursion through haute cuisine, should be a feast.

This is all the more true when holiday celebrations are

involved. While the daily dinner table should look attractive, the holiday buffet should look little short of extraordinary.

There are many ways—most of them not terribly complex—of ensuring this, and one of the best resources for the novice at food presentation is the recently published volume *Foodstyle* (Crown Publishers, Inc.) by Molly Siple and Irene Sax.

What Siple and Sax do, in 300 pages liberally scattered with line drawings, is to make the reader visualize food, and conceptualize what are, in essence, "settings" for it. They shy away from the catering hall look—theirs is not a book in which to learn the how-to's of ice sculpture.

Rather, they will tell you what color plate best complements the food in question, what garnishes will look—and taste—good, and what vegetables will serve as an appropriate counterpoint to the main focus of the meal.

They suggest innovative treatments of standard food, such as serving crackers in a hollowed-out loaf of brown bread, and using crunchy sprouts—rather than the standard lettuce—as a base for hors d'oeuvres.

Many of their ideas are simple—deceptively so—of the "I can't believe I never thought of that" variety. In this category, fall such suggestions as bedding grapes—mixed green and purple, of course—on ferns or leaves, which is as easy to do as it is eye-catching.

Another suggestion in this vein, which goes a long way toward achieving visual appeal is a single radish, intricately carved, which is set down on a single-portion

salad of dark greens, way off center.

Siple and Sax devoted several pages to dressing the home in general, and the table in particular, for Christmas celebrations. Among the ideas they share with their readers: decorating the front door with a wreath made from fruits and nuts, and brightening the mantelpiece with a glowing candle nestled in a carved-out pineapple.

Traditional Christmas cookies, they suggest, make innovative placecards for a sit-down meal.

Christmas is the one occasion, in their book, where no holds are barred. They advocate red and green all over, and sprigs of pine, holly and mistletoe abounding. Lots of candy canes and popcorn balls add to the festive atmosphere. For Christmas, unlike the other 364 days of the year, nothing ever seems to be too much.

Siple and Sax suggest garnishing the holiday bird with seasonal greenery (not holly or poinsettia, ever), and describe a fanciful winter diorama set on a plate—an arrangement of pine needles to one side which has been sprinkled with confectioner's sugar "snow."

A final Christmastime suggestion from the authors of *Foodstyle*—a dramatically iced bottle of clear spirits—they mention vodka and aquavit—which has been placed in an empty milk carton, to which sprigs of evergreen and water (to fill) are added.

The whole thing is put in the freezer for several hours. At serving time, simply peel the carton away from the iced liquor, for instant drama and tabletop glamour. And, have yourself a very merry Christmas!

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