

Holiday Flavors



Have a Decadent Holiday

Cacao trees, the source of chocolate and much of the world’s happiness, have been a source of food for humans for more than 5,000 years.

This holiday season, make it the star of your table with these sweet — and savory! — recipes.

SHORT RIB TACOS
Serves 6. Recipe is from Taste of Home.

- Ingredients**
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
 - 6 bone-in short ribs
 - 1/4 teaspoon salt
 - 1/4 teaspoon pepper
 - 2 medium carrots, finely chopped
 - 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
 - 2 tablespoons baking cocoa
 - 1 15-ounce can tomato sauce
 - 1 12-ounce bottle dark beer or beef broth
 - Water
 - 12 6-inch corn tortillas, warmed
 - 3/4 cup pico de gallo
 - 3/4 cup queso fresco cheese, crumbled

- Directions**
1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. In an ovenproof Dutch oven, heat oil over medium high heat. Sprinkle the beef with salt and pepper, then brown in batches. Remove and reduce the heat to medium.
 2. Add the carrots and onions and cook, stirring frequently, until it starts to brown, or about 3-5



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- minutes. Add cocoa and toast, stirring frequently, until aromatic or 1-2 minutes longer. Add the tomato sauce and beer, then stir to loosen browned bits from the pan. Bring to a boil and simmer for 2-3 minutes.
3. Return the ribs to the pan and add water to cover, if needed. Bake, covered, until the meat is tender, 2 ½-3 hours. Remove from the oven and drain, reserving the juices. When they’re cool enough to handle, remove the ribs from the pan

and shred the meat. Skim the fat from the reserved juices and return the juice and meat to the Dutch oven. Heat through and serve.

CHEWY CHOCOLATE COOKIES
Makes four dozen cookies. Recipe is from Allrecipes.

- Ingredients**
- 2 cups white sugar
 - 1 1/4 cup butter, softened

- 2 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups flour
- 3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 cups semisweet chocolate chips

- Directions**
1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Cream together the sugar

- and butter until light and fluffy, then beat in the eggs one at a time. Stir in the vanilla.
2. Sift together the flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt. Stir into the creamed butter mixture. Mix in chocolate chips.
3. Drop spoonfuls of dough onto ungreased cookie sheets. Bake for 8-9 minutes and remove. Cookies will be soft. Cool slightly, then remove from the cookie sheet to cool completely.

Spotlight-Stealing Sides

Sure, there are plenty of oohs and aahs for the roast beast or the fried turkey, but these side dishes might just swipe the spotlight from the protein on the platter.

HASSELBACK SWEET POTATOES WITH PISTACHIO CRUMBLE

Serves 6. Recipe is from The Food Network.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
2 tablespoons olive oil
3/4 teaspoon smoked paprika
Kosher salt
6 small sweet potatoes

For the pistachio crumble:

1 tablespoon olive oil
2/3 cup chopped, shelled unsalted pistachios
1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
1/4 teaspoon chili powder
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon onion powder
Kosher salt
1/4 teaspoon sugar
2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil. Combine the butter, oil and paprika in a small bowl.
2. Using a sharp knife, cut eighth-inch slices crosswise through each sweet potato, slicing about two-thirds of the way through so the

potatoes remain intact. Put the potatoes on the baking sheet and brush with half the paprika butter, getting some between the slices. Bake until halfway cooked or about 30 minutes.

4. Use a fork to gently apply pressure to the tops of the half-baked potatoes, causing the slices to fan out. Brush the butter in between the slices. Bake again until cooked through and slightly crispy on top, about 35 minutes more.

5. Make the pistachio crumble by heating the oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add the pistachios, paprika, chili powder, garlic powder, onion powder, salt and sugar. Cook, stirring often, until aromatic and lightly toasted, about 3-4

minutes. Stir in the parsley. Sprinkle over the sweet potatoes and serve.

MISO HONEY EGGPLANT

Serves 6. Recipe is from Pom Wonderful.

Ingredients

1 large eggplant
2 tablespoons sesame oil
1 tablespoon avocado oil
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tbs. honey
1 tablespoon pomegranate juice
1 teaspoon white miso

For the glaze:

3/4 cup pomegranate juice
2 tablespoons honey

1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tsp. white miso
1/4 cup chopped scallions
1/3 cup pomegranate arils
Sesame seeds for garnish
Red chilis, sliced, for garnish
Cilantro, for garnish

Directions

1. Trim the stems and ends from the eggplant and cut into quarter-inch slices. Cut slices into halves or quarters and set aside. In a large bowl, whisk together the sesame oil, avocado oil, garlic, honey, pomegranate juice and white miso. Add the eggplant and toss thoroughly to coat.

2. Heat the oven to 375 degrees.

Place the eggplant on a parchment-lined baking sheet in a single layer, then roast for 15 minutes. Turn the eggplant pieces over and roast another 15 minutes until golden brown.

3. For the glaze, heat the pomegranate juice, honey, lemon juice and white miso in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil and reduce the heat to low. Cook until reduced by half, or about 6-8 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.

4. Toss the cooked eggplant with half the glaze and arrange on a platter. Top with scallions, pomegranate arils, sesame seeds, chilis and cilantro. Drizzle with remaining glaze.



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Serve Up a Soup Party

This holiday season, serve up a dish of friendliness with a soup party.

Gather friends and family together and have each bring a pot or a slow cooker full of their favorite soup (bonus points: and the recipes!). Serve in flights with disposable coffee cups.

PUMPKIN AND RICE SOUP

Recipe from 101 Cookbooks.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 large shallot, chopped
- 1/2 serrano chili, including seeds, chopped
- Salt
- 1 1/2 lbs. pumpkin, seeded, peeled and cut into 3/4 -inch chunks
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger juice
- Cooked brown rice, warm
- Toasted pumpkin seeds

Directions

1. In a large soup pot, melt the butter over medium-high heat. Add the onion, shallot, serrano and salt. Cook until soft, about 5 minutes, then add the pumpkin and about six cups of water. Add less if you like thinner soup.
2. Bring to a simmer and cook until the pumpkin is tender, about 15 minutes. Remove from the heat and puree with a blender or hand blender until smooth. Add the ginger juice. If it's too thick, add some more water. Stir in salt to taste.
3. Serve over rice with toasted pumpkin seeds.



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SENATE BEAN SOUP

Recipe is from Soup Addict.

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil or avocado oil
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 3/4 pound ham hock or pork shank
- 1 pound dried navy beans
- 8 cups water

1 tablespoon butter

Directions

1. Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven or soup pot until the surface shimmers. Add about half the onions and celery and sauté until soft, about five minutes. Place the pork in the pot, flattest side down, and sear all sides.
2. Pour the navy beans into a large bowl, rinse, drain and pick

out debris and broken beans.

3. Add the beans and six cups of water to the pot and raise the heat to high. Skim off any foam that forms on the surface. Let the soup boil for 10 minutes and lower the heat to maintain a simmer. Cover the pot with the lid ajar to allow steam to escape.

4. Cook the beans for 2-3 hours, checking every 20-30 minutes and adding more water as needed to

cover the beans. Beans are done when they easily smash flat. When the beans are done, remove the pork.

5. Heat the butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add the remaining onions and celery and sauté until soft. Remove the pork from the bone and chop it. Add it to the pan and stir well, then add it to the soup. Check for seasonings and serve.

A Feast of Seven Fishes

Italian Americans celebrate the Feast of the Seven Fishes on Christmas Eve.

As a fasting holiday in the Catholic religion, the seafood in the meal reflects the religious abstinence from meat until Christmas Day. Traditionally, it features seven or 13 seafood dishes.

ORECCHIETTE WITH CLAMS, SAUSAGE AND PEPPERS

Serves 6. Recipe is from The Food Network.

Ingredients

- Salt
- 1 pound orecchiette
- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 8 ounces hot Italian sausage, casings removed
- 3 pounds littleneck clams, scrubbed well
- 1/2 cup chopped roasted red peppers
- Fresh ground pepper
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley

Directions

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook as directed. Drain, reserving a cup of cooking water.
2. Heat 3 tablespoons of olive oil in another large pot over medium-high heat. Add the sausage and cook, stirring and breaking up the meat with a wooden spoon until browned and crumbled, about 2-3 minutes. Add the clams and 1/4 cup of the cooking water. Cover and cook, removing the clams to a bowl as they open. Discard any unopened clams.



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3. Add the pasta, 3/4 cup of the reserved cooking water, the roasted red peppers and the remaining olive oil. Simmer, stirring, until the liquid is slightly thickened, about 2 minutes. Add more cooking water as needed. Season with salt and pepper. Stir in the parsley. Add the clams and toss gently.

ITALIAN FISH AND VEGETABLE STEW

Serves four. Recipe is from Epicurious.

Ingredients

- 1 pound firm white skinless fish,

such as mahi-mahi, cod or halibut, cut into 2-inch pieces

- Kosher salt and ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 cup dry or instant polenta
- 1 garlic clove, smashed
- 1 medium bell pepper, seeds and ribs removed, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 medium zucchini, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 pint cherry or grape tomatoes, halved

- 1 tablespoon slivered fresh basil, plus whole leaves for garnish
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh oregano, plus whole leaves for garnish

Directions

1. Season fish with salt and pepper. Whisk together the lemon juice, vinegar, mustard and 2 tablespoons of oil in a medium bowl. Add the fish, toss to coat, and chill until ready to use. Cook the polenta according to package directions.
2. Heat a tablespoon of oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the garlic, stirring

occasionally, until beginning to brown, or about two minutes. Transfer to a plate. Cook the bell pepper in the same skillet, stirring frequently, until beginning to brown and soften. Add the zucchini, cover and cook for about three minutes.

3. Reduce heat to medium-low. Add tomatoes, garlic, fish and dressing, a tablespoon of slivered basil and a teaspoon of oregano. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer until the fish is just cooked through, about five minutes. Discard the garlic, if desired.

4. Divide the polenta among bowls and arrange the fish mixture over it. Garnish with basil and oregano.

ARTICHOKE COD WITH SUN-DRIED TOMATOES

Recipe is from Taste of Home.

Ingredients

- 1 14-ounce quartered, water-packed artichoke hearts, drained
- 1/2 cup julienned soft sun-dried tomatoes, not packed in oil
- 2 green onions, chopped
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 6 6-ounce cod fillets
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. In a small bowl, toss the first five ingredients to combine. Sprinkle both sides of the fish with salt and pepper. Place in a baking dish coated with cooking spray. Top with artichoke mixture.
2. Bake, uncovered, until the fish just begins to flake easily with a fork, about 15-20 minutes.

Let's Talk Turkey

More than 40 million turkeys will grace tables this holiday season.

Here are some frequently asked questions about turkeys and food safety from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service.

HOW MUCH TURKEY SHOULD I BUY?

The USDA says to allow about a pound of turkey per person. A pound and a quarter per person if it's a frozen, pre-stuffed turkey. Don't buy a fresh pre-stuffed turkey.

HOW LONG SHOULD YOU THAW A FROZEN TURKEY?

Thaw a frozen turkey in the fridge, in cold water or in the microwave. In the fridge, allow 24 hours of thawing time for every 4-5 lbs. of turkey.

Keep the turkey in its wrapper and place it on a tray or pan to catch any leaking juices. A thawed turkey can remain in the fridge for 1-2 days. If properly thawed in the fridge, a turkey may be refrozen.

When thawing in cold water, allow about 30 minutes per pound. Wrap the turkey securely, ensuring water cannot leak through to the bird. Change the water every 30 minutes. Cook the turkey immediately after thawing and do not refreeze.



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In the microwave, ensure the turkey will fit and find the manufacturer's instructions for thawing a turkey.

Remove all outside wrapping and place on a microwave safe dish, then defrost. Cook immediately. Do not refreeze or refrigerate the turkey.

Remember to remove the giblets before cooking!

CAN YOU STUFF A TURKEY?

The USDA recommends against stuffing a turkey. Instead, cook the stuffing outside the bird in a casserole, making sure it reaches 165 degrees.

How long should I cook the turkey? Cook the turkey until the internal temperature reaches 165 degrees. Check

the temperature in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and in the thickest part of the breast. A turkey can take up to five hours to roast for the largest birds. Tuck the wing tips under the shoulders of the bird for even cooking.

Don't rely on the pop-up indicator. Also check the temperature with a food thermometer. Let the turkey

stand for 20 minutes before carving to allow the juices to set.

Always wash with soap and water your hands, utensils, the sink and anything else that comes in contact with raw turkey or its juices. The USDA maintains a meat and poultry hotline for all cooking questions. Get in touch at 888-MPHotline, or 888-674-6854.

Snacks to Put a Bow On

Holidays mean plenty of food-centric parties and gatherings, but sometimes, you just need a good grab-and-go snack.

Try some of these when you need a quick pick-me-up.

CHEESE STRAWS

Recipe is from Food & Wine.

Ingredients

1 2/3 cups flour, plus more for the work surface
1 1/4 teaspoons dry mustard
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
8 ounces extra-sharp cheddar, coarsely grated, about 2 1/2 cups
1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
2 tablespoons water

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Sift together the flour, mustard, salt and cayenne in a medium bowl. Set aside. Beat the cheese and butter in a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment on medium speed until well blended and the mixture becomes a spreadable consistency, about 2 minutes. Reduce the mixer speed to low and gradually beat in the flour mixture until incorporated. Add the water and beat on medium speed until the dough comes together.

2. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead five times. Place the dough on a large sheet of wax paper or parchment paper and roll into a 12x9-inch rectangle that's about a quarter of an inch thick. Slide the



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dough and paper onto a baking sheet and refrigerate until cold, about 15 minutes.

3. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Cut the dough in half crosswise and cut each half into 6-inch-long, quarter-inch-wide strips. Transfer the dough strips to the prepared baking sheets, spacing them a half inch apart. Using your fingers, wiggle the dough strips to

create a slightly curvy shape.

4. Bake, one sheet at a time, until golden brown and crisp, 12-14 minutes. Let cool on the baking sheet for 10 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to let cool completely, about 15 minutes.

CANDIED PECANS

Recipe is from Allrecipes.

Ingredients

1 cup white sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt, or to taste
1 large egg white
1 tablespoon water
1 pound pecan halves

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 250 degrees. Mix the sugar, cinnamon and salt in a small bowl. Whisk

together the egg white and water until frothy. Toss the pecans in the egg white mixture to coat.

2. Slowly pour in the sugar mixture and stir until pecans are evenly coated. Spread onto a baking sheet and bake for 10 minutes. Stir pecans and rearrange into a single layer. Cook, stirring every 10-15 minutes, until pecans are evenly browned, about 30-50 minutes.

Building the Perfect Board

Charcuterie boards or grazing boards are perfect for holiday parties and gatherings where your guests will need nibbles before a main meal or even just to graze on during a party.

The perfect board is a balance between sweet and savory, featuring cheeses and crackers, pickles, olives, fruit, vegetables, nuts and other finger-friendly foods.

BAKED BRIE WITH HONEY AND PISTACHIOS

Serves 6-8. Recipe is from Serious Eats.

Ingredients

1 6-8-ounce round brie, camembert or any soft-ripened cheese, slightly chilled

1/4 cup lightly salted pistachios, shelled and roughly chopped

3 tablespoons honey

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Using a sharp knife, score the top rind of the cheese in a criss-cross pattern, spacing cuts about an inch apart. If the cheese came in a wooden container, place it back in the container, without any other packaging, and place it on a parchment-lined rimmed baking sheet. If it came in packaging that wasn't wooden, place directly on the parchment-lined sheet and bake until the top is soft and runny, about 25



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minutes.

2. Top with chopped pistachios and drizzle with honey. Let rest five minutes before serving.

HOLIDAY MERINGUES

Makes about 7 dozen. Recipe is from Taste of Home.

Ingredients

2 large egg whites, room

temperature

1/2 teaspoon white vinegar
Dash of salt
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup sugar
Red gel food coloring

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 225 degrees. Beat the egg whites with

vinegar and salt on medium speed until foamy and doubled in volume. Beat in the extracts. Gradually add sugar, one tablespoon at a time, beating on high after each addition until sugar is dissolved. Continue beating until stiff, glossy peaks form, about 10 minutes.

2. Insert a half-inch round tip into a pastry bag. Paint five stripes of red food coloring inside the length of

the pastry bag. Transfer the meringue to the pastry bag and pipe dollops an inch apart onto parchment-lined baking sheets.

3. Bake for an hour or until set and dry. Turn off the oven and do not open the oven door. Leave the meringues in for an hour. Remove from the oven and cool completely on baking sheets. Store in an airtight container at room temperature.