

I thought some of you might like to include your garden friends in your holiday treat making. There are a lot of recipes out there for bird seed and pinecone ornaments that use peanut butter as a binding agent. Peanut butter is okay for most birds, but very sticky and can be hard to eat. It is best mixed with something to make it a bit more slippery. Suet, oil and cornmeal are good, less-super-sticky alternatives. You can add peanut butter, but don't overdo it. Other good add-ins are a bit of sand and crushed eggshells, to help aid digestion and add calcium.

Bird Seed Ornaments -team amaroo

Mix the following ingredients in a bowl:

3/4 cup flour

1/2 cup water

4-5 tablespoons corn syrup

4 cups bird seed mix

Roll the mixture flat on waxed paper. Use cookie cutters to cut out holiday shapes like bells and stars, etc. Use a straw to make a small hole near the top of the shape (used for attaching string to hang on trees).

I recommend leaving to dry for 12 hours per side, because if you move them at all before they are dry, they will break. It is best to make them about 1/2 inch thick and to make the string holes BEFORE you remove the mold. If the ornaments do not release neatly from the molds, you may need to rinse them every now and again in warm water.

For garland, you can string unroasted peanuts in their shells along with bits of fruit and cereal about the tree. Do not use long strands around the tree (like stringing Christmas lights). Keep the length to 3 inches and hang a bunch all over.

Using string can be dangerous, so be careful. If you use regular string, keep the length short to prevent entanglement, choking, etc. Florist wire is an alternative that you can wrap tightly around branches. This keeps your ornaments attached to your trees and makes it easier for animals to get treats off of the garland.

Holiday Punch - 57Chevy

INGREDIENTS

4 cups cranberry juice cocktail (Oceanspray)
8 cups prepared lemonade
2 cups orange juice
1 (4 ounce) jar maraschino cherries
1 (2 liter) bottle ginger ale
1 orange, sliced in rounds

DIRECTIONS

In a large punch bowl, combine cranberry juice cocktail, lemonade, and orange juice. Stir in the maraschino cherries. Refrigerate for 2 hours or more.

When ready to serve, pour in the ginger ale. Garnish each glass with an orange slice.

[note: Cranberry Juice Cocktail recipe from Oceanspray website](#)

Ingredients:

3.7 % Ocean Spray® Cranberry Concentrate
16.69 % High fructose corn syrup, 42% fructose, 71 Brix*
79.57 % Water
0.04 % Ascorbic Acid

* Staley Isosweet 100

Instant Russian Tea

(For those times when you only need a single serving)

Not as good as above but still taste good

3 cups Tang Breakfast Drink Mix
1/2 cup lemon flavored instant tea
1.5 cups sugar
1/2 tsp ground cloves
1 tsp, ground cinnamon

Mix well all ingredients & store in plastic container or jar.

To serve: Mix 3 teaspoons of mix with one cup of boiling water.

SPICED TEA - opalsns

Add water to your coffee maker and put 4 tea bags in the pot. When finished , add 1/4 cup sugar or sugar substitute, 2 cinnamon sticks and a shot of Captain Morgan Rum. Simmer for 10 minutes, Enjoy !!!

Two-minute (microwave) Hot Chocolate - jackalgirl

1 tsp sugar*
1 tsp cocoa powder
dash of cinnamon (to taste)
1/4 tsp. vanilla
1 mug (cup) milk

*I prefer dark chocolate, so I put in less sugar, and it makes the drink almost savory (it's *wonderful*). If you prefer sweeter chocolate, add another tablespoon of sugar.

Mix the sugar, cinnamon, and cocoa powder thoroughly in the bottom of the mug. Add a little milk and mix it all up until you have a slush or slurry of chocolate, then add the rest of the milk and mix well.

Microwave for one minute. Stir thoroughly, then microwave until hot (at least another minute in my microwave, though your mileage may vary). Stir in the vanilla after.

For an extra special treat, top with whipped cream & nutmeg. The cocoa will want to settle to the bottom of the mug, so swirl it around from time to time to keep it mixed.

Vodka Watermelon team cedo

When you host a party, there are several things you need to have to ensure that your guests have a great time. Even if you don't want to go overboard on all the little details, it is still important to remember that the key ingredients that make any adult party a blast are food and alcohol.

If you plan on having a lot of guests at your party, buying food and alcohol to accommodate everyone can be a bit pricey. Do you really want to impress the crowd and save a little green in the process? Then, why not combine the two and make a Vodka Watermelon?!

A Vodka Watermelon is quite possibly one of the best party accoutrements ever created, especially when it's being served on a hot

summer day. Guests can partake in a slice, satiate their hunger, and also start working on a tasty buzz.

Ingredients

1 bottle(s) [Vodka](#) (One 1.14 litre bottle)

1 [Watermelon](#) (Large)

Creating a Vodka Watermelon is simple. All you need is a few items, and you'll be ready to go in no time.

The four items needed to create a Vodka Watermelon are a watermelon, vodka, a knife, and a funnel. A mini watermelon works well with a 375 ml vodka bottle. However, if you buy a large watermelon, you will need a larger bottle, or even an additional bottle.

Instructions

Cut a hole into the top of the watermelon. Put the vodka into the hole and let it soak in the watermelon. Cut the top off the watermelon and get ready to be hammered.

To begin, puncture the watermelon with the knife and create a hole on the top that is deep enough so that you can see the pink fruit, and is big enough to hold a funnel.

Next, insert the funnel and begin pouring in the vodka. Make sure to pour slowly, because the vodka needs time to absorb. You may have to start and stop several times until the vodka will no longer absorb into the fruit.

Once you're done, the watermelon is ready to be served. Simply slice and let your guests have at it. While it really doesn't get much easier than that, there are some additional tips that you may find helpful when creating a Vodka Watermelon:

- Some people feel that a Vodka Watermelon tastes best after it has had a chance to rest for a day or two in a refrigerator. Others think that placing the watermelon in the freezer for a short amount of time before serving it gives it a colder, more refreshing flavor.
- Slicing it isn't the only way to serve it. If you really want to get fancy, halve the melon and use a melon baller to scoop out the fruit. Serve the scoops in the empty rind for a more impressive presentation.
- Another way is to try the previous technique, but take the scooped out fruit and serve it in glasses or bowls, while using the

watermelon shell as a decorative punchbowl. You can also use the scoops to create frozen blender drinks.

- If you really want to get fancy with the watermelon, try adding different alcohols to create fun flavor options. Rum, tequila, and champagne work well, as do many other liquors. To really make a good impression on your guests, create several watermelons, each containing a different alcoholic beverage.

Appetizer Cups - ATMoose

INGREDIENTS

- 8 slices bacon (I used a bag of real bacon for salads and so didn't even have to cook it or chop it)
- 1 tomato, chopped and seeded (I used about 2 pints of grape tomatoes, seeded and chopped – I also added a ½ teaspoon of sugar to them after I chopped them and let them sit for a bit.)
- 1/2 onion, chopped and sautéed (or see salad dressing requirement below)
- 3 ounces finely shredded Swiss cheese, or cheese of choice – I used aged provolone and some finely shredded mixed pizza cheese)
- salad dressing of choice – I used an onion-bacon one and omitted the sautéed onion; you can use ranch or even mayo. Use just enough to moisten. I used about a tablespoon or less for my 48 cups.
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 (16 ounce) can refrigerated buttermilk biscuit dough (I used about 2 tubes of the Grands layered biscuits for 48)
- I purchased foil mini cups because I didn't have a mini muffin pan and used cooking oil spray on them. They worked great.

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C). Lightly grease a mini muffin pan.
2. In a skillet over medium heat, cook bacon until evenly brown. Drain on paper towels. Crumble bacon into a medium mixing bowl, and mix with tomato, onion, cheese, salad dressing and basil.
3. Separate biscuits into 3 – 4 pieces horizontally. You are aiming for at least 3 pieces. If you can get 4 without it being paper thin, great. Place each round into cups of the prepared mini muffin pan. Fill each cup with the bacon mixture.
4. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes in the preheated oven, or until golden brown. And I really watched them towards the end.

Notes: Stupid easy and it looks WOW! The hardest part is seeding the tomato (and you really ought to, they are bitter.) I imagine you could use a jar of bruschetta and omit some seasoning, or roasted red peppers chopped fine or use feta cheese and chopped fresh spinach,

or chopped pepperoni or ...or...the possibilities are endless – you just want to make sure you give it a good solid seasoning (don't go overboard, either!) or these would be a mouthful of "oh it's okay" rather than a "wow". I also pretty much judged by eye the cheese – I wanted a good amount in each spoonful I put in the cups. I added no salt – the cheese had enough in it. And if you wanted to use 1/2 a biscuit and a regular muffin pan...I'll bet a couple of these bad boys would make a meal. Even Toolman, my "meat and potatoes" husband ate these.

Brown Bread for Dummies - erica-opoly (ie. Me...if i can make this, anyone can)

Wet Mixture: Mix the following together and let cool:

2 1/2 cups Boiling water
1 cup of rolled oats
1tsp salt
1/2 cup of Molasses
2 tbs Lard (ie. Crisco shortening)

Dry Mixture:

1 pkg Instant Yeast
5 cups flour (NOTE: if you use whole wheat flour, be sure to add an extra 1/4 cup of water to the wet mixture)

After the wet mixture has cooled COMPLETELY add the flour mixture, stir and knead well (2-3 minutes)

Let rise 1 1/2 to two hours

Punch down and form into two round balls, place in two round 9inch cake pans and let rise 1 to 1 1/2 hours

Bake at 350F/180C for 30-40 minutes (depending on your oven) the top will be nicely browned when finished.

The nice thing about this recipe is that it only make two loaves, so no massive amount of ingredients or 10 loaves to bake and then try to figure out where to put them all although if there were more than two of us we probably wouldn't have a problem with that! The round loaves work well because they look nice cut up with butter or preserves for company, but they can also be baked as two small loaves or one regular, they will just need a few more minutes in the oven.

Cheese Spread - Hollora

This recipe was from a local restaurant and held as a deep secret. They made this and served it on every table before your meal with crackers and a dish of cottage cheese and one of marinated red beans with onions/oil and garlic ~ sort of complimentary hors d'oeuvres. In high school, I was fortunate enough to procure the recipe.

This makes a bunch but it freezes well and you can always use it for gifts. The restaurant went out of business when the owners retired, but, guess what they are making, marketing and selling through local supermarkets - this spread. A lot less expensive to make your own.

Merry Christmas - Enjoy!

2 - 8 oz. cold pak cheddar cheese (these are like the little juice size jars of packed cheese - I can no longer find them in the 8 oz any more but I buy enough to either equal 16 oz or just shy thereof); 1 - 8 oz. container small curd cottage cheese; 2 - 8 oz packages of cream cheese; 1 - 4 oz package of blue cheese; 1/2 small onion chopped VERY fine; 1/4 green pepper chopped VERY fine; 1/4 tsp garlic salt (and if you don't want the salt just add a few shakes of garlic powder); 1 oz. pimento; dash of worchestershire sauce.

Put all ingredients out to reach room temperature. Mix ingredients together with electric mixer until smooth. (WARNING - this will be very thick so you need a good mixer - I have burned out a cheap one trying to make this.). Once well mixed and smooth, place in containers for storage or presentation. Chill and Eat!

I usually put some in cute little dishes for serving and freeze a few containers of this for use later in the season. You can make the dishes of cheese pretty for presentation by adding some garnish.

7 Layer Salad - gridlox

Looks really nice when prepared in large clear glass bowl with straight sides (Trifle Dish)

-Layer 1-

1 head of iceberg lettuce

(sliced thin as you would for a tossed salad)

-Layer 2-

Diced Celery & Chives

Dice 1-3 stalks of celery (depending on your taste for celery - I personally hate celery, so I don't use any)

Chop "green part only" of 2-3 large green onions

-Layer 3-

1 small bag of FROZEN green peas

(they will thaw before you eat the salad - also be sure to mash bag to separate peas well before opening bag)

-Layer 4-

4 Large Eggs

Hard Boiled & thinly sliced layer over entire salad

(Reserve 6 Slice from center of eggs for garnish to top of finished salad)

-Layer 5-

Dressing

Combine in medium sized mixing bowl 1 pint of Mayonaise, 2 Tbsp of sugar, & 1 Tbsp of White Vinegar

-Layer 6-

Shredded Sharp Cheddar Cheese

Use just enough to cover the dressing completely

-Layer 7-

Bacon Bits

Place solid ring around outside edge of top of salad then sprinkle sparingly across the middle.

Finish off by placing the reserved 6 egg slices evenly on top for a pretty presentation.

Baked Potato Soup

(*A chef Gridlox original*)

Just the ticket to warm the bones after a long cold day of caching!!

Refridgerates & Reheats really well!!

4-5 large BAKED potatoes

6 strips of bacon (fried till crisp)

1 can of cream of chicken soup

1 can of cream of celery soup

2 cups of water

1 Package of White Creme Gravy Mix (or Peppered Gravy Mix)
Salt & Pepper (to taste)
Shredded Sharp Cheddar Cheese

Bake Potatoes till done & let cool (at least till you can handle them without getting burned)

Scrape skins from potatoes then crumble potatoes into soup pot

Crumble in Bacon

Add both cans of soup (undiluted)

Prepare White Gravy per package instructions, but "DO NOT" cook until thick!!

Add gravy to soup pot

Add 2 cups of water (Add more if you like a thinner broth)

Stir well & bring to simmer

Reduce heat to low (to keep warm until you come back for the second bowl!!) and serve in bowls with Sharp Cheddar Cheese sprinkled across top

Russian Tea

(A Favorite at Chef Gridlox Christmas Family Gatherings)

2 cups sugar
2 cups water
1 small jar of cloves
1 small jar of stick cinnamon

Combine all of above in cooking pot and bring to a boil
Reduce to simmer for 15 minutes.
Pour through strainer into separate large pot
Add 1 more cup of water to cloves & cinnamon and bring to boil once more.
Strain into the 2nd pot.

Throw out cloves and cinnamon sticks.

Combine in cooking pot:
8 large glasses of weak tea

1 large frozen orange juice concentrate
1 large unsweetened pineapple juice
Juice from 3 to 4 fresh squeezed lemons

Heat until hot. Do NOT boil!!

Mix into 2nd pot with clove & cinnamon boil.

Leave pot on stove on low heat & serve "Hot"

Creme Brulee French Toast - luckycharm

1 stick butter
1 cup brown sugar
2 Tbl corn syrup
1-10 inch round country loaf or 1 Lb French bread or 1 Challah
5 eggs
1 1/2 cup half and half *
1 tsp vanilla
1 tsp Grand Marnier (optional...NOT!)
1/4 tsp salt
1. Melt butter, sugar and corn syrup in saucepan over moderate heat. Pour into 9 X 13 pan.
2. Slice bread into 6 slices and place on top of the sauce in the 9 X 13 pan, press together to fit.
3. Whisk together eggs, half and half, vanilla, Grand Marnier and salt. Pour over bread.
4. Cover and chill 8 to 24 hours.
5. Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 40 minutes, until puffy and brown.

*half-and-half

Substitutions: Equal parts milk and cream

1 cup half and half = 1 cup less 2 tablespoons milk plus 1 1/2 tablespoons melted butter

Peach French Toast - luckycharm

1 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup margarine
2 Tbsp water
1 can (29 oz) sliced peaches drained, reserving syrup

8 eggs
2 cups skim milk
1 Tbsp vanilla
1 loaf French bread, cut into cubes

Heat brown sugar & margarine on medium-low heat until melted. Add water.

Continue cooking until sauce becomes thick and foamy. Pour into 9x13 baking dish. Cool 10 minutes.

Place peaches on cooled caramel sauce. Cover with bread cubes close together.

Mix together eggs, milk and vanilla in separate bowl. Pour over bread. Refrigerate, covered, overnight.

Preheat oven to 350 F degrees. Bake prepared casserole in oven 40-45 minutes, covering loosely with foil the last 10 to 15 minutes if browning too fast.

Add 2 tsp of cornstarch to reserved peach syrup; heat until thickened and serve with French toast.

Serves 8.

Wrapped Dates - usyoopers

Pitted Dates (whole)
Bacon
toothpicks

Heat over to 375 F degrees. Cut your bacon slices in half. Wrap a half of a slice of bacon around a date, secure with a toothpick.

Put them on a foil lined baking sheet and pop into that heated oven. Bake for 15-20 minutes, until bacon starts getting crispy

SPICEY CRANBERRIES - opalsns

1 cup Sugar
2 Cinnamon Sticks
2 cups Fresh Cranberries

Mix Sugar and 1/2 cup of water in a pan.

Add Cinnamon Stick and bring to a boil while stirring.

Add Cranberries and heat to reboil and cook until all the Cranberries

have popped.

Around 3 to 5 minutes.

Remove from heat.

Let Cranberries cool, Remove Cinnamon Sticks and Chill.

Popcorn Chicken Parmesan - gridlox

- Cook frozen popcorn chicken bites in oven per package instructions.
- Warm canned tomato sauce in pot.
- Drop cooked popcorn chicken bites into tomato sauce, coat well, remove and place on serving plate.
- Sprinkle finely grated parmesan cheese over bites and serve!!

Jalapeño Cheese Dip -team cedo

- 1 medium onion
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 4 jalapeño peppers
- 1 large 14-oz can of diced tomatoes
- 1 large 2-lb block of Velveeta cheese

Seed and chop the peppers. Chop up onion and saute with peppers in a frying pan with butter over medium heat until onion is soft. Drain tomatoes and add them to the onions and peppers until heated throughout. Cut Velveeta cheese into chunks. Reduce heat to low, add cheese, and stir until melted. Serve with Fritos.

NOTES: The dip can be made ahead of time, and microwaved later to serve. Easy and yummy. If you like things hot, just add more peppers!

Velveeta made by Kraft is a blend of colby and cheddar cheeses with emulsifiers and salt.

"Velveeta" Cheese Substitute

Source: www.recipezaar.com

Yield: Approximately 2 pounds

- 1-1/2 cups very hot water
 - 1/2 cup instant milk, plus
 - 1 tablespoon instant milk
 - 1/2 envelope unflavored gelatin (1-1/2 teaspoons)
 - 1-1/2 pound cheddar cheese, grated
- I melt all of this together over low heat, taking care not to scald the milk.

----- Starters with NUTS -----

heathers nutty nibbles - paganfrog

one cup of sugar - white or brown, but brown is best
2 cups of shelled pistachio nuts
one tablespoon of cinnamon

heat up a shallow frying pan or a wok, throw in the nuts and dry cook them until they are lightly toasted and remove them from the pan. throw in the sugar and the cinnamon and carefully heat up until it turns to syrup, allow to heat until it turns to a glue like consistency and then mix in the nuts.

remove the mixture from the pan and tip onto a metal sheet or a plate with foil on. spread the nut mixture so it can solidify in separate pieces. allow to cool down and set.

tip into a dish and they are ready to eat.

alternative flavours to cinnamon can be suited to individual choice, per batch.

flavours i have tried and enjoyed are

cinnamon

paprika powder

curry powder

ground black pepper

freshly squeezed orange or lemon juice

the best thing about this is, although you think sweet with pepper or paprika is yuck its really nice.

Black Pepper Almonds - usyoopers

1 tablespoon ground black pepper
2 teaspoons salt
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter
3/4 cup packed golden brown sugar
4 teaspoons water
2 2/3 cups whole almonds

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a large baking sheet with foil, lightly butter the foil. Mix pepper and salt in a small bowl. Melt butter in a large nonstick skillet over medium-low heat. Add sugar and 4 teaspoons water; stir until sugar dissolves. Add almonds; toss to coat.

Cook over medium heat until syrup thickens and almonds are well coated, stirring occasionally, about 5 minutes. Sprinkle half of pepper mixture over.

Transfer almonds to baking sheet. Using a spatula and working quickly, separate almonds. Sprinkle remaining pepper mixture over. Bake until deep golden brown, about 10 minutes. Transfer sheet to rack, cool. (can be made 4 days ahead. Store airtight at room temperature.)

NOTE from HarmFamily

I used raw almonds, no skins, which I purchased in bulk at my local grocery store and they were delicious.

HOWEVER, I just tried this same recipe but used RAW PECANS instead!!

GOOD LORD HOLD ME BACK!!

They are so addictive and good! They hold the glaze much better than the almonds did (maybe skins vs. no skins had something to do with that?).

Trust me, try it with the pecans, stand back, be amazed, then try to NOT eat them all at once!

Cinnamon Roasted Almonds - usyoopers

1 egg white
1 teaspoon cold water
4 cups whole almonds
1/2 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Preheat oven to 250 degrees. Lightly butter a large cookie sheet.

Lightly beat the egg white; add water and beat until frothy but not stiff.

Add nuts, stir until well coated. Mix the sugar, salt and cinnamon and sprinkle over the nuts. Toss to coat, spread evenly on the prepared pan.

Bake for up to 1 hour in preheated oven, stirring occasionally, until golden. Allow to cool, then store nuts in airtight containers...Enjoy!