

This week we will do a throwback to Darlene's Holiday Columns from 2018.

11/21/2018

It's holiday time already! This year has gone by so quickly. It could be I'm getting older. As the saying goes, "Life flies by quick as we age." Everyone is so busy with all the things we do to get ready for Christmas. We put up the outside Christmas lights; we trim the tree and our homes; plan the foods we will be preparing for holiday parties; and then, of course, we shop, shop and shop. Always wanting to find the perfect gift for everybody on the list.

This year, I'm not going to decorate the house as much. I'm not going to bake as much, and I'm certainly not going to shop as much. I think Christmas gift-giving is out of hand. After all, it's Jesus' birthday we celebrate!!!

~ Darlene Dixon

Turkey Biscuit Stew

Servings: 8

1/3 C. chopped onion
1/4 C. butter
1/3 C. flour
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. chicken bouillon granules
1/4 tsp. pepper
10-1/2 oz. can chicken broth
3/4 C. whole milk or 1/2 & 1/2 cream
2 C. cubed, cooked turkey
1 C. frozen peas, thawed
1 C. chopped carrots
10 oz. tube refrigerated buttermilk biscuits

In a large skillet, sauté onion in butter until tender. Stir in flour, salt, bouillon and pepper. Gradually add broth and milk, whisking as you add. Bring to a boil. Cook and stir until thickened and bubbly, about 2 min. Add the turkey, peas and carrots; heat through.

Separate biscuits and arrange over the stew in the skillet if oven-safe, or transfer turkey mixture to a casserole and top with biscuits. Bake at 375°F. until biscuits are golden brown, 25-30 min.

Turkey Pot Pie

1/2 lb. sliced baby portabella mushrooms
1/3 C. chopped onion
2 tsp. olive oil
2 C. cubed peeled butternut squash
1-2 potatoes, peeled & cubed
1 lg. carrot, chopped
2-1/2 C. chicken broth, divided
1/3 C. flour
1/2 C. milk
3-3-1/2 C. cubed, cooked turkey
2 T. sherry or chicken broth
1 tsp. sage
1/4 tsp. poultry seasoning
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
1 frozen 9 inch pie crust

In a large skillet, sauté mushrooms and onion in oil until tender. Add the squash, potatoes and carrot; sauté 5 min. Add 1/2 of the broth. Cover and cook until vegetables are tender, about 15 min.

Sprinkle flour over vegetables; cook and stir for a minute. Gradually add the milk and remaining broth; add the seasonings. Bring to a boil, cook and stir until thickened, 1-2 min. Stir in the turkey.

Transfer to a 2 qt. casserole, coated with cooking spray. Roll out crust in shape of casserole, giving 1 inch extra to go around the top. Brush with mixture of one beaten egg and 1/2 tsp. water. Crimp edges around the top. Cut 8-10 slits in top of crust. Sprinkle with a little sugar or salt. Bake at 425°F. for 20 min.

Silver Bell Cookies

Yield: 4 dozen

1-1/2 C. butter (3 sticks), softened
3 C. sugar
4 lg. eggs
1 tsp. peppermint extract
1 tsp. vanilla extract
2 tsp. baking powder
5 C. flour
1 tsp. salt
1 pkg. (10-12 oz.) white baking chip
1 T. vegetable oil
Green sugar
Silver edible shimmer

Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs and extracts. In another bowl, combine baking powder, flour and salt. Gradually beat into the creamed mixture. Divide dough into four portions. Shape each into a circle. Refrigerate 1 hour (if you chill too long, the dough will be too firm to roll).

Preheat oven to 350°F. On a lightly floured surface, roll each portion to 1/8 inch thickness. Use a floured tree or bell cookie cutter to cut out cookies. Place on greased cookie sheets. Bake for 10-12 min.

Microwave chips with the oil. Takes only 1/2 to 1 min. Tint 2 different colors in 2 tiny bowls, one green, one red for the bells. Spread over the cookies; sprinkle with sugars.

Key Lime Cookies

Yield: 3-4 dozen

1-1/2 C. flour
1/2 C. powdered sugar
1/2 C. cornstarch
1 C. butter, softened
1-1/2 T. lime juice
1 tsp. lime zest
1/2-1 tsp. green food coloring

Glaze:

1-1/4 C. powdered sugar
1 tsp. lime zest
2 T. fresh lime juice

Soften the butter in your bowl, then add the flour, powdered sugar and cornstarch. Stir in lime juice, zest and coloring.

Shape dough into 2 logs. Wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

Preheat oven to 350°F. With a sharp knife, cut into 1/4 inch slices. Place on ungreased cookie sheets. Bake 8-10 min.

Combine powdered sugar with juice and zest. Frost the tops of cookies.

Swedish Shortbread Cookies

Yield: 6 dozen

1 lb. butter (4 sticks) softened
1-1/2 C. sugar
1 tsp. orange extract
1 egg
Zest of 1 orange and 1 lemon
3/4 tsp. salt
5 C. flour
Candied red & green cherries
Finely chopped pecans

Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add extract, egg, zest of orange and lemon, and salt. Gradually add flour; stirring after each addition.

Drop by teaspoonfuls onto greased cookie sheet. Press 1/4 of a cherry into each center. Roll edges in chopped pecans. Bake at 350°F. for 9-10 min.

Dried Cranberry Spice Bars

Yield: 4-5 dozen

1 C. butter, softened
1 C. dark brown sugar
1/2 C. molasses
2 eggs
2 tsp. baking soda
3/4 tsp. salt
1 tsp. vanilla
1 T. cinnamon
1 tsp. cloves
1/2 tsp. ginger
1/2 tsp. nutmeg
1 C. brewed warm coffee
2 to 2-1/2 C. flour
1 C. chopped dried cranberries or raisins

Frosting:

1/2 C. butter, softened
3 oz. cream cheese, softened
2 C. powdered sugar
2 tsp. vanilla

Preheat oven to 350°F. In mixing bowl, cream butter, brown sugar and molasses. Mix in eggs, baking soda, salt, vanilla, cinnamon, cloves, ginger and nutmeg. Add coffee and flour, adding gradually. Stir in chopped dried cranberries. Spread into a greased 10x15 inch pan. Bake for 25 min.

Frosting: Combine ingredients. Frost cooled bars.

12/06/2018

As you're thinking, planning and creating for the special holiday gatherings for your family and friends, I find it's best to make lists. What day you're going to do what, maybe, your least favorite jobs first. First, for me, is writing out my Christmas cards. Once the Christmas cards are all signed, the notes written inside, then the stamps and return addresses stuck on, I'm a happy camper. Decorating the house with Christmas decorations, the baking and meal planning are the most enjoyable for me.

~ Darlene Dixon

Bourbon Glazed Ham

Yield: 16 servings

1 fully cooked, smoked ham (9-10 lbs.)
1 tsp. whole cloves
1/2 to 3/4 C. brown sugar
1 heaping T. dry mustard
1/4 C. bourbon or apple juice

Preheat oven to 325°F. Spray a shallow pan with cooking spray. Place ham, fat side up, in pan. Score ham in diamond pattern; insert cloves into slits.

Bake 1 hr. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, stir together brown sugar and mustard; brush the combination over the ham. Pour the bourbon over the top of the ham. Cover with foil, bake for 2 hrs.

Cheesy Potatoes

Yield: 16

32 oz. pkg. frozen Southern Style diced hash browns, thawed
2 C. shredded sharp cheddar cheese
16 oz. sour cream
10-3/4 oz. can cr. of mushroom soup
1/2 C. diced onion
1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
1/3 C. butter, melted
1 T. fresh chopped parsley or 1 tsp. dried parsley

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a 3 qt. casserole with cooking spray. In a large bowl, combine the hash brown potatoes with cheese, sour cream, soup, onion, salt, pepper, butter and parsley. Cover with foil, bake for 30 min. Uncover, bake for an additional 40 min.

Festive Lasagna

Yield: 12 servings

1/2 of a (1 lb.) box lasagna noodles
2 lbs. bulk Italian sausage, mild or spicy hot
1/2 C. diced onion
2 toes garlic, minced
28 oz. can spaghetti sauce
12 oz. can tomato paste
2 tsp. sugar
2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. basil
1 tsp. oregano
1 tsp. crushed red pepper,
15 oz. ricotta cheese
1 egg
4 C. shredded mozzarella cheese
1 C. grated parmesan cheese

Cook lasagna noodles according to package directions; drain. In Dutch oven, cook the sausage, onion and garlic, until sausage is no longer pink, stirring occasionally; drain. Return sausage mixture back to the cooking pot. Stir in the next seven ingredients.

In a small bowl, blend the ricotta cheese with egg. Spread a thin layer of sausage-sauce mixture on bottom of a greased 9x13 inch pan. Layer one-third of the noodles, sauce, ricotta cheese, mozzarella and Parmesan. Repeat layers. Bake in a 375°F. oven for 1 hour, or until bubbly. Let stand 5 min. before serving.

Slow Cooker Peachy Glazed Sweet Potatoes

Yield: 10-12 servings

2-1/2 lbs. sweet potatoes, peeled
21 oz. can peach pie filling
2 T. butter
2 T. brown sugar

1 tsp. grated ginger root
1/4-1/2 tsp. salt

Topping:

1 T. brown sugar
1 T. butter
1/4 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 C. chopped pecans

Spray 4-6 qt. slow cooker with cooking spray. Cut sweet potatoes lengthwise; then into 1/2-inch slices. Place in slow cooker, add pie filling, 2 T. butter, grated ginger root and salt; mix well to coat sweet potatoes. Cover and cook on high for 3 hrs.

In a small skillet, add brown sugar, butter, cinnamon and pecans. Cook over medium heat until they start to caramelize and are bubbly. Spoon onto buttered foil.

Just before serving, gently stir caramelized pecans into the sweet potatoes.

Cherry Angel Braid

2 (8 oz.) refrigerated crescent dinner rolls
1/2 C. pineapple cream cheese spread (from 8 oz. container), softened
3 T. sugar
1 egg, separated
12 oz. can cherry pie filling
1 T. water
1 tsp. sugar

Glaze:

1/3 C. powdered sugar
1/4 tsp. almond extract
1-2 tsp. milk or water

Preheat oven to 375°F. Spray cookie sheet with cooking spray. Unroll crescent dough onto cookie sheet, forming 7x13 inch rectangle. Firmly press perforations to seal. Roll with rolling pin.

In a bowl, beat cream cheese and the 3 T. sugar with an electric mixer. Beat in egg yolk. Spread thin layer over the dough, then spread a layer of cherry filling on.

Roll out second crescent to measure 7x13 inches. Place on top of filling. Seal edges.

In a tiny bowl, whisk egg white and water together until frothy. Brush over the top; sprinkle sugar on top. Bake about 20-22 min.

Glaze: Mix, drizzle over warm pastry. Great served warm or cold, sliced.

Blueberry Banana French Toast

Yield: 8 servings

1 can refrigerated cinnamon rolls with icing
1-1/2 C. granola crushed
4 eggs
3/4 C. milk
14 oz. can sweetened condensed milk
3 bananas, sliced
10 oz. bag frozen blueberries, thawed
8 oz. tub frozen whipped topping, thawed

Heat oven to 350°F. Spray a 9x13 inch pan with cooking spray.

Separate the 8 rolls, cut each roll into 4; arrange evenly in pan. Sprinkle 3/4 of the granola evenly over dough pieces.

In blender or mixer, mix eggs, milk and sweetened condensed milk. Add bananas, mixing until blended into small chunks. Pour the mixture over the rolls. Sprinkle remaining granola over the top.

Bake 35-45 min. Spread with the icing from the rolls. To serve cut into 8 servings. Top each with 3 T. blueberries and a dollop of whipped topping.

Quiche Cups

Yield: 22 appetizers

1/2 lb. Italian pork sausage
6 eggs
6 T. salsa
1/3 C. shredded cheddar cheese
1/2 C. shredded mozzarella cheese
3/4 tsp. dry mustard
3/4 tsp. dried parsley flakes
15 oz. pie crust, softened

Heat oven to 375 °F. Brown sausage in a skillet. Set aside. In a bowl, beat eggs, add the dry mustard, parsley, salsa and cheeses. Stir in cooled sausage.

Unroll pie crusts. Using a rolling pin, roll each crust into 12-inch round circle. With a 3-1/2 inch round cutter, cut out 22 rounds from crusts.

Fit the rounds of pastry into regular-size muffin cups, pressing to form into the cups.

Spoon 1 heaping tablespoon of the sausage-cheese mixture into each. Bake 14-18 min. Serve hot.

Note: You can make the sausage-cheese filling the day before, refrigerate until ready to prepare. You can add chopped hot peppers to add heat to the quiches.

Holiday Helpful Hints:

- Add a few fresh red cranberries to your guests' ice water. Looks pretty in the glasses.
- When chopping hot chilies, wear plastic kitchen gloves - don't touch your face.
- Keep refrigerated dough in the refrigerator until you're ready to use it.
- A nice holiday platter: thread chunks of vegetables and cheeses onto wooden skewers. A combination of chunks of cheese with fruit is also a nice addition.

Quote of the Week:

"The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our blessings."

~ Eric Hoffer