

KOLACHES FOR BEGINNERS

It's funny how so many bakers are intimidated by yeast. They see it listed as an ingredient in a recipe, and quickly flip the page. There's no need to fear this version.

This particular dough is quite forgiving. It's elastic, resilient and will make you feel like a pro. As my grandmother, Helen Majesky, used to say, "You know more than you think you know."

- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 packets of active dry yeast, which is kind of a pain, since yeast is sold in packages of three
- 1/2 cup warm water
- 2 cups milk
- 6 tablespoons pure unsalted butter
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 egg yolks, lightly beaten
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 6-1/4 cups flour
- 1- 1/2 sticks melted butter

- Put the yeast in a measuring cup and sprinkle 1 tablespoon sugar over it. Add the warm water. How warm? Most cookbooks say 105 to 115 degrees. Experienced cooks can tell by sprinkling a few drops on the inside of the wrist. Beginners should use a thermometer. Too hot, and it'll kill the active ingredients.
- Warm the milk in a small saucepan; add the butter and stir until melted. Cool to lukewarm and pour into a big mixing bowl.
- Add the salt and sugar, then pour in the beaten egg yolks in a thin stream, whisking briskly to keep the eggs from curdling. Then whisk in the yeast mixture.
- Roll up your sleeves and add flour a cup at a time. When the dough gets too heavy to stir, mix with your hands. You want the dough to be glossy and sticky. Keep adding flour and knead until the dough acquires a sheen.
- Put the dough ball in an oiled mixing bowl, turning it to coat. Cover with a damp tea towel and set in a warm place where the air is very still. In about an hour, the dough should double in size. My grandmother used to push two floured fingertips into the top of the soft mound, and if the dimples made by her fingers remained, then she would declare the dough risen. And then, of course, you give it a punch to deflate it. A soft sighing sound, fragrant with yeast, indicates the dough's surrender.
- Pinch off egg-sized portions and work these into balls. Place on oiled baking sheets, several inches apart. Let them rise again for fifteen minutes and then use your thumb to make a deep dimple in each ball for the fruit filling. The exact filling to use is a source of endless debate among Polish bakers. My grandmother never entered into such a debate. "Do what tastes good" was her motto. A spoonful of raspberry jam, peach pie filling, fig preserves, prune filling or sweet cheese will do.
- Create a popsika by mixing 1/2 cup of melted butter together with a cup of sugar, 1/2 cup of flour and a teaspoon of cinnamon.
- Sprinkle the popsika over each kolache. Now place the pans in a warm place-like above the fridge-and allow to double in bulk again, about 45 minutes to an hour. Meanwhile preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Bake 20-40 minutes, until golden brown. Pay particular attention to the bottoms, which tend to burn if too close to the heat source.
- Take the kolaches out of the oven, brush with melted butter and remove from pans to cool. This recipe makes about three dozen.
- My grandmother used to tell me not to worry about how long this whole process takes. Baking is an act of love, and who cares how long love takes?

NOTES:

POLISH SOURDOUGH RYE BREAD

It's a Polish wedding tradition to give a new bride a supply of starter for sourdough rye bread. I suspect it's a combination of tradition and desperation on the part of the bride. It just doesn't seem fair to add the pressure of making a good bread right out of the gate to everything else the poor girl is juggling.

My grandmother told me that the day before her wedding, when she was just a scared girl of eighteen, her mother gave her a carved pine box, just like the one that had sat on a shelf above the kitchen stove all her life. It's kind of nice, really, thinking of that chain of women, spanning the decades and centuries.

Now, the reality of today's world is that new brides don't give a hoot about making bread. However, if the breadmaking mood strikes you, here's a recipe with a starter that only takes one night to set up. The process begins somewhat mysteriously. Flour, buttermilk and onion meld together in the beginnings of a hearty bread.

2 (.25 ounce) packages active dry yeast
1 teaspoon white sugar
2 cups water
1 slice of onion
4 cups rye flour
1 cup buttermilk, room temperature
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 tablespoon salt
8 cups bread flour
1 tablespoon caraway seed (optional)

- The night before making the bread, in a medium sized mixing bowl, dissolve one packet of yeast and the sugar in 2 cups of water. Let stand until creamy, about 10 minutes. Stir in the rye flour until the mixture is smooth. Slip the onion slice in. Cover and let stand overnight.
- The next day, dissolve the remaining package of yeast in the buttermilk. Add the rye flour mixture, baking soda, the salt, 4 cups of the bread flour and stir to combine. Add the remaining 4 cups of bread flour, 1/2 cup at a time, stirring well after each addition (you may not need to add all of the flour).
- When the dough has become a smooth and coherent mass, turn it out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and supple, about 8 minutes. Sprinkle the caraway seeds on the dough and knead them in until they are evenly distributed throughout the dough.
- Lightly oil a large mixing bowl. Place the dough in the bowl and turn to coat with the oil. Cover with a damp cloth and let rise in a warm place for about 1 hour or until the volume has doubled.
- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
- Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and divide into three pieces. Form each piece into a loaf and place in 3 lightly greased 9x5 inch bread pans. Cover and let rise until nearly doubled, about 1 hour.
- Bake at 350 degrees for about 35 minutes or until the loaves sound hollow when tapped.

NOTES:

HAPPY CAKE

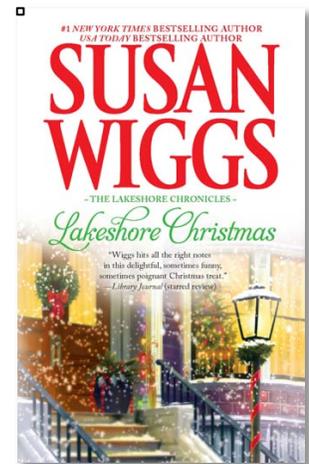
Here's something I bet you never noticed. But once I point it out, you'll never fail to notice it again. A small, family-owned bakery is a happy place. Think about it. When was the last time you walked into a bakery and found a cranky person? It just doesn't happen. The people behind the counter are cheerful. The customers are cheerful. Even the sounds and the smells of the place -- totally cheerful.

I bet if a study was done on the air quality of a bakery, pheromones would be found. One of the happiest recipes in my grandmother's arsenal is this one. It's actually a pound cake, but Gram called it *Szczeńśliwe ciastko*. Roughly translated into English, that means -- you already guessed it, didn't you? "Happy Cake." This is distinguished by its sunny yellow color and by the fact that it's impossible to eat a slice and not feel happy.

1 pound cake flour (3 cups)
1 pound eggs (about six)
1 pound (4 sticks) unsalted butter, softened (don't substitute)
1 pound (about 2-1/4 cups) sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup buttermilk
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder

- Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.
- Grease and flour a bundt or tube pan.
- Beat the butter until light and gradually add the sugar, vanilla and then the eggs, one at a time.
- With mixer on low, add the buttermilk.
- Sift together all the dry ingredients and add slowly.
- Pour the batter into the pan and bake for about 1 hour and twenty minutes, until a thin blade or toothpick comes out clean.
- Allow the cake to cool 15 or 20 minutes in the pan. Then gently remove it, and serve at room temperature with fresh fruit or lemon curd.

NOTES:



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MISS IDA'S BUTTERMILK CHESS PIE

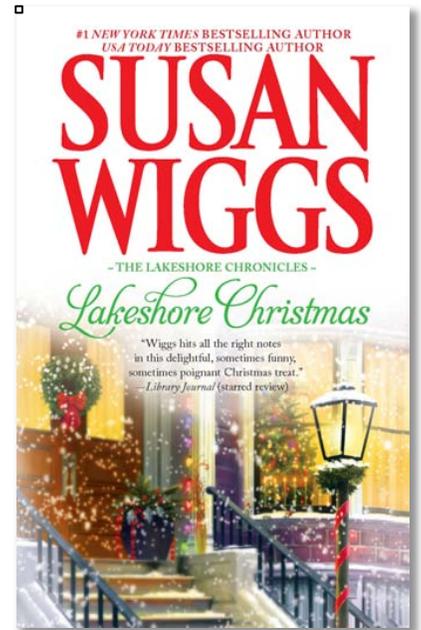
Nobody knows the origin of the name "Chess Pie." It surely doesn't have anything to do with the game of chess. My grandmother got her recipe decades ago from a tourist visiting from Texas to see the turning leaves. I don't know anything else about the woman except that her recipe is called "Miss Ida's Buttermilk Chess Pie."

Don't be put off by the buttermilk. This pie is so sweet and intense, you need a large cup of coffee to go with it.

4 eggs
3/4 cup sugar
2 tablespoons flour
1-1/2 cups buttermilk
1/4 cup butter, melted
grated peel of 1 lemon
3 tablespoons lemon juice
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 9-inch graham cracker pie shell
fresh berries for garnish

- In a large bowl beat eggs and sugar until light and lemon-colored.
- Beat in flour, then buttermilk, melted butter, lemon peel, lemon juice, and vanilla.
- Pour mixture into pie shell.
- Bake in a 375° oven for 35 minutes, or until knife inserted near center comes out clean.
- Garnish with fresh berries.

NOTES:



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FRIENDSHIP BREAD

At the Sky River Bakery, a lot of our breads begin with a sourdough starter, and Friendship Bread is one of the favorites. It's called that because the starter can easily be shared among friends, who are invited to create breads of their own. It seems a little counterintuitive to let a vat of ingredients ferment for days on end, but ultimately, it gives the bread a special depth of flavor. This makes enough starter to share with your friends, along with a copy of the recipe.

This particular recipe is very flexible. You can add dried fruit, nuts, almond extract or sweet spices.

FRIENDSHIP BREAD STARTER

3 cups sugar
3 cups flour
3 cups milk

Day 1: In a nonmetal bowl, combine 1 cup sugar, 1 cup flour and 1 cup milk. Stir with a wooden or plastic spoon (don't use a metal spoon or electric mixer). Cover bowl loosely with a tea towel. Keep at room temperature, not in the fridge.

Day 2, 3, 4: Stir the mixture once each day

Day 5: Add 1 cup sugar, 1 cup flour and 1 cup milk, and stir.

Day 6, 7, 8: Stir the mixture once each day

Day 10: Add 1 cup sugar, 1 cup flour and 1 cup milk. Remove 3 cups of the mixture and give 1 cup each to three friends. Save remaining starter for yourself.

1 cup starter
1 cup oil
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup milk
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
2 cups flour
1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 eggs
1 large box instant vanilla pudding mix

- Combine starter with all the other ingredients, mixing thoroughly.
- Grease 2 large loaf pans and dust with a mixture of cinnamon and sugar.
- Spoon the batter into the pans.
- Coat top of batter with butter and sprinkle with remaining cinnamon/sugar mixture.
- Bake at 325 degrees F for 50 - 75 minutes, or until done.

NOTES:

IRISH CREAM CAKE

It's a well-known fact that a nursing mother should drink something alcoholic, every day, as long as she doesn't have a drinking problem. A doctor wouldn't tell you this, but my grandmother and her friends all believed it. Give a nursing mother a glass of beer to drink every evening, and it's good for her milk production. A very moderate amount doesn't affect the baby at all.

My grandmother was never much of a drinker, but we always had liquor in the house to use in her baking—sherry for Fanny Farmer cakes, triple sec for the fruitcake, Kahlua with its variety of uses, rum and of course, Irish cream. Decades ago, Gram found a recipe for a cake on an Irish cream label, and Grandpa liked it so much that he finished off the rest of the bottle. Afterward, they could be seen snuggling on the porch swing.

She made the cake so many times, she never really had to refer to the recipe again. This cake freezes well, and makes a nice gift.

½ cup finely chopped pecans
½ cup finely shredded coconut
1 (18.25 ounce) package yellow cake mix
1 (3.4 ounce) package instant vanilla pudding mix
4 eggs
¼ cup water
½ cup vegetable oil
¾ cup Irish cream liqueur
½ cup butter
¼ cup water
1 cup white sugar
¼ cup Irish cream liqueur

- Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Grease and flour a 10 inch Bundt pan.
- Sprinkle chopped nuts and coconut evenly over bottom of pan.
- In a large bowl, combine cake mix and pudding mix. Mix in eggs, 1/4 cup water, 1/2 cup oil and 3/4 cup Irish cream liqueur.
- Beat for 5 minutes at high speed. Pour batter over nuts in pan.
- Bake for 60 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the cake comes out clean.
- Cool for 10 minutes in the pan while you prepare the glaze.
- To make the glaze, combine butter, 1/4 cup water and 1 cup sugar in a small saucepan.
- Bring to a boil and continue boiling for 5 minutes, stirring constantly with a whisk.
- Remove from heat and whisk in 1/4 cup Irish cream.
- Invert the cooled cake onto a serving platter. Prick top and sides of cake.
- Spoon glaze over top and brush onto sides of cake, until the glaze is absorbed.

NOTES:

SCRATCH BISCUITS WITH LAVENDER SUGAR

Lots of people use this phrase and understand perfectly what it means, although few know its origin. To start from scratch is to begin from the beginning, from square one. It's to start with nothing, no odds in your favor, no head start or advantage. It is ground zero, which is another phrase that needs explaining, but maybe not here.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, "starting from scratch" was a sporting term. It referred to a starting line, usually scratched into the dirt with a sharp stick. In cricket, "scratch" is the line in front of each stump where the batsman stands. And finally, in bare-knuckle boxing, a line was drawn across the ring, and the boxers would come "up to scratch" to begin their bout.

Nowadays, starting from scratch is synonymous with starting from nothing, and in baking, something made from scratch is generally presumed to be excellent. You can add flavor with a pinch of herbs, and don't forget-lavender is an herb. Make a batch of lavender sugar and keep it on hand.

SCRATCH BISCUITS

2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup unsalted butter, cold and sliced into about a dozen pieces
¾ cup buttermilk
1 tablespoon melted butter
sprinkle of lavender sugar

- Heat oven to 450°F.
- Combine dry ingredients and cut in butter with two knives or a pastry blender until crumbly.
- Stir in buttermilk just until moistened.
- Turn dough onto lightly floured surface; knead about 10 times or until smooth.
- Roll out dough to ¾-inch thickness.
- Cut with a 2- 1/2-inch biscuit cutter, or use a juice glass. Place 1 inch apart on an ungreased baking sheet.
- Brush biscuits with melted butter and sprinkle with lavender sugar.
- Bake for 10 to 14 minutes or until lightly browned. Serve warm with butter.

LAVENDER SUGAR

1 cup sugar
1 vanilla bean, halved and snipped into pieces
1 Tbsp dried lavender buds

- In a spice or coffee grinder, pulse 2 Tbsp sugar with vanilla beans.
- Transfer to a jar.
- Then pulse the lavender with 1 Tbsp of the remaining sugar until finely ground.
- Combine everything in the jar, cover tightly and let stand for about five days.

NOTES:

GINGERBREAD BARS WITH ORANGE CREAM CHEESE FILLING

Baking cookies is good for the soul, on so many levels. The most basic virtue is simply the smell of a batch of cookies in the oven. The scent of ginger and butter floats through the house, lingering for a few hours afterward. The addition of a pinch of cayenne in gingerbread might seem unorthodox, but it's subtle and gives it a little extra "bite."

¾ cup butter, softened
¾ cup sugar
1 egg
1 tablespoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 ¼ cups flour
¼ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt
1/3 cup molasses + 3 tablespoons hot water

Orange Cream Cheese Filling

½ package (4 ounces) cream cheese, softened
1/3 cup powdered sugar
2 tablespoons orange juice
1 tablespoon Cointreau, Grand Marnier or Triple Sec (optional)

- Preheat oven to 350°F. Line 13x9x2-inch baking pan with wax paper.
- Spray with no-stick cooking spray and dust with flour.
- Beat butter in large bowl with electric mixer until smooth.
- Beat in sugar and egg.
- Gradually mix in dry ingredients, alternating with molasses and water.
- Spread in prepared pan.

- Beat cream cheese with electric mixer until smooth.
- Add sugar, orange juice and Cointreau until smooth.
- Spoon by teaspoons over batter in pan.
- With a knife, swirl through batter with long strokes in each direction to marbleize.
- Bake 30 minutes or until gingerbread begins to pull away from edges. Lift out of pan using edges of wax paper. Cool on wire rack.
- Cut into bars. Store in refrigerator.

NOTES:

EILEENS BITTER CHOCOLATE CAKE

Eileen has been a bakery regular for years, and she loves chocolate more than any other customer we know. Chocolate has magical properties when prepared correctly. It's an appropriate ingredient for days when it feels as though the whole world is against you, or on the anniversary of a sad event, because it tends to enhance one's mood. The addition of a hint of liqueur brings out some of chocolate's finest nuances. Frangelico is a good choice. Made in Italy with roasted hazelnuts and bottled in a container that will remind you of Mrs. Butterworth, it won't overwhelm the other flavors.

The cocoa content of chocolate matters; don't let anyone tell you otherwise. The very best taste comes from chocolate with a cocoa content of 70%. Also, avoid anything with an ingredient called "vanillin," a chemical substitute for real vanilla. Possibly most important of all, choose chocolate that uses cocoa butter. Interestingly, it melts at 93 degrees F, which is close to body temperature. This, I think, is no coincidence.

2 sticks unsalted butter
6 oz semisweet chocolate, chopped
3 oz unsweetened, strong, dark chocolate, chopped
1-¼ cups sugar
4 extra-large eggs
1 Tbsp all purpose flour
Lightly sweetened whipped cream
1 Tbsp Frangelico liqueur
toasted chopped hazelnuts

- Preheat oven to 325 F.
- Butter 9-inch diameter springform pan.
- Sprinkle bottom and sides with sugar. Wrap foil around bottom and 2 inches up outside of pan.
- Combine butter and both chocolates in top of double boiler. Melt over simmering water, stirring until smooth.
- Whisk sugar and eggs in large bowl to blend.
- Mix in flour.
- Stir in warm chocolate mixture.
- Pour batter into prepared pan.
- Place cake in large baking pan.
- Pour enough boiling water into baking pan to come ½ inch up sides of cake.
- Bake cake until top is firm and toothpick inserted into center comes out with some moist crumbs attached, about 1 hour.
- Remove cake from water and cool completely on rack.
- Transfer cake to platter, release pan sides.
- Add the Frangelica to the whipped cream.
- Cut & serve with whipped cream and a sprinkle of hazelnuts.

NOTES:

POLISH APPLE STRUIDEL

There is almost always food involved in the happiest moments of our lives. Maybe not the big fireworks moments—a marriage proposal, the birth of a baby—but the quiet times, like when you're a kid, and you bring home a good report card. Someone almost always gives you a cookie.

And then there are the not-so-happy times. That's when comfort food means the most. As a girl, my grandmother had scarlet fever and tucked in bed, she could smell the scent of cinnamon from her mother's baking and forever after, the scent of cinnamon was the scent of love.

Comfort food is also important when you get together with your girlfriends to sit around and talk. It's not possible to do that without food, if you ask me. My grandmother always baked with great joy, and she knew that food can be comforting because of the associations we make between the food and the people around us, or the emotions the tastes and smells evoke. Spiced with nostalgia, scented with love, a taste of true comfort food is like getting a hug from someone special.

3-4 tart apples, peeled, cored and sliced very thin
1 pie crust, from scratch or refrigerated
2 tablespoons butter
1 (5-ounce) jar walnuts in syrup
½ teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon allspice
½ teaspoon ground cardamom
3 tablespoons brown sugar
3 tablespoons honey
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1/4 cup plain breadcrumbs

- Preheat oven to 375°F.
- Sauté the apples in butter over gentle heat until the apples soften.
- Add the walnuts, spices, brown sugar and honey.
- Then add the cornstarch and stir to dissolve. Cook until the mixture thickens.
- Roll the dough into a rectangular shape and place on a piece of parchment on a large baking sheet.
- Spoon the apple mixture down the middle of the rectangle, bring the edges up and pinch to close.
- Score the dough with a few slashes along the top. Sprinkle breadcrumbs over the top.
- Bake for about 30 minutes, until golden brown.
- Let stand for ten minutes or more. Serve plain or with a dollop of sour cream.

NOTES:

BURNING LOVE

People like to set things on fire. Admit it, when you see a flaming dessert, you're impressed. There's something mesmerizing about the way the flames run like a river and then go out, leaving behind a delicious, unmistakable essence.

There's a primal attraction to burning things. According to a Polish proverb, fire is never a gentle master. Henry James claims that what is needed is "unrestrained passion, fire for fire." Which is a little scary, if you ask me, but that just makes this all the more delicious.

8 slices bread
3 cups heavy cream
1 large whole egg
3 large egg yolks
1½ cups sugar
½ teaspoon nutmeg
½ teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 cup rum
½ cup raisins or currants, steeped for 15 minutes in a cup of very hot water (reserve liquid)

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
- Toast the bread slices and remove the crusts. Dice the bread into cubes.
- Whisk together the cream, whole egg, egg yolks, ½ cup sugar, nutmeg, cinnamon, and 1 tablespoon of rum.
- Combine the bread cubes and the cream mixture.
- Drain the raisins and reserve the liquid. Add the raisins to the bread mixture.
- Spoon mixture into soufflé cups.
- Place cups in a baking pan filled with hot water ½ inch deep. Bake until a knife inserted in the center of the custards comes out clean, about 30 minutes.
- Just before serving, combine the reserved liquid and remaining sugar in a small, shallow saucepan and bring to a simmer, whisking constantly, over high heat.
- When the sugar turns amber, carefully whisk another ½ cup of hot water. Return to a simmer and cook until the mixture becomes the consistency of syrup.
- Stir in the remaining rum and return to the heat for 15 seconds.
- Remove the saucepan from the heat and touch a match to the sauce. Pour the flaming caramel over the puddings and serve.

NOTES:

PACZKI

In Poland, the Thursday before Lent is known as Tłusty czwartek (Fat Thursday), also known as Paczki Day. It's traditional to enjoy a the yeasty fruit- or custard-filled Polish doughnut known as paczki. The most traditional fillings are made of prune or rosehip marmalade.

Since Lent was a time to avoid meat, it was traditional to use up all the lard in frying. Nowadays, vegetable shortening is recommended. My grandmother had a trick to keep the oil from burning. She would cut a fresh potato in half and put it in the pan.

1 quart warm water
4 packets dry yeast
8 cups flour
2 ounces dry milk powder
5 ounces shortening
1 teaspoon salt
3 eggs
5 eggs yolks
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon orange extract
1 teaspoon lemon extract
Additional shortening for frying

- Combine water and 2 ounces of yeast and stir to dissolve. Then add flour, dry milk, shortening, salt, whole eggs and the vanilla, orange, and lemon extracts.
- Once combined, mix in remaining 1 ounce of yeast and egg yolks.
- Knead until you can form a large, soft ball.
- Let the dough rise in a greased bowl covered with plastic wrap for approximately one hour, until doubled in size.
- Then roll the dough into balls the size of an apricot and let them rise again.
- Heat shortening for frying until it reaches 375 degrees.
- Once the balls of dough have risen, deep fry them in oil for approximately 4 to 6 minutes, until they are a medium golden brown.
- Drain the paczki on paper towels.
- Once cool, fill with custard or fruit fillings, such as cherry, blueberry, apple, pineapple, raspberry, rosehip, marmalade or prune.
- Top with glaze or sugar.

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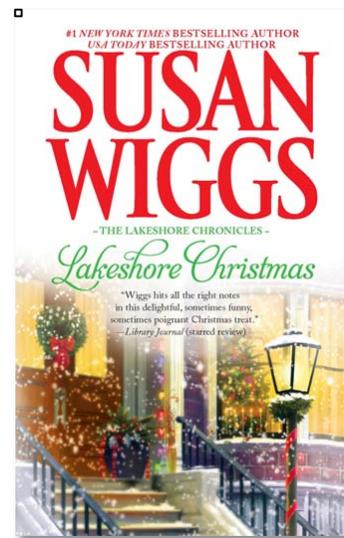
AMERICAN LEGION FUNERAL HOT DISH

Whenever a cherished friend passed away, the family would call my grandmother, because she was a genius at putting together a menu for a crowd on short notice. The centerpiece of the meal was, of course, the funeral hot dish—a savory mixture baked in a roasting pan that resembled a small bathtub. Here is a version for a smaller crowd. It doesn't cure sadness, but it's said to comfort an aching heart.

1 pound ground beef
½ onion, chopped
1 cup frozen sliced carrots
1 cup frozen cauliflower
1 cup frozen chopped broccoli
1 can cream of mushroom soup
1 can cream of chicken soup
3-4 stalks celery, chopped
2 Tablespoons soy sauce
½ teaspoon white pepper
1 12-ounce bag chow mein noodles

- Preheat the oven to 325°.
- Fry hamburger and onion in a large cast-iron pan, breaking it up into small pieces.
- Drain and place in a large baking pan.
- Mix vegetables, soups, celery, soy sauce and pepper, then into pan and combine with meat.
- Fold in two-thirds of the chow mein noodles (8 ounces), cover and bake for about an hour.
- Sprinkle remaining chow mein noodles on top.
- Put cover back on and bake another 15 minutes.

NOTES:



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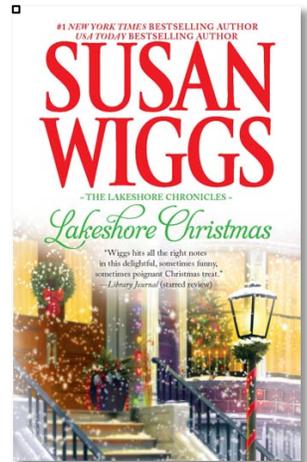
FIADONE

Fiadone isn't a Polish dish, but it's been on the menu at Sky River Bakery for a long time. This is a type of pizza rustica from the Sangro Valley of Abruzzo, Italy. It doesn't cure sadness, but it's said to comfort an aching heart.

4 eggs
½ tablespoon water
1/8 cup extra virgin olive oil
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 cup flour
1 tablespoon milk
1 cup grated Pecorino cheese and ½ cup grated Parmigianino cheese
Ground pepper
A pinch of salt
A pinch of dried herbs-oregano and thyme

- Heat oven to 375 F.
- Beat one egg and reserve a little to mix with the water and brush on the top later.
- Stir in olive oil and 1 teaspoon baking powder.
- Gradually add the flour and form a ball with the dough.
- Sprinkle in milk and knead until smooth, adding just enough flour to keep it from getting too sticky.
- Wrap in plastic and refrigerate for about fifteen minutes.
- Beat remaining 3 eggs until frothy.
- Stir in remaining teaspoon of baking powder, the cheese, salt, pepper and herbs.
- Reserve about a third of the dough and roll out the rest.
- Place in a buttered pie pan.
- Fill with egg mixture.
- Roll out remaining dough into a circle, place on top of the filling; flute and trim the edges.
- Brush the top with egg wash; cut a few slits in the top.
- Bake for about 35 minutes, until golden brown.

NOTES:



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CELEBRATION CAKE

The perfect ending to every meal has nothing to do with dessert and coffee, and everything to do with the company you keep. Even so, any celebration can be made more enjoyable by food. At the Sky River Bakery, we create cakes for every occasion, and our customers are always bringing us more ideas. Not just weddings, birthdays and anniversaries, but first communions, graduations, retirements, funeral wakes, births and national holidays. My grandmother, Helen Majesky, created this one for Mr. Gordon Dunbar's 100th birthday, but it's appropriate for any happy occasion, if you ask me.

2 cups flour
4 teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
2 sticks pure unsalted butter, melted
2 cups brown sugar
4 eggs
½ cup bourbon whiskey
¼ cup water
1 (6-ounce) package chocolate chips
1 cup chopped pecans
Hot Buttered Whiskey Glaze (directions below)

- Preheat oven to 325F. Grease and flour a 13x9x2-inch baking pan.
- Combine flour, baking powder and salt.
- Melt butter and add it to the flour, along with brown sugar, eggs, whiskey and water.
- Pour batter into prepared pan.
- Sprinkle with chocolate chips and pecans.
- Bake 50 to 55 minutes or until center of cake is firm and edges begin to pull away from sides of pan.
- Cool about 15 minutes, then drizzle with glaze.

Hot Buttered Whiskey Glaze:

- Melt ¼ cup butter.
- Whisk in 2 cups confectioners' sugar, 1/3 cup bourbon whiskey, 1 teaspoon vanilla, and blend well.

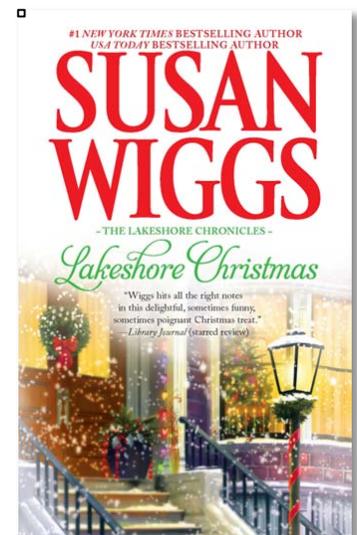
NOTES:

CRANBERRY-FILLED CHEES BARS

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups oats
1/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon firmly packed brown sugar
1 cup butter or margarine, softened
8 ounces cream cheese
1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
1/4 cup lemon juice
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 (16 ounce) can whole berry cranberry sauce

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease a 9 x 13-inch baking pan.
- In a large mixer bowl, combine flour, oats, 1/4 cup brown sugar and butter or margarine. Mix until crumbly.
- Reserve 1 1/2 cups crumb mixture. Press remaining mixture firmly on bottom of prepared baking pan.
- Bake 15 minutes. Remove from oven; set aside.
- Meanwhile, in a small bowl, beat cream cheese until fluffy.
- Gradually beat in sweetened condensed milk until smooth.
- Stir in lemon juice. Spread over prepared crust.
- In a small bowl, combine the remaining 1 tablespoon brown sugar and cornstarch.
- Stir in cranberry sauce.
- Spoon evenly over cream cheese layer; spread with a butter knife as necessary. Top with reserved crumb mixture.
- Bake 40 minutes, or until topping is golden.
- Cool, then refrigerate. Store, covered, in refrigerator.

NOTES:



Susan Wiggs 
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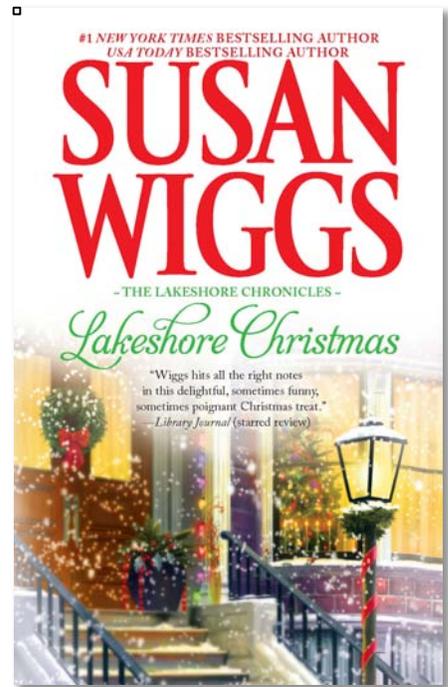
KRUPNIK

My grandparents had very few treasures, because they brought so little with them when they emigrated from Poland. The treasures they had were precious, and one that stands out in my memory is a set of crystal cordial glasses. My grandfather went to Brooklyn one year and bought a set imported from Poland. They had the color and cut of jewels—ruby, sapphire, emerald, amethyst—and they were only used on special occasions. A birth, a death, a holiday. Krupnik is a hot honey-and-spice cordial that brings warmth to any occasion.

1 cup honey
½ cup water
1 bay leaf
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
pinch of nutmeg
10 cloves
cinnamon
3 cups 100 proof vodka

- Bring all ingredients besides the vodka to a boil, reduce heat, skimming off scum and simmer, covered, for about 10 minutes.
- Strain, discarding spices.
- Add 3 cups of 100-proof vodka and heat gently but do not boil.
- Serve immediately, preferably in crystal cordial glasses.

NOTES:



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