

Try some dessert gamesmanship

If you want to win some compliments when you have friends in for dessert over the holidays, this Saronno Checkerboard Cake should do the trick. Besides looking rather spectacular and tasting fabulous, it will have your guests completely puzzled. They'll be hard pressed to figure out how you managed the checkerboard effect.

Alternate strips of golden and chocolate pound cake are put together with a yummy frosting flavored with Amaretto di Saronno, the Italian liqueur that's working magic in so many delectable dessert recipes these days.

Collectors of odd historical facts might be interested to know that the game of checkers came into being in Europe in the 16th century. During the same century — in the year 1525 at Christmastime — a young woman in Saronno, Italy, created Amaretto di Saronno as a gift for the man she loved.

So much for the history lesson, here's the recipe for Saronno Checkerboard Cake.

SARONNO CHECKERBOARD CAKE

- 2 16-ounce packages golden pound cake mix
 - 3 ounces semisweet chocolate, melted and cooled
 - 2 tablespoons instant coffee powder
 - 1/2 cup Amaretto di Saronno
 - 1/2 cup soft butter or margarine
 - 1 pound confectioners' sugar, sifted
 - 2 ounces semisweet chocolate, melted and cooled
 - Silvered rind of 1 orange
 - 1/2 cup Amaretto di Saronno
- Prepare 1 package golden pound cake mix according to package directions and bake in loaf pan 9 x 5 x 3 inches.
- Prepare a 9 x 5 x 3-inch chocolate pound cake with second package of mix by adding 3 ounces semisweet



WHEN YOUR INVITATION IS FOR DESSERT, be sure your game plan calls for serving something special. It would be hard to top this Saronno Checkerboard Cake which boasts a delicious frosting intriguingly flavored with Amaretto di Saronno and garnished with orange peel.

chocolate, melted and cooled, with the water and eggs called for in package directions.

With a sharp knife, trim crusts from cakes, making sure tops are level, not rounded. Cut each cake into three lengthwise strips. Cut each strip in halves lengthwise so you have 6 golden and 6 chocolate strips.

Dissolve instant coffee powder in Amaretto di Saronno. In a large bowl, cream together butter or margarine and sugar. Add coffee mixture and cooled chocolate. Beat until smooth and fluffy.

In a saucepan, cook orange rind and Amaretto di Saronno until peel is glazed. Cool. Place one chocolate strip

on serving platter and frost one long side of strip. Press one golden strip into frosting, repeating until you have 4 strips. Spread top with frosting.

Start the second layer with a golden strip and end with a chocolate strip. Spread top with frosting.

Start third layer with a chocolate strip and end with a golden strip. Frost top and sides of cake.

Place remaining frosting into a pastry bag with a star tip and press rosettes of frosting around top and base of cake. Garnish with glazed orange peel.

Chill until ready to serve. Makes 1 cake.

Christmas cookies

From first sniff to last bite, these cookies make everyone's Christmas merrier! tantalizing peanutty aroma wafting from the kitchen brings the first hint of good things to come — for these are sugar cookies with a difference.

Peanut butter chips are the delicious secret ingredient here! And along with the extra goodness, the chips add a bonus of protein, niacin and riboflavin because they're made from real peanuts.

Let the whole family join in the cookie-decorating fun (older children can add dollops of frosting, while little tots will love sprinkling on colored sugar.)

And if these treats don't vanish at once, they make

delightful gifts, place card "markers" or centerpieces (group decorated cookie trees, for instance, on a bank of artificial snow).

PEANUT BUTTER SUGAR COOKIES

- 2 cups (12-ounce package) Reese's Peanut Butter Chips
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups unsifted all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

In top of double boiler over simmering (not boiling)

water, melt peanut butter chips; stir until smooth. In large mixer bowl, cream butter or margarine and sugar until fluffy; add eggs and vanilla.

Beat well; blend in melted chips.

Combine flour, baking soda and salt; blend into creamed mixture.

Cover bowl tightly; chill about one hour or until dough

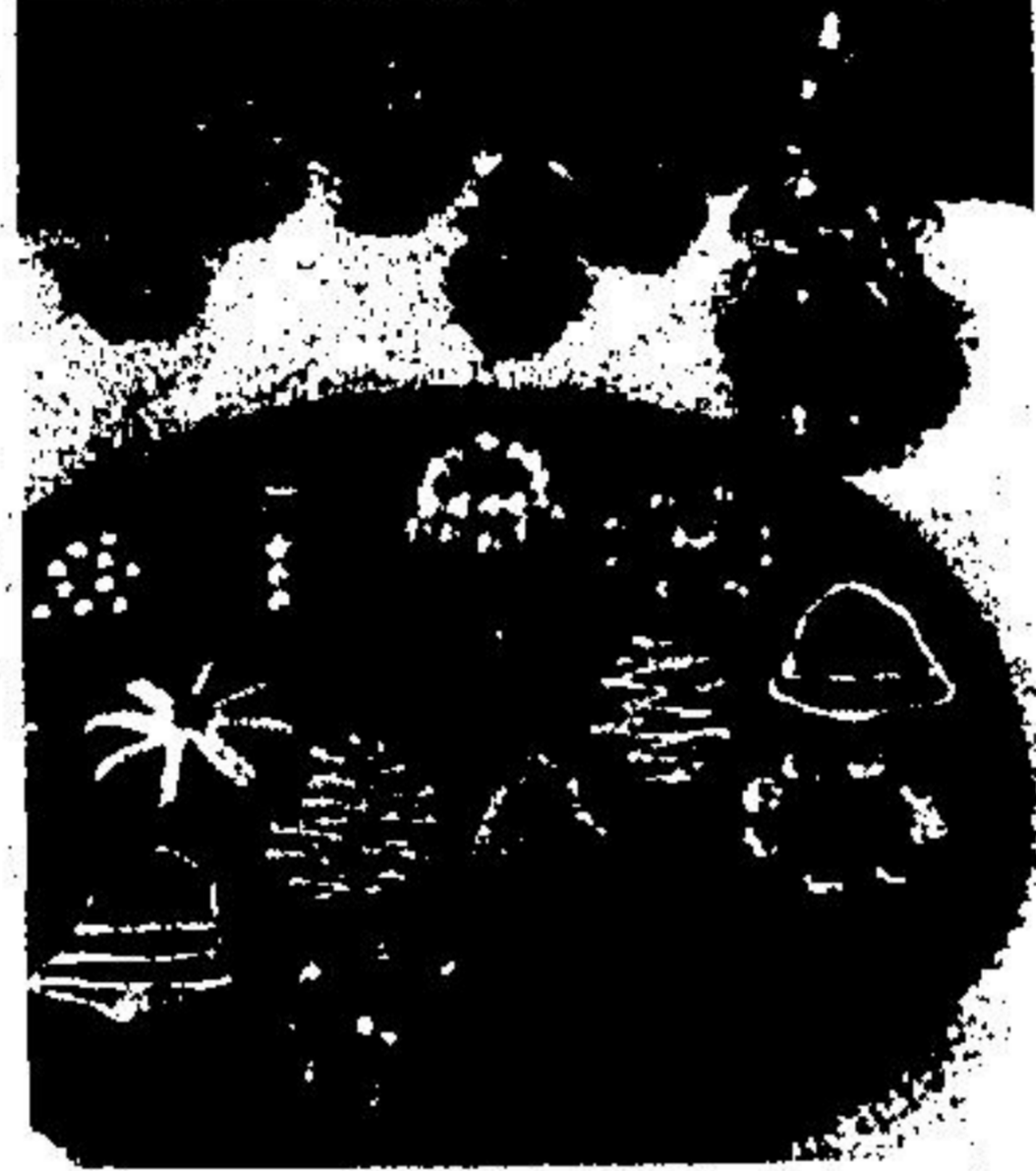
is stiff enough to handle. Roll dough on lightly floured surface to 1/4-inch thickness; cut into desired shapes with Christmas cookie cutters.

Bake at 375° for 6 to 8 minutes.

Cool on wire rack.

Decorate with frosting, colored sugar, miniature gumdrops.

About 5 dozen cookies.



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