

Holiday Dessert Party Planner



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Complement the end of your meal with a selection of luscious sweets—or skip the main course altogether. Print our easy-to-read cards and file them in your recipe box.

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It is possible to create the perfect piecrust every time—we'll tell you how.

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Create these festive templates for your own recipe box, or to give your guests at the end of the night.



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APPLE PIE UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE

SERVES 10 TO 12

1¼ cups (2½ sticks) unsalted butter, softened, plus more for pan

1½ cups packed light-brown sugar

3 tablespoons Calvados apple brandy

Salt

3 whole cinnamon sticks

6 medium Braeburn or McIntosh apples (about 2½ pounds),
peeled, cored, and cut into ¼-inch-thick rings

2¼ cups all-purpose flour

½ teaspoon baking soda

½ teaspoon baking powder

¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon

1½ cups granulated sugar

3 large eggs

1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract

½ cup sour cream

FOLD

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Butter a 12-by-1-inch round pizza pan. Line bottom with parchment paper, and butter parchment; set aside. Put ½ cup butter, the brown sugar, brandy, and a pinch of salt into the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment; mix on medium-high speed until pale and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes. Spread mixture into prepared pan. Place cinnamon sticks on top. Layer with apple rings. Use your hands to press apples gently into mixture; set aside. Sift flour, baking soda, baking powder, ¾ teaspoon salt, and the ground cinnamon into a medium bowl; set aside.

2. Put remaining ¾ cup butter and the granulated sugar into the clean bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the clean paddle attachment; mix on medium-high speed until pale and fluffy. Mix in eggs, 1 at a time, and vanilla. Reduce speed to low. Add flour mixture in 2 batches, alternating with the sour cream. Spread batter evenly over apples.

3. Bake until cake is golden brown and a cake tester inserted into center comes out clean, about 45 minutes. Let cool on a wire rack 15 minutes. Invert onto a serving plate. Cake can be stored at room temperature, covered, up to 1 day.



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“PUMPKIN PIE” CHEESECAKE

SERVES 12 TO 14

FOR THE FILLING:

- 1 small butternut squash (about 1¾ pounds)
- Unsalted butter, for parchment and pan
- ¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon ground allspice
- ⅛ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- 2½ pounds cream cheese, room temperature
- 1¾ cups sugar
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup sour cream
- 1¼ teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 5 large eggs

FOR THE CRUST:

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup all-purpose flour, plus more for work surface
- Pinch of salt

FOLD

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Make the filling: Cut squash in half lengthwise; remove seeds, and reserve for another use. Place squash, cut sides down, on a baking sheet lined with buttered parchment paper. Bake until tender, about 45 minutes. Transfer sheet to a wire rack; let cool.
2. Make the crust: Put butter and sugar into the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment; mix on medium speed until pale and fluffy. Mix in egg yolk and vanilla. Reduce speed to low. Add flour and salt; mix until dough comes together. Shape into a disk; wrap in plastic. Refrigerate until firm, at least 30 minutes and up to 1 day.
3. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into a 10-inch circle, a scant ¼ inch thick. Fit into bottom of a 10-inch springform pan. Freeze 15 minutes. Bake until crust is firm and pale golden, 12 to 15 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack; let cool completely. Reduce oven temperature to 325°.
4. Scoop squash flesh into the bowl of a food processor; process until puréed. Transfer 1 cup purée to a medium bowl; reserve remainder for another use. Stir in cinnamon, allspice, nutmeg, and ginger.
5. Wrap exterior of springform pan (including base) in 2 layers of foil. Butter sides of pan; set aside. Put cream cheese into the clean bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the clean paddle attachment; mix on medium speed until fluffy. Gradually add sugar and flour, mixing until smooth. Mix in sour cream, vanilla, and salt. Mix in eggs, 1 at a time, until just combined; do not overmix.
6. Stir 2 cups cream cheese mixture into squash mixture; set aside. Pour remaining cream cheese mixture into prepared pan on top of the crust. Drop dollops of squash-cream cheese mixture on top. Gently swirl with a butter knife.
7. Set pan in a large, shallow roasting pan. Transfer to oven. Carefully pour enough boiling water into roasting pan to come halfway up sides of cheesecake. Bake until cake is set but still slightly wobbly in center, 50 to 60 minutes. Turn off oven; let stand in oven with door slightly ajar 1 hour. Let cool completely on a wire rack. Refrigerate at least 6 hours or overnight. Run a knife around sides of cake; unmold.



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CHOCOLATE-ESPRESSO TART

SERVES 8

FOR THE GANACHE:

8 ounces bittersweet chocolate (preferably
61 percent cacao), chopped

1¼ cups heavy cream

2 tablespoons good-quality ground espresso
beans

FOR THE FILLING:

1½ cups mascarpone cheese

FOR THE TART SHELL:

1 cup all-purpose flour, plus more for parchment paper

¾ teaspoon salt

⅓ cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened

¼ cup sugar

1 large egg

¾ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

3 tablespoons heavy cream

FOLD

1. Make the ganache: Put chocolate into a medium heatproof bowl, and set aside. Bring cream and espresso to a boil in a small pan. Pour through a fine sieve over the chocolate; discard solids. Let stand 2 minutes, then whisk until smooth. Let cool to room temperature, 1 to 2 hours.

2. Make the tart shell: Sift flour, salt, and cocoa powder into a medium bowl; set aside. Put butter and sugar into the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment; mix on medium speed until pale and fluffy, about 4 minutes. Add egg and vanilla, and mix until combined, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. Reduce speed to low. Gradually add the flour mixture in 3 batches, alternating with the cream. Shape dough into a thick rectangle; wrap in plastic. Refrigerate until cold, about 30 minutes.

3. Preheat oven to 350°. Roll out dough between 2 pieces of lightly floured parchment paper to a 16-by-6-inch rectangle, about ¼ inch thick. Press dough into a 14-by-4½-inch rectangular flan frame set on a baking sheet lined with parchment. Trim dough flush with top edge. Prick all over bottom of shell with a fork. Bake until firm, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack; let cool completely. Unmold.

4. Put ganache into the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the whisk attachment; beat on medium-high speed until soft peaks form, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a pastry bag fitted with a large star tip (such as Ateco #828).

5. Smooth mascarpone cheese over bottom of tart shell with an offset spatula.

6. Pipe ganache rosettes, one next to the other, on top of mascarpone to cover. Store in the refrigerator up to 1 day.

Great Ganache:

To turn out smooth ganache every time, make sure the mixture is at room temperature before whipping. Any warmer or colder, and its cream is likely to seize or become grainy.



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CHEWY CHOCOLATE GINGERBREAD COOKIES

MAKES 2 DOZEN

7 ounces best-quality semisweet chocolate

1 ½ cups plus 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour

1 ¼ teaspoons ground ginger

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon ground cloves

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

1 tablespoon cocoa powder

8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter

1 tablespoon freshly grated ginger

½ cup dark-brown sugar, packed

½ cup unsulfured molasses

1 teaspoon baking soda

¼ cup granulated sugar

1. Line two baking sheets with parchment. Chop chocolate into ¼-inch chunks; set aside. In a medium bowl, sift together flour, ground ginger, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, and cocoa.
2. In the bowl of an electric mixer, fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and grated ginger until whitened, about 4 minutes. Add brown sugar; beat until combined. Add molasses; beat until combined.
3. In a small bowl, dissolve baking soda in 1½ teaspoons boiling water. Beat half of flour mixture into butter mixture. Beat in baking-soda mixture, then remaining half of flour mixture. Mix in chocolate; turn out onto a piece of plastic wrap. Pat dough out to about 1 inch thick; seal with wrap; refrigerate until firm, 2 hours or more.
4. Heat oven to 325°. Roll dough into 1½-inch balls; place 2 inches apart on baking sheets. Refrigerate 20 minutes. Roll in granulated sugar. Bake until the surfaces crack slightly, 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool 5 minutes; transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

FOLD



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SEVEN SECRETS FOR BAKING THE PERFECT PIECRUST
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1. All the ingredients should be ice-cold. Even the flour should be chilled.
2. Keep tools handy. Have a dry brush, bench scraper, and bowl of flour at the ready when rolling.
3. Preshape dough before chilling. Form dough into a disk; cover with plastic. Chill at least 1 hour or overnight.
4. Roll quickly. Using only a minimal amount of flour to prevent sticking, evenly roll out a round without overworking the dough.
5. Keep the dough as cold as possible. If at any point the dough sticks to the work surface, return it to refrigerator for about 15 minutes.
6. Prebake single-crust shells. For a single-crust pie, prebake crust to prevent sogginess. Partially cook when filling will be baked in shell; bake completely when using chilled fillings.
7. To easily cover the edges of a pie with foil if the crust is browning too quickly, before you begin, press a piece of foil onto an empty pie plate to shape it. Then trim the outer edge and cut out the center, making a ring that's about two inches thick to cover the rim of the pie.



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SEVEN SECRETS FOR BAKING THE PERFECT PIECRUST
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- GLASS PIE PLATE
- PASTRY BLENDER OR FOOD PROCESSOR
- LARGE OFFSET SPATULA
- RULER
- ROLLING PIN
- SCISSORS
- PARCHMENT PAPER
- WIDE PASTRY BRUSH
- NARROW PASTRY BRUSH
- COOKIE CUTTER



GLASS PIE PLATE

Heat disperses well in a tempered-glass pie plate (such as Pyrex), allowing for more even browning; the clear glass also lets you see the color of the bottom crust.

PASTRY BLENDER

If you don't have a food processor, working butter into flour with a pastry blender simplifies the process. Some bakers prefer this method.

LARGE OFFSET SPATULA

As you roll dough, it inevitably starts to stick to the work surface. To release it, slide an offset spatula at least 10 inches long underneath. Do this repeatedly while rolling.

RULER

Why guess if the dough is the right size? Use a ruler to make sure; 13-inch circles are just right for a standard 9-inch pie plate.

ROLLING PIN

There are many kinds of rolling pins. A 1½-by-18-inch one gives good control.

SCISSORS

The perfect tool for trimming dough—a knife is just not exact enough, and scissors are easier to work with.

PARCHMENT PAPER

Roll dough on parchment so you can transport the rolled dough to refrigerate or freeze.

WIDE PASTRY BRUSH

Use a 3- or 4-inch-wide pastry brush to remove excess flour before transferring the dough to the pie plate.

NARROW PASTRY BRUSH

A ½-inch brush lets you get the egg wash into crevices without making pools. It's also used for brushing water on the rim of bottom dough before adding the top.

COOKIE CUTTER

A vent in the top of a pie lets steam escape. Instead of making slits with a knife, try using a shaped cookie cutter. You can add the cutout to the dough as a decoration.

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GOOD THINGS



BAKER'S SACHET

Pie weights—used to help a crust keep its shape while baking—get a workout during the holiday season. A layer of cheesecloth keeps them neat and at the ready. For a standard-size pie plate, take 1 pound of dry beans—pinto, kidney, or black ones—and wrap loosely in cheesecloth (the beans should be able to spread out to cover the bottom of the pan). Cinch the bundle with kitchen twine. After each use, let the pouch cool and store it in an airtight container. Discard the bundle if the beans develop a musty odor, after about ten uses.

A CRISPER CRUST

The secret to keeping a fruit-pie crust from getting soggy is egg white. The proteins bond together and form a wall that prevents the filling's juices from seeping into the crust. Lightly beat an egg white; then brush it over the inside of the uncooked shell before adding the fruit mixture. The coating will set as the pie bakes, and it will keep your dessert crisp.



BAKING SUBSTITUTIONS

INSTEAD OF 1 CUP OF..	YOU CAN USE...
Self-rising flour	1 cup all-purpose flour plus 1½ teaspoons baking powder and ¼ teaspoon salt
Cake flour	1 cup minus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
Light-brown sugar	1 cup white sugar plus 1 tablespoon molasses
Molasses	¾ cup dark-brown sugar plus ¼ cup water
Whole-wheat flour	⅞ cup all-purpose flour plus 2 tablespoons wheat germ



PIE CARRIER

A freshly baked pie is always a welcome gift, even more so when it comes wrapped inside this unusual but sensible container. A bamboo steamer is the ideal size to transport a pie to your hostess's door and can hold two pies at once. After placing lid on steamer, secure with a piece of twill tape tied in a bow.

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CLIP-ART CRAFT: RECIPE CARDS
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Some of your best recipes may be the ones someone has shared with you over the years. Why not return the favor with a special gift? Copy the recipes you serve for dessert onto these charming recipe cards, and tie them with ribbon. Bundled with a few blank ones for the recipient to fill in, plus a pie plate, a pie server, and a pastry cutter, they make a delicious gift.

RECIPE CARD HOW-TO

Print our three-card template onto an 8½-by-11-inch piece of heavy card stock (or make copies of just your favorite card). Cut out each of the sturdy 3-by-5-inch cards—they're just the right size for a recipe box.



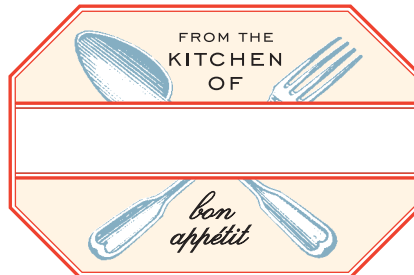
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TEMPLATE







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