

Show 34: Gifts in Good Taste

Cranberry, Apple & Ginger Chutney

An ideal accompaniment to turkey or ham, this full-of-flavor chutney can also be canned in Mason Jars. This chutney is also particularly good with cheese & crackers and as an hors d'oeuvre.

1 bag (12 oz) fresh or frozen cranberries
2 medium green apples – peeled, cored and diced
½ cup sugar
½ cup cranberry juice cocktail
1 T. cider vinegar
1 t. ground ginger
1 t. fresh lemon zest
pinch of Kosher salt

Combine ingredients in a saucepot and bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce the heat to simmer and cook uncovered, stirring occasionally, until thickened, about 20 to 25 minutes. Cool before serving.

Makes 4 Cups

Rosemary Biscotti

¼ cup butter (no substitutes)
¾ cup sugar
1 t baking powder
1 T snipped fresh rosemary or 1 t. dried rosemary, crushed
½ t. baking soda
¼ t. salt
2 eggs
2 egg whites
2 T finely shredded orange peel
3 Cups flour

1. Beat butter in a medium, mixing bowl with electric mixer or medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add sugar, baking powder, rosemary, baking soda and salt, beat till combined. Beat in eggs, egg whites and orange peel till combined. Beat in as much flour as you can with the mixer. Stir in the remaining flour with wooden spoon. Divide dough in half.
2. Preheat oven to 375. With lightly floured hands. Shape each dough portion into an 8-inch long roll, about 2 ½ inches wide and 1 inch high. Place rolls about 3 inches apart on a lightly greased baking sheet.
3. Bake for 20 minutes or till lightly browned. Cool on a cookie sheet for 1 hour or till completely cool. Transfer to a cutting board. Using a serrated knife, cut each roll diagonally into ½ inch slices. Reduce oven heat to 325.
4. Place slices cut side down, on the baking sheet; bake for 8 minutes. Turn slices to the other side and bake for 10 minutes more or till biscotti are browned. Transfer to wire rack and cool. Biscotti becomes crisper as they cool.

Makes about 36 biscotti.

Chili Cheese Muffin Loaf

This cheesy, moist bread is a great accompaniment to a Tex-Mex dinner, or use it to spice up a turkey or roast beef sandwich.

2 ¼ cups flour
2 t. baking powder
1 t. chili powder
¾ t. salt
¼ t. baking soda
1/3 cup solid vegetable shortening
1 ½ cups grated cheddar cheese
1 cup buttermilk, at room temperature
1 egg, at room temperature

1. Preheat oven to 350. Lightly grease your 3 small loaf pans with nonstick cooking spray. Set aside.
2. Sift together the flour, baking powder, chili powder, salt, and baking soda into a medium bowl.
3. Add the shortening and cut in the flour mixture with a pastry blender. Stir in the cheddar cheese.
4. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture. Add the buttermilk and egg. Combine the ingredients, shortening in the center and spiraling outward. Stir only until just blended. Do not over mix!
5. Turn the batter in the prepared pans. Smooth the top with a spatula or spoon.
6. Bake for 50 or 55 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the bread tests clean. Cool on a wire rack. Store wrapped in foil or in a plastic bag for 3 days, or freeze until 3 months.

Vary it! Omit the chili powder and add ¾ cup chopped dried apples.

Maple Roasted Pecans

These spiced nuts are irresistible any time of the year, but especially ideal for holiday entertaining!

7 cans pecan halves
1/3 cup maple syrup
1/3 cup Karo light corn syrup
¼ cup sugar
2 t. chili powder
2 t. round cumin
2 t. Kosher salt
2 t. mixed peppers, crushed

Preheat the oven to 350. Spread the pecans in an even layer on a baking sheet and bake them until lightly roasted, about 10 minutes. Toss the nuts once during baking for even color.

Combine the maple syrup and the corn syrup in a pot large enough to hold the nuts. Bring the mixture to a simmer, then add the roasted pecans. Cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, until the nuts have absorbed most of the syrup, about 10 minutes.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the sugar, chili powder, cumin, salt and the pepper, to cool. Store the nuts in an airtight container until ready to serve.

Chocolate-dipped Peppermint Pretzels

12 oz. semi-sweet chocolate chips
24 pretzels
2 cups peppermint candies or candy canes, crushed into bits

In a double boiler or heat proof bowl over a pot of simmering water, melt the chocolate. Dunk each pretzel in to the melted chocolate. Immediately dip the chocolate-coated pretzel in the candy bits. Transfer to a wax paper-lined baking sheet and allow to cool until hardened.

Try dipping the bowl of spoons, almonds, biscotti and apricots ... your friends will be delighted!

Your thoughtful gift will be appreciated by all lucky enough to receive one!

To make your feasts ready for gift-giving, try packaging them in a variety of holiday tins, and bags. Combine these with candy canes or holiday decorations. You can use raffia, ribbons, and yarn to secure your gifts. Be sure to include the recipe with any special instructions about storing or reheating with your gift tag.