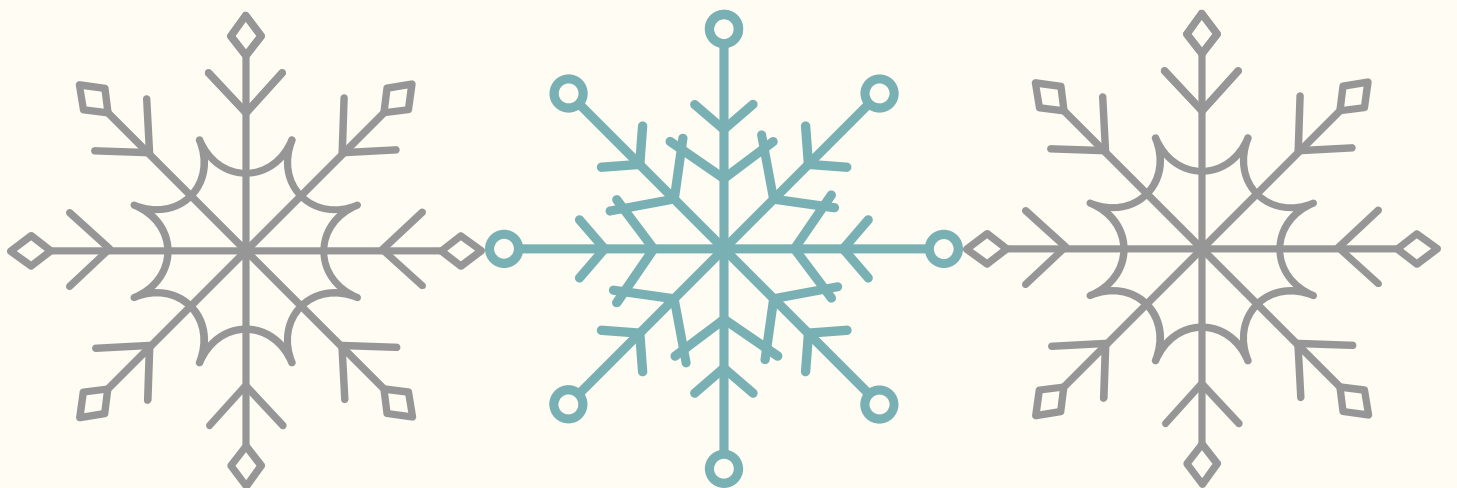




LOGAN WOLFRAM
PRESENTS

WINTER WARMERS

RECIPES AND STORIES TO
WARM YOUR HEART AND HOME





Winter Warmers: Recipes and Stories to Warm Your
Heart and Home

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When I was a little girl I thought I'd grow up to be a baker or a chef. In fact, I used to have dreams about owning a bakery and rising early to knead bread and see the sun rise. Then I got older and realized I'm not really a morning person, and that even when I have a cup of coffee, it still doesn't totally take the edge off of any rising hour prior to about six am.

So long bakery dreams.

During college, while I was studying to get a degree in Spanish (since the communications department turned out to be focused more on political speech writing and I had zero interest in that), I got a job working at a local restaurant. Somehow, I walked in and convinced the executive chef that being a hard worker and loving food was reason enough to hire a bright-eyed college student. I worked there throughout the Spring and Summer between my junior and senior years of college and loved every minute. Upon graduation, now fluent in Spanish with no clue what to do with it, I returned to the little Bistro Europa on North Main Street in Greenville, SC and spent the next nine months cooking again.

My father was less than thrilled to have paid for a private college education and here I was choosing instead to wear checkered MC Hammer pants on a daily basis and constantly smell like garlic. The heat was on me then, and it wasn't the kind that turned out delightful baked goods.

So I folded the checkered pants, hung the coat, scrubbed the garlic out of my fingers, and spent the next 15 months selling radio advertising and wearing business attire to prove to my parents that I could hack it in the corporate world. I won a few awards, got offered jobs in major metropolitan cities, and then I quit.

Just because you can do something doesn't mean you should.

But all that time, through college, and with friends, and on the weekends when I wasn't selling air time, I was still cooking. Perhaps it was my first creative love even if it hasn't ever been the thing that has defined my career path.

Maybe it has though really. Because in food, I see creativity. When I'm not writing, I'm creating...with my kids, in my home, and in the kitchen. And perhaps what I love most about food is the way that it brings people together.



Growing up in North Carolina, I remember one year we had a terrible ice storm. It knocked out trees and the power all over town and I feel like it was out well over a week. My family was the only one in the neighborhood with a gas cooktop, so despite the fact that we were all wearing more layers indoors than usual, we could at least still eat warm food.

Norman lived across the street in the scary house. I'm sure in its prime it was lovely, but years of neglect had left shutters and eaves rotten and leaves piled over the yard.

If we hadn't been told that someone lived there, I'm certain we would have thought it abandoned. Perhaps once a year or so, we would happen to see him in the wooded side yard. Mostly though, he seemed creepy to all of us kids. His mother was sick and elderly, and he was the classic definition of a recluse.

That year of the ice storm, Mom made several giant pots of soup and invited all of the neighbors over to eat. She told my dad to go over and invite Norman even though we all knew he wouldn't come.

But then he did. He came. He knocked on the front door with his thick bifocal glasses perched on his nose and a brown flannel shirt tucked into his pants, and our whole family was shocked. But, in he came, and he stayed and had soup and talked for hours.

Turned out, Norman was a pretty fascinating guy. He knew all about history and the world and for the first time ever for us as kids, this scary reclusive man became awfully human.

Norman began coming outside more often after that. He even started raking the leaves and waving at us when we were outside playing. He would stand on the curb and talk to my dad for lengths of time, and I'd venture to say they even struck up a bit of a friendship. If even still a bit eccentric, he certainly wasn't scary anymore, and I learned as a young child that people and things aren't always as they seem.

Soup did that. Well maybe really my mom and dad did it, but ever since then I've never underestimated the power of a warm meal to begin to give life back to someone.

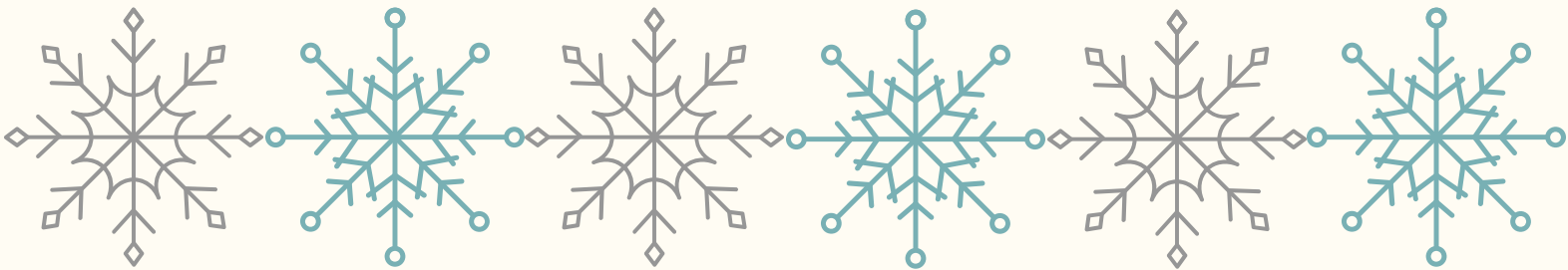
HOLIDAY WASSAIL

serves 6-10

I don't remember the first time I ever had Wassail, but I do know that I've loved it as long as I can remember. Never much of a soda drinker, I have always gravitated more towards juices anyhow. And while I do love a good cup of hot chocolate on occasion, I really have to be in the mood for the heaviness of it.

Wassail though, I'll drink anywhere I come across a cup. It's like Appalachian Mountain hot apple cider went out and made friends with someone more sophisticated. By adding the pineapple and orange juices, the acidity offers just a little punch that satisfies more than just the sweet tastebuds on the tip of your tongue.

And let's not forget that it makes your house smell amazing too!



Ingredients:

- 2 quarts apple cider
- 1-1/2 cups orange juice
- 3/4 cup pineapple juice
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 cinnamon sticks (3 inches)
- Dash ground cinnamon
- Dash ground cloves

Instructions:

In a large saucepan, combine all of the ingredients. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 20-30 minutes. Discard cinnamon sticks. Serve hot in mugs. Yield: 10-12 servings (2-1/2 quarts).

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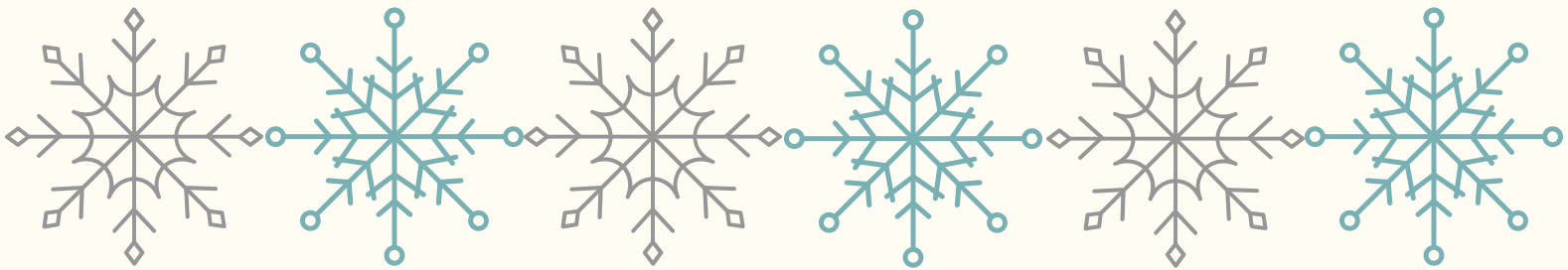
SPANISH SANGRIA

serves 4-6

The fall of my junior year in college I was in Spain studying for a semester. There are so many things I love about the Spanish culture...from long siestas (naps) in the afternoon, to the way they center so much of life around people and relationships...I was in heaven.

I'll never forget one time planning to meet a friend for drinks and tapas in the afternoon when she apologized profusely for not being able to stay long because she had a busy afternoon. My American brain figured that we had maybe 30 minutes or an hour tops to visit. Three hours into our afternoon together she again apologized for cutting it short and made her departure. I think it was that moment that solidified this culture of people lovers in my heart forever.

If you're not familiar with it, Sangría is a refreshing drink made with red wine and citrus, and there are loads of places in the US that are making it **WRONG** in my opinion! Forget the stuff with white wine and berries...that's a spritzer...the real deal is bold and refreshing!



Ingredients:

- 1 bottle red wine (750 mL)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c brandy
- a little less than $\frac{1}{3}$ c sugar
- 2 c lemon lime soda
- orange, lemon, lime sliced

Instructions:

Mix wine, brandy, sugar and sliced citrus in a pitcher and chill for an hour or so. Before serving add lemon lime soda and serve over ice.

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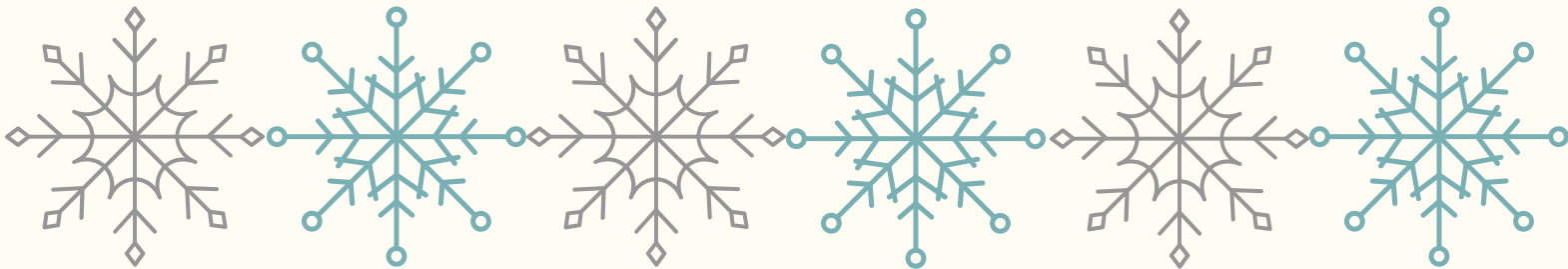
BAKED GOAT CHEESE

serves 6

I learned this recipe back in the day when I cooked at that little Bistro Europa restaurant in college. Mind you, this was back before the farm to table movement was a big deal and the fact that our chef was sourcing locally produced goat cheese was a pretty big deal.

Red loved to serve it on salads, sprinkle it onto pizzas, whip into mashed potatoes, and even create appetizers where it was the stand out ingredient. The creaminess and tangy flavor remains a favorite to this day.

I think I have him to thank for making me a goat cheese lover forever.



Ingredients:

- 10 oz log of goat cheese
- julienned sundried tomatoes
- peeled and roasted garlic cloves (roasted at 400 degrees for about 20 minutes)
- herb mix (herb de provence or italian, or whatever savory blend you feel like doing)

Instructions:

Roll goat cheese into balls, toss in herbs and put in baking dish. Surround with roasted garlic and sundried tomatoes and bake at 350ish for about 7-8 minutes. Serve on crostini, lavosh crackers, or any other yummy cracker.

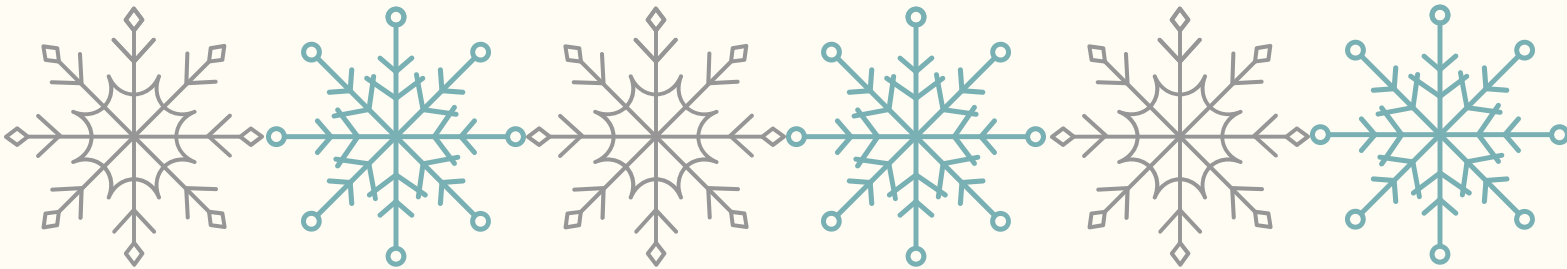
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SAVORY CRACKER MIX

serves 6-8

My mom started making this addictive little snack years ago. I have no idea where it came from, but I do know that once you start popping these spicy little bites into your mouth, you better already have an exit strategy in place. For heavens sake don't just leave it in a bowl on the counter or a few hours later you'll wonder what happened to them when they turn up gone even while your kids are at school. Truly...they're a problem in the most savory and spicy of ways.

You can add more or less crushed red pepper depending on how much you like to feel a burn. I'm married to a Texan and he has been conditioning my children from the womb to have a high heat tolerance, so we like these pretty hot. My children beg for it, it's the easiest snack to take to a party ever, and the good news is that you won't have any to bring home to wonder where they all disappeared to the next day!



Ingredients:

- 1 box Cheez-it Duoz (I like the cheddar and parmesan mix)
- 1 box Premium Saltine Cracker Minis
- 1 packet Ranch Dressing Seasoning
- 2/3 cup Canola Oil
- red pepper flakes (to taste...if you don't like spicy, then skip this one...if you do, I'd start with about 1 tsp or so.)

Instructions:

Dump all of this stuff together and mix well in a large bowl. About every 15 minutes for an hour, give it a quick stir.

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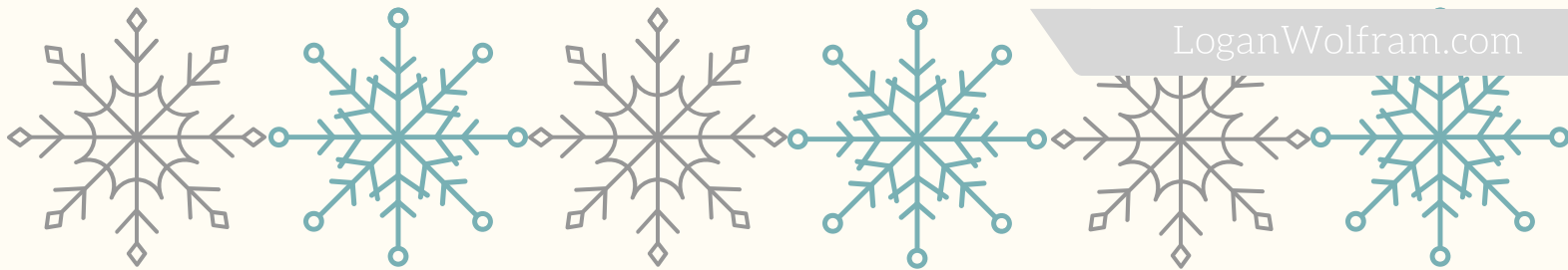
BLACK EYED PEA STEW

feeds 6

I dreaded New Years Day as a child. When you're young you don't much appreciate the freshness of a new year and all that it can mean anyhow. But for me what it really meant was that my mother was going to make hog jowl bacon, black eyed peas, collard greens, and rice with tomato red-eye gravy. I thought every bite of every item was foul and disgusting. But if I wanted to have good luck, money, happy relationships, and whatever else silly superstitious things were promised from eating these foods, I better figure out how to manage at least two bites of each one.

Once I was old enough to no longer believe in annual promise made by Southern food consumption, I stopped eating all of the things altogether. That is until my sister SWORE to me that I'd like this stew. Somehow it combines nearly all of the things I hated as a child and makes it completely delicious. Perhaps I should have mixed up my childhood New Years plate and continued it into my college years when I was so down on my financials one time that I ate only plain baked potatoes for a month.

Anyhow...of course I tell my kids all the same silly things these days. Since we have discovered this stew though, I don't even have to try to convince anyone to eat more than two bites.



Ingredients:

- 2 cups dried black-eyed peas
- 1 olive oil
- 3/4 cup chopped yellow onion
- 8 ounces turkey kielbasa, halved lengthwise and cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
- 1 (28-ounce) can no-salt-added diced tomatoes
- 1 (10-ounce) bag prewashed collard greens
- 1 (10oz can) Rotele tomatoes

Instructions:

Sort and wash peas; set aside.

Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion to pan; cook 3 minutes or until tender. Add sausage; cook 4 minutes or until lightly browned.

Stir in broth; bring to a simmer, scraping pan to loosen browned bits. Stir in peas, salt, peppers, and bay leaves. Cover and simmer 45 minutes or until peas begin to soften. Uncover and cook 15 minutes or until liquid begins to thicken.

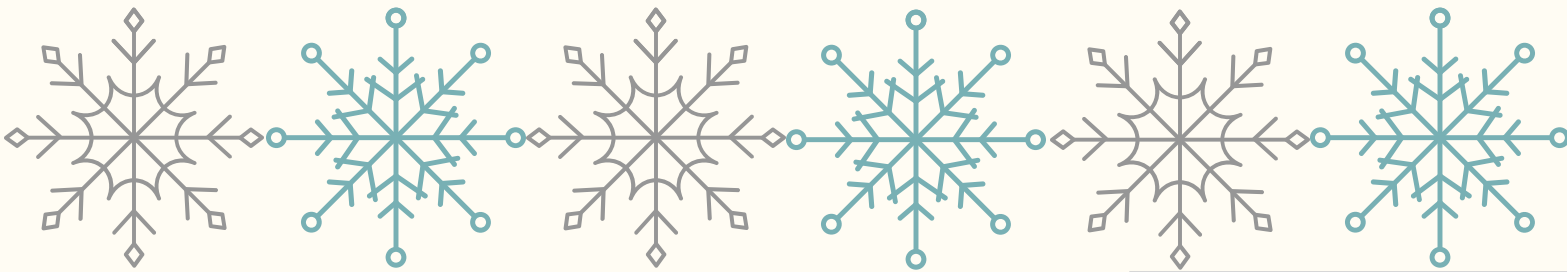
Stir in vinegar, tomatoes, and mustard greens; simmer 10 minutes or until peas are tender, stirring occasionally. Discard bay leaves.

BRUNSWICK STEW

serves 6-8

My father grew up in Virginia and for some reason I think this one pot meal may hail from there. I honestly can't remember where it came from because I've been making it forever. The key to this, as with any stew, is to cook it a long time. The longer it cooks, the more the broth reduces and all of the flavors meld together. Make it in the morning and just let it simmer all day.

I like to cheat a lot with this recipe to make it even easier sometimes. I'll buy already picked rotisserie chicken, use southern style hashbrowns (which is really just cubed frozen potatoes), and whatever other frozen veggies I happen to have around. The point is, dump it all in a pot and let it go. Also, the Pork Roast later on in this book is amazing when you set aside about a pound of it to use in this application as well. Do yourself a favor and make a skillet of cornbread to go alongside this one too.



Ingredients:

- 1 whole cooked & picked chicken
- 3-ish qts chicken stock
- 1 can rotele tomatoes
- 2 cans diced tomatoes
- 1 can tomato sauce
- 2 cans creamed corn
- 1 bag frozen baby butter beans
- 4 potatoes diced
- 2-3 c. frozen peas & carrots
- 2 med onions diced
- about 3 Tbsp brown sugar
- about 3-4 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 lb BBQ pulled pork

Instructions:

Put all of this in a pot and bring to a boil. Reduce to simmer...at least 4 hours! Your pot will reduce by at least 1/3 or more. Make sure you scrape the bottom well when you stir it so it doesn't burn on the bottom of the pot.

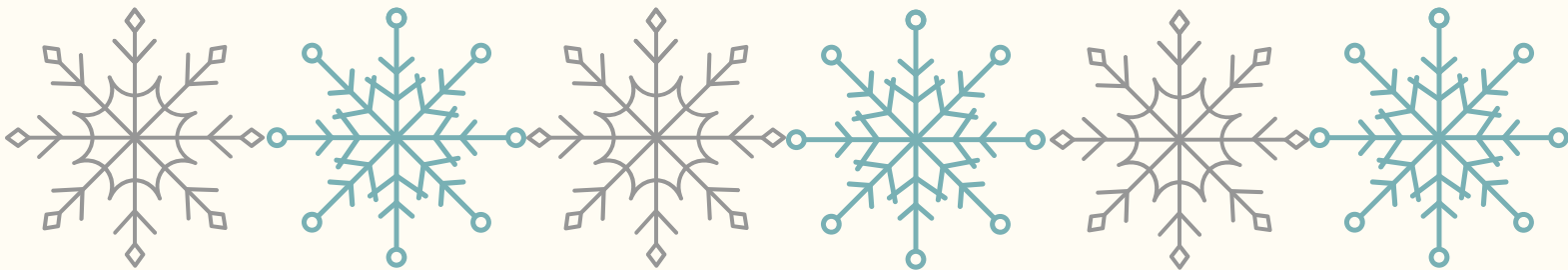
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HEARTY CHILI

makes 2 qts

In our house, chili is synonymous with a football game, and most certainly with the Super Bowl. There's something about loading it up with sour cream and cheese and standing around eating the beany, tomatoey goodness out of a paper bowl with a plastic spoon. Classic Americana.

This recipe is the one my mom has made my whole life, and for anyone who doesn't make homemade chili, I decided that it was important you had access to a good one. Again...cook the heck out of it or else it'll just taste too much like canned tomatoes and flavorless beans. All together though, its just the magic you need to kick off fun with friends or an afternoon cheering your favorite team!



Ingredients:

- 2 lbs ground beef
- 1 lg bell pepper seeded & chopped
- 2 medium onions diced
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 4 - 28 oz cans crushed tomatoes
- 4 Tbsp chili powder
- 6 - 15oz cans kidney beans (I usually use 3 cans of light red and 3 cans dark red beans)

Instructions:

Saute beef, peppers, onion, and garlic til meat loses pink color. Pour off grease. Add tomatoes & chili powder and simmer 3-4 hours. Add beans and cook 1 more hour. Garnish with onions, cheese and sour cream!

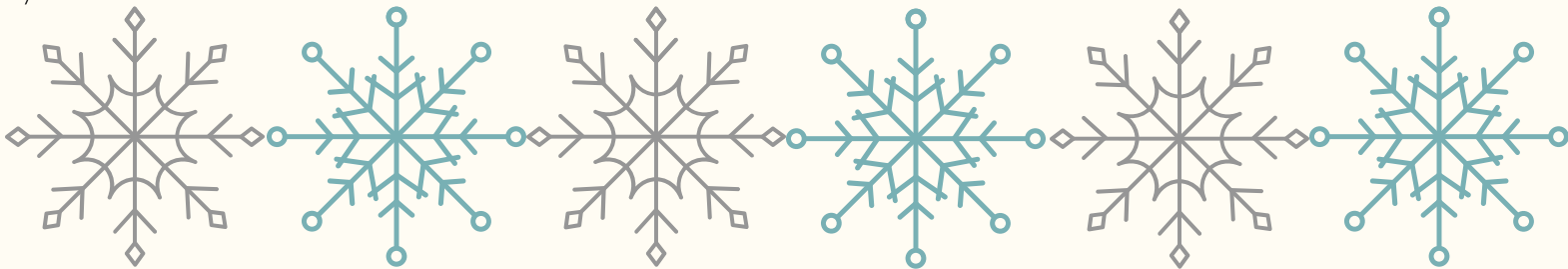
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HOMEMADE CHICKEN STOCK

makes 2 qts

Let's just come right out and say what should be the obvious here; You NEED to know how to make homemade chicken stock. I learned how to make this kitchen staple back when I cooked at Bistro Europa and I've made it ever since. I'll still buy the stuff from Costco for when I'm in a hurry, but usually I'll make loads of stock over the fall and winter and keep it in 32oz containers in the deep freezer.

The recipe I've included cooks a whole chicken (which you can pick and use for just about anything), but a lot of times after we've eaten the meat, I'll use all the bones and skin from a rotisserie chicken and toss it into a pot of water with all the spices, onions, carrots, and celery and cook it til it's reduced by half as well. Let it go til it turns a really lovely caramel brown and it'll be divine in whatever way you use it.



Ingredients:

- 3 qts water
- 1 large chicken (remove gizzards)
- 1 ½ -2 Tbsp salt
- 2-3 tsp fresh ground pepper
- 1 onion quartered
- 1-2 carrots quartered
- 1-2 stalks celery quartered
- 6-8 sprigs thyme
- 2 tsp oregano
- ½ tsp crushed red pepper

Instructions:

Cover and bring all ingredients to a boil. Reduce and simmer about an hour or so for a young chicken (if you use a roasting or laying hen it'll take more like 4-5 hours but it makes a yummier broth.) Once you're done simmering, turn off heat and let the chicken sit in the broth for 30-45 minutes or until you can pick it and the meat easily comes off of the bones. Strain the broth to remove all the stuff you added and it's ready for soups or stews! I store mine in 32oz containers and freeze it for whenever I need some!

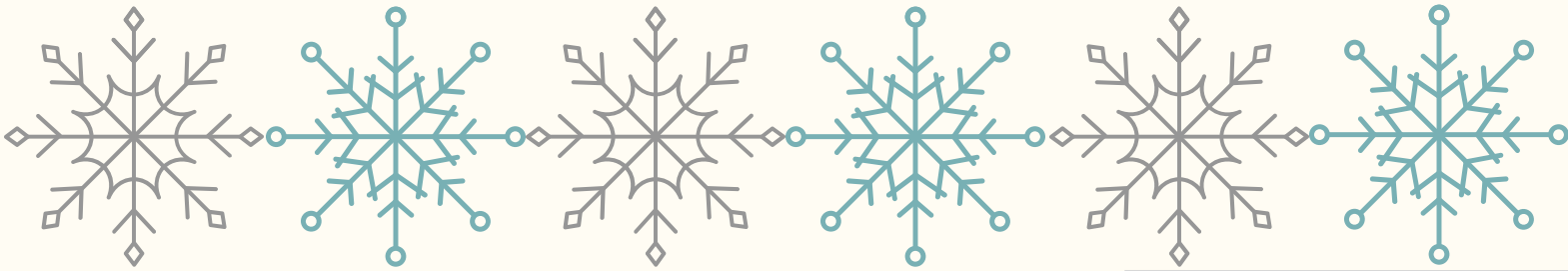
Then you also have delicious chicken to use in pastas, soups, or any recipe calling for picked chicken!

SPANISH BEAN SOUP

serves 4-6

My grandparents, Nanny and Bop, were both born and raised in Florida and they remembered well when droves of Cubans immigrated to the peninsula to escape the terrors of Fidel Castro. The Cuban influx made some pretty solid influence on culture, especially in areas like Miami and even some concentrated parts of Tampa (a little over an hour from Nanny and Bop). I remember when our family used to fly down to visit they'd pick us up at the airport and take us out to eat at a restaurant called The Columbia in Tampa. It was Cuban owned and served up the most incredible soups and meats and sandwiches.

My Nanny loved this particular soup so much that she asked a Cuban friend of hers to teach her how to make it and our family has been making it ever since. Serve it with Cuban bread or throw some mustard, swiss cheese, roasted pork, ham, and dill pickles on that bread to make a Cuban sandwich. This is one of those soups that is almost even better the next day so be sure you make plenty!



Ingredients:

- 1 qt water
- 1 qt chicken stock
- 1 smoked ham bone/hock
- 1 pkg Vigo Spanish Seasoning
- 4 cans chick peas (garbanzo beans)
- 6 potatoes cut into ½ inch cubes
- 1 yellow onion diced
- 2-3 Spanish chorizo sausages in ½ inch half moons

Instructions:

Bring all ingredients to a boil and simmer 2 hours. Before serving remove about 1 cup of beans, mash them, then return to pot. Don't be afraid to double this recipe...it's even better the next day and also freezes like a dream!

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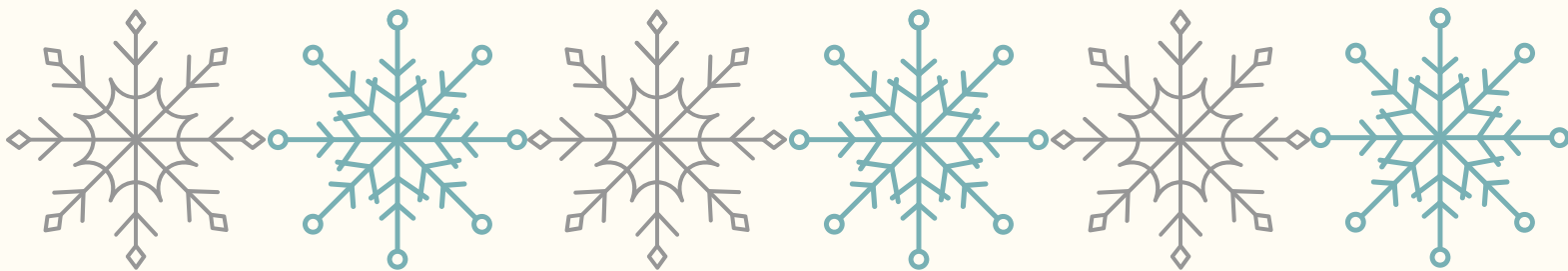
SWEET POTATO & CHORIZO SAUSAGE SOUP

feeds 6

I think originally this recipe was on the front of Gourmet or Bon Appetit or one of those yummy magazines. It has been so many years ago that I really don't remember where it came from, but I've made some tweaks along the way anyhow.

The first time I ever came across this soup was when I was pregnant with my now 5th grader. I distinctly remember standing there in the checkout line and this soup was on the front page of whatever magazine just beckoning me to pick up a copy. I remember it was in a dark green bowl and was all orangey with green spinach swirled throughout and chunks of spicy sausage making their way to bob at the top. It was spectacular looking if ever a soup could be.

I knew if I didn't buy the magazine and make it right away I'd never forgive myself. I even got out of the checkout line to collect all of the ingredients and made it that night. That's what happens when you're pregnant and see something that is appetizing. This yummy soup remains a family favorite and once again, it's amazing the next day!



Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 10- to 11-ounce fully cooked smoked Portuguese linguica sausage or chorizo sausage, cut in half lengthwise and then crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- 2 pounds red-skinned sweet potatoes (yams; about 2 large), peeled, quartered lengthwise, cut crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- 1 pound white-skinned potatoes, peeled, halved lengthwise, cut crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- 6 cups low-salt chicken broth
- 9-ounce bag fresh spinach

Instructions:

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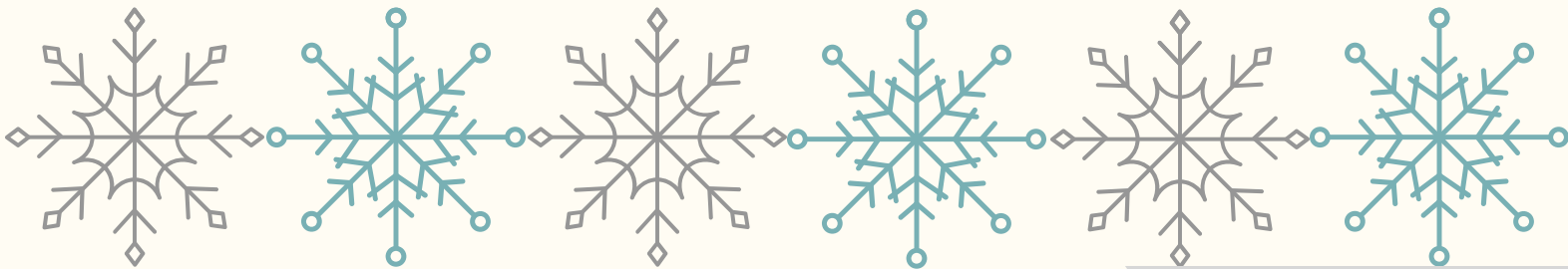
Heat 2 tablespoons oil in heavy large pot over medium-high heat. Add sausage; cook until brown, stirring often, about 8 minutes. Transfer sausage to paper towels to drain. Add onions and garlic to pot and cook until translucent, stirring often, about 5 minutes. Add all potatoes and cook until beginning to soften, stirring often, about 12 minutes. Add broth; bring to boil, scraping up browned bits. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer until potatoes are soft, stirring occasionally, about 20 minutes. Using potato masher, mash some of potatoes in pot. Add browned sausage to soup. Stir in spinach and simmer just until wilted, about 5 minutes. Stir in remaining 1 tablespoon oil. Season with salt and pepper. Divide among bowls and serve.

TACO SOUP

makes 2 qts

Matt and Jenny live in the coolest old white farmhouse out in the middle of nowhere. Despite that it was about a 25 minute drive from where I lived 15 years ago, we all went there for small group from church every week. A lot of the time we would pitch in and bring stuff so we could all eat dinner together. One time Jenny made Taco Soup because she said all you have to do is dump everything in and once it's warm you can serve it.

Jenny was right in that you can dump everything in a pot and serve it, but if you let this cook together for an hour or more it's way yummier. Put cheese, sour cream, and Fritos on top and you'll instantly have created happy taco-ness in a bowl. Sometimes I'll put a scoop of it over a salad the next day so that I can feel extra healthy. I've got to be honest, I even make this one more than chili anymore because my kids are such fans as well.



Ingredients:

- 2 lbs ground beef
- 2 medium onions diced
- 3 cans diced tomatoes
- 2 cans rotele tomatoes
- 2 cans corn
- 1 can pinto beans
- 2 cans black beans
- 2 pkgs taco seasoning
- 1 pkg dry Ranch dressing mix

Instructions:

Brown meat and onions. Dump all cans (undrained) into pot. Stir together well. Bring to a boil then turn down heat and simmer for 3-4 hours. Top with Fritos, cheese, & sour cream.

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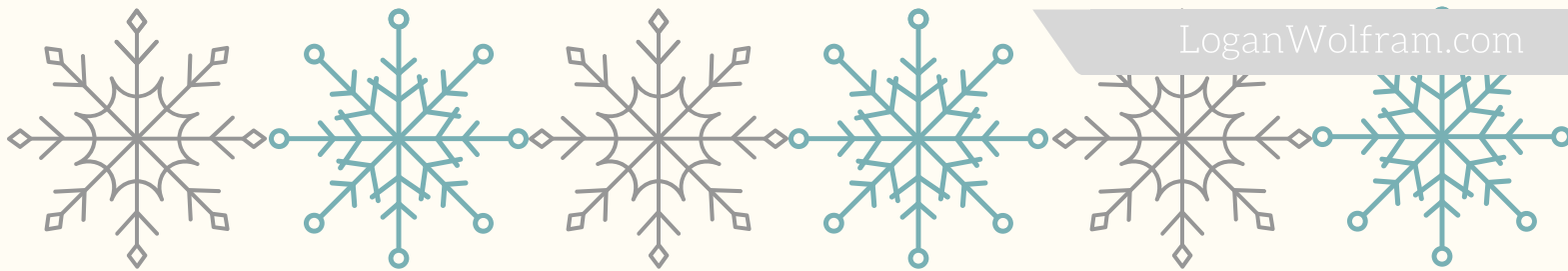
CHICKEN TAGINE WITH LEMON AND OLIVES

erves 4

Sometimes I think I might have been born in the wrong food country. Of course I'm proud to be an American, and I do love a good burger and hot wings, but I tell you what, I'm a sucker for flavors from around the world. I especially love places that have strong affinity for spices. And sometimes I don't even care what spices...hot chilis, curries, cardamom, garam masala, ginger and lime...that stuff just gets tossed in to all manner of dishes in other parts of the world.

This particular dish calls for turmeric and if you already have it in your pantry then you are my spirit cook. Between the fresh ginger and cinnamon, lemon and pepper in this yummy pot of deliciousness, it is just an absolute treat! If you're gluten-free, then it'll totally work with King Arthur's Gluten Free flour, so you're welcome for that.

And if you're wondering like I did ages ago "what is a tagine?", well, it was traditionally a North African stew of spiced meat and vegetables prepared by slow cooking in a shallow earthenware cooking dish with a tall, cone shaped lid. I don't have a tagine dish though, so lucky for us born in the US of A that it works just fine in a skillet.



Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice (about 1 large lemon)
- 12 boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 1 c. all-purpose flour (for dredging)
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1/8 tsp cayenne pepper
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 onions, chopped
- 2 tsp minced fresh ginger
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 c. low sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 c green olives chopped
- rind from 1 lemon, zested
- 2 cinnamon sticks

Instructions:

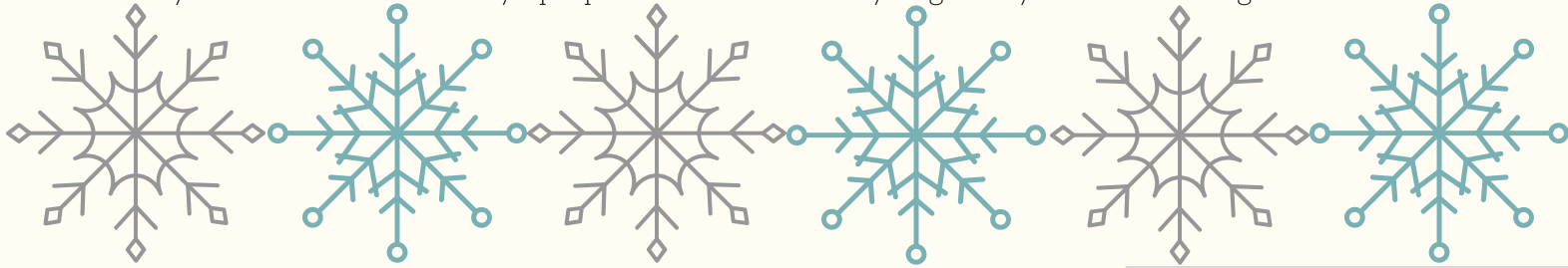
Combine lemon juice & chicken in a large zip-lock bag and marinate for about 30 minutes. Remove chicken afterwards and discard remaining juice in bag. Pat the chicken dry with paper towels and dredge in mix of flour, pepper, salt, cayenne pepper, and turmeric. Heat oil in a large skillet with high sides or dutch oven over med-high heat. Add half of the chicken and cook about 3 minutes on each side or until lightly browned. Once it's browned on both sides, remove from pan, add a little more oil as necessary for the second batch of chicken and repeat procedure with other half of chicken. Once done, remove all the chicken from the pan and set aside. Then, to same pan, add the onion, ginger, and garlic and saute until tender (about 5 minutes or so.) Return all of the chicken to the pan. Add the broth, olives, lemon zest, and cinnamon sticks, and about another 1/4 tsp turmeric, and bring to a boil. Once boiling, cover the pan, reduce the heat, and simmer 1 hour or until chicken is tender. Discard cinnamon stick before serving.

CORIANDER CRUSTED SALMON

serves 6-8

I have a confession to make. Apparently many people I know think this is strange, but I absolutely LOVE going to the grocery store. Maybe it's because I love food and it's one of the few places where it's completely acceptable to stand and stare at it and to ponder and make up your mind at your own pace. And I love American grocery stores too because we are crazy and need to have so much variety that we have a yogurt aisle with no less than 50 different kinds and flavors. Anyhow, I digress. Really though, I love walking the aisles, looking at different items and enjoying the variety and creativity. It makes me feel creative too...aisles and aisles of possibility.

And I tell you what is just the bees knees, grocery stores with samples! I kid you not, we have totally fed our children lunch purely off of Costco samples after church on a Sunday. It's genius. And that's how I came across this recipe. It was being made once in the grocery store and I grabbed the recipe and for years now it has been my husband's favorite way I prepare salmon. Thank you grocery stores for being so awesome!



Ingredients:

- 1 ½ lbs Salmon fillets
- 3 Tbsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp pepper
- 2 Tbsp Olive Oil

Chickpea Artichoke Salad

- 1 bag baby arugula (4-5 oz)
- ½ c canned, quartered artichokes, chopped
- ¼ c. red onion, finely chopped
- ½ c. canned chickpeas (drained and rinsed)
- 3 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1/3 c. olive oil
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp pepper

Instructions:

Preheat a large saute pan on medium-high for 2-3 minutes. Combine coriander, salt, and pepper and then coat both sides of the fish.

Place the oil in pan and let it get good and hot. Add the fish and cook 3-4 minutes on each side or until it reaches 145 degrees and the fish will flake easily. Serve over Chickpea Artichoke Salad

To make the Salad: Combine arugula, chickpeas, onion, and artichokes. Whisk vinegar, oil, salt and pepper until well blended and drizzle desired amount over salad. Toss and serve.

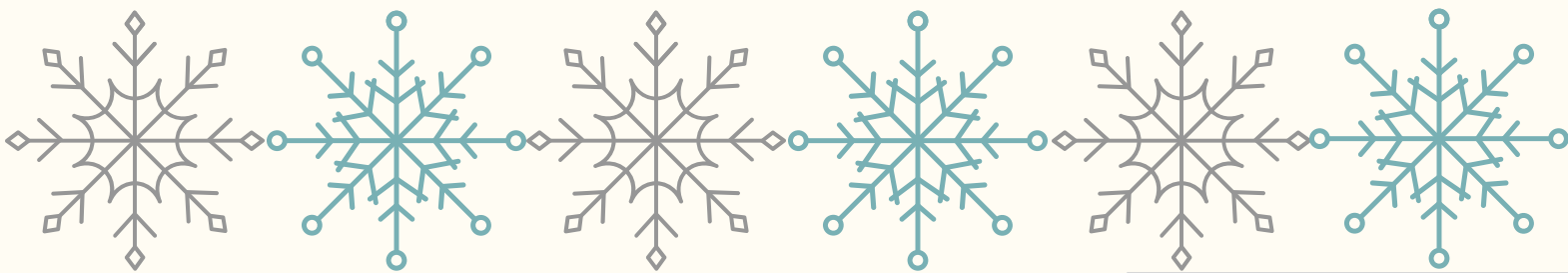
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HOMEMADE SPAGHETTI WITH A KICK

makes 2 qts

I'm very fortunate in that somehow I am not Italian but still manage to have come from a family that has on both sides always made homemade spaghetti sauce. If you're wanting a spaghetti sauce that is truly authentically Italian, then keep looking my friend, because this isn't it. If authenticity is what's burning in your heart, then make a marinara or Bolognese. This is a mash up of my mom's spaghetti, my mother in law's, and my sister's twist on my mom's recipe, which really came from my grandmother. In short, I've jacked up this passed-along recipe to high heaven and it is awesome!

My grandmother's version was always too greasy. Mom fixed that by using leaner meat. My sister added mushrooms and Italian sausage (drain the grease or you'll return to Nanny's version right quick.) Then my MIL sent me her recipe once and she used to put a can of Rotele tomatoes with green chilis in hers and I liked that idea a whole lot. So now, it's a mix of them all and my family loves it. For the record, the whole family has now converted to my mashup, so our generations below will do something to it down the road I'm sure!



Ingredients:

- 2 lbs ground beef
- 2-3 hot italian sausages (casings removed)
- 2-3 mild italian sausages (casings removed)
- 12 oz tomato paste
- 2 medium onions diced
- 2 pkgs sliced mushrooms
- 2 15 oz cans diced tomatoes
- 2 cans rotele tomatoes
- 1 tsp each basil, oregano, thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 cloves minced garlic

Instructions:

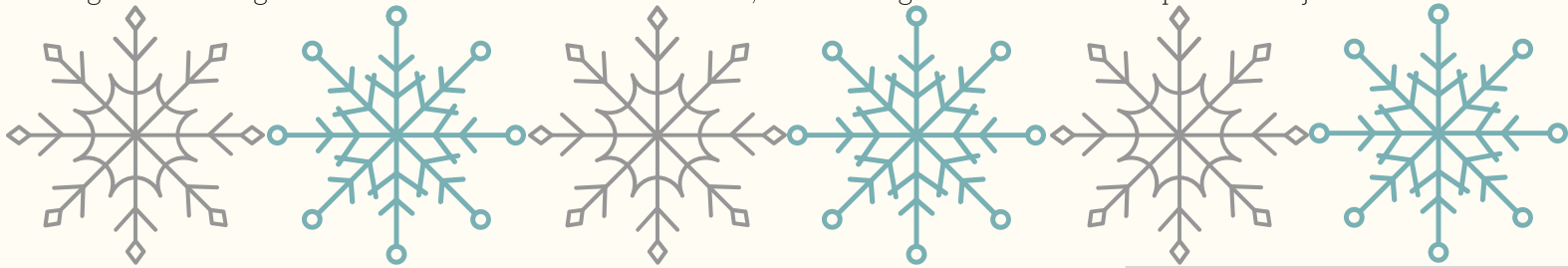
Brown meat, garlic, onions. Add mushrooms and let them sweat a little. Once the meat is completely cooked, add in all tomatoes, tomato paste, and spices. Stir together well. Bring to a boil then turn down heat and simmer on low for 4-6 hours.

INDIAN BUTTER CHICKEN

feeds 4

There's a fantastic little pub in downtown Greenville, SC called the Velo Fellow that makes for a great date night on occasion. It's a dimly lit, Edison bulb sort of place located on the basement level of a row of buildings and is filled with old wood and cozy booths. It's modeled after a British public house and has live music on the weekends. It's the kind of place my husband and the guys started going for man night and of course after awhile I was curious to see it for myself.

The menu at the Fellow has standard pub fare like fish and chips and burgers. On occasion they have a cleverly titled dish like "The Starving Artist" which is a plate full of beans and rice you can pick up for next to nothing. It was in this British styled pub where I first tried Butter Chicken. I don't even know why "butter" is in the title because the dish tastes nothing like its namesake. Instead it's a mixture of yummy warm spices and tender saucy chicken that you'll want a piece of naan bread to sop up the extra sauce for sure. A friend sent me this recipe a bit ago, and though I'm lacking the Edison bulbs and wooden booths, the warm goodness of this recipe hits me just the same!



Ingredients:

- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 9 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 (14 oz.) can light coconut milk
- 1 (6 oz.) can tomato paste
- 2 tsp. garam masala
- ½ tsp. cayenne, or to taste
- 1 tsp. dried coriander
- 1 Tbsp. paprika
- 1 tsp. tumeric
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1½ tsp Kosher salt
- Freshly ground pepper
- 2 lbs. boneness, skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1 inch pieces.
- 1 c chopped broccoli (optional)
- 1 c thinly sliced carrots (optional)

Instructions:

Heat the oil in the multi cooker (or a saucepan) on sear. Add the garlic and cook continuously stirring for about 1 min. Stir in coconut milk, tomato paste, garam masala, cayenne, coriander, paprika, tumeric, cumin, salt and pepper. Stir and cook for about 2 min. until thoroughly mixed. Add in salt and pepper. Add in chicken, stir well. Cover and cook for 5-6 hours on low. Add the veggies 1-2 hrs before it's done. Serve over rice and with naan bread if desired.

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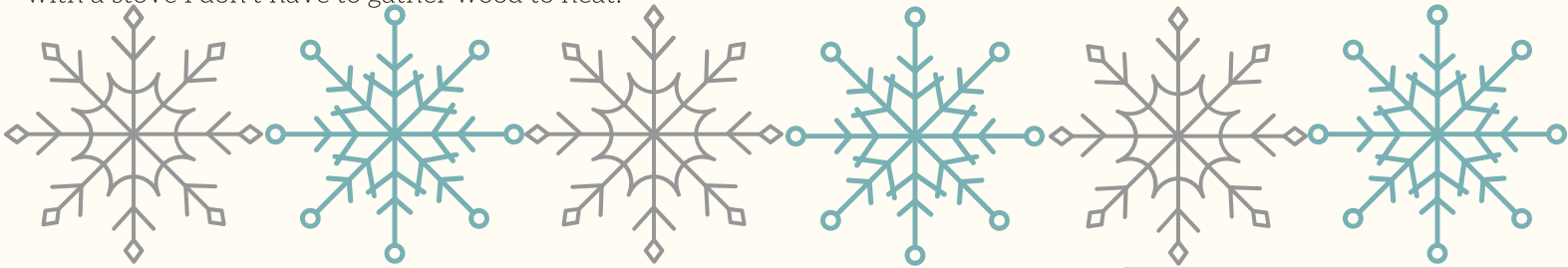
MADRAS GRILLED VENISON (OR BEEF TENDERLOIN)

serves 4

My husband is a pretty manly guy. A few years ago he decided that he wanted to learn how to deer hunt. And by deer hunt, I don't mean with a rifle. He wanted to be more primitive than that and learn how to bow hunt. So he got a bow for Christmas and went out to hunt with a friend on some land nearby for the first time.

Apparently, it's common that you may have to wait awhile to get a decent deer. From what I understand, it can especially take longer bow hunting since there is some more precision involved. But don't you know that man of mine got his first deer on his first shot on his first ever time out! And I was just elated because VENISON!

There's something satisfying about hunting and gathering to feed the family. I once made a basket from tree bark with my kids and then we went and foraged for blackberries to put in the basket and made a cobbler with our findings. I felt like a regular Laura Ingles Wilder and decided that maybe I was born in the wrong time period. But then I remembered that I have asthma and probably would have actually died if I lived in that Little House on the Prairie and never made it to an age to have done all of those things. Oh well...I'll just settle for husband hunted venison and being alive in a house with a stove I don't have to gather wood to heat.



Ingredients:

- 1 can coconut milk
- 1/2 c extra virgin olive oil
- 3 Tbsp yellow curry paste (I couldn't find this at the store so I used 3 Tbsp curry powder that I mixed with a bit of water and oil til it became a paste)
- 4 - 7oz pieces of venison loin (or beef tenderloin)
- salt and pepper to taste
- Dried Cherry Butter Reduction (see recipe)
- Ginger Ale Mushrooms (see recipe)

Instructions:

In a baking dish, whisk together the coconut milk, olive oil, and curry paste

Add the venison to the marinade and toss to coat.

Refrigerate overnight. (I didn't have this kind of forethought so I put all of this in a vacuum sealed bag for 3 hours to speed the process and it was great.)

Prepare a grill for high heat. Season both sides of each venison loin to taste with salt and pepper. Oil the grill and place the steaks on the hottest part of the grill. Grill for 2 minutes and flip. Grill for 2 minutes and flip again, keeping the steaks on the hottest part of the grill. Grill for 2 more minutes on each remaining side for rare temperature. (I went closer to 3 minutes per 4 sides and it was perfectly medium rare.)

To serve, spoon the dried cherry-butter reduction onto each of 4 plates. Place slices of the venison tenderloin on the sauce and spoon the ginger-ale mushrooms over top!

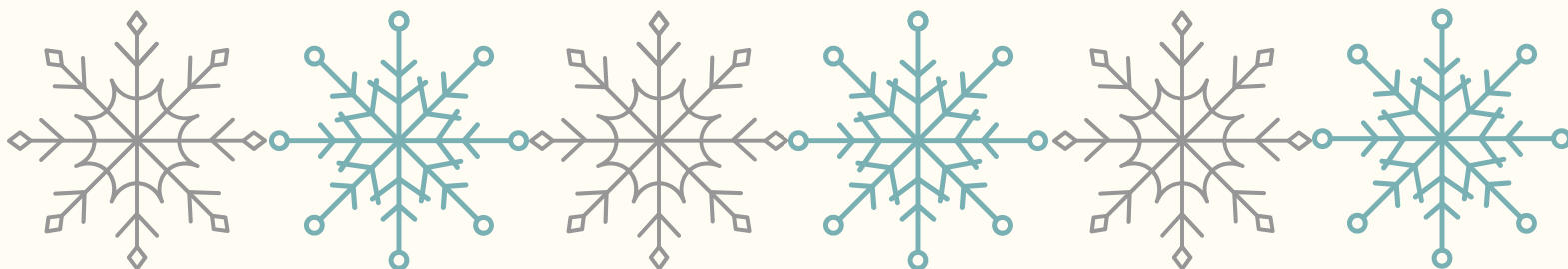
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DRIED CHERRY BUTTER REDUCTION & GINGER ALE MUSHROOMS

for Madras Venison

In a continuation of my manly husband-hunted venison story, I must confess that I didn't have the first clue how to cook it once I had a freezer full. Mostly I decided that I could use some of it in applications like I would have for beef, but also I wanted to figure out how to bring out the flavors more than I could have just by converting things.

Several years ago we went to an incredible restaurant in Denver called the Vesta Dipping Grill. The restaurant's concept was that you could order different meats with like 3-4 sauces that came on the side and each sauce would completely change the flavor profile of the dish. It was really creative and fun and they had a cookbook, which I totally purchased. I'd highly recommend finding the cookbook if you're a fan of cookbooks like I am, but this recipe was adapted from that! It totally works with a beef tenderloin as well and makes for an impressive thing to serve for company, or even something special like Christmas dinner! Make the Madras Tenderloin but FOR SURE make these incredible embellishments for it as well!



Ingredients:

- 1/2 c dried cherries
- 1 c port (or you can use Sherry as well)
- 1/3 c heavy cream
- 1 Tbsp butter
- salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

In a small saucepan, combine the cherries and port. Cook the mixture over high heat until about a quarter of it cooks off.

Add the cream, lower the heat and simmer the sauce to reduce until it is thick and syrupy. Swirl in the butter and whisk to mix well.

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- 1 pound baby portobella mushrooms
- 1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp peeled, minced ginger
- 1 tsp chopped garlic
- 2 Tbsp ginger ale
- 1 tsp chopped fresh basil
- salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

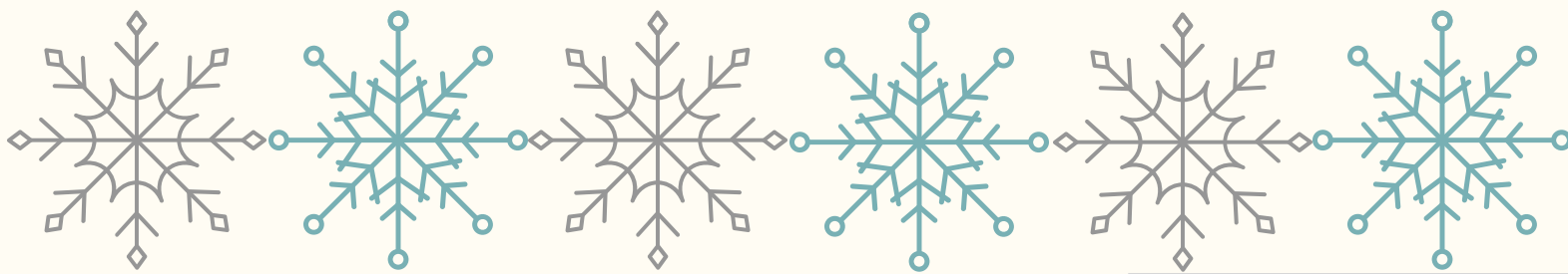
In a saute pan, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the ginger and the garlic and saute for 1 1/2 minutes. Add the mushrooms and sweat them until they look wet and are cooked through. Add the ginger ale and reduce the liquid until the mushrooms have absorbed all of the ginger ale. Keep moving the mushrooms until they start to caramelize and are almost crisp around the edges. Add the butter and basil and season to taste with salt and pepper.

SAVORY BEEF & RICE CASSEROLE

feeds 6

My mom told me that she remembers back in the day churches used to have what they called “tasting dinners” as fundraisers. Participants would essentially each bring a dish and you could taste a portion and then pay to get a copy of the recipe if you liked it. My mom got this recipe from one such event and I cannot even begin to tell you how ridiculously warm and delicious it is. I have used venison chunks in this as well and it was incredible.

My brother in law calls this dish “Man Meal” because it’s so savory and bacony and hearty. I guess it passes manly standards of fulfillment, but as far as I’m concerned it passes feminine ones as well. I’ll be honest in that it’s not especially gorgeous on a plate, as casseroles often aren’t, but it’s one worth serving for company simply because it’s so flavorful and fulfilling. Your house will smell incredible after cooking all of this bacony, beefy, winey goodness, and your guests will have mouths watering before they’ve even seen what you’re taking out of the oven!



Ingredients:

- 3 lbs sirloin tips (or stew meat)
- 12 slices bacon
- 2 lg onions sliced
- 1 1/4 c. raw rice (i prefer brown b/c it's tastier and better for you)
- 1 c. dry red wine
- 2 cans beef consommé
- 1 garlic clove minced
- 1/2 tsp thyme
- 1 tsp chopped parsley
- bay leaf
- 15 oz can diced tomatoes
- 1 c. parmesan cheese

Instructions:

Cook bacon in large pan, crumble and put in bottom of large casserole dish or dutch oven. Pour off about 1/2 of bacon drippings and then brown beef chunks. Remove browned beef to casserole dish and put on top of bacon. In same pan (with beef juices and bacon grease) brown onions, then add rice til lightly browned as well. Add tomatoes at the end and set aside (removed from heat) for later use. To casserole dish add wine, consommé, garlic, thyme, parsley, and bay leaf. Cook covered 1 hour on 325. Afterwards then add rice mixture and cook another hour. Sprinkle with cheese the last 5 minutes. Serve and enjoy! This is truly a favorite and makes your whole house smell so savory and delicious!

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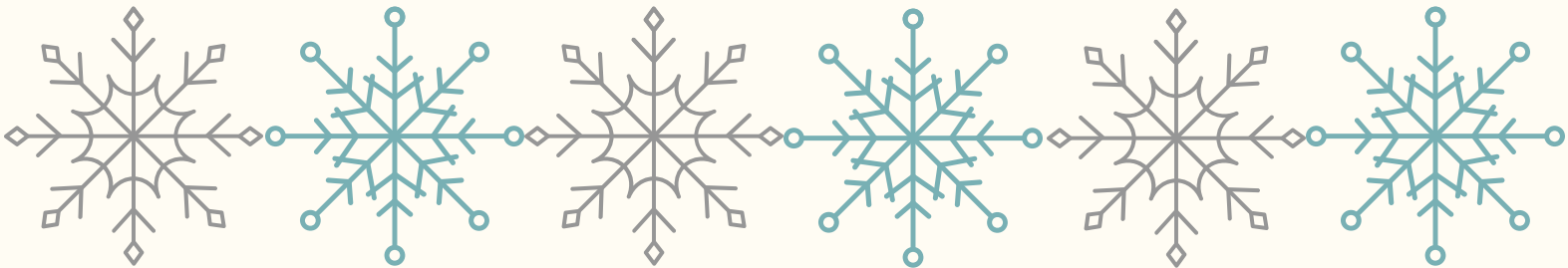
SLOW ROASTED CIDER PORK ROAST (3 WAYS)

erves 6

In 2012, I experienced my fourth loss of a pregnancy. I was 16 weeks along and had gone in for a routine check when we learned that our baby had died just a couple of days before. The next month was full of heartache and sickness and multiple procedures and complications from those procedures. I was ill from it all for several weeks and really needed help from people around me to function well.

I've always believed that the ministry of meals is an important one as it reduces so many factors for the recipient. One meal removes the need to meal plan, grocery shop, and prepare something. It takes away a burden and fills an obvious need. To me it has always been such a simple way to love on someone in a hard spot, or even just going through a rough week.

My friend Laura originally brought us a version of this pork, which I have now tweaked to make even yummiier over time. The way she made it originally was on tacos with fresh pico de gallo, cheese, and sour cream. I love adding freshly sliced jalapeños and avocado as well. Often I'll even make 2 entire roasts and freeze the meat to use later in Brunswick Stew or to serve on a bun for BBQ sandwiches. We can eat on this for a week with different applications and it's a fantastic thing to take to someone needing a meal as well!



Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 tablespoon ground paprika
- 1 tablespoon sea salt
- 1 tablespoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 (6-pound) or 2 (3-pound) pieces Boston butt or pork shoulder
- 1 cup apple cider
- 20 to 24 corn tortillas, grilled
- Toppings: lime slices, grated cheese, fresh cilantro, sliced avocado, sour cream, fresh pico de gallo, salsa

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 325°. Combine first 4 ingredients in a small bowl; rub spice mixture all over pork. Place pork, fatty side up, in a large Dutch oven. Pour cider and 1/2 cup water around pork. Cover with a lid or aluminum foil, and roast at 325° for 5 hours or until fork-tender. Uncover and cook another 30 to 40 minutes or until skin is crispy and pork breaks apart easily with a fork.
2. Remove from oven, and let stand 10 to 15 minutes before shredding into chunks with 2 forks. Skim fat from cooking liquid, and add liquid to pork before serving. Serve warm with tortillas and desired toppings.

Also you can add your favorite sauce and use this for BBQ sandwiches or add to Brunswick Stew!

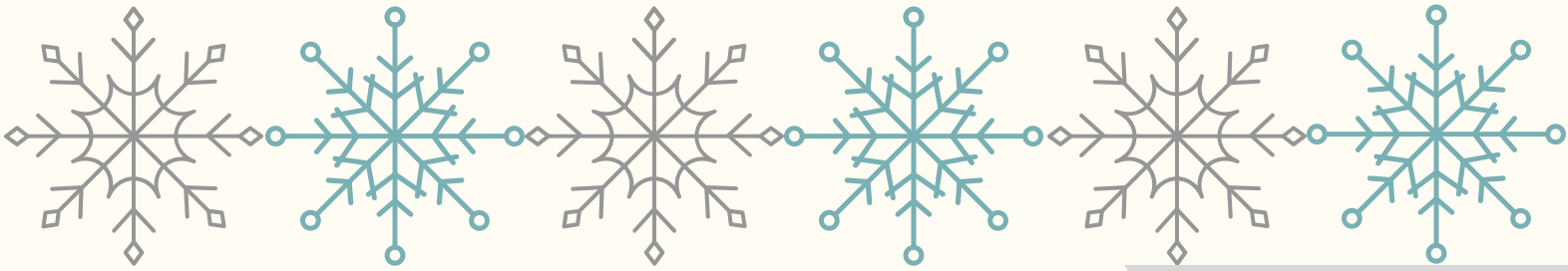
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STUFFED RED & YELLOW PEPPERS

erves 6

Be forewarned that my children don't like this recipe. Actually, in all fairness, they love the stuffing inside but don't love the peppers. And since they pretty much will eat anything I serve them the majority of the time, I relent on this one and just let them eat the stuffing. My husband and I usually just divide up their extra peppers, but I still make them because we love them so.

I totally made up this recipe after looking at dozens of what seemed like relatively boring versions of stuffed peppers. As you know by now, I do love some interesting spices and some of these more unexpected ones give these peppers some really rich flavors. When I'm in a pinch I'll snag some of the pre-made stuffed peppers from Costco, but they can't hold a candle to my version.



Ingredients:

- 6 colored peppers (topped, seeds removed, and boiled for 5 minutes)
- 1 lb ground turkey
- 1 onion diced
- 1 - 15 oz can diced tomatoes
- 1 can tomato paste
- 1 pkg Mahatma wild rice (prepared)
- 1 c. plus 1/2 c shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 2 tsp curry powder
- 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1/2 tsp thyme
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1/2 tsp allspice
- 1 tsp parsley
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper

Instructions:

Cook rice according to pkg and set aside. Brown turkey, onion, and garlic til cooked. Add all spices. Add tomatoes and tomato paste and let all simmer together for maybe 10 minutes. Mix in rice and 1 c. cheese. Fill each pepper with mixture and place in a greased baking dish. Sprinkle tops with remaining 1/2 c cheese and bake at 350 degrees for 35-45 minutes.

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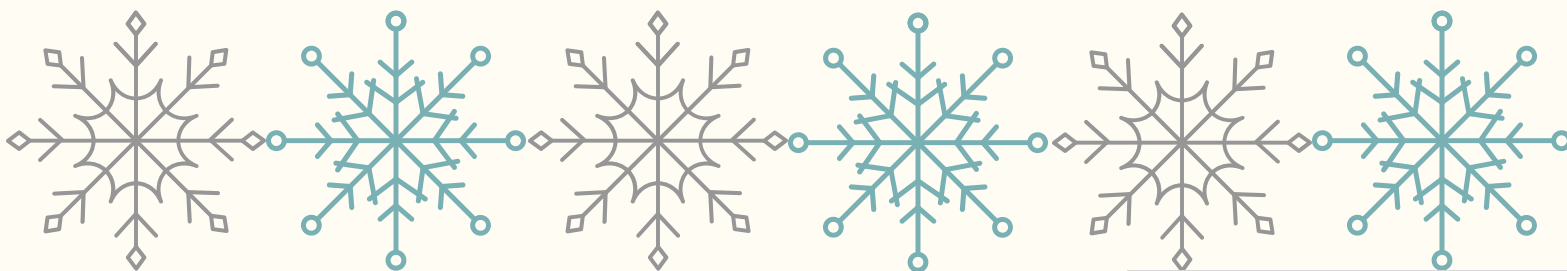
BEST SUGAR COOKIES OF ALL TIME

yield 2 dozen

I feel like everyone should have a solid recipe for sugar cookies. We grew up making them at Christmas every year and decorating them, and no matter what you think about how making store bought ones to decorate seem easier, the flavor cannot even begin to touch the buttery flakiness of these homemade ones. For years I made the version that has been in my family for generations, but I always got frustrated that when I cut them out to decorate and they'd spread so much in the oven that the finished baked shapes looked more blobby than all the lovely shapes in the end.

During my stint selling radio advertising after my short-lived restaurant career, I discovered a fun place called Cookies By Design that would make really cute custom cookie baskets with darling decorated sugar cookies that I'd sometimes send to really awesome clients. Their cookies held the shapes well and had an almost shortbread like texture. So round about that point in time when I fell in love with their cookies, I set out to find a recipe that could rival our family's traditional one.

After testing and combining more than 30 different sugar cookie recipes over a couple of years, I settled on this version. The powdered sugar keeps them really crisp and flaky and they also aren't too too sweet which I like. We usually ice them with a simple mix of confectioners sugar, a dash of vanilla, and a little bit of milk just til the sugar gets runny and it adds the perfect amount of final sweetness. They hold shapes beautifully and are my youngest son's favorite cookie of all time.



Ingredients:

- 24 ounces butter (softened)
- 20 ounces powdered sugar (sifted)
- 3 whole eggs, plus
- 1 egg yolk
- 1/2 ounce vanilla extract
- 1/4 ounce almond extract
- 6 1/2 cups flour

Instructions:

With paddle attachment, mix butter for 30 seconds. Add a 1/3 of the powdered sugar, mix on first speed for 1 minute. Add another 1/3 of the powdered sugar, mix another minute. Finally, add the last 1/3 of sugar, mix 1 minute.

Combine eggs, vanilla, and almond extract together, add to butter/sugar mixture. Mix for 30 seconds.

Add a 1/3 of the flour, mix 1 minute. Scrape. Add the next 1/3 of the flour, mix 2 minutes. Scrape.

Add the final 1/3 of the flour, mix 3 minutes. Refrigerate until able to be rolled out and cut into desired shapes. Bake at 350 for 9-15 minutes depending on the size you cut them!

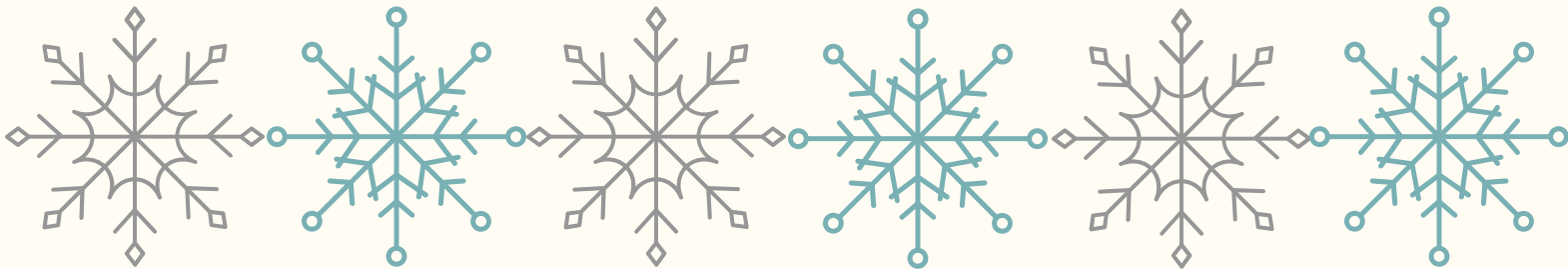
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CARAMEL POPCORN

8 quarts

I'm convinced that Caramel Popcorn is a staple of childhood. I remember my mom making it for a fall festival that our neighborhood would have every year towards the middle to end of October. I distinctly remember her stirring it every few minutes in the oven and how excited we would get when we finally got to eat it!

Caramel Corn in my mind is a crucial inclusion in a list of important childhood treats like cotton candy, funnel cakes, and sno cones. Sometime I'll share recipes for these other 3, but for the sake of winter and warmth, this stuff straight out of the oven is a little bit of heaven. To this day I still love the sections that get a little more of the caramel and clump together 4 or 5 pieces of popcorn. Make this for your littles or a party or just on a cold, wintry day and you will have instantly elevated the mood in your home!



Ingredients:

- 8 quarts of popped corn
- 2 c brown sugar
- 1 c margarine
- ½ c white corn syrup
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp baking soda

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 200 degrees. Mix together brown sugar, margarine, corn syrup, and salt in a saucepan on the stove and bring to a boil. Boil for 5 minutes constantly stirring so as not to burn. Pour over popcorn and mix well. Spread onto cookie sheets lined with parchment paper and bake at 200 degrees for 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes.

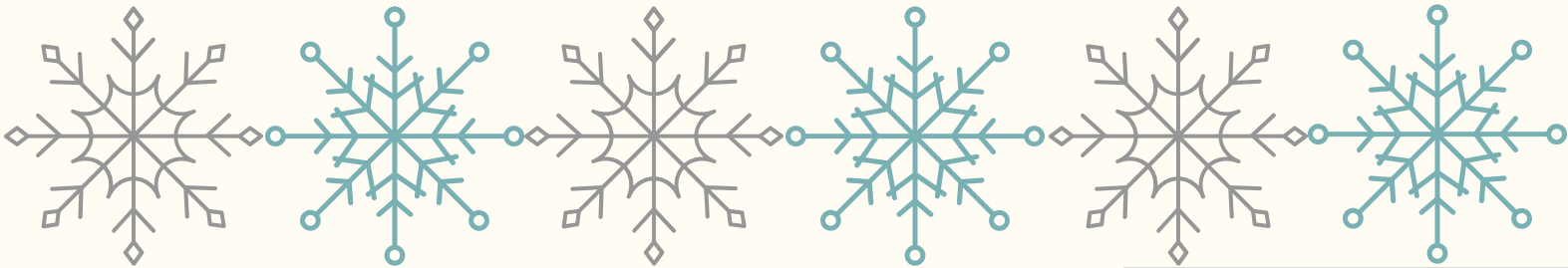
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CINNAMON RAISIN RICE PUDDING

6-8 servings

I'm an old soul when it comes to desserts. As much as I can appreciate fancy versions of things, it's the old favorites that my great grandparents savored that I still prefer most over anything else. This one was from my great grandmother.

Rice pudding is so creamy and comforting and also feels very British to me. I'm not even sure if it's British at all, but I totally imagine characters from Jane Austen novels enjoying a dish of rice pudding around the holidays and that makes me feel sophisticated when I make it. Sprinkle a tiny dash of cinnamon on top of each serving and it can look very pretty in a dish for an after dinner treat. It's not too sweet either, which I like. Honestly I love it so much though that I have been known to even eat it cold straight out of the refrigerator the next morning for breakfast!



Ingredients:

- 3 c scalded milk (milk that has been brought to a boil and cooled down)
- 1 Tbsp butter
- 1 ¼ c cooked white rice
- ½ c sugar
- ¼ tsp salt
- ½ c raisins
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 2 beaten eggs

Instructions:

Heat Oven to 325 degrees. Mix milk and next 6 ingredients and slowly add and mix well into eggs. Turn into a 1 ½ qt casserole dish and set in pan of boiling water bath. Bake for 1 hour, stirring 1-2x during the last 30 minutes.

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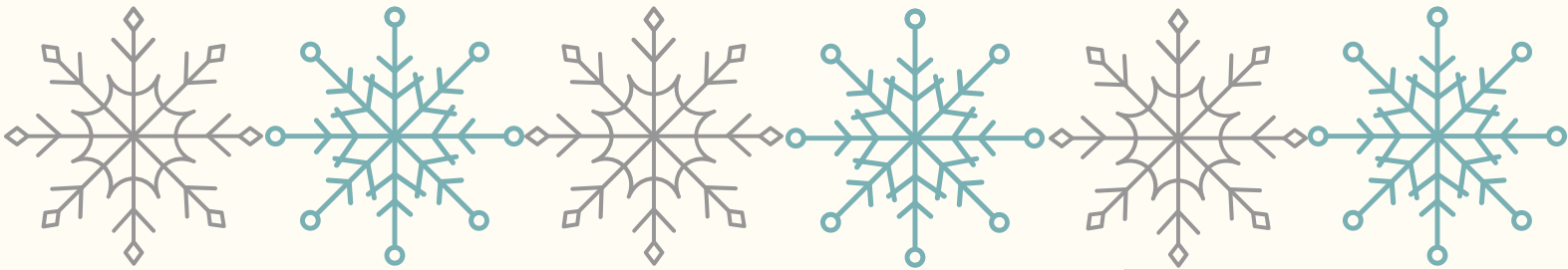
CRACKER CANDY

serves 8-14

This is the easiest and most spectacular treat and you just must learn how to make it!

I've heard some people call it Christmas Crack, but I grew up calling it Cracker Candy. I made it once for a really fancy party I went to and an older lady came up to me and marveled for like five minutes about the "extraordinary delicate pastry" that I'd made in the center. I took great joy telling her it was nothing more than a saltine cracker much to her utter shock and I think even disappointment. I decided after that I'd take credit for the "delicate pastry" every time it came up. It still makes me laugh to this day to think about it.

My friend Emily and I have gotten together every year for the last 17 to make batches and batches of this to give to friends and neighbors at Christmastime. We have been doing it for so long now that certain friends look forward to receiving a pretty little bag of Cracker Candy every year. Truly it's a cinch to make and I think was probably making people love salted caramel long before it was ever a thing at Starbucks.



Ingredients:

- A cookie sheet lined with parchment paper (trust me...you'll appreciate this step for cleanup later.)
- Saltine Crackers (usually a pan takes about 1 1/2 sleeves of crackers)
- 1 1/2 c chocolate chips
- 1 c. brown sugar
- 2 sticks butter

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper and cover with crackers. Melt butter and brown sugar over med-high heat. Once boiling, boil while stirring constantly for 4 minutes. Pour over crackers and spread out to evenly coat the crackers. Then put in the oven to bake for 5 minutes. As soon as it comes out of the oven, sprinkle the chocolate chips over the crackers and let them melt. Once melted, spread the chocolate to evenly coat the crackers. If you want to expedite the process, put the pan in the freezer to let the chocolate harden. When it's hardened, cut it up and try not to eat the whole pan!

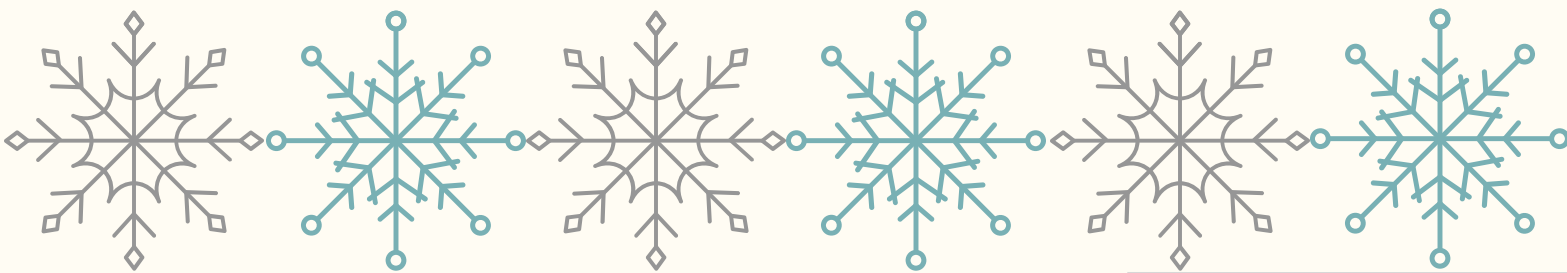
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MOLASSES COOKIES

2-3 dozen

As soon as fall hits and the air turns crisp, I begin craving the flavors and smells of cinnamon, ginger, and cloves. I've always loved a gingersnap cookie, but a handful of years ago my friend Lisa introduced me to this recipe for Molasses Cookies. They are chewy and spiced and might be one of my most favorite cookies ever. Somehow they always taste the most delicious when Lisa makes them, but that doesn't stop me from doing my best with her recipe regardless.

Be warned that these cookies are highly addictive. Get yourself in front of a cozy fire and you'll find that they nicely compliment a cup of coffee in the morning, tea in the afternoon, or glass of red wine in the evening. They're the kind of cookie that even though you make a double batch, you find yourself wondering what happened to them only 2 days after removing them from the oven. A favorite for years to be certain!



Ingredients:

- 3/4 c shortening
- 1/2 c sugar
- 1/2 brown sugar
- 1/4 c molasses
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp baking soda
- 2 c flour
- 1/2 tsp cloves
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp ginger
- 1 tsp cinnamon

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Slightly melt shortening in microwave. Stir to thick, white consistency. Add sugars, molasses, and egg. Beat well. In a separate bowl mix together all dry ingredients. Pour wet mix into the dry mix and combine well. Chill 30-60 minutes. Form into about 1" balls and roll balls in granulated sugar. Bake on greased cookie sheet about 2" apart for 8-12 minutes.

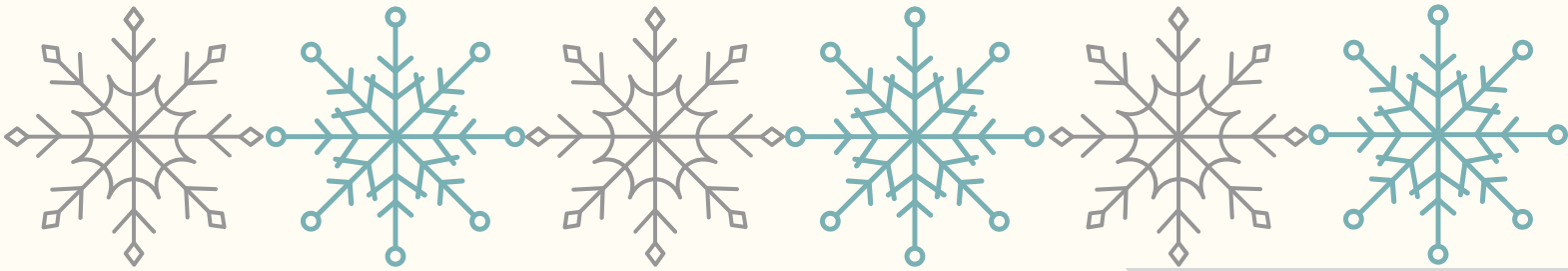
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OLD FASHIONED GINGERBREAD

8 servings

Gingerbread is one of those recipes that is so old, no one really can probably trace it back to where they got it originally. I've done a little reading up on it and the name "gingerbread" refers to baked goods with ginger, cloves, nutmeg or cinnamon and sweetened with honey, sugar or molasses. It dates back to 16th century Germany as a holiday treat.

I've always loved gingerbread cookies, but when I got hold of this recipe from my great grandmother for a more cake-like application, I was in love. It's a pretty basic recipe and it's fine served plain, but if you make a bourbon caramel sauce and serve the cake warm out of the oven with vanilla ice cream or spiced apples or pears, you will have created a wintry tasting dessert that would have even Saint Nicholas coming back for more. I'm telling you...make this one with that Madras Tenderloin for dinner and you'll have a holiday meal fit for the three kings themselves!



Ingredients:

- 1 c sugar
- ½ c shortening
- 1 egg
- ½ c maple syrup
- 1 tsp ginger
- ½ tsp cloves
- ½ nutmeg
- 2 ½ c flour
- 1 ½ tsp baking soda
- 1 c boiling water
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 c caramel ice cream topping
- ¼ bourbon
- vanilla ice cream

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix together first 12 ingredients and pour into an 8x8 greased baking dish. Bake at 350 for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a saucepan on the stove, mix 1 c caramel ice cream topping and ¼ bourbon and bring to a boil. Boil for about 1-2 minutes and serve drizzled over warm gingerbread with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. (Is also delicious with baked spiced apples or pears layered on top as well!)

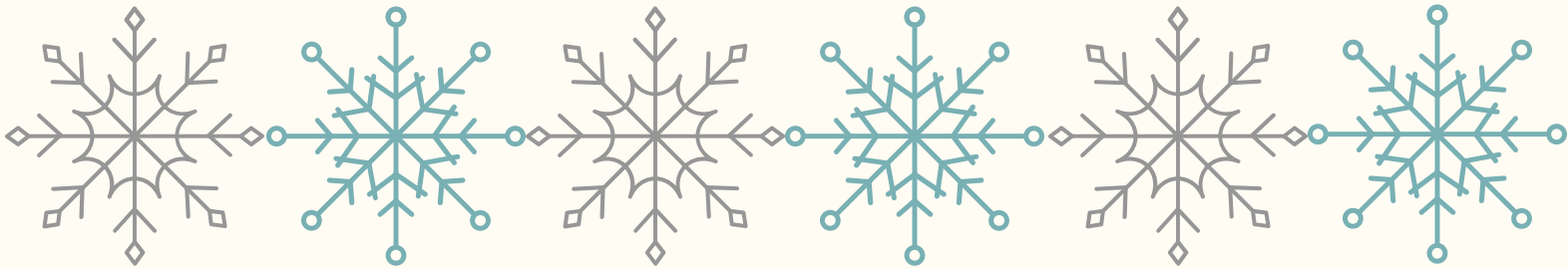
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POUND CAKE

serves 8-14

Pound Cake is another basic dessert that is good to have in your arsenal. It's easy enough to make, but I've always found it to be one that beckons a trustworthy recipe. A lot of times I'll make it in loaf pans because it freezes so nicely and can be layered in a trifle, used as a base for fruit shortcake, or even served completely plain. I like that this recipe has three different extracts, which I think give it a little more complex flavor. The crumb is really nice too, especially if you use cake flour to make for a finer texture.

When I was a little girl, we had the most wonderful neighborhood full of kids and incredible families. Our friends the Camerons had four boys and Mrs. Cameron would often invite me over to bake and hang out since her boys didn't have much interest in the kitchen. She used to make this pound cake and it was always my favorite. When I was in college I called her one time for the recipe, and to this day I still have it scratched out on that original purple piece of paper that was lying around in our collegiate apartment.



Ingredients:

- 1 c butter softened
- 1/2 c shortening
- 3 c. sugar
- 1 8oz pkg cream cheese
- 3 c sifted flour (cake flour makes it great, but if you don't have that, regular will work)
- 6 eggs
- 1 Tbsp vanilla extract
- 1/2 Tbsp almond extract
- 1 tsp lemon extract

Instructions:

Cream butter and shortening til white and fluffy. Slowly add sugar and beat at a medium speed til fluffy. Add cream cheese and then beat it til it's super fluffy! Alternately add eggs and flour (I add the flour in probably 1/2 c increments and then always end with adding flour.) Mix in well and then add in all of the flavor extracts. Grease and flour about 3 loaf pans (or a bundt pan...whatever you want) and bake for about 45 minutes at 325. Cool about 10 minutes and then turn them out!

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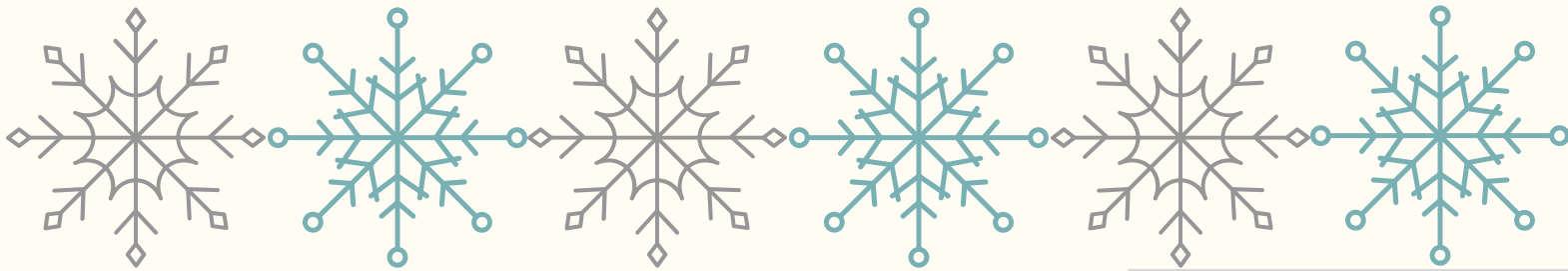
SANTA HAT BROWNIE BITES

makes 2 dozen

Somehow I made it through my entire life and never even tasted a boxed brownie until I got to college. My mom always made this homemade version from my paternal grandmother and since they were so good I always ended up being asked to bring brownies to events growing up. Once I was exposed to boxed brownies I thought it was stupid to make such an inferior version that really didn't take much less time than the incredible, fudgy, homemade version.

A few years back I was throwing a Christmas party and wanted to have tidy little versions of the brownies, so I put them into mini muffin tins and invented the way to add a little icing and a raspberry or strawberry to look like a Santa hat. They were a huge hit and the little bit of fruit with the fudgy chocolate really took them to a new level.

Sometimes when I'm feeling adventurous, I'll even put a Rollo, Reese's cup, or Junior Mint shoved down in the middle of the batter in the mini muffin before baking for a really yummy twist on an old faithful brownie recipe. If you want to stay basic though then bake these in an 8x8 pan for about 35-40 minutes or a 9x13 pan for about 25-30.



Ingredients:

- 4 oz unsweet Baker's brand chocolate
- 2 sticks butter
- 2 c. sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 c. flour
- 1 tsp vanilla

Cream cheese frosting:

- 2 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 2 cups sifted confectioners' sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 pkg fresh raspberries

Instructions:

Put the chocolate and butter into a microwave safe dish and melt on high for about 3 1/2 minutes. When that's done, stir it up well to make sure the chocolate squares melted completely. Then add and incorporate sugar, then eggs, then vanilla, and finally flour. Don't over mix. Pour into paper lined mini muffin pans and bake at 350 for about 18 minutes. A toothpick should come out pretty clean in the center of the pan. I like mine slightly underdone though to make them really fudgy.

In a medium bowl, cream together the cream cheese and butter until creamy. Mix in the vanilla, then gradually stir in the confectioners' sugar.

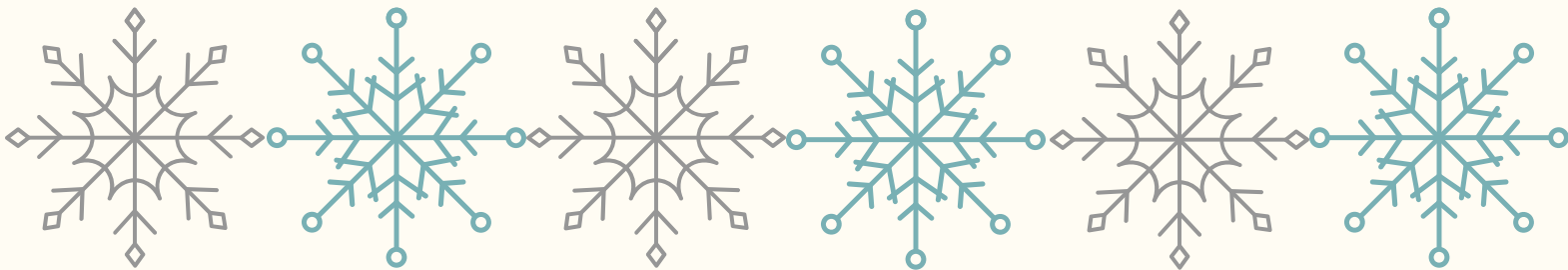
For the santa hat bites, wash & dry raspberries. Pipe the icing onto the brownie top. Put the berry on top, and then pipe a small dollop of frosting onto the point of the berry to look like a pom pom. Refrigerate until you serve.

TOASTED COCONUT CARAMEL CREAM PIES

yields 2 pies

This recipe isn't warm, but it's so darn yummy that I decided it needed to be included alongside these other favorites. My sister first made it some years ago for something or another and now it has become a real go-to when I'm needing something kind of different and light. I'm a sucker for toasted coconut and pecans anyhow and when you put caramel and cream cheese and Cool Whip all together, it's really pretty out of this world. Also, it's awesome to make for a crowd since the recipe actually yields two pies.

I make this every year for Easter, but it's so lovely at the Holidays and into the New Year to have something that is a little different than some of the heavier fare. I'm not always a fan of Cool Whip desserts either, but this one has enough other sophisticated things going on that it makes plain old Cool Whip shine in quite a lovely way!



Ingredients:

- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 bag coconut
- 1 - 8 oz pkg cream cheese
- 1 c. chopped pecans
- 1 - 16oz pkg Cool Whip
- 1 stick butter (1/2 c.)
- 2 deep dish pie crusts
- Caramel Ice Cream Topping

Instructions:

Bake crusts as directed by package and set aside to cool. Toast coconut on baking sheet in the oven...at about 350 degrees. Takes about 20 minutes, but you need to check it and stir it around about every 4 minutes til browned. Melt butter in large saucepan and brown pecans for about 5 minutes or so. Add toasted coconut to nut/butter mixture and continue to brown some more...over about medium heat. You will need to be almost constantly stirring this to make sure it doesn't burn. Set aside to cool. Mix cream cheese and sweetened condensed milk well in electric beater til smooth. Fold in cool whip. Once everything is completely cooled, layer fluff mixture, coconut mix, and drizzle caramel topping 3 times in pie shells. Refrigerate to set a few hours before serving.

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WINTER WARMERS

Recipes and Stories to Warm
Your Heart and Home

So these are a few of my winter favorites. I'm hungry even typing them all up, and hope that they will bring warmth and a sense of home to your house as well.

While it can be fun sometimes to troll around looking for new recipes, it can also be exhausting and time consuming during a season where really the weather and season beckon more time with family and friends and less time searching around to find what you need. I hope that by curating these tried and true favorites from our family and friends, I've helped make a little more space for you with yours.

And as you're chopping and stirring and creating all these yummy things in your home, I'd love for you to consider ways you can even warm the heart of someone else as you recreate these recipes. Food brings people together like little else does, and it's my hope that these recipes are simply the starter for something more meaningful in your life.

Soups for one are super easy to double, so consider trying that and surprising a neighbor, a friend, or even someone you don't know with a serving or two. Now that you're armed with some assurance in a recipe that you don't even have to wonder if it's good before you make it, go ahead and invite over that friend you've been wanting to get to know more for dinner. Make extras for your freezer for a day you'd rather snuggle and watch movies in the winter with your kids than spend too much time in the kitchen. Let these Winter Warmer recipes pave the way for your life to feel as full as your belly.

This winter, let's give the gift of a warmth that simmers from within a heart long before it boils in a pot.

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