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Shalach manot: Be a basket case on Purim

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Try some of the following goodies for your shalach manot, traditional Purim gift baskets. For extra fun, let children help!

COOKIE DOUGH HAMENTASCHEN – *Dairy or Pareve*

1 stick (4 oz) unsalted butter or pareve margarine, room temperature

1/2 C sugar

2 large eggs

Grated zest of 1 orange

2 C sifted flour

1-1/2 t baking powder

1/4 t salt

1 can prepared poppy seed or prune filling

1 egg, beaten with 1 t water and a dash of salt

Vegetable spray

In large bowl of electric mixer, beat butter or margarine and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time and orange zest; mix thoroughly. Add flour, baking powder and salt. Blend into a smooth dough. Scrape dough onto a floured board; pat into three discs. Chill one hour or longer.

Flatten a disc, roll to 1/4" thick. Cut into 2 -1/2" to 3" rounds with a cookie cutter. Center 1 scant teaspoon filling on each round of dough. Pinch edges toward center to form a triangle. Allow filling to show. Pinch edges securely again.

Preheat oven to 375° F. Line two cookie sheets with foil and lightly spray with vegetable oil. Brush beaten egg, water and salt mixture on top of the dough. Space hamantaschen 1" apart on prepared pans. Bake about 20-25 minutes until golden brown. Cool on a rack. Store airtight. Makes about 36 hamantaschen.

POPPY SEED POUND CAKE with LEMON ICING – *Dairy*

Batter:

2 C sugar
Zest of 3 lemons, grated
8 oz unsalted butter or pareve margarine (2 sticks)
4 large eggs
1 t vanilla
1 T lemon juice
2 T poppy seeds
2-1/2 C all-purpose flour
1 t baking powder
1 t baking soda
1/2 t salt
3/4 C buttermilk

Frosting:

2 C confectioner's sugar
1 lightly beaten egg white
1 T lemon juice
1 t grated lemon zest

Hot water

Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease and flour a 10" tube pan. (Use mini bread pans if giving in shalach manot baskets)

Blend sugar and lemon zest in food processor. In large bowl of electric mixer, beat butter or margarine with the sugar and lemon mixture until light and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, blending well. Add vanilla, lemon juice and poppy seeds. Sift dry ingredients together. Add to batter alternately with buttermilk. Do not overbeat.

Spoon batter into prepared pan. Bake 50-60 minutes until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool. Remove from pan and cool thoroughly.

Blend frosting ingredients together. Add enough hot water for a frosting consistency to pour over top of cake and drizzle down sides. Sprinkle with a few additional poppy seeds.

ROCKY ROAD CUPS – Pareve

12 regular marshmallows or 1 C mini-marshmallows
2 C semi-sweet chocolate morsels
1/2 C super-crunchy peanut butter

Vegetable cooking spray

Generously spray two mini muffin trays or line them with small paper muffin liners.

Dip a sharp knife or scissors in cold water and cut large marshmallows into quarters. (Use mini-marshmallows whole.) Place chocolate and peanut butter in the top of a double boiler set over hot, not boiling water until melted. Stir until smooth.

Remove from heat and stir in marshmallows. Immediately spoon into muffin cups. Refrigerate until firm. Keeps several days in airtight container or two weeks refrigerated. Makes 24 muffins.

PEANUT BUTTER POPCORN – *Dairy or Pareve*

1 pkg microwave popcorn, popped

2 T (1/4 stick) butter or pareve margarine

1/4 C chunky peanut butter

1/2 C roasted peanuts

Salt to taste

Prepare popcorn according to microwave instructions. Melt butter or pareve margarine in a small saucepan on low heat. Add peanut butter; stir until just combined. Drizzle over the popcorn and toss with a large spoon. Add the peanuts and a bit of salt if desired. Makes 6 C.

GINGER COOKIES – *Dairy or Pareve*

Dough:

1/2 C butter or pareve margarine

1/4 C dark corn syrup

1/2 C sugar

2 C flour

1 T powdered ginger

1 t baking soda

Icing:

1-3/4 C confectioner's sugar

juice of 1 lemon

1 t butter or margarine

Dough: In top of double boiler or a bowl set over a saucepan of hot water on low heat, melt butter or margarine, dark corn syrup and sugar. Sift flour, ginger and baking soda together. Stir into warmed mixture until it forms a stiff dough. Cool the dough and roll into a 2" thick cylinder. Wrap in plastic, chill 30 minutes or more.

Preheat oven to 375° F. On a floured surface with a sharp knife, cut 1/2" thick slices of dough.

(Alternately, roll dough to 1/4" thick, cut into 2" rounds or other shapes.) Place on a greased cookie sheet; flatten cookie rounds slightly. Bake 15 minutes or until golden. Cool on a rack.

Icing: Sift sugar into a small bowl; stir in lemon juice and butter/margarine until smooth. Spread on cookies. Sprinkle with colored sugar crystals, if desired. Place on a rack in single layer until set. Makes about 30 cookies.

CHOCOLATE CHIP BARS – *Dairy or Pareve*

1/2 C + 2 T unsalted butter or pareve margarine

2-1/3 C brown sugar, firmly packed

3 eggs

2-1/2 C unbleached all-purpose flour

2 t baking powder

1/4 t salt

1 pkg (12 oz) semi-sweet chocolate chips

1/2 C chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease or spray 10 x 15 x 1" jelly roll pan.

Beat butter or margarine and brown sugar in large bowl until light and creamy. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in flour, baking powder and salt; blend well. Fold in chocolate chips and nuts.

Turn batter into prepared pan and spread evenly. Bake until top is golden brown, about 20-25 minutes. Cool on a wire rack. Cut into about 32 bars. Store or freeze airtight.

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