

Boozy, Malty, Creamy Hot Chocolate

This recipe, from *How to Hygge* by Signe Johansen, is a great way to warm up after coming in from the cold.— *Jen*

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp Ovaltine

1 shot Knob Creek bourbon

2/3 cup whole milk

1 oz dark chocolate

1 tbsp cocoa powder plus extra for dusting

Pinch of vanilla sea salt

Dollop of whipped heavy cream

Ground cinnamon for dusting

DIRECTIONS

Place the Ovaltine and bourbon in a heatproof cup and stir slightly so you have a paste. Warm the milk with the dark chocolate, cocoa powder and vanilla sea salt in a small saucepan over medium heat. Using a small whisk, stir until the chocolate is melted and the mixture looks even and starts to steam. Once it looks molten, pour a little into the glass with the Ovaltine and bourbon, stir and then pour in the remainder of the hot chocolate mixture. Scoop a dollop of whipped cream on top and dust with cocoa powder and some cinnamon. Drink up!!



Hot Chili Chocolate

(Based on a recipe from Fifteen Spatulas)

I was this many days old when I found out that hot cocoa is made from cocoa powder, whereas hot chocolate is made from chopped chocolate. I have a skating pond at my house along with acres of trails for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. There's nothing more comforting than a hot cup of chocolate after winter activities. I love the richness and sophistication of this sweet and spicy dark-chocolate drink. — Juli

INGREDIENTS

2 cups whole milk

2 tbsp sugar (to taste)

4 oz high-quality, bittersweet chocolate chopped
(just under 1 cup measured)

1 tsp vanilla extract

1 tsp chili powder (or to taste)

1 tsp cinnamon

Whipped cream & marshmallows
optional

DIRECTIONS

Heat chopped bittersweet chocolate in 30-second intervals in microwave until melted. Stir in chili powder. Combine milk and sugar in a small saucepan and place on the stovetop over medium heat. Heat milk to 180 degrees F, (you'll see bubbles on the edge of the pan – do not boil), turn off the heat and add the melted chili chocolate, cinnamon and vanilla, whisking to combine. Pour into warmed mugs and top with whipped cream, shaved chocolate or marshmallows and enjoy!



Cheesy Pull-Apart Christmas Tree

I've made this recipe at least six times during the Christmas season the last two years for every holiday party my husband and I attend. Huge crowd pleaser and looks so festive! Also, incredibly easy which doesn't hurt, either! Family and friends have started requesting it. — Whitney (Adapted from a delish.com recipe)

INGREDIENTS

2 cans pizza dough
(I use Pillsbury Thin Crust)
8 mozzarella string cheese sticks

1 egg
1 small container of pesto
1 jar marinara

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 450°. Grease big cookie sheet (I use plenty of Pam).

Cut cheese sticks into about 1-inch pieces (into thirds or fourths depending on how big you want your bites!)

Pull off small pieces of pizza dough—just enough to comfortably wrap around each piece of string cheese so it's no longer visible, forming a tightly sealed ball. Repeat until all cheese pieces are gone and arrange balls on the greased cookie sheet in the shape of a Christmas



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Cheesy Pull-Apart Christmas Tree, continued



tree (they should be touching with seams down). There should be anywhere between 24 and 32 balls depending on how you've cut your cheese sticks.

Whisk together 1 egg and a tablespoon of water to create egg wash. Brush the top of the tree before it goes in the oven for 15-20 minutes, or until golden brown.

Once out of the oven, brush the top of the tree with pesto. Serve with warm marinara for dipping. Enjoy!

Maple Mashed Sweet Potatoes

When prepping and serving a holiday meal, I like to do as much as possible in advance to have more time to enjoy my family. I've taken this Martha Stewart recipe and made it my own. It's an easy and delicious side dish and gives me an opportunity to use one of my favorite Maine-made ingredients.

— Charlene

INGREDIENTS

7 - 8 medium sized sweet potatoes

4 tbsp melted butter

1/4 cup Maine maple syrup

Salt and pepper

Fresh grated nutmeg

DIRECTIONS

Prick potatoes in several places with a fork. Bake at 400° for about an hour, or until potatoes are tender pierced with a fork.

Once cool enough to handle, halve and scoop out potatoes and discard skins.

Add melted butter and maple syrup and mash or whip with mixer. Add salt and pepper to taste. Add about 1/4 to 1/2 tsp. of fresh grated nutmeg. Mix together and put in a lightly greased serving dish. Reheat before serving.



Oma's Cranberry Sweet Potato Bake

My mother hasn't been well lately, so I have been spending a lot of time reminiscing about her wonderful life of cooking and entertaining. I have several of her recipe boxes with recipes written in her own handwriting which I will cherish forever. I don't think I realized or appreciated what a great cook she was when I was growing up, but now that I reflect back, I realize she was a phenomenal cook and hostess. I so appreciate all she did for our family and friends. She considered color, taste, and combinations of foods when she planned a meal, especially when she was entertaining. The scents and sights were always amazing in Oma's kitchen. — *Nancy*

INGREDIENTS

6 roasted sweet potatoes, cut in chunks

1 can whole cranberries

1 large apple, cubed

¼ cup melted butter

1/3 cup chopped pecans

DIRECTIONS

Put first five ingredients in baking dish sprayed with Pam and pour cranberry juice over the top. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes and serve.



Tater Tot Casserole

This tater tot casserole is easy and delicious. This will forever be one of my favorite dishes to prepare for the holidays. My family would have this every Christmas morning after opening our gifts. I top mine with fresh salsa! Enjoy and happy holidays. — Megan (from tasteofhome.com)

INGREDIENTS

3/4 to 1 lb. ground beef or turkey

1 small onion, chopped

Salt and pepper to taste

1 package (16 oz) frozen Tater Tot potatoes

1 can (10-3/4 oz) condensed cream of mushroom soup, undiluted

2/3 cup 2% milk or water

1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°. In a large skillet, cook beef and onion over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Season with salt and pepper.

Transfer to a greased 2-quart. baking dish. Top with potatoes. Combine soup and milk; pour over potatoes. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake, uncovered, 30-40 minutes or until heated through.



Santa Hat Peanut Butter Cookies

If you're looking to get in the holiday spirit, these Santa hat cookies are the perfect place to start.

We have made these treats part of our family holiday tradition and I like them because they don't have too much chocolate and the peanut butter and protein will fill you up (especially if you eat a lot of them). The protein will also give you energy for a workout or to clean up after your guests or do a little late-night wrapping. — *Greg*

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup butter

1 cup brown sugar

1/2 cup creamy Hannaford peanut butter

1 egg

1 tsp vanilla

1 3/4 cup flour

1/2 tsp salt

1 tsp baking soda

1 tbsp of protein powder

32 milk chocolate kisses



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Santa Hat Peanut Butter Cookies, continued



DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375°. In a large bowl, cream together the butter and brown sugar. Beat in the peanut butter, egg and vanilla. Stir in the flour, salt and baking soda. Roll into 36, approximately 1-inch, balls. Roll each ball in granulated sugar.

Bake at 375° for 8-10 minutes or until lightly browned around the edges.

Remove from the oven and immediately press a chocolate kiss into the center of each cookie.

Oreo Cookie Balls

These are kind of a holiday tradition for my family. Each year my mom makes them and brings them to many of our family gatherings. She makes them with both chocolate and golden cookies with white or milk chocolate but my favorite is the plain gooey center! — *Emma (from AllRecipes.com)*

INGREDIENTS

1 (8-oz) package cream cheese, softened
36 OREO Cookies, finely crushed
16 oz semi-sweet baking chocolate, melted

DIRECTIONS

Mix cream cheese and cookie crumbs until well blended.

Shape into 48 (1-inch) balls. Freeze 10 min. Dip balls in melted chocolate; place in single layer in shallow waxed paper-lined pan.

Refrigerate 1 hour or until firm.



Vanilla-Orange Cranberry Cookies

These cookies are yummy and so easy to make. They are great with a hot cup of tea on a cold winter day. — Dianne (from King Arthur Flour)

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup (8 tbsp) butter

3/4 cup sugar

Grated peel of 1 medium to large orange

1 tsp vanilla extract

1/4 tsp baking powder

1/2 tsp salt

1 large egg

1 1/2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

2 cups dried cranberries, or a mixture
of dried cranberries and toasted
chopped walnuts or pecans

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 425°. Lightly grease two baking sheets or line them with parchment. In a large bowl, beat together the butter, sugar, orange peel, vanilla, baking powder and salt.



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Vanilla-Orange Cranberry Cookies, continued



Beat in the egg. The mixture may look slightly curdled.

Add the flour and dried cranberries (or cranberries and nuts), stirring until well combined.

Drop the dough by heaping teaspoonfuls onto the baking sheets, leaving about 1 1/2" between them. Dough balls should be about 1 1/4" in diameter. Using the flat bottom of a glass dipped in sugar, flatten the cookies slightly, to a scant 1/2" thick.

Bake the cookies for 6 to 7 minutes, until they're barely set, and a light golden brown around the edges. Don't over bake; if you do, the cookies will be hard, not soft and chewy.

Remove the cookies from the oven and cool them right on the pan. Give the cookies about 5 minutes to set before transferring them to a rack to cool completely.

Cafe Rio

Now that I'm in Utah, I've discovered the joys of Cafe Rio — a local restaurant chain — or more importantly, DIY Cafe Rio! Here's my own take on their Cilantro Lime Tomatillo Ranch! — Anna

INGREDIENTS

1 (1-ounce) package Hidden Valley Ranch dressing mix

1 cup buttermilk

1 cup mayonnaise

2 medium tomatillos, chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

1/2 bunch cilantro, chopped

1 lime, squeezed

1/2 to 1 small jalapeno, seeds removed if you don't like any spice

DIRECTIONS

Blend all ingredients together until smooth and store in the refrigerator to let the flavors meld. Serve over Mexican-inspired salads or add to your favorite burrito!

