



# FOOD BITES



**December 2014**

## The Joys of Christmas Food

Buche de Noel or Yule Log...

Of French origin, this is a Christmas cake possibly dating back to the 19th century. At this time rolled sponge cakes filled with jam or cream and covered with butter cream icing began to show up in European cookbooks. They were usually decorated with marzipan or meringue. The rolled shape of the cake was to remind one of a log and was typically covered with chocolate butter cream to look like the bark of a tree. An interesting story behind this Christmas cake is that in Paris, Napoleon I of France issued a proclamation requiring households to keep their chimneys closed during the winter so as not to let the cold air cause medical problems. It prevented Parisians from enjoying their fireplaces especially at Christmas and so a French baker invented this cake to remind everyone of the traditional Yule log. Traditionally a Yule log cake would be served at the midnight feast following Mass on Christmas Eve.

Candy Canes...

According to legend the first candy canes showed up in 1670 when a choirmaster at the Cologne Cathedral in Cologne, Germany handed out sugar sticks shaped like shepherd's crooks (to represent the humble shepherds who were the first to worship the newborn Christ) to young singers to keep them quiet during the long living Creche ceremony. Only at the turn of the century did the candy canes gain their red stripes and peppermint flavor. The body of the cane is white which represents the life that is pure and the red stripes are symbolic of the Lord's sacrifice for man. In the 1920s Bob McCormack started making candy canes for his children, friends and local shopkeepers in Albany, Georgia. This being a long and tedious process it was very small scale. Then in the 1950s Bob's brother-in-law Gregory Keller, a Catholic priest invented a machine to make

the canes. Bob's Candies Inc. became the largest producer of candy canes in the world.

Candy Cane facts:

- ◆ For 200 years it came in only one color - white.
- ◆ December 26 is National Candy Cane Day.
- ◆ World's largest candy cane was created by Paul Ghinelli - 58 ft. 2 1/4 in.
- ◆ Every year 1.76 billion candy canes are made.

The Birds of Christmas...Peacock, Swans, Geese and Turkeys...

Turkeys were introduced to Europe in the 16th century. For years these birds were found only on the tables of the wealthy. In America turkey was the natural choice for a Christmas feast, however through the 17th century historic newspapers revealed that the goose took the main place on the Christmas table. Peacocks and swans were food for the rich.

Fruitcake...

Many people receive gifts of fruitcake through the mail during the holidays. Making cake with dried fruit dates back to the Middle Ages. Fruit cake is a British specialty. Only in the 13th century did dried fruit begin to arrive to Britain from Portugal and the East Mediterranean. Fruit cakes have been used for celebrations as early as the 18th century. One classic phrase on the longevity of this food was coined in 1983 by Russell Baker "Fruitcake is forever." Fruitcakes are a family tradition and recipes are passed from generation to generation. They are baked with love and sent to people as Christmas gifts. The oldest fruitcake company is The Collin Street Bakery, Corsicana, Texas (1896).

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# Mix It Up

to Expand Your Gift-giving Dollar With

## Food Mixes in a Jar

When the holiday season rolls around, many family budgets become strained. With a long list of family and friends, finding enough money to go around may be challenging. To help reduce the stress of your next holiday season, try making gifts instead of purchasing them. Consider these fun and economical gift ideas:

- ✓ Create gift baskets. For the family member who loves movies, make a "night-in" basket. Get a large bowl for popcorn to use as the container. Add packaged popcorn and a coupon for a free movie rental. Gardening, sports or any other themed baskets also work.
- ✓ For parents with young children, provide a homemade coupon good for free baby-sitting. Other ideas include coupons for helping walk the dog, painting or cleaning.
- ✓ Create a recipe booklet with favorite holiday recipes. Copy the recipes onto festive recipe cards, punch a hole in the corner of the

cards and tie them together with a red ribbon. Holiday photo albums also can be used to hold recipes.

- ✓ Fill a holiday mug with packets of flavored tea, hot cocoa or coffee for those who enjoy warm beverages. Or tie a packet of soup mix to a large wooden spoon. Include a bowl and package of biscuit mix for a complete gift.
- ✓ If you are computer savvy, create homemade calendars for family members. These could include highlighted birthday and anniversary dates. Try adding family photos for a personal touch.
- ✓ Repurpose old tins, filling them with cookies, muffins or other holiday goodies. A gift like this will be a delight to anybody who has little time for baking.
- ✓ Make homemade mixes in a jar. Mixes for soups and cookies are popular gift items that are fairly inexpensive to make. The gift recipient will appreciate the attractive and thoughtful gift and also will value the convenience.

### Key to Abbreviations

tsp. = teaspoon	g = grams
Tbsp. = tablespoon	qt. = quart
c. = cup	mg = milligrams
oz. = ounce	lb. = pound

Try any of these four tasty and inexpensive recipes during this holiday season. You can decorate the jar with fabric and a ribbon. Either photocopy and cut out the provided recipes or hand-print each recipe on a card and attach it to the jar.

### Country Chili Mix

1 lb. kidney beans  
3 Tbsp. chili powder  
2 Tbsp. dehydrated onions  
1 Tbsp. garlic salt  
1 tsp. oregano  
¾ tsp. salt  
¼ tsp. cayenne pepper (optional)

\* To reduce sodium, substitute garlic powder for some of the garlic salt.

Pour the kidney beans into a clean quart-sized jar. In a small bowl, mix the remaining ingredients. Pour mixture into a clear sandwich bag and place it on top of the beans. Cover the jar tightly with a lid, decorate and attach a copy of the recipe card.



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This material is funded in part by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more contact your county Social Services office or call 1-800-755-2716.

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## Homemade Cornbread Mix

- 1 c. flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp. salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c. sugar
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$  c. dry milk powder
- 1 c. plus 2 Tbsp. cornmeal

In a large bowl, mix all the ingredients. Place the mixture in a clean quart-sized jar. Cover the jar tightly with a lid, decorate it and attach a copy of the recipe card.

## Cranberry-Oatmeal Cookie Mix

- 1 c. plus 2 Tbsp. flour
- 1 c. rolled oats
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c. brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c. white sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  c. dried cranberries
- $\frac{1}{2}$  c. white chocolate chips

Layer the ingredients in a clean, quart-sized jar. Cover the jar tightly with a lid, decorate it and attach a copy of the recipe card.

## Friendship Soup Mix

- $\frac{1}{2}$  c. dry split peas
- 2 Tbsp. beef bouillon granules
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c. pearl barley
- $\frac{1}{2}$  c. dry lentils
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c. dry, minced onions
- 2 tsp. Italian seasoning
- $\frac{1}{2}$  c. long-grain white rice
- $\frac{1}{2}$  c. macaroni noodles

In a clean, quart-sized jar, layer all the ingredients except the macaroni. Place the macaroni in a sandwich bag and place it on top of the other ingredients. Cover the jar tightly with a lid, decorate it and attach a copy of the recipe card.

▼ Recipe Cards – you may photocopy the recipes and cut them apart. To attach a card, punch a hole in the flower in the upper right.

### Country Chili

- 1 container Country Chili Mix
- Additional ingredients: 10 c. water (for soaking beans)  
1 (8-oz.) can reduced-sodium tomato sauce  
1 (24-oz.) can diced tomatoes  
1 lb. ground beef or turkey  
6 c. water (for cooking beans)

Remove bag of seasoning from jar and rinse beans. In a stockpot, bring 10 cups of water to a boil. Add beans and return to a boil; let boil two to three minutes. Cover and set aside at room temperature for one hour. Drain and rinse the beans.

Fill a pot with 6 cups of water and add the beans. Cook beans until soft, about one hour; simmer gently with lid tilted. Brown meat; drain and add to the beans with tomatoes and sauce. Add in seasonings, stir and simmer, covered, for one hour. Add a little more water if needed to thin the broth. For best flavor, use mix within one year.

*Makes eight servings. Each serving has 240 calories, 6 g fat, 21 g carbohydrate and 290 mg sodium.*

### Homemade Cornbread

- 1 container Homemade Cornbread Mix
- Additional ingredients: 1 egg  
1 c. water  
2 Tbsp. oil

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Pour dry mix into a large bowl. In a second bowl, combine egg, water and oil. Add liquid ingredients to dry ingredients. Stir well. Pour into an 8- by 8-inch greased baking pan and bake for 20 to 25 minutes until the top is golden brown. For best flavor, use this mix within nine months.

*Makes 10 servings. Each serving has 150 calories, 4 g fat, 25 g carbohydrate and 330 mg sodium.*

### Cranberry Oatmeal Cookies

- 1 container Cranberry Oatmeal Cookie Mix
- Additional ingredients:  $\frac{1}{2}$  c. butter  
1 tsp. vanilla  
1 egg

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, mix butter, vanilla and egg together until smooth. Add cookie mix and mix well. Place by spoonfuls onto a greased cookie sheet and bake for eight to 10 minutes until golden brown. For best flavor, use this mix within nine months.

*Makes 28 cookies. Each serving has 100 calories, 4.5 g fat, 13 g carbohydrate and 70 mg sodium.*

### Friendship Soup

- 1 container Friendship Soup Mix
- Additional ingredients: 1 lb. lean ground beef or turkey  
3 qt. water  
1 (28-oz.) can diced tomatoes

Brown meat and drain. Place in a large pot and add the water and tomatoes. Add soup mix except macaroni. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for one hour. Add macaroni and continue cooking for another 10 to 15 minutes (until macaroni is done). For best flavor, use this mix within one year.

**Note:** To avoid overcooked pasta in leftovers, add the appropriate amount of macaroni to the portion being served.

*Makes 12 servings. Each serving has 150 calories, 4 g fat, 12 g carbohydrate and 390 mg sodium.*

# Let Better Living for Texans Help You with Your Holiday Plans...



## Morning Muffins

1/4 cup butter, softened  
1/2 cup packed brown sugar  
2 eggs  
1 cup sour cream  
1 cup shredded carrots  
1/2 cup flaked coconut  
1/2 cup raisins  
1 1/2 cup all purpose flour  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1/2 cup chopped nuts

### Directions:

In a small mixing bowl, cream the butter and brown sugar. Add eggs and sour cream; beat well. Stir in the carrots, coconut and raisins. Combine the flour, baking soda and cinnamon; stir into creamed mixture just until moistened. Fold in nuts. Fill greased or paper-lined muffin cups 3/4 full. Bake at 375 degrees for 20-25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool for 5 minutes before removing from pan to a wire rack. Serve warm.



## Corn Potato Pancakes

1 cup mashed potatoes, prepared with milk and butter  
1/4 cup all-purpose flour  
1/4 cup cream-style corn  
1 egg, beaten  
1 Tablespoon finely chopped onion  
1 teaspoon minced fresh parsley  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon minced garlic

### Directions:

In a large bowl, combine the first 9 ingredients. In a large skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of oil; drop four 1/4 cupfuls of batter into the skillet. Cook for 1 - 2 minutes on each side or until golden brown. Repeat with remaining batter and oil.

Yield: 12 servings



## Carrot Cakes

3/4 cup sugar  
3/4 cup shortening  
1 egg  
1 1/4 cup grated raw carrots  
2 cup sifted flour  
2 teaspoon baking soda  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon vanilla

### Directions:

Cream together sugar and shortening until light and fluffy; add egg and beat well. Stir in carrots, sift together dry ingredients. Combine with cream mixture, add vanilla and lemon extract. Drop by teaspoonful on greased cookie sheet. Bake in moderate oven at 375 degrees for 15



# More Recipes for Your Holiday Events...



## Italian Brochette

8 roma tomatoes, chopped into cubes  
1/3 cup red onions, chopped  
1 package fresh basil  
3 cloves garlic, chopped  
1/2 cup red wine vinegar  
1/2 cup olive oil  
1 dash salt and pepper  
1 loaf of long French bread, sliced

### Directions:

Chop roma tomatoes, red onion, and garlic and put them into a medium sized bowl; set aside. Chop basil very fine in food processor. Add to tomato mixture. Add red wine vinegar and oil and salt and pepper; mix well. Let sit. Grill or broil bread until just toasted. Spread mixture over bread; slice and serve.



## Cranberry Pot Roast

2 pounds chuck or arm roast  
1 can (16 oz) whole cranberry sauce  
1/2 cup chopped onion  
1 teaspoon grated orange peel  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

### Directions:

Cut off fat from meat. Place in baking dish. Stir together the remaining ingredients and spoon over the roast. Cover with foil. Bake in a slow oven 350 degree about 3 hours or until tender.



## Cornbread Dressing Cakes

2 packages cornbread mix  
1 cup soft, fresh bread crumbs  
1 1/2 cup frozen corn, thawed  
2 tablespoons butter  
1 large sweet onion, diced  
1 cup celery ribs  
3 large eggs, lightly beaten  
1 cup mayonnaise  
1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley  
1/4 cup chopped fresh sage  
2 teaspoons seasoned pepper  
1 teaspoon garlic salt  
4 1/2 tablespoon vegetable oil

### Directions:

Cook cornbread according to package directions. Cool completely. Combine crumbled cornbread and bread crumbs in a large bowl. Melt butter in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat; add onions and celery and sauté 5 minutes or until tender. Add corn and sauté 1 minute. Stir together onion mixture, cornbread mixture, eggs and next 5 ingredients into a large bowl. Shape mixture into 24 3-inch patties. Cook 8 patties in 1 1/2 tablespoon of hot oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat 2 to 3 minutes on each side or until golden brown. Repeat procedure with remaining patties and oil. Serve immediately, or remove to a wire rack to cool. Garnish if desired.



# More Recipes for Your Holiday Events...



## Crockpot Dressing

1/2 cup margarine  
1 1/2 cups chopped celery  
1 cup chopped onion  
2 teaspoons sage  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon pepper  
1 quart turkey or chicken broth  
2 packages cornbread mix, prepared and broken in pieces  
1/2 loaf of white bread, broken into small pieces

### Directions:

Simmer the mixture in a saucepan 15 minutes. Place white bread and corn bread, broken into small pieces, in a large mixing bowl. Pour hot mixture over top and mix well. Add 3 eggs, mix again. If more liquid is needed add hot water. Place in crock pot, cook on high for 1 hour, then on low for 4 hours. The length of time depends on the size and type of Crockpot.



## Apple Sausage Balls

1 package pork sausage  
1 1/2 cup all-purpose baking mix  
16 ounces (4 cups) shredded Cheddar cheese  
2 tart baking apples, cored, peeled and coarsely grate  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/2 cup toasted chopped pecans or walnuts, optional

### Directions:

Let cheese and sausage come to room temperature. Mix all ingredients together - hands are easiest. Form into 1 inch balls. Bake on rimmed



## Chicken Tortilla Soup

4 corn tortillas, halved then cut crosswise in narrow strips  
2 cans ( 14.5 ounces) reduced sodium chicken broth  
1 medium zucchini cut in 3/4 inch thick half rounds  
1/2 teaspoons each minced garlic and ground cumin  
1 cup corn  
1 can (16 ounces) red kidney beans, rinsed  
1 1/2 cups large shredded cooked chicken  
1 large ripe tomato cut in 1-inch chunks  
1/2 cup chopped cilantro

### Directions:

Coat a 5 to 6 quart pot or Dutch oven with non-stick spray; heat over medium heat. Add tortilla strips and cook 5 minutes; turning occasionally until lightly toasted. Remove to a paper towel or plate. Add broth, zucchini, garlic and cumin to pot; bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer 3 minutes, or until zucchini is crisp-tender. Stir in tortilla strips, corn and beans; continue to simmer 2 minutes until tortillas soften. Stir in remain-

