

Holiday Open House

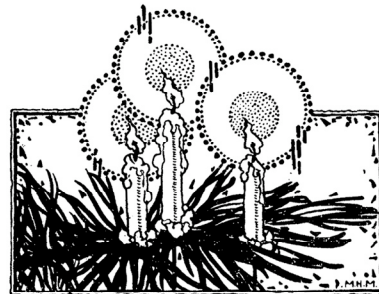
*Open Your Heart
and Your Home*

*by Marilyn Moll
The Urban Homemaker*

www.urbanhomemaker.com

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About the Author

As a young girl, I vividly and fondly remember walking into my grandmother's Depression-era kitchen greeted by the tantalizing and unforgettable smells of spicy ginger snap cookies, homemade applesauce, and assorted other kitchen creations. I remember, too, waking up to the fragrant smell of homemade blueberry muffins baking in the oven to be served hot for breakfast on colorful Fiestaware plates.

I have been a passionate lover of anything old-fashioned ever since, and I seek to pass on to others the timeless skills of cooking for family.

I quit a full-time job in 1985 to stay home with my twelve month old daughter. I then learned to mill my own flour, bake my own bread, and began teaching bread baking classes. In 1991, together with my husband, we started **The Urban Homemaker** to teach the old-fashioned skills of baking and cooking with basic whole food ingredients, and offer practical, quality tools and equipment in the spirit of Titus Two. **The Urban Homemaker** offers top-of-the-line products and related books that we use and recommend.

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Our 64-page catalog is available at catalog@urbanhomemaker.com

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INTRODUCTION

Some of my fondest childhood memories are of being invited to friends or neighbors for an open house or dinner. The wonder of entering the home of friends and enjoying their food and fellowship always made me feel extra special. These fond memories and the relationships that developed have been stuck firmly in my mind for decades. When we are fortunate to go into someone's home, we are not only served and blessed by their willingness to open their heart and their home to us but our relationship begins to take on a new dimension the minute we walk through the door. When all is said and done, I ask myself if I will be remembered for my willingness to be a servant to others?

Interestingly, a passage in 1 Tim 3:2 points out that one of the qualifications of a bishop or elder is to be hospitable. The definition of hospitable is the willingness to welcome guests and strangers with warmth and generosity into our homes. Jesus, is also our role model; many New Testament stories center around his "breaking bread" or sharing meals with people from all walks of life. Do you remember who said, "the servant is greater than his master"? Serving the Lord while serving others is modeled frequently throughout scripture.

Having noticed that everyone seems to be getting busier and busier, we women, wives and mothers may need to purposefully plan to determine that we will execute the biblical admonition of welcoming friends, neighbors and relatives to our home warmly.

All the people I interviewed for this book who are experienced in hospitality mentioned that they learned to serve others while growing up in their families. I believe that mothers, in particular, have an obligation to train their children at a young age in order to establish a pattern of an open heart and home. By beginning the process of equipping them with great recipes and cooking skills as well as social skills at a young age, we will be able to preserve the vanishing art of hospitality.

I also envision hospitality as being a foundation for building rich relationships that contributes to the strengthening of the fiber of our society.

Lastly, I wish to differentiate between Martha Stewart-style entertaining and biblical hospitality. Entertaining is often lavish, and done to impress others, and done so with the expectation that your equally or more lavish parties will be reciprocated. Biblical hospitality, however, emphasizes the willingness to open your home to others and share what you have without any expectations of a return or a reward, with the goal of building relationships.

The holiday season offers an opportunity to open our homes to friends and relatives. I have done my best to present useful and practical information, including tried and true recipes. Regardless of your budget and experience with serving others, my desire is that this ebook will inspire and equip you to get started by planning an open house today and begin strengthening relationships through hospitality.



Plan an Open House

Getting Started:

Are you are thinking of having an open house, dessert party, game night, birthday party or other celebration? Wonderful! People will be delighted just to be invited to get to know you and your family better. Here are some simple and realistic planning steps.

- 1. Determine the date, time, and purpose** of your party or open house. Send out written invitations or make phone calls several weeks ahead so your event is on their calendar. RSVPs help with planning but are often overlooked. Be sure to give a date by which you wish to hear from people. Don't stress if people fail to RSVP and show up anyway, as the social grace of response to them is becoming lost.
- 2. Start planning the food you will be serving** based on the time of day your party is planned. If you start your planning up to a month ahead of time, many appetizers, cheese balls, cookies, and more can be prepared or purchased and frozen ahead. It is perfectly acceptable to incorporate convenience foods and commercial, frozen appetizers such as mini pizzas or quiches, chicken wings, or desserts to make a realistic do-able menu plan.

Calculate the number of servings of each item you expect people will eat and multiply that times the number of guests. Then you will be able to make detailed lists of quantities of ingredients that will be needed for the food, as well as the supplies you wish to have on hand, including cups, plates, napkins and decorations. Paper products add more expense but also streamline cleanup, so balance cost versus convenience in all your planning.

If you use what you have on hand, expenses may be controlled. Purchase the paper products, and non-perishable gro-

cery items as far ahead as possible, always keeping an eye open for sales when you can stock up. Keep detailed lists updated and revised as you go.

- 3. Identify which serving dishes will be used** for each food item and set aside all the serving pieces needed for your occasion ahead of time. If you don't have enough serving pieces, borrow these items beforehand. Plan how you will present each food item attractively with a workable flow. This is a good time to determine who will be responsible, during the party, to keep food trays and beverage service refreshed. Enlist their help ahead of time. This would be a good opportunity to train a responsible child to be attentive to serving others.
- 4. Develop a realistic timeline for decorating** (if needed), last minute food preparations, and cleaning tasks. Enlist the help of family members, friends or relatives in all aspects of food and home preparations. Remember, you do not need to do it all yourself so don't be embarrassed about asking! Guests will be delighted to contribute whatever they can. It's even okay to ask that the guest bring or prepare a specific item or recipe.
- 5. Pray over your plans and preparations.** Ask the Lord to enable you to be creative and to plan a beautiful, delicious selection of foods without overspending. Make your party plans and preparations fun for yourself as well as the guests by keeping the attitude that you are serving the Lord and doing this for His glory. Avoid perfectionism which will rob your joy! Sometimes our best and funniest memories will be the things that were forgotten or didn't go perfectly!
- 6. Execute your plan on party day by allowing plenty of time** for last minute preparations and assigning tasks to family members.

Menu Planning Tips:

When planning the menu for an open house or a buffet, consider serving a wide variety of foods that contrast in color, shape, size, taste (sweet, sour, type of seasonings), and temperatures (hot and cold). For example, a vegetable platter with orange carrots, white cauliflower, green broccoli florettes, red cherry tomatoes, and green celery sticks gives a variety of shape, color, and crunch while the accompanying dips offer complementary smooth texture. Meatballs are warm, savory, and chewy; cheese balls are cold, smooth and spicy and can be served with crackers which are dry, flat and crunchy. Mixed nuts are small and salty; cookies, candies and other desserts contribute sweetness which contrasts and complements the salty or spicy foods being served. Family favorites that are tried and true recipes can be served to help reinforce the memory of the occasion.

As long as you have a wide variety of food items, you will have something that appeals to everyone without boredom and monotony. Leftovers are a very good thing when having a party because no-one wants to come up short on food. Besides, when you plan for leftovers, you plan for future meals that will require minimal preparations.

I suggest that your open house menu include finger foods such as a platter each for veggies and fruits, including dips, a crockpot of meat balls or chicken wings, appetizers such as mini-quiches, a cheese ball with crackers or chips, sweets, and beverages. If you are planning around regular meal times, make sure you allow extra servings of each item as people will be more hungry and eat more. Events planned after regular meal times, such as early afternoon or after dinner will not require as much food and variety.

Beverages should be simple but tasty. Hot and cold beverages such as sweetened and unsweetened ice tea with lemon, apple cider or juice, and hot tea and coffee is sufficient. Always have a pitcher of cold water available. Beautiful, rich, sweet punches may compete with the foods you are serving. Avoid serving soda as it is expensive and the plastic bottles are tacky.

Decorate on a Dime

Use What You Have

Table Decorations:

Decorations made from what you have around your home or assembled from natural plants and weeds growing in your garden, yard, neighborhood, or nearby woods can make simple and attractive centerpieces, fireplace mantle decorations, and other embellishments throughout your home. For example, we always cut and bundle our dried corn stalks in the Fall to adorn our front door along with brightly colored golden rabbit brush and other dried weeds which grow along the roadsides. If I add some commercially grown Indian Corn, I have decorated my entry for less than \$5.00.

I have also used dried orange and red leaves that I pick up on the ground in the Fall as part of a table centerpiece along with Indian Corn, gourds and mini pumpkins. For Christmas I use evergreen branches cut from my trees along with pinecones which drop to the ground right in my own yard. Combined with seasonal ribbon, votive candles and other things I already have I can create beautiful decorations with minimal expense.

I also invest in basic colors for placemats and table cloths when I see attractive solid colors that can be used in different seasons. Mostly I find just what I need in garage sales, and thrift stores or on sale and I use these items year after year. A friend of mine has accumulated a wide assortment of cloth napkins in different colors and prints over time. She is always prepared to set a beautiful, seasonally appropriate table from what she has on hand without buying disposable paper products.

Here are some other decorating strategies from others that may inspire you to use what you have:

1. Remember to incorporate a variety of shapes, sizes and colors to add texture and interest to a display.

2. Select an assortment of different sized inexpensive candles in one or two colors (based on season) on a large plate or platter, add some filler such as baby's breath and greenery, and seasonal ribbon twisted about at random around the bottom.
3. Have an oval mirror cut at your local glass business to a 12 X 18 size. This "mirror" provides a brilliant foundation with a touch of sparkle for an infinite number of table centerpieces. The look is changed seasonally, based on the colors of candles, ribbon, type of greenery used and anything else that goes. For example use:
 - Pillar candles with ribbon, baby's breath, statice or other fillers and greenery. The color of the ribbon and candles should suit the season.
 - Votive candles, artificial greenery such as ivy or pine boughs, and filler such as baby's breath or statice, red berries and pinecones at Christmas.
 - A bowl of rose buds with added candles, artificial ivy, and/or baby's breath in summer.
4. A great way to build up a stock of decoration basics for a minimum of expense is to stock up on seasonal decorations after the season is over. For example, if you wait a week or two after Christmas, you will be able to invest in many basics such as greens, picks, wired ribbon, fabric and colored candles for up to 90% off. Store these bargains for the next year in a "prop closet" or a box labeled "decorations".
5. Use white Christmas lights on table buffets to add sparkle, and glamour for ANY season.
6. Allow the children to get creative and resourceful using what is around your home.

Here is a testimonial of how one lady solved her decorating dilemma for Thanksgiving on a "shoestring".

"I didn't have a pretty tablecloth for the Thanksgiving meal one year. I hated the idea of having a bare table and wanted to make it special. I came up with an idea

that looked pretty and was practical too! I got inexpensive table paper from the grocer's warehouse; the white kind on a roll that you can just roll out over the table. I taped the corners under so it wouldn't slip off. I had a variety of leaf print stamps in my craft box.

With just a little bit of inexpensive stenciling paint in some pretty autumn colors I stamped leaf prints all over the table paper. Some in golds, others in burnt orange and an array of browns. I used a solid color large paper napkin at each plate in a deep gold. The centerpiece was an oil lamp with small ornamental squash, pumpkins and nuts scattered round it. Simple, but full of homespun love!"

Appetizers

Determine what to serve by considering the time of day. If your get-together is at meal time, serve more meat related appetizers. If the event is between meals, serve lighter finger foods and appetizers. Remember to plan a wide variety: hot, cold, meats, cheeses, veggies for dipping, etc.

Hot Spinach and Artichoke Dip

- 2 cups of mayo**
- 1 (14 oz) jar of artichoke hearts (NOT marinated, just plain), drained and chopped**
- 10 oz. frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained**
- 1 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese**
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese**
- 2 cloves minced garlic**

Mix all together and bake in a pie plate for 20-25 minutes in 350 degree oven or until warmed. Serve with party rye bread and wheat crackers.

Slow Cooker Lil' Smokies #1

Very popular even if it isn't gourmet!

Combine 1 package Lil' Smokies with a 10 oz. jar of grape jelly and a bottle of chili sauce (found on the condiment aisle near the catsup). Cook in the slow cooker until jelly is melted and sausages are hot. Stir well before serving with toothpicks.

Slow Cooker Lil' Smokies #2

My family's favorite

Combine Lil' Smokies with a 16 oz. jar of Catalina salad dressing and 1 package. of dried onion soup mix. Heat till warm. Stir well. Serve with toothpicks.

Slow cooker Buffalo Chicken Dip

- 1 can of white chicken meat**
- 12 oz. bottle of Franks Hot Sauce (or whatever type you prefer)**
- 2 - 8 oz. packages of cream cheese**
- 16 oz. bottle of Ranch dressing**
- 16 oz. Monterey Jack cheese or Cheddar Cheese, grated**

Combine all ingredients in a slow cooker and cook until bubbly. Serve with celery sticks, crackers, scoop chips, and/or bagel bits.

Cream Cheese Bacon Crescents

When you have a crowd, convenience products protect your sanity. Use without guilt.

- 1 tub (8 oz.) Chive & Onion Cream Cheese Spread**
- 3 slices turkey bacon, cooked, crumbled**
- 2 cans (8 oz. each) refrigerated crescent dinner rolls**

Preheat oven to 375°F. Mix cream cheese spread and bacon in small bowl until well blended.

Separate each can of dough into 8 triangles each. Cut each triangle in half lengthwise. Spread each dough triangle with 1 generous tsp. cream cheese mixture. Roll up, starting at shortest side of triangle and rolling to opposite point. Place, point sides down, on ungreased baking sheet.

Bake 12 to 15 min. or until golden brown. Serve warm.

Swedish Meatballs

- 1 bag frozen meatballs or any basic homemade meatball recipe**
- 1-3 cans of cream of mushroom soup (depending on how big/small your bag of meatballs is - adjust your grocery list)**
- milk (depending on how thick or thin you want the gravy)**
- 1 cup sour cream (more or less to taste)**

Brown the meatballs before putting them in the crockpot so as to render off much of the fat (the browning adds nice flavor too). Season the meatballs with some pepper and Mrs. Dash while browning them as well. Put the meatballs, soup, and some milk in the crockpot and let it cook for a few hours. Add the sour cream right before you serve so it doesn't separate.

Chili/Cheese Dip

My children and their friends absolutely adore this dip and request it often. So easy they can make it themselves. Double the amounts for a crowd.

- 8 oz. cream cheese**
- 1 cup cheddar cheese**
- 1 can chili**
- tortilla chips or Fritos**
- optional garnishes: sliced green onion or chopped cilantro**

Cut up cream cheese and lay on the bottom of an 8 inch baking pan. Pour chili on top of cream cheese. Sprinkle the cheese over the chili. Bake at 375°F until heated through, about 15-20 minutes. Serve with tortilla chips.

Serving Idea: To make this into an entrée, serve with baked potatoes. Cut cooked potatoes open and spread the dip over the potatoes. Add some onions or chives.

Chicken Appetizers

The red and green pepper in this recipe make these easy chicken appetizers colorful for Christmas.

- Chicken strips, boneless/skinless, ready made, or cut your own about 1" X 6"**
- Seasoning, such as Grill Mates for Chicken, Spike, Mrs. Dash, Seasoned Salt**
- red and green bell pepper, cut in 2-3" thin slices**

Roll one green and one red pepper strip up in the chicken strip and secure with a toothpick. Sprinkle a favorite seasoning such as McCormick's Grill Mates for Chicken, Mrs. Dash, Spike, or seasoned salt. You can bake these in the oven at 350°F for about 10-12 minutes. Watch carefully as they bake up quickly. Sprinkle with grated parmesan cheese when done, if desired.

Do Ahead Tip: Prepare the appetizers ahead of time on cookie sheets. Freeze cooked or uncooked. When frozen, bag into zipper freezer bags. These are easily warmed up at the last minute.

PinWheels

The red and green ingredients make these colorful and tasty for the Christmas holidays.

- 2 packages of cream cheese (8 oz.) softened,**
- 1 package ranch salad dressing mix (dry mix)**
- 1/2 cup minced sweet red pepper**
- 1/2 cup minced celery**
- 1/4 cup minced green onions**
- 1/4 cup minced black olives (optional)**
- 3-4 flour tortillas (10 inch)**

In a mixing bowl beat cream cheese and dressing mix until smooth. Add the red peppers, celery, onion, and olives; mix well. Spread about 3/4 cup on each tortilla. Roll up tightly; wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Slice into 1/2 inch pieces. Yield: 15-20 servings (double or triple as needed) Make ahead!

Vegetable and Fruit Platters with Dips

Vegetable Platter

Cut up a variety of vegetables keeping a contrast in color in mind. Line the platter or plates with deep green leaf lettuce or romaine. Vegetables can be cut up a day ahead and stored in plastic bags or containers with a little water to keep them from drying out. Serve with one or more dips. Choose an assortment of veggies from the following list:

mini carrots	celery sticks
cauliflower	jicama
broccoli	cherry tomatoes
radish	red pepper slices
green onions	green pepper slices

Easy Dill Dip

This dip works well with all veggies and can be made in a minute.

- 1 cup sour cream**
- 1-2 tsp. dried dill weed**
- 1 tsp. dried parsley**
- 1/8 tsp. salt or to taste**
- 1 tbsp. dried onion powder or dry minced onion**

Mix together. Chill to blend flavors. Double, triple, quadruple as needed. Figure about 1-2 tbsp. dip per guest.

Marinated Vegetables

This is a delicious veggie tray that doesn't need a dip!

- 8 cups bite sized fresh vegetables such as:
broccoli, cauliflower, red bell peppers, baby carrots, onions,
celery, etc.**
- 1/3 cup rice vinegar or white vinegar (rice is not so sharp)**
- 1/4 cup sugar**
- 1/4 cup water**
- 1 package of Hidden Valley Seasoning And Salad Dressing
Mix (dry mix)**

Place all the vegetables into a zipper bag. Mix vinegar, sugar, seasoning mix, and water together in a small bowl. Pour this over the vegetables and marinate. I marinate about 4 hours, maximum. Drain the marinade before serving or after vegetables have marinated.

Green Chili Cheese Dip

Really good and easy. Double or triple to serve in a small crock pot to keep warm.

- 3/4 cup chopped onion**
- 2 tbsp. butter**
- 1 - 7 oz. can mild green chile salsa**
- 1 can 4 oz. can diced green chiles**
- 1 package cream cheese, cubed**
- 1/3 cup Half and Half**
- tortilla chips**

In a skillet saute the onion in butter until softened. Add salsa and chiles. Cook over medium heat 10 minutes. Lower heat; blend in cheese. Slowly add half-and-half so as not to curdle. Mix well. Heat through slowly. Serve warm with tortilla chips or raw vegetables.

Less Mess Guacamole Salsa

- 6 ripe avocados**
- 1-2 cups of salsa (as much or little as desired)**
- salt and pepper to taste**
- 3 tbsp. lemon juice (or to taste)**
- 1 tsp. garlic powder (or to taste)**
- tortilla chips**

Use a knife to cut around the avocado (like you would with a peach). Twist the avocado apart. Lay the avocado on a cutting board (skin side on the cutting board) and make slices in the avocado, taking care to not cut all the way through the skin. Then use your fingers to turn the avocado inside out so that the avocado slices fall into a bowl. Mash with a fork. Add lemon juice, garlic powder, salt and pepper to taste. Mix in salsa. Or, just serve the guacamole in one bowl and the salsa in the other and allow guests to dip into either. Store this dip with the pits to prevent browning. Make this dip at the last minute as this dip will not store well if made ahead. Serve with raw veggies and chips.

Texas Caviar

(This isn't fishy at all!) Tex-Mexican flare

- 2 cans (16 oz) ranch style black eyed peas**
- 1 can (16 oz) Bush's White Hominy (drained)**
- 1 jar (16 oz) Pace Picante sauce (med. flavor)**
- 1 cup chopped white onions**
- 1 cup chopped tomatoes**
- 3/4 cup chopped green pepper**
- 1/4 cup seeded finely chopped jalapeno**
- 1/4 cup minced fresh garlic**
- 1 tbsp. ground black pepper**
- 1 tbsp. sugar**
- 1/2 cup minced cilantro**
- 1 tbsp. salt, dried garlic and ground cumin.**

Chill overnight and let flavors mingle. Serve with Fritos. Yummy!

Hummus and Pita Chips

Hummus is traditionally a creamy puree of seasoned chickpeas. Hummus is VERY inexpensive to make and really helps fill peoples tummies!

- 2 cloves roasted garlic (for best flavor) or raw—roughly chopped**
- 1/4 cup lemon juice**
- 1/4 cup drained bean liquid to make it creamy (optional)**
- 14 oz. (400g) canned chickpeas (garbanzo beans)—rinsed and reserve drained liquid**
- 1/2 tsp. cumin or to taste**
- 2 tbsp. olive oil**
- 1/2 - 1 tsp. Real Salt**

Place all ingredients in a food processor or blender and process until smooth, scraping the sides occasionally. Adjust seasonings to taste. Serve with a variety of vegetables.

Variations:

Spicier hummus: add a small red chili (chopped) or a pinch of cayenne pepper.

Roasted red bell peppers can be pureed and added to hummus for a pretty color and flavor variation.

Black Olives can be finely chopped and added as a variation but not in combination with other ingredients.

Do Ahead Tip: Prepare extra quantities of hummus for the refrigerator; if covered it will store for up to 1 week. You can freeze hummus for up to 3 months.

Fruit Platter

Cut up a variety of fruits (at least 3 kinds). Choose from:

- strawberries
- melon balls
- orange slices (easy and usually in season)
- apple slices
- pineapple - fresh or canned
- pears
- bananas

Fruit Dip

This dip is so easy you will be shocked at the compliments you'll receive.

- 1 cup sour cream**
- 3 tbsp. strawberry jam**

Blend together. Serve with a fruit tray.

Apple Brickle Dip

- 8 oz. cream cheese**
- 1/2 cup brown sugar**
- 1/4 cup sugar**
- 1 tsp. vanilla**
- 1 package toffee chips**
- 3 tart apples, sliced**

Blend sugar into softened cream cheese and other ingredients except the apples. Slice up the apples. If you are not serving the apples immediately they may be held with lemon juice water or a bit of water with vitamin C crystals to prevent browning. Rinse the apples before serving.

Cheese Balls

Cheese Balls are a great way to serve cheese and crackers more economically than sliced hard cheeses. They can be made ahead easily if carefully wrapped. Partially used Cheese Balls can be wrapped and re-rolled if need be. If you are going to have a party, stock up on cream cheese while it is on sale. It is used in many, different dips, and appetizers. Be sure to buy plenty.

Cheese Ball #1

- 3 cups finely shredded cheddar cheese (3/4 lb)**
- 8 oz. cream cheese**
- small jar of pimentos**
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder**
- 1 cup finely chopped pecans**
- 3/4 cup mayo**
- 1 small onion, finely chopped (optional)**
- 2 tbsp. Worcestershire Sauce**
- 1/2 cup finely chopped fresh parsley**
- paprika**

Mix all ingredients together. (Tip: put cream cheese out on the counter for a few hours to warm up. It will mix much easier warm than cold.) Combine all the ingredients EXCEPT the parsley and paprika and form cheese mixture into a ball or log. Roll in parsley and sprinkle with paprika. Chill until ready to serve; wrap tightly in plastic wrap. Serve with crackers.

Cheese Ball #2

8 oz. cream cheese	2 oz. blue cheese crumbles
1 shake garlic salt	1 tbsp. worcestershire sauce
chopped pimento	chopped pepper

Mix cheeses and other ingredients. Shape into a ball and place on saran wrap that is covered with chopped walnuts. Roll around until ball is covered with nuts; chill.

Marilyn's Christmas Cookie Recipe Sampler

We love to make cookies at Christmas time but I don't have time to do fussy rosettes and tedious cut-out cookies. All my recipes are quick and easy without multiple steps. They can all be made well ahead of time and frozen in moisture proof containers or zipper freezer bags.

As long as I have an assortment of cookies on plates or platters with different shapes, sizes, and colors including a little chocolate my family content. These are the cookie recipes that my family asks for each year that will work at any open house.

Butter Nut Snowballs

I have used this recipe for nearly 30 years!

- 1 cup butter, softened**
- 1/2 cup sugar**
- 2 tsp. vanilla**
- 1/2 tsp. salt**
- 2 cups all-purpose flour (I use Kamut® flour)**
- 2 cups very finely chopped walnuts or pecans (I use pecans)**
- Confectioner's Sugar**

Cream butter, sugar, and vanilla until fluffy. Add the flour, salt, and blend well. Add in the finely chopped nuts. Shape into 1 inch balls. Bake 325°F for 30 minutes. Do not over brown! Roll in confectioner's sugar while still warm and place on cooling racks.

Peanut Blossoms

This recipe is fun to make with your children.

- 1 3/4 cups all-purpose or whole grain flour**
- 1 tsp. baking soda**
- 1/2 tsp. salt**
- 1/2 cup sugar**
- 1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar**
- 1/2 cup softened butter**
- 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter**
- 1 egg**
- 2 tbsp. milk**
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract**
- 48 milk chocolate kisses, unwrapped**

In a large mixer bowl, stir flour, soda, and salt. Add remaining ingredients except chocolate kisses and beat at low speed with mixer until well combined, scraping bowl occasionally. Chill dough 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 375°F. Roll small amounts of dough into 1 inch balls. Place on ungreased cookie sheet and bake 12 minutes or until light brown. Remove from oven and immediately press a chocolate kiss into each center. The cookie cracks around the edge. Repeat with remaining dough. Makes 4 dozen.

Raspberry Bars

Super easy and fast to make. Festive and delicious.

- 1 yellow cake mix**
- 2 1/2 cups uncooked quick oats**
- 3/4 cups butter, melted**
- 1 - 12 oz. jar of raspberry preserves or jelly of choice**

Combine cake mix and oats. Stir in butter until mixture is crumbly. I mix this in my Bosch mixer as it seems to distribute the butter better. Press about 3 cups mixture evenly into a greased 13 X 9 pan. Spread preserves over the crumb mixture. Sprinkle with remaining crumb mixture. Pat gently to level the topping. Bake at 375°F for 25 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool completely in the pan. Cut into 32 bars.

Double Chocolate Mint Treasures

- 3/4 cup butter**
- 1/2 cup brown sugar or SUCANAT**
- 1/2 cup sugar**
- 1 egg**
- 1 tsp. vanilla**
- 1 tsp. peppermint extract**
- 1 1/2 cups whole grain flour**
- 1/2 cup cocoa powder**
- 1 tsp. baking soda**
- 1/4 tsp. salt**
- 1 cup chocolate chips**

Cream together butter and sugars. Add egg, vanilla and peppermint extract. Combine dry ingredients in a bowl. Add to wet ingredients and then stir in chocolate chips. Drop by teaspoonfuls on greased cookie sheets two inches apart. Bake at 350°F for 10 minutes on greased cookie sheet.

Date Bars

These are excellent, festive, and delicious.

- 2 1/2 cups dates, cut up**
- 1/4 cup sugar**
- 1 1/2 cups water**
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts (opt)**
- 1 1/4 cups whole grain flour**
- 1/2 tsp. salt**
- 1 tsp. baking soda**
- 1 1/2 cups Quick oats**
- 1 cup brown sugar**
- 1/2 cup butter, softened**
- 1 tbsp. water**

Combine dates, sugar and 1 1/2 cups water in saucepan. Cook, stirring frequently, until consistency is like thick jam. Cool. Stir in nuts, if desired. Meanwhile, sift together flour, salt and soda into mixing bowl; stir in oats and sugar. Cut in butter until mixture is crumbly. Sprinkle 1 tbsp. water over oat mixture; mix lightly. Pat about 2/3 of crumb mixture into greased 13 X 9 X 2 pan. Spread with date mixture. Cover with remaining crumb mixture, pat lightly. Bake at 350°F for 35 to 40 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool; cut into bars. Makes about 40 bars.

Lemon Squares

A family-favorite tradition for Christmas

Crust:

- 2 cups all purpose flour**
- 1 cup butter**
- 1/2 cup confectioner's sugar**

Melt butter and mix flour and sugar together. Press this mixture in a 9" X 13" pan. Bake at 350°F for 20 minutes.

Filling:

- 4 eggs**
- 6 tbsp. lemon juice**
- 1 1/2 cups granulated sugar**
- 1/2 tsp. salt**
- 1 tsp. baking powder**

Beat together. Pour over crust. Bake at 350°F for 20-25 minutes. Do not over-bake. It should only be very lightly browned. When cool, sift a little confectioner's sugar over the top and cut into squares.

Rich Brownies

But if you want a rich, fudge-like brownie, here is a tried and true favorite. My son always volunteers to make this one. This is easily made ahead and frozen. Chocolate really balances out a great buffet of goodies.

- 6 - 1 oz. squares unsweetened chocolate**
- 3/4 cup butter**
- 6 eggs beaten**
- 2 cups sugar**
- 1/4 tsp. salt**
- 2 tsp. vanilla**
- 1 1/2 cup flour**
- 1 - 16 oz. package semi-sweet chocolate morsels - or use mint flavored for the holidays**

Grease a 9" X 13" pan. Set aside. Melt unsweetened chocolate and butter in saucepan, stirring constantly. Remove and cool.

Combine eggs, sugar, salt, and vanilla; add to chocolate. Mix well. Stir in flour and chocolate morsels. Pour in pan and bake at 350°F for 25-30 minutes. Cool. Cut into 24-30 squares.

Treats and Other Accompaniments

No Bake Pumpkin Pie

Surprisingly delicious even to the non-pumpkin pie lover. Make ahead! Easy, light and tasty.

- 1 cup whole milk**
- 2 packages Vanilla Flavored Instant Pudding And Pie filling**
- 2 cups thawed Cool Whip (don't use low fat, it doesn't hold up)**
- 1 14-16 oz. can pumpkin puree**
- 1 1/4 tsp. pumpkin pie spice**
- 1 /2 cup toasted pecans**
- 1 cup toasted coconut, optional**

Place milk in bowl; add pumpkin, pudding mixes and pumpkin pie spice. Beat for 1 minute or until well blended. Fold in whipped topping and place mixture in a graham cracker pie crust, or mini-tart crusts. Refrigerate until set then sprinkle with pecans and toasted coconut.

Spiced Pecans

- 1 tsp. cold water**
- 1 egg white**
- 1 lb. large pecan halves.**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon**
- 1 tsp. salt**

Beat water and egg white until frothy. Mix well with pecans. Combine remaining ingredients. Spread on a greased cookie sheet and bake at 225°F for one hour. Stir occasionally.

Peanut Brittle

This is easily made ahead by children. This recipe has been particularly fun for our children to make with supervision.

- 1 cup raw Spanish peanuts**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 1/2 cup white corn syrup**
- 1/3 tsp. salt**
- 1 tsp. salt**
- 1 tsp. butter**
- 1 tsp. vanilla**
- 1 tsp. baking soda**

Stir together peanuts, sugar, syrup and salt in a bowl. Place in microwave and cook 7-9 minutes, stirring well after 4 minutes. Continue cooking until color turns a pale yellow. Add butter and vanilla to syrup. Cook 1-2 minutes more until mixture and peanuts are lightly browned. Add baking soda and stir quickly. Pour mixture onto greased pan and cool.

Submerge bowl and other cooking instruments that came into contact with the peanut brittle under warm water as quickly as possible and allow to soak. After soaking cleaning will be a breeze!

Once peanut brittle has cooled, crack it into small pieces, put in a bag, and tie it with ribbon. You'll never go back to store bought peanut brittle after this!

Other Easy Treats to round out your buffet:

Hard Christmas Candy, Mixed Nuts, Fudge, Hershey Kisses.

Beverages

Beverages are an easy way to cut costs. If you are serving lots of tasty or rich foods, why not serve plain water and ice tea or coffee alone. People won't notice this budget builder or serve less food with a great punch. Calculate about 12-16 ounces per person when planning amounts.

Punch

This punch is not real sweet but can easily be made carbonated or non-carbonated.

- 1 - 12 oz. can frozen orange juice**
- 1 - 12 oz. can frozen lemonade**
- 1 tbsp. almond extract**
- 1 tbsp. vanilla extract**
- 20 cups water or carbonated water to taste**

Combine ingredients to taste. Chill with ice.

Pineapple Punch

- 1 can apple juice concentrate to make 2 quarts of juice**
- 1 quart of pineapple juice, unsweetened**
- 2 cups orange juice**
- juice of 2 lemons**

Mix juices together for a perfect blend of sweet and tart. Garnish with citrus slices of lemon, lime, or orange.

Hot Mulled Cider

Combine in a saucepan or large stock pot:

- 4 quarts apple juice,**
- 1 cup pineapple juice**
- 2 Cups Orange Juice**
- 4 whole cloves or 1/8 tsp ground cloves**
- 2 cinnamon sticks or 1/4 tsp cinnamon**
- 1/2 tsp allspice**

Add:

1/4 Cup honey or sugar to taste before serving

Garnish with orange slices and cinnamon sticks.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Available at urbanhomemaker.com

The Urban Homemaker is dedicated to teaching and promoting "old fashioned" skills of cooking from basic, whole ingredients. We offer top-of-the-line products and related books that we use and recommend ourselves.

Wonder Mill

The Wonder Mill quickly mills a wide variety of grains and beans into wholesome flours. Adjusts from fine pastry flour consistency to coarse corn meal. I have been using a grain mill for over 20 years.

The Bosch Universal

For the chef who desires **quality** as well as quantity, consider the popular 3-speed, 700 watt Bosch Universal. It's capacity comes from a 10-pound capacity mixing bowl (5-6 large loaves) and 6-cup standard blender attachment. The wide assortment of standard and optional attachments lends versatility to make the Universal much more than just an ordinary kitchen machine. I depend on my Bosch "servant" daily.

Multi-Pure Drinking Water System

Multi-Pure's Solid Carbon block technology is a recognized leader in home water filtration. Better health starts with pure water.

Sue Gregg Cookbooks

This Christian author shows how to select and prepare whole food ingredients to maximize nutritional benefits and good taste. This series came highly recommended by many of you, our valued customers and after using them now for a number of years, I concur. These books are excellent and packed with all kinds of valuable background information. Start collecting them one by one as finances allow or buy the set of six and save!

**These and other products for health can be ordered at
www.urbanhomemaker.com**

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