

JUST DESSERTS

When you think elegant desserts, do you think spir-its? Do you think of crepes suzette flaming with Grand Marnier, rum-soaked babas, chocolate fondues spiked with cherry-flavored brandy, creamy fruit trifles redolent with sherry? If so, you're not alone.

For it's generally acknowledged that cordials, rums and brandies add that special something to a dessert, turn the ordinary into the extraordinary, and provide the absolutely right finishing touch to a well-planned and well-executed dinner.

The variety of sweet liquors suitable for addition to such desserts as souffles, mousses, pies, cakes and ice cream is staggering.

Among the most popular liqueurs are: Amaretto (almond); Anisette (licorice); Cointreau (orange); Creme de Cacao (chocolate); Creme de Cassis (currant); Creme de Menthe (mint); Drambuie (Scotch whisky which has been flavored with herbs, spices and honey made from heather); Framboise (raspberry); Grand Marnier (orange-flavored liqueur which has been blended with cognac); Kahlua (coffee); Kirsch (cherry); Maraschino (cherry); and Triple Sec (orange).

What precisely is a liqueur? L. Patrick Coyle, Jr., in *The World Encyclopedia of Food* (Facts on File, Inc.) defines it as "any sweetened, flavored alcoholic beverage usually drunk after a meal as a digestive, but sometimes served as an ingredient in a cocktail."

The make-up of a liqueur is further defined by U.S. law, which requires liqueurs and cordials to contain a minimum of 2 1/2

percent sugar or other sweetener.

There are five basic categories of liqueur, depending on what their major flavoring ingredient is: either fruit, peel, herb, seed or creme.

Those liquors made with fruits, peels or creme are usually dominated by a single flavor: orange, raspberry, currant, etc.

On the other hand, liqueurs made with seeds and herbs are generally combinations of flavors; Chartreuse, probably the most renowned of these, is reputed to be made up of well over 100 different flavoring ingredients.

While we drink liqueur today purely for the pleasure of it — what better way to wind up a good dinner? — they originated as medicinal elixirs as far back as the Middle Ages.

They were distilled by learned men, often monks, who guarded the secret of their preparation jealously, and who often experimented with adding new flavorings to their recipes in order to outdo each other and themselves.

In this way, a wide variety of liqueurs, based on diverse flavorings from flowers, fruits, seeds, bark, etc., came into being.

Two of the most well-known of these liqueurs are D.O.M. Benedictine and Chartreuse, both produced in monasteries, both heady combinations of a multiplicity of ingredients, whose precise formula is known only to a handful of people.

Brandy, perhaps the archtypal after-dinner drink, came into existence in medieval times, when the grape-growers of France,

to avoid paying excessive export duties (which were computed according to quantity, not quality), chose to distill — or burn — their wine. The result was called in Dutch brandewijn, "burned wine," a name which posterity has shortened to "brandy."

Flavored brandies came about during the Renaissance, when enterprising individuals strove to conceal the harsh taste of the brandy distilled at that time with the mellowing flavors gleaned from such fragrant ingredients as rose petals, rosemary, musk, orange flowers and anise.

Today, carefully blended and aged brandies — one thinks of a fine cognac — need no extra ingredients to disguise their distinctive taste.

Connoisseurs of fine liqueurs and good food will be quick to seize upon a recently-published book, *Grand Finales* (Barron's Educational Series, Inc.) by Dick Tauber, which takes as its subject "desserts and sweets flavored with liqueurs, rums, and brandies."

The following recipe reproduced from *Grand Finales* is indicative of what liqueur and dessert-lovers have to look forward to when their favorites are joined together.

AMARETTO CHEESECAKE

INGREDIENTS
 1/2 cup (60 g) sliced blanched almonds
 2 large eggs
 1 1/2 cups (305 g) granulated sugar
 16 ounces (450 g) cream cheese

1/2 cup (8 cL) orange curacao or triple sec
 1/2 cup (12 cL) amaretto

CRUST

1 1/2 cups (36 cL) graham cracker crumbs
 2 tablespoons (25 g) granulated sugar
 1 tablespoon (15 mL) grated orange peel
 1/2 tablespoon (4 g) powdered cinnamon
 1/2 cup (115 g) butter, melted

TOPPING

2 cups (48 cL) sour cream
 1/2 cup (25 g) confectioners' sugar
 1 tablespoon (15 mL) amaretto

1. Preheat the oven to 300° F (150° C). Butter a 13 x 9 x 2-inch (33 x 23 x 5-cm) baking pan. Also select a large roasting pan which will hold your baking pan. Place the almonds in a flat pan, put in the oven, and toast for 6 to 8 minutes, or until lightly browned. Remove from the oven and let cool.

2. To make the crust, combine the graham cracker crumbs, sugar, orange peel, and cinnamon in a small bowl. Stir with a fork or a whisk to mix thoroughly, then add the butter and work the mixture with a fork or flat spoon to dampen all the crumbs. Spread in the pan, and press evenly across the bottom. Bake for 5 minutes, then remove from the oven.

3. Combine the eggs, sugar, cottage cheese, cream cheese, orange liqueur, and amaretto. Use a food processor or blender to process this mixture in batches, adding a portion of the cream cheese to each batch. Blend each batch

until smooth. As each batch is blended, pour it into a large mixing bowl, and, after the last batch is processed (with the last of the cream cheese), stir the total mixture to blend thoroughly. Crumble half the toasted almonds and stir them into the mixture.

4. Pour the cheese mixture into the baking pan, filling almost to the top. Set the baking pan into the larger roasting pan and pour hot water around it to come halfway up the sides. Place cake in the oven and bake for 40 minutes. To check for doneness, shake the pan lightly to see if the cake is set, or go by appearance. The sides will have raised and will show a hint of browning. (Testing the center is not appropriate

for cheesecakes, for the center firms up as the cake cools.)

5. While the cheesecake is baking, prepare the topping. Combine the sour cream, sugar, and amaretto and stir to blend thoroughly. Crumble the remaining almonds with your fingers, and stir them into the topping.

6. When the cheesecake is done, change the oven setting to 475° F (250° C). Working quickly, slide the oven rack forward so that you can add the topping. Gently pour the topping over the cheesecake and using a long, narrow, thin spatula, spread the topping evenly. Bake at the high temperature for 5 minutes. Carefully remove the cheesecake pan from the

water bath and set it on a wire rack to cool to room temperature. Refrigerate for 4 or more hours to set before serving.

Did You Know?

Cookie Keeper

Cookies and crackers keep well stored in coffee cans with plastic lids.

Sprout and Use

Some of the seeds that can be sprouted and used in salads, sandwiches and other dishes are alfalfa, barley, buckwheat, corn, cress, clover, caraway, celery, dill fennel, flax, garbanzo beans, kale, lettuce, lentils, mustard, millet, parsley, purslane, pumpkin, peanuts, onions, oats, radishes, beets, safflower, sesame, sunflower and wheat.

Easter Buns

(Continued from Page 2)

Combine confectioners' sugar and water. Make crosses on each bun with confectioners' sugar glaze. Yield: 1 1/2 dozen.

MOLASSES STICKY BUNS

3 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
 4 tablespoons sugar, divided
 1/4 cup Grandma's Unsulphured Molasses
 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
 1/2 cup raisins
 1 package (8 ounces) refrigerated crescent dinner rolls

Four butter into an 8 x 8 x 2-inch baking pan. Add 2 tablespoons sugar and molasses; mix well. Set aside. Combine remaining 2 tablespoons sugar, cinnamon and raisins.

Unroll crescent rolls in two sections. Sprinkle with sugar-cinnamon mixture; reroll.

Cut each roll in four pieces. Place cut-side-down in prepared pan.

Bake in a 375° F oven 20 to 22 minutes until brown. Cool in pan 5 minutes.

Place cookie rack on wax paper; invert pan on rack.

Yield: 8 buns.

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