

The background of the book cover is a close-up photograph of several round, light green cookies dusted with white powdered sugar. The cookies are arranged on a light-colored surface, with some in the foreground and others in the background. A metal whisk is visible on the left side, and a small, dark, round object is on the right. The overall tone is warm and festive.

Quick and Easy Recipes for the Holidays

Holiday Thyme

Jennifer Dempsey

creator of Mother Thyme



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by Jennifer Dempsey

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ISBN 978-0-615-72111-8

Second Edition

**Dedicated to my little sugar plums, Eden and Tyler.
Forever and ever and always.**

CONTENTS

Introduction	7
Appetizers	8
Cranberry Cocktail Meatballs	10
Rosemary and Herb Dipping Oil	11
Deviled Eggs	12
Holiday Pinwheels	15
Mini Tuna Cakes	16
Walnut and Date Cheese Ball	19
Christmas Morning	20
Apple Cinnamon French Toast Casserole	22
Cranberry Orange Muffins	23
Drinks	24
Eggnog	26
Hot Chocolate Mix	27
Frozen Hot Chocolate	29
Prosecco and Cranberry Mojitos	30
Hot Spiced Cider	31
Entrees	32
Maple Glazed Pork Tenderloin	34
Prime Rib	36
Salmon with Pesto in Puff Pastry	38
Sicilian Chicken	41
Slow Cooker Beef Burgundy	42
Side Dishes	44

Creamy Mashed Potatoes	46
Easy Risotto	47
Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Balsamic and Cranberries	48
Spinach Salad	49
Desserts	50
Gingerbread Truffles	52
Red Velvet Cheesecake Swirl Brownies	53
Peppermint Chocolate Pudding Pie	55
Rum Cake	56
Holiday Cookies	58
Coconut Cherry Drops	61
Double Chocolate Crinkles	62
Pistachio Wedding Cookies	63
Snowball Cookies	65
Iced Oatmeal Cookies	66
Theme Menus	68
Dinner with Friends	70
Last Minute Dinner Party	71
Christmas Eve	72
New Year's Eve	73
In a Pinch	74
In a Pinch ~ Quick Tips	76
Ranch Dip	78
Parmesan Crisps	78
About Jennifer	80

It's the most wonderful time of the year.



Introduction

Happy Holidays!

The holidays are my favorite time of year. I have to admit, I am one of those people that enjoy listening to Christmas music in November and start decorating for Christmas before Thanksgiving dinner is even served. From baking Christmas cookies to decorating the Christmas tree, I make each day festive with holiday activities.

When December comes, the 25 Days of Christmas is in full swing and so begins a calendar full of events, gatherings and family activities. It's also time to plan out the menus for the season and spend a few afternoons baking cookies.

My husband and I like to entertain during the holidays. Enjoying a nice meal and spending time with family and friends is what the season is all about.

Many of us can find the holidays overwhelming, especially if you are hosting a party. Coming up with ideas that are fast and easy that don't require all day in the kitchen, is the key to enjoying this time of year yourself.

Here you will find some of my favorite original recipes that make holiday entertaining enjoyable. From Beef Burgundy to a creamy Peppermint Pudding Pie, you can easily prepare these dishes quickly before your company arrives. Now all you have to do is relax and enjoy the evening!

Whether you use these recipes while entertaining or after a busy day, I am sure these will become favorites you will find yourself making throughout the year.

From my kitchen to yours, I wish you a very warm holiday *thyme*.

Jennifer



Appetizers



Cranberry Cocktail Meatballs

Classic cocktail meatballs are a favorite among many, especially during the holidays. This version uses cranberry sauce along with a splash of orange juice to give these meatballs a sweet and sour taste.

2 pounds frozen meatballs
14 ounce can jellied cranberry sauce
12 ounce jar chili sauce
1/4 cup orange juice
1 tablespoon worcestershire sauce

Place frozen meatballs in slow cooker. In a medium bowl mix together cranberry sauce, chili sauce, orange juice and worcestershire sauce. Pour over meatballs and toss until coated. Cook on low for 2-5 hours until meatballs are heated through.

Rosemary and Herb Dipping Oil

No one can pass up a loaf of warm crusty bread especially when it is served with an herb infused oil. With a few ingredients probably in your spice cabinet you can easily whip up this simple dipping oil. You may want to double the recipe because it never lasts long!

- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

In a small bowl add red pepper flakes, oregano, pepper, rosemary, basil leaves, salt and minced garlic. While stirring stream in extra virgin olive oil.

If desired, warm in microwave for 10-15 seconds.

Serve with slices of bread.

Prep tip! *You can make batches ahead of time by combining the spices and storing in an airtight container to have on hand. When ready to make, just add fresh minced garlic and olive oil. It's as easy as that!*

Deviled Eggs

I have a weak spot for deviled eggs, especially these. With crisp bacon, chopped chives and a touch of dijon, they are perfect for any holiday gathering.

Makes 12

6 large eggs
1/3 cup mayonnaise
1/2 teaspoon dijon mustard
1/2 teaspoon white distilled vinegar
1 tablespoon chopped bacon (or real bacon bits)
1 teaspoon pimentos, chopped
1 teaspoon chives, chopped

Place eggs in a medium saucepan and fill with water and a pinch of salt. Bring water to a boil. Cover then turn off heat and let sit for 14 minutes. Rinse under cold water and peel.

Cut eggs lengthwise and place yolks in small bowl and mash. Add mayonnaise, dijon mustard, vinegar, bacon, pimentos and chives and stir until blended.

Scoop mixture into the center of egg whites. Chill until ready to serve.





Holiday Pinwheels

Growing up I remember my mom serving deli spirals as the family would sit around the Christmas tree opening presents. It became somewhat of a joke each year asking my mom if she had gotten the deli spirals.

Several years ago the torch was handed to me to host Christmas. I couldn't bear not to continue our tradition of serving deli spirals or pinwheels. They are easy to make and perfect not just for the holidays but anytime of year.

Serve on a bed of rosemary for an elegant presentation.

Makes 50

2 packages (8 ounce each) cream cheese
1 cup asiago cheese, shredded
1/2 cup sun-dried tomatoes in herbs, chopped
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
Pinch of dried basil
Pinch of salt
5 10-inch flour tortillas

Combine all ingredients except tortillas in a medium bowl until blended.

Divide mixture between the tortillas and spread evenly. Tightly roll tortillas and wrap in plastic wrap for several hours or overnight.

Unwrap from plastic wrap. Slice and serve.

Save a step! *This also makes a great dip! Instead of wrapping mixture in tortillas, serve as a dip along with thin crackers.*

Mini Tuna Cakes

Substituting crabmeat for tuna makes for a great alternative for a traditional crab cake topped with a creamy homemade tartar sauce. These are great to make ahead of time and keep in the refrigerator. When ready to serve just pop in the oven to bake.

Makes 12

For Tuna Cakes

2 tablespoons mayonnaise
1 large egg
1 tablespoon sweet relish
1/2 teaspoon worcestershire sauce
2 teaspoons dijon mustard
1 teaspoon lemon juice
2 cans (5 ounce each) tuna in water, well drained
3 tablespoons bread crumbs
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon dried parsley
1/4 teaspoon salt
Pinch of pepper

For Tartar Dipping Sauce

1/4 cup mayonnaise
1 teaspoon sweet relish
Splash of lemon juice
Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven at 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Lightly spray large baking sheet with non-stick cooking spray and set aside.

In a medium bowl stir together mayonnaise, egg, relish, worcestershire sauce, mustard and lemon juice until blended.

Stir in tuna until combined. Add bread crumbs, garlic powder, parsley, salt and pepper and mix.

Make tablespoon size balls and flatten slightly. Place on baking sheet. Bake for 8-10 minutes until golden brown. Turn over and bake for an additional 8-10 minutes.

For Tartar Dipping Sauce:

Add all ingredients in a small bowl and stir until blended. Serve on the side or dollop on top of each tuna cake before serving.

Make these for a weeknight dinner! Instead of 12 mini tuna cakes you can double the size and make 6 tuna cakes. Serve with a tossed salad for an easy weeknight meal.





Walnut and Date Cheese Ball

A holiday buffet is not complete without a cheese ball. You can often find cheese balls of different varieties in the grocery store cheese case, but making your own takes only a few minutes.

Lightly sweetened with a hint of cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves, this cheese ball is great served with wheat crackers or thinly sliced bread.

Makes 1 cheese ball

8 ounce cream cheese (regular or light)

1/8 teaspoon cinnamon

Pinch of ground nutmeg

Pinch of ground cloves

1/2 cup chopped dates

1/2 cup chopped walnuts

In a medium bowl combine cream cheese, cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves and roll into a ball. Toss dates and walnuts together in another bowl and roll cream cheese ball in mixture until covered.

Wrap in plastic wrap until ready to serve.

Shopping note! *You can often find chopped dates near the raisins and dried fruits at your local grocery store.*



Christmas Morning



Apple Cinnamon French Toast Casserole

I love serving this Christmas morning. It is quick to prepare the night before and on Christmas morning just pop in the oven when ready to serve.

Serves 8

For French Toast

21 ounce can apple pie filling
16 ounce loaf cinnamon bread or raisin cinnamon bread
6 large eggs
1 1/2 cups half and half
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 teaspoon cinnamon

For Oatmeal Streusel Topping

2 tablespoons butter, melted
1/2 cup light brown sugar
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
1/4 cup old fashioned rolled oats

For Glaze

1/2 cup confectioners sugar
2 tablespoons milk

Spray a 9"x13" baking pan with non-stick cooking spray. Spread apple pie filling evenly on the bottom of pan.

Cut slices of bread into four squares and arrange on top of filling.

In a medium bowl whisk eggs, half and half, vanilla extract and cinnamon. Pour mixture evenly over bread. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.

In a small bowl mix together butter, brown sugar, flour and rolled oats. Sprinkle on top of bread.

Bake uncovered for 40-45 minutes.

In a small bowl combine confectioners sugar and milk. Drizzle on top of casserole. Serve with maple syrup.

Cranberry Orange Muffins

Citrus is a favorite of mine during the holidays. I like to place a large bowl of oranges with fresh sprigs of balsam on the kitchen table. The smell of oranges and balsam together is such an inviting scent.

These muffins are perfect for a holiday brunch, for Christmas morning, or even to give as a gift in place of cookies. These also freeze well so making these ahead of time and storing in the freezer until needed makes for easy holiday baking.

Makes 12

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, softened
1 cup sugar
2 large eggs
1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup orange juice
2 tablespoons sour cream
1 teaspoon almond extract
Zest from one orange
1 cup dried cranberries

For Glaze

1 1/2 cups confectioners sugar
3 tablespoons orange juice
1 teaspoons almond extract
1/4 cup almond slivers

Preheat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit. Line muffin tin with liners and set aside.

In a medium bowl stir together flour, baking powder and baking soda and set aside.

Using an electric mixer cream together butter and sugar. Add eggs, milk, orange juice, sour cream, almond extract and orange zest and stir until blended.

Gradually add in flour mixture until combined. Stir in dried cranberries.

Pour batter into prepared muffin pan about 3/4 full.

Bake for 20-25 minutes until tops are golden brown. Place on wire rack to cool.

In a small bowl stir together confectioners sugar, orange juice and almond extract. Dip muffin tops in glaze and set on wire rack until dry. Garnish with almond slivers.



Drinks

a cup of good cheer



Eggnog

Eggnog is a classic drink during the holidays. Impress your guests with an easy to make homemade eggnog. You can make it a day ahead of time and it is ready to serve as your guests arrive. Once you try this, the store bought version will never taste the same.

Serves 6

6 large eggs
2 cups whole milk
3/4 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 cup ground nutmeg
2 cups heavy cream
1/4 cup bourbon (optional)

Whisk eggs in a large bowl and set aside.

Add milk, sugar, vanilla and nutmeg in a large saucepan over medium heat until it comes to a low boil. Remove from heat and stream milk into eggs whisking constantly. Pour mixture back into saucepan and cook on medium-low heat, stirring frequently until it thickens, about 15 minutes.

Remove from heat and set aside to cool. Stir in heavy cream and bourbon and refrigerate until chilled before serving.

Hot Chocolate Mix

Making your own hot cocoa mix is easy. It also makes cute gifts placed in mason jars for holiday gift giving. Add a tag with instructions and the recipient can enjoy a hot cup of cocoa all winter long.

Makes 3 pint size jars

3 cups dry milk
1 cup confectioners sugar
1 cup granular non-dairy creamer
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1/2 cup sugar

Mix all ingredients together and store in an airtight container. To make, combine 3 tablespoons mix with 6 ounces of hot water or milk.



Frozen Hot Chocolate

Enjoy a frozen version of a wintertime favorite. It tastes exactly like what it is called, frozen hot chocolate. A must try for anyone that loves hot cocoa.

Serves 4

4 ounce semi-sweet chocolate bar
2 cups milk
1 envelope (or 3 tablespoons loose) milk chocolate hot cocoa mix
2 tablespoons sugar
3 cups ice
Whip cream for serving
Chocolate chips for garnish (optional)

Melt chocolate in a double boiler over medium heat. Stir in milk, hot chocolate mix and sugar until hot chocolate mix and sugar is dissolved and milk is heated through. Remove from heat and let cool completely.

Place ice and cooled hot chocolate in blender. Blend until smooth. Pour into glasses. Garnish with whip cream and chocolate chips.

Give it a kick! Add 1-2 ounces of chocolate liqueur before blending.

Prosecco and Cranberry Mojitos

Prosecco, an Italian white wine, and mojitos are two of my favorite cocktails. Combining the two and adding fresh cranberries makes a festive drink not just for the holidays but any time of year.

Serves 4

1 cup fresh cranberries
24 mint leaves plus sprigs for garnish
1/4 cup lime juice
1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup light rum
2 cups Prosecco
Crushed ice

In a large bowl add cranberries, mint leaves, lime juice and sugar and muddle together until cranberries have been crushed and juices have been extracted. Pour in rum and Prosecco and stir. Strain into a pitcher.

Fill tall glasses with ice and pour in the drink. Garnish with sprig of mint.

Hot Spiced Cider

Warm up this holiday season to a cup of spiced cider. If desired add a little rum or bourbon and cozy up near the fire. Not only does this make a festive drink but it makes the house smell inviting.

1/2 gallon apple cider
1/4 cup orange juice
2 tablespoons light brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
2-3 cinnamon sticks
Pinch of ground nutmeg
Pinch of salt

Place all ingredients in a large saucepan and simmer on medium-low heat, stirring occasionally until sugar is dissolved about 20-25 minutes.

Ladle in mugs and serve.

Store leftovers in refrigerator to serve cold or warm.



Entrees



Maple Glazed Pork Tenderloin

Tender pork tenderloin wrapped in bacon and topped with a maple glaze. Simple and delicious.

Serves 6

2 pork tenderloin (about 1 pound each)
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
8 slices bacon
1/2 cup brown sugar
3 tablespoons maple syrup
2 tablespoons butter
1/2 teaspoon dijon mustard

Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Line a baking sheet with foil and spray with non-stick cooking spray and set aside.

Season tenderloin with salt and pepper. Wrap bacon slices around meat placing the seam on the bottom. Bake for 15 minutes.

In a small saucepan over medium heat stir together brown sugar, maple syrup, butter and mustard until butter is melted and sugar is dissolved.

Reserve 2 tablespoons and brush the remaining glaze on meat. Cook for another 15-20 minutes until internal temperature of meat reaches 145 degrees Fahrenheit.

Let meat rest for 5 minutes before serving. Drizzle remaining glaze over meat before serving.



Prime Rib

It is tradition for our family to serve prime rib for Christmas or New Year's Eve. I have to give all the credit of this recipe to Mr. Mother Thyme whom not only has a love for prime rib, but also knows how to cook a mighty good one at that. For Christmas he doesn't want a fancy gift or even a tie, he just wants prime rib.

People are often intimidated by cooking prime rib thinking it is something to just treat themselves to while dining out. It is more expensive than other cuts of meat so it is usually just reserved for special occasions.

It does take a few hours to slowly roast in the oven, but the prep time is quick and easy, the oven will do the rest of the work. The best part, other than enjoying this fabulous cut of meat on Christmas day, is the smell of rosemary that lingers throughout the house while it is roasting.

Serves 6-8

7-9 pound (about 3-4 ribs) bone in prime rib roast

For Prime Rib Rub

1/2 cup olive oil
1 tablespoon garlic powder
1 tablespoon season salt
1 tablespoon dried rosemary
1/4 teaspoon pepper

For Au Jus

1/4 cup butter
32 ounce low sodium beef broth
1 large white onion, cut into wedges
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 tablespoon white distilled vinegar
1 tablespoon worcestershire sauce
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon season salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Before roasting let prime rib come to room temperature, about 30-45 minutes.

Preheat oven to 500 degrees Fahrenheit.

Coat all side of prime rib with olive oil. In a small bowl combine garlic powder, season salt, rosemary and pepper and rub all over prime rib.

In a medium saucepan melt butter over medium heat. Add in beef broth, onion, garlic, vinegar, worcestershire, salt, season salt and pepper and let it simmer for 10 minutes.

Pour au jus on the bottom of roasting pan. Place prime rib fat side up on top of a roasting rack. Roast for 5 minutes at 500 degrees Fahrenheit.

Reduce heat to 325 degrees Fahrenheit and continue to cook, basting with au jus every 20 minutes until meat thermometer inserted into the center of prime rib reaches 135-140 degrees Fahrenheit for medium, 2 1/2 to 3 hours.

When desired temperature is reached, remove prime rib from oven and tent it with tin foil and let it rest for 15-20 minutes.

Strain au jus into a bowl. Carve prime rib and top with au jus before serving.

Salmon with Pesto in Puff Pastry

Flaky salmon wrapped in a buttery puff pastry with cream cheese and pesto. So elegant, so easy, and so good!

Serves 4

1 puff pastry (1/2 of a 17.3 ounce box), thawed
4 ounce cream cheese
1/4 cup basil pesto (store bought or homemade)
4 4 ounce salmon fillets, skin removed
Salt

Preheat oven at 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Line large baking sheet with parchment paper or spray with non-stick cooking spray and set aside.

Roll out puff pastry to 12-inch square. Cut into 4 equal size squares, about 6-inch each.

In a small bowl stir together cream cheese and pesto until blended. Spread mixture equally between each pastry square leaving about a 1/2 inch space around the sides.

Season salmon with salt. Place on center of each pastry square on top of cream cheese mixture.

Wrap each side to the center pinching pastry together to close. Place seam side down on baking sheet. Poke a few holes on top of pastry.

Bake for 20-25 minutes until pastry is golden brown.





Sicilian Chicken

This one skillet chicken dish combines juicy stewed tomatoes with olives and capers. It makes a simple Italian dinner served with a side of risotto.

Serves 4

4 (6 ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon black pepper
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 tablespoons olive oil
14.5 ounce can Italian style stewed tomatoes
1/2 cup green olives, sliced
1/2 cup kalamata olives, pitted
2 tablespoons capers, rinsed

Flatten chicken slightly. Season with salt and pepper. Mix flour and 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese in a shallow bowl. Coat chicken with flour mixture.

In a large skillet heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add chicken and cook about 7 minutes per side, turning once until no longer pink in the center. Add in tomatoes, olives and capers. Cover and cook for 3-5 minutes. Remove from heat and sprinkle with remaining Parmesan cheese.

Cooking Tip! To flatten chicken place in a large resealable bag. Use a mallet or rolling pin to flatten to desired thickness.

Slow Cooker Beef Burgundy

Beef Burgundy also known as the French recipe Beef Bourguignon sounds like a fancy and elegant meal. With ingredients such as red wine to make a thick sauce, this is the perfect dish to serve at a holiday dinner. The best part, your guests will think it took you hours to prepare.

This dish is typically served over egg noodles but I like to serve it over creamy mashed potatoes.

Serves 6

2 pounds round steak, cubed
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
14.5 ounce can reduced sodium beef broth
10 ounce frozen peeled white pearl onions
8 ounce sliced mushrooms
1/2 cup burgundy wine (or similar like a Merlot or Cabernet)
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 bay leaf
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 tablespoon water

Add steak to slow cooker. Sprinkle steak with flour, salt and pepper and toss to coat. Add in beef broth, onions, mushrooms, wine, tomato paste, Worcestershire sauce, thyme, garlic and bay leaf and stir until combined. Cook on low for 8-10 hours or on high for 4-5 hours until meat is cooked. Prior to serving, in a small bowl dissolve cornstarch in water and pour into slow cooker. Stir until sauce thickens. Serve over mashed potatoes or wide egg noodles.





Side Dishes



Creamy Mashed Potatoes

These creamy mashed potatoes are a perfect compliment to many of your holiday dishes.

Serves 6

3 pounds (about 8) white potatoes peeled, halved and quartered
1/4 cup butter, cubed
1/4 cup sour cream
1 cup milk
Pinch of dried parsley
Salt and pepper

Put potatoes in a large pot and cover with water and a pinch of salt. Bring to a boil and cook until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork.

Drain potatoes. Place potatoes in a large mixing bowl with butter and sour cream. Mix with a handheld mixer or potato masher until mashed. Gradually add in milk until creamy. Stir in a pinch of parsley and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Easy Risotto

Risotto is typically cooked slowly in a risotto pan or large deep skillet. This easy risotto will still give you the same taste and creamy consistency without the need to be standing at the stove for twenty minutes.

Serves 4

2 tablespoons butter
1/4 cup white onion, chopped
3 cups low sodium chicken broth
1 cup arborio rice
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

In a large saucepan melt butter over medium heat. Stir in onion and cook until slightly tender, about 3-4 minutes. Add in chicken broth and bring to a boil. Stir in rice until liquid begins to boil again. Stir and cover and reduce heat to medium low. Cook until all broth is absorbed, about 40-45 minutes.

Remove from heat and stir in Parmesan cheese. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Balsamic and Cranberries

Tender crisp brussels sprouts tossed in balsamic vinegar and dried cranberries make an elegant side dish to your holiday dinner table.

Serves 4

1 pound brussels sprouts
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, divided
1/2 teaspoons salt
Pinch of pepper
1/4 cup dried cranberries

Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit.

Wash brussels sprouts and remove outer layers. Trim ends and cut brussels sprouts in half. Place in medium bowl and toss with olive oil, 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar, salt and pepper. Place cut side down on large baking sheet.

Bake for 15-20 minutes until crisp-tender and cut side is golden brown. Remove from oven and place in serving dish. Toss with remaining balsamic vinegar and dried cranberries.

Spinach Salad

A great salad to serve on the side ~ or toss in chopped chicken for a meal on its own.

For Salad

1 bag baby spinach
1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese
1/2 cup dried cranberries
1/4 cup chopped walnuts or pecans
1/4 cup cooked, crumbled bacon (about 3 slices)
2 large eggs, hard-boiled, chopped
1 small red onion, sliced

For Dressing

5 tablespoons white distilled vinegar
2 tablespoons sugar
1/2 teaspoon dijon mustard
1/2 teaspoon dried parsley
Pinch of garlic powder
1/2 cup olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

Toss spinach, feta, cranberries, nuts, bacon, eggs and onion in a large salad bowl. Chill in refrigerator until ready to serve.

In a small bowl add vinegar, sugar, mustard, parsley and garlic. While stirring, stream in olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside until ready to serve.

Add dressing just before serving.

Cooking tip! *For the perfect hard boiled egg place eggs in a small saucepan. Fill with water and a pinch of salt. Bring water to a boil. Cover, turn off heat and let sit for 14 minutes. Rinse with cold water and peel.*

Try baking bacon! *Don't deal with bacon splatter on the stove. Line a baking sheet with tin foil. Place bacon slices on baking sheet. Bake in a 375 degree Fahrenheit oven for 18-20 minutes for crispy slices of bacon.*



Desserts

pass around the coffee and the pumpkin pie



Gingerbread Truffles

These may become a holiday favorite. They have all the great flavors of a classic gingerbread cookie all rolled into a soft truffle.

Makes 30 truffles

16 ounce (1 pound) box Ginger Snaps
8 ounce regular or light cream cheese
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 cups melting white chocolate
Decorating sprinkles (optional)

Line a large baking sheet with wax paper or parchment paper and set aside.

Break up Ginger Snaps and place in food processor. Pulse in food processor until cookies are finely chopped. Mix cookie crumbs with cream cheese using a fork or mixer until well combined. Roll into tablespoon size balls and place on baking sheet. Chill in refrigerator for 15 minutes.

Melt chocolate using a double boiler or microwave. Let melted chocolate cool and roll balls in chocolate. Place back on wax paper. Garnish with a dash of cinnamon or sprinkles if desired.

Store in an airtight container in refrigerator.

Truffles make a great gift! *Make a batch and place in mini cupcake liners. Place in a decorative tin or box.*

Red Velvet Cheesecake Swirl Brownies

Red velvet is a classic holiday dessert. Red velvet desserts are typically topped with sweet cream cheese, which you can find swirled on these decadent brownies.

For Brownies

3/4 cup all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
1 cup sugar
2 large eggs
1 tablespoon red food coloring
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

For Cream Cheese Swirl

8 ounce cream cheese, softened
3 tablespoons sugar
1 large egg
1/8 teaspoon vanilla extract
1-2 tablespoons white chocolate shavings for garnish (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Butter an 8-inch square baking pan and set aside.

In a small bowl combine flour, cocoa powder and salt and set aside. Using an electric mixer beat butter until fluffy. Mix in sugar, eggs, food coloring and vanilla and beat until creamy. Stir in flour mixture until combined. Pour into a prepared baking pan.

For Cream Cheese Swirl

In a small bowl mix cream cheese, sugar, egg and vanilla until creamy. Pour over brownie batter then swirl with a butter knife.

Bake for 30-35 minutes until cake tester inserted into the center of brownies comes out clean. Cool completely on wire rack before cutting. Sprinkle with white chocolate shavings for garnish.

Save a step! *Prepare brownies without cream cheese swirl and dust with confectioners sugar once cooled.*



Peppermint Chocolate Pudding Pie

Chocolate and peppermint is a classic holiday combination. Mixed in this creamy pudding pie for an easy dessert to enjoy all season long.

Serves 8

2 boxes (3.9 ounce each) instant chocolate pudding mix
1 1/2 cups milk
1/4 teaspoon peppermint extract
2 cups cool whip, thawed and divided
9-inch ready made chocolate pie crust
Chocolate shavings and crushed peppermints for garnishing (optional)

In a large bowl combine pudding mix and milk until blended. Stir in peppermint extract. Gently fold in 1 cup cool whip until combined. Spread into pie crust. Top with remaining cool whip.

Place in the refrigerator for 2-3 hours until set.

Garnish with chocolate shavings and/or crushed peppermints before serving.

Rum Cake

Moist and delicious rum cake topped with a butter rum glaze is the perfect ending to your holiday dinner.

For Cake

Non-stick cooking spray
1 cup chopped walnuts
3 cups all-purpose flour
3.4 ounce box instant vanilla pudding mix
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
1 1/2 cups sugar
1/2 cup vegetable oil
4 large eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/2 cup light rum

For Butter Rum Glaze

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
1 cup sugar
1/4 cup light rum
1/4 cup water

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Generously spray a standard 10-inch bundt pan with cooking spray. Sprinkle walnuts evenly on the bottom of bundt pan and set aside.

In a medium bowl stir together flour, pudding mix, baking powder, baking soda and salt and set aside.

Using an electric mixer cream butter and sugar. Stir in vegetable oil, eggs, vanilla extract and rum.

Gradually add in flour mixture to wet ingredients until blended. Pour batter into bundt pan on top of nuts.

Bake in preheated oven for 55-60 minutes until cake tester comes out clean. Cool completely before inverting.

In a small saucepan combine butter, sugar, rum and water over medium heat. Bring to a boil and cook for 3-4 minutes stirring constantly. Remove from heat and cool slightly.

Using a toothpick poke small holes all over cake. Generously brush cake with glaze. Drizzle remaining glaze on top of cake. Reserve a small amount to pour on slices when serving.





Holiday Cookies





Coconut Cherry Drops

Soft Coconut Cherry Drops filled with sweet coconut flakes, chopped walnuts and maraschino cherries. These will quickly become a holiday favorite.

Makes 3 dozen

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
1 cup light brown sugar
1 large egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup sweetened coconut flakes
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1/2 cup chopped maraschino cherries, rinsed, drained, patted dry

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spray baking sheets with cooking spray and set aside.

In a medium bowl mix flour, baking soda and salt.

Using an electric mixer beat butter and brown sugar. Add in egg and vanilla extract. Gradually mix in flour mixture until combined. Slowly mix in coconut flakes, walnuts and chopped cherries until combined.

Drop dough by the tablespoon on prepared baking sheet. Bake for about 8-9 minutes until bottom of cookies begin to brown.

Cool on baking sheet for about 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely. Store in an airtight container.

Double Chocolate Crinkles

These cookies are perfect for the chocolate lover! A great addition to your holiday baking , or to enjoy anytime of year. They are simply delicious!

Makes 3 dozen

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup Dutch-processed unsweetened cocoa powder
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
1 cup packed light brown sugar
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/2 cups good quality milk chocolate chips
3/4 cup confectioners sugar

In a medium bowl mix flour, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt.

Using an electric mixer cream butter and sugar. Add in eggs and vanilla. Gradually stir in flour mixture until combined. Stir in chocolate chips.

Cover dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line baking sheets with parchment paper. Place confectioners sugar in a shallow bowl.

Form 1 tablespoon size balls with dough and generously roll in confectioners sugar without shaking excess sugar off. Place on baking sheet spacing 2 inches apart and bake for 10-12 minutes until cookies have cracked on top and slightly firm.

Cool on baking sheet for a few minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely. Store in an airtight container.

Pistachio Wedding Cookies

These melt-in-your-mouth Pistachio Wedding Cookies are a Mother Thyme favorite!

Makes 3 dozen

1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
1 cup confectioners sugar, divided
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
1 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
3.4oz package pistachio instant pudding mix
1/2 teaspoon salt

In a large mixing bowl cream butter. Beat in 1/2 cup sugar until fluffy. Add in vanilla extract.

In a medium bowl combine flour, pudding mix and salt. Gradually mix flour mixture into wet ingredients until combined.

Divide dough in half and form into a ball. Wrap in plastic wrap and place in refrigerator for at least an hour.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Line baking sheets with parchment paper.

Remove dough from plastic wrap and make teaspoon size balls. Place on baking sheets and press down on the balls slightly spacing them about 1 inch part.

Bake in preheated oven for 9-10 minutes. Don't over bake. Remove from oven and let them sit on baking sheet for about 5 minutes. While cookies are still warm toss them in remaining confectioners sugar and set on wire rack until cooled completely. Store in airtight containers.



Snowball Cookies

My mom makes these every year during the holidays. It wouldn't be Christmas without these cookies!

Makes 3 dozen

1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
1/4 cup white granulated sugar
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 cups chopped walnuts
2 cups confectioners' sugar

Preheat oven to 300 degrees.

In a large mixing bowl, cream butter and white sugar using an electric mixer. Stir in flour and walnuts until combined.

Roll tablespoon size balls and place on baking sheet. Bake for 45 minutes.

Cool for about 10 minutes on baking sheet.

Generously toss in confectioners' sugar and place on wire rack to cool completely. Once cooled, toss again in confectioners' sugar if desired. Store in an airtight container.

Iced Oatmeal Cookies

Soft and chewy Iced Oatmeal Cookies ~ perfect with a tall glass of milk!

Makes 2 dozen

2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
2 cups all purpose flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
1 cup light brown sugar
1/2 cup sugar
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Glaze

2 cups confectioners sugar
3 tablespoons milk

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray baking sheets with cooking spray and set aside.

Place rolled oats in a food processor and pulse for about 10 seconds until coarse. Mix oats with flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg.

Using an electric mixer cream butter and sugars. Add in eggs one at a time then vanilla extract. Gradually add in flour mixture until combined.

Roll dough into 2 tablespoon size balls and place on baking sheet spacing about 2 inches apart. Bake for 10-12 minutes until the bottoms begin to brown.

Cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

Glaze

Mix confectioners sugar and milk together in a medium bowl. Quickly dip tops of cookies into glaze and let excess drip off. Place back on wire rack until glaze sets. Store cookies in an airtight container.

Cooking Tip! *To have these cookies turn out flat, you don't want to over ground the oats, just a couple quick pulses in the food processor to break them up a bit. If the oats are finely ground, the cookies won't spread. You want to keep the oats in tact as they create texture.*





Theme Menus

Sometimes it is not the cooking that takes so much time, it is the time spent planning the menu.

These menus will be crowd pleasers or great just for a busy weeknight dinner.



Dinner with Friends

Enjoy this Italian inspired dinner while spending the evening with friends.

Appetizer

Rosemary and Herb Dipping Oil with French baguette, sliced

Dinner

Sicilian Chicken

Side

Easy Risotto

Dessert

Rum Cake

Signature Drink

Eggnog

Prepare cake and eggnog the day before. Prior to guests arriving place herbs for dipping oil in bowl. Add oil and minced garlic right before serving. Set dipping bowl in the center of a medium serving platter. Arrange bread slices around bowl. Add sprigs of rosemary for garnish. Forty-five minutes before dinner begin the risotto. Make chicken twenty minutes before risotto is done. Plate risotto in the center of dinner plate. Top chicken just slightly off center on the risotto. Serve dessert with a drizzle of Butter Rum Glaze.

Last Minute Dinner Party

Pork tenderloin always makes an elegant presentation with minimal effort, even if you only have a few hours to spare.

Appetizer

Walnut and Date Cheese Ball ~ serve with crackers

Dinner

Maple Glazed Pork Tenderloin

Side

Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Balsamic and Cranberries

Dessert

Peppermint Chocolate Pudding Pie

Signature Drink

Hot Spiced Cider

Prepare pie and set in refrigerator. If time is limited place in freezer. Make cheese ball and wrap in plastic wrap. Wash, trim and cut brussels sprouts. Place in bowl until ready to cook. Make cider and let simmer on stove until guests arrive or keep in refrigerator and reheat when ready to serve. When ready to prepare dinner, wrap pork with bacon, begin cooking in oven. Prepare maple glaze. Toss brussels spouts with olive oil, salt, pepper and balsamic and place in oven with pork 15 minutes prior to serving.

Christmas Eve

Fish is a popular choice for Christmas Eve. I love having an intimate Christmas Eve dinner before heading to the living room to relax by the fire.

Appetizer

Mini Tuna Cakes

Dinner

Salmon with Pesto in Puff Pastry

Side

Spinach Salad

Dessert

Gingerbread Truffles

Signature Drink

Frozen Hot Chocolate

Make truffles and store in air tight container in the refrigerator until ready to serve. Prepare hot chocolate mix. Cover in a bowl in the refrigerator until ready to blend with ice. Make salad and dressing and store separately. Make tuna cakes. Place on baking sheet until ready to bake. Thaw puff pastry for salmon. When ready to prepare dinner, make salmon according to directions. Toss salad with dressing before serving.

New Year's Eve

Ring in the New Year at home with friends and a classic Prime Rib dinner.

Appetizer

Holiday Pinwheels

Dinner

Prime Rib

Side

Creamy Mashed Potatoes

Dessert

Red Velvet Sheet Cake

Signature Drink

Prosecco and Cranberry Mojitos

Make the cake the day before. Prepare prime rib and let roast 2-3 hours prior to serving. Make mashed potatoes ahead of time if desired. Prepare pinwheels and place on platter wrapped in plastic wrap. Make mojitos and strain in pitcher. Store pitcher in refrigerator until ready to serve.



In a Pinch

Quick Tips

'tis the season



In a Pinch ~ Quick Tips

Don't have time to cook? Maybe you had planned a gathering but unexpected things came up and you don't want to cancel your plans. Before you know it, your company is expected to arrive in a few hours. You still need to tidy up the house and have a few minutes for yourself before the festivities begin.

These are what I like to call my *grab, go and make* items that you can quickly find at the market. Add a few simple touches and your guests will think you spent all day cooking.

Cheese Platter

Keep it simple and stick to three cheeses. A good choice is to go with a soft cheese a hard cheese and a blue cheese for a nice variety. With so many varieties of cheese to choose from, it can be overwhelming walking into the cheese department to pick out cheeses that will pair well with each other. A creamy Brie, an aged Gouda, and a Roquefort blue cheese are always good choices. Make the platter appealing by adding dried fruits such as dried apricots, almonds and olives. Serve with a french baguette and crackers. Pair with a few white wines such as Riesling, Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc.

Vegetable Tray

A staple at most gatherings. Sure it is easy to purchase one already made, but you can quickly make your own and save a few dollars in the process. Create your own vegetable tray with one pint grape or cherry tomatoes, one pound broccoli crowns, cut into pieces, one head of cauliflower cut into pieces, a bag of baby carrots and a few ribs of celery cut into 2 inches pieces. Arrange vegetables on a tray and serve with this easy to make Ranch Dip.

Create a quick ranch dip from your spice cabinet.

Italian Deli Tray

Hit the deli for Genoa salami, prosciutto and capicola. Arrange on a platter with marinated artichokes and a medley of olives from the olive bar for an effortless appetizer. Pick up a jar of sun-dried tomatoes and wrap them with prosciutto. If your local market does not have an olive bar you can substitute a can of large green or black olives. Toss with 1 tablespoon olive oil, a splash of fresh lemon juice and a pinch of red pepper flakes. You can often find marinated artichokes in the pasta aisle at your local market too.

No Cook Dinner

Guests coming for dinner? Grab a rotisserie chicken. They are fast, inexpensive and great to serve when in a pinch. Place on a nice serving platter with the chicken in the center. Dress the platter around the chicken with sprigs of rosemary, thyme and few lemon or orange wedges. Sometimes it's all about presentation. Who's going to know that you didn't make it yourself?

Tip ~ Don't throw the carcass out. I always save my chicken carcass to make chicken stock, perfect for winter soups. Place the carcass in a large pot with about 12 cups of water. Toss in carrots, celery, onion wedges, a few garlic cloves and sprigs of fresh herbs, whatever you have on hand. I keep a container in my freezer of scraps such as the ends of celery, onions, even herbs that go unused so I have them on hand when I want to make stock. Season with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil and then reduce to low and let simmer for 3-4 hours, the longer the better. Strain stock and place in freezer safe containers. Store in the freezer to have on hand when needed.

Dessert

Cream Puffs

Grab a box of frozen cream puffs and thaw. Dust with confectioners sugar and place on serving tray. Melt milk chocolate over low heat with double boiler or microwave in 30 second increments until creamy. Pour into a serving bowl or chafing dish to keep warm. Your guests can enjoy dipping cream puffs in chocolate as an easy dessert!

Ranch Dip

1/2 cup sour cream
1/2 cup mayonnaise
1/2 teaspoon dried parsley
1/2 teaspoon dill weed
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon onion powder
1/8 teaspoon salt or to taste

Combine all the ingredients in a small bowl. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.

Parmesan Crisps

These are an easy crowd pleaser.

1/2 cup good quality freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven at 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Line baking sheet with parchment paper. Drop tablespoon size mounds of grated cheese on baking sheet. Bake until crisp, about 6-8 minutes. Cool and serve.



About Jennifer



Jennifer is a self taught cook and a mother of twins. Her concept is *homemade made easy* which combines fresh ingredients with common items already on hand. With a few simple ingredients you can create delicious dishes that don't require too much time.

Jennifer enjoys incorporating herbs into her dishes as they can take a simple dish from ordinary to extraordinary. One of her favorite herbs is thyme. She loves the freshness it brings to dishes like chicken and potatoes. A few sprigs of thyme nestled in a bed of potatoes and chicken is all a dish needs to make a satisfying meal.

Her love of thyme, and other herbs, helped in the creation of her name Mother Thyme. It also is a play on words with names like Mother Goose and Mother Nature.

When she is not busy with her two year old twins, she can be found spending "thyme" in her garden or in the kitchen creating new meals and taking classic recipes and making them easy to create for any home cook.

Jennifer resides in the suburbs of Western New York with her husband, two children and two dogs. She contributes to various sites, and can also be found on her blog www.motherthyme.com.





www.motherthyme.com

Jennifer, the creator of the blog Mother Thyme, gives us a glimpse into her holiday recipe collection of quick and easy recipes with **Holiday Thyme**. Her concept of *homemade made easy* shows us it doesn't have to take long to cook from scratch.

In her holiday collection you will find such recipes as **Red Velvet Cheesecake Swirl Brownies** and **Maple Glazed Pork Tenderloin**. Ring in the New Year with **Prosecco and Cranberry Mojitos** or cozy up by the fire with a hot cup of **Spiced Apple Cider**. Many of these recipes are great anytime of year.

Along with these easy to follow recipes you will find **theme menus** and a **In a Pinch** guide for last minute party planning.

Everything you need for the holidays from **appetizers to desserts** all in one book.

