

Thanksgiving side dishes are as important as the turkey

Today, nearly 90 percent of Americans choose turkey — whether roasted, baked or deep-fried — for Thanksgiving, according to the National Turkey Federation. Other traditional foods include stuffing, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie.

To survive the cooking marathon that invariably accompanies the day, make side-dish selections based on ease as well as flavor. Macaroni and cheese and mashed potatoes are popular with smaller children.

Appetizers are always a hit, like a tray of grapes, cut up apples and pineapple or veggies, which can also be used as a garnish for main dishes.

Pineapple Delight

- 1 can pineapple tidbits, drained, save the juice
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons all purpose flour

- 1/2 cup butter, melted
- 1 cup grated cheddar cheese
- 1 sleeve butter flavor crackers, crushed

Combine sugar and flour, stir in juice. Add cheese and pineapple, mix well, put into greased casserole dish. Combine melted butter and crackers. Sprinkle cracker crumbs over top. Bake at 350°F for 20-30 minutes until topping is golden brown. Recipe can easily be doubled.

Pear Salad

- 1 large box of lemon flavored gelatin
- 1 small container whipped topping
- 1 large can Bartlett pear halves, save the juice
- 8 ounces cream cheese, room temperature

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Food for Thought

Heat gelatin in pear juice until dissolved, cool. Mix in the whipped topping, add cream cheese, continue beating until smooth. Fold in the pear juice and gelatin mixture. Pour half of the mixture into a casserole dish.

Place pears evenly in mixture. Refrigerate for 30 minutes then add rest of the mixture on top. Refrigerate.

Tennessee Squash Casserole

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 cup hot milk
- 1 cup dry bread crumbs
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 eggs slightly beaten
- 2 cups yellow squash, cooked, drained, mashed
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans

In small skillet, melt butter, saute onion until tender. Add milk over the

dry bread crumbs, stir to mix along with salt, pepper and nutmeg. Add eggs, squash and pecans. Pour all in a small greased casserole dish. Bake at 325°F for 30 minutes. Serve hot.

One of the favorites on any Thanksgiving table is sweet potatoes. I usually make my sweet potato casserole with a brown sugar and flour topping. But occasionally I like a new style of sweet potato casserole.

I made this Caribbean one a few years ago when there was a shortage of fresh sweet potatoes. I was looking for recipes using canned sweet potatoes, which I had never used before.

Caribbean Yam Casserole

- One 1-ounce can of yams or sweet potatoes, drained
- 1/2 medium banana, thickly sliced
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper

- 2 tablespoons pecans, coarsely chopped
- 2 tablespoons toasted flaked coconut

In a small buttered casserole dish, arrange yams and banana. Pour orange juice over all. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Top with pecans and coconut. Bake covered in a 350°F oven for 30 minutes.

Serves three. This can be doubled and tripled for a larger casserole.

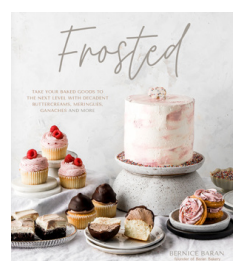
As you set your Thanksgiving table, remember the reason for the season. May you set aside time to share the things you are thankful for. May you remember those who are not with us this year. May we realize we are a land of plenty and should be thankful for all our farmers who have made this bounty plentiful.

Happy Thanksgiving!

MARY KATE RIDGEWAY, a retired Extension leader, is a freelance home economist and educator.

COOKBOOK REVIEW

Baran Bakery founder proves it is possible to have your cake and frost it too



In *Frosted* (2021, Page Street Publishing Co.), Baran Bakery founder Bernice Baran shares tips and tricks for whipping up popular frosting recipes including buttercream, meringue, ganache and more.

Each frosting option includes a breakdown of its flavor, texture and characteristics, what it's best used for and which desserts it goes best with.

Recipes include: Frosted Animal Cracker Cake with White Chocolate Italian Meringue Buttercream, Little Mocha Cake with Espresso Diplomat Cream and Chocolate Ganache, etc.

Pumpkin Marshmallow Cake

Chai-Spiced Caramel Sauce:

- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
 - 2 tablespoons water
 - 1/4 cup heavy whipping cream, room temperature
 - 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
 - 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
 - 1/4 teaspoon salt
 - 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
 - 1/8 teaspoon ginger
 - 1/8 teaspoon cloves
 - 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
 - 1/8 teaspoon cardamom
 - Pinch of black pepper
- Chai Spice Pumpkin Cake:**
- 3 cups all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
 - 1 teaspoon baking soda
 - 2 teaspoons baking powder
 - 1/2 teaspoon salt
 - 2 teaspoons cinnamon
 - 1 teaspoon nutmeg
 - 1 teaspoon cloves

- 1 teaspoon ginger
 - 1 teaspoon cardamom
 - 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 - 4 large eggs, room temperature
 - 1 cup granulated sugar
 - 1 cup packed brown sugar
 - 1 cup canola oil
 - One 15-ounce can pumpkin purée
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Toasted Marshmallow Cream Cheese Frosting:**
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
 - 1/2 cup cream cheese, room temperature
 - 3 cups powdered sugar, spooned and leveled
 - 1/8 teaspoon salt
 - 10 large marshmallows
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste or high-quality vanilla extract

Caramel sauce: Place sugar and water in a medium, light-colored saucepan with a lid over medium heat. Allow sugar to melt in water, but do not stir it. After about 10 minutes, when sugar begins to turn an amber color, remove the pan from stove and stir in the cream. The mixture will bubble violently, so be careful. Stir mixture until it's completely combined, whisk in the butter and pour the caramel into a heat-proof bowl. Add vanilla, salt, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, nutmeg, cardamom and pepper, mixing until completely combined. Cover caramel, allow it to cool to room temperature.

Cake: Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease three 6-inch cake pans with baking spray, and line them with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, ginger, cardamom and pepper.

In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, granulated and brown sugars, oil, pumpkin and vanilla, until mix-

ture is completely smooth. Add dry ingredients to wet ingredients, whisk just until the last streak of flour is combined. Distribute batter evenly among prepared pans, filling each pan only about one-half to two-thirds full.

Bake cakes for about 35 minutes, until an indentation made with your finger in the top center of the cake springs back. If the indentation remains, return cakes to the oven for 2 minutes, or until center springs back. Remove cakes from the pans, allow them to cool completely before frosting.

Toasted Marshmallow Cream Cheese Frosting: Preheat oven to 400°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Make the batch of frosting: Use a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment to beat the butter and cream cheese at medium-high speed for 1-2 minutes, until the color turns into a pale yellow.

Add powdered sugar to the butter mixture, mix it at low speed, just until sugar is combined, about 2 minutes. Turn mixer to medium-high speed, and beat frosting at least 5 minutes, or until all of the sugar is fully dissolved and frosting no longer feels gritty when pressed between your fingers. Scrape down sides of the bowl as needed. Add salt, mix just until it's combined.

If you want to remove excess air to more smoothly frost a cake, whip frosting on low speed for an additional 3-5 minutes.

Place marshmallows on prepared baking sheet, bake them for about 5 minutes. Stand next to the oven and watch marshmallows toast; as soon as they brown, remove them



from the oven and scrape them into the bowl of Cream Cheese Frosting. Add vanilla bean paste. Beat frosting, at medium-high speed, just until marshmallows are fully combined. Refrigerate frosting for 30 minutes. Remove frosting from fridge, mix it with a spatula to smooth it out a bit.

Place the first layer of cake on a flat surface and use an offset spatula with half of the frosting to frost the first and then the second layer of cake. Place the third layer on top, then smooth out any frosting that squeezed out between the layers.

Apply a thin crumb coat to the out-

side of the cake, and refrigerate cake for at least 1 hour.

Place the rest of the frosting on top of the cake and, with the offset spatula, work it down the sides. Use the offset spatula or a cake scraper to smooth out the top and sides of the cake as needed. Refrigerate the cake for at least 30 minutes before drizzling the caramel on top.

Yields eight to 10 slices.
Note: This Pumpkin Marshmallow Cake is best served at room temperature or slightly chilled. Store it in an airtight container in the fridge for up to a week.

Celebrate holiday celebrations with these delicious Southern treats



A little bit of "Southern" is inside all of us. You don't have to be from the South to embrace the food — especially

the sweets. There's something about Southern treats that appeal to the hearts, souls and stomachs of all.

Let chef Belinda Smith-Sullivan enhance holiday celebrations with hospitality, cooking tips and 100 flavor-packed recipes for Southern desserts and treats in her cookbook, *Southern Sugar* (2021, Gibbs Smith). She reintroduces some favorite recipes that may have been forgotten and puts fresh takes on Southern classics.

"*Southern Sugar* is all about traditions — the traditions of Southern people, families and communities," she said. "Nowhere is this strong sense of connectedness felt like in the South. Southerners are especially proud of their desserts. I have had the opportunity to travel throughout all the Southern states, and I am amazed

at the sweet treasures that I have discovered in the smallest corners of communities that I share in my book."

The book is divided up into chapters that focus on cakes, pound cakes, cheesecakes, pies, ice creams, candies, cookies and brownies, and beverages. Recipes include: Afternoon Tea Cakes, Hummingbird Cake, Chess Pie, Sweet Potato Pecan Pound Cake with Orange Glaze and Candied Peel, Mississippi Mud Cake, Fig Pistachio Cheesecake, Beignets, etc.

Pecan Tassies

- Pastry:**
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
 - 3 ounces cream cheese, softened
 - 1 cup all-purpose flour
- Filling:**
- 1 cup chopped pecans, divided
 - 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
 - 1 large egg, room temperature
 - 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
 - Pinch of kosher salt
 - 1 cup packed light brown sugar

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a 24-count mini-muffin pan with non-

stick spray.

In a medium bowl, cream together butter and cream cheese with a hand mixer. Add flour, mix until well blended. Cover, refrigerate 30 minutes.

Divide dough into 24 even pieces (using a scoop makes this easier) and, using a small wooden tart tamper, press dough into the bottoms and sides of prepared muffin pan. If you don't have a tart tamper, you can use your fingers to press the dough into the cups. Dough should reach the top of the cups. Evenly divide 1/2 of the chopped pecans between the muffin cups and set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the melted butter, egg, vanilla and salt. Add brown sugar and 1/2 of the remaining pecans, mix until blended and smooth. Using a small scoop, fill each cup evenly to about 3/4 full and sprinkle the last of the remaining chopped pecans evenly among the cups. Bake 20-25 minutes or until center is almost set. Remove from oven and cool completely in the pan on a wire rack.

Makes 24 tassies.



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