



*Sweets &
Treats for
Someone
Special*

Recipes For Valentine's Day

Compiled by *Sloane Taylor*

Sweets & Treats
for
Someone Special

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Sweets

Candy



ALMOND CANDY

C.D. Hersh

1 cup butter or margarine

1¼ cup sugar

¾ cup slivered almonds

6 oz. chocolate chips

Melt butter in 3 qt. pan. Stir in sugar and nuts. Turn heat to high. Cook 5 minutes stirring rapidly till it turns dark and burps smoke.

Pour into greased 9 x 13-inch pan and then spread evenly.

Sprinkle on chocolate chips. When melted, spread smooth.

Chill and cut into pieces.

Putting words and stories on paper is second nature to co-authors **C.D. Hersh**. They've written separately since they were teenagers and discovered their unique, collaborative abilities in the mid-90s. As high school sweethearts and husband and wife, they believe in true love and happily ever after. They look forward to many years of co-authoring and book sales, and a lifetime of happily-ever-after endings on the page and in real life.

Learn more about C.D. Hersh on their [website](#) and [blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Goodreads](#), and their [Amazon Author Page](#).

COCONUT ICE

Vonnie Hughes

3 breakfast cups (mugs) white sugar

1 oz. butter

$\frac{3}{4}$ breakfast cup (mug) desiccated coconut*

$\frac{1}{2}$ breakfast cup (mug) milk

Pinch of salt

Coloring if wanted

Put all the ingredients except the coloring into a saucepan and boil for 10 minutes.

Add coloring.

Beat until thick. This won't take long, it sets quickly.

Pour into a greased tin and mark into squares.

*Dried coconut may be substituted if desiccated isn't available.

Vonnie Hughes is a multi-published author in both Regency books and contemporary suspense. Vonnie was born in New Zealand, but she and her husband now live happily in Australia. If you visit Hamilton Gardens in New Zealand be sure to stroll through the Japanese Garden. There is a bronze plaque engraved with a haiku describing the peacefulness of that environment. The poem was written by Vonnie.

Learn more about Vonnie on her [website](#), [blog](#), and [Amazon Author Page](#).
Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Goodreads](#).

CHOCOLATE COCONUT SQUARES

Chris Pavesic

These treats mirror the taste of a mass-produced candy bar while at the same time being made with simple ingredients. My family likes a bittersweet chocolate with a high amount of cacao, but you can use whatever type of chocolate you like the best. These pair exceptionally well with a dish of homemade vanilla ice cream.

6 oz. sweetened condensed milk

1 tbsp. vanilla

$\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. salt

2 cups powdered sugar

14 oz. sweetened shredded coconut

Extra butter to coat the foil

Line an 8 x 8-inch straight edged pan with tinfoil, overlap the edges, and lightly coat with butter.

In a mixing bowl, combine condensed milk, vanilla, and salt. Stir in the sugar, 1 cup at a time, until you have a smooth mixture. Mix in coconut until thoroughly coated and combined. Pour mixture into prepared pan and press in to an even layer using your hands or rubber spatula lightly coated with butter.

Refrigerate for at least 1 hour, until firm enough to cut in to squares.

When the mixture has set, lift from the pan by the foil. Peel the foil off and place on a cutting board. Cut in to strips then cut in to squares.

Pop the squares back into the refrigerator. Keep refrigerated until ready to coat.

COATING

16 oz. bittersweet chocolate or 1 bag chocolate chips
2 tbsp. butter, melted

Heat a double boiler until the water begins to simmer. Add chocolate to top pan. Stir every so often until melted. Add butter. Stir until chocolate and butter are completely blended. The chocolate will thin and be shiny.

Use a fork to dip each square into the chocolate. Let excess drip off.

Place the dipped bars on a wax paper lined baking sheet. Allow them to sit until chocolate sets. Store at room temperature or refrigerate.

Chris Pavesic writes fantasy and lives in the Midwestern United States. She loves Kona coffee, steampunk, fairy tales, and all types of speculative fiction. Between writing projects, Chris can most often be found reading, gaming, gardening, working on an endless list of DIY household projects, or hanging out with friends.

Learn more about Chris on her [website and blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

FATHER KNOWS BEST PEANUT BRITTLE

Sharon Ledwith

This wonderful peanut brittle has a WOW factor that adds to any celebration. Give as gifts or enjoy with family and friends. This recipe is a sure-fire crowd-pleaser! Make sure you have all the ingredients measured and ready to go, as it requires you to react quickly between steps.

1 cup white sugar

½ cup light corn syrup

¼ tsp. salt

¼ cup water

1 cup peanuts

2 tbsp. butter, softened

1 tsp. baking soda

Candy thermometer

Grease a large cookie sheet. Set aside.

Bring sugar, corn syrup, salt, and water to a boil in a heavy 2 quart saucepan set over medium heat. Stir until sugar is dissolved.

Stir in peanuts.

Set candy thermometer in place, and continue cooking. Stir frequently until temperature reaches 300°F (150°C).

Remove from heat. Immediately stir in butter and baking soda. Pour at once onto cookie sheet. With two forks, lift and pull peanut mixture into rectangle 14 x 12-inches. Allow to cool.

SNAP candy into pieces and enjoy!

Sharon Ledwith is the author of the middle-grade/YA time travel series *The Last Timekeepers* and a teen psychic series *Mysterious Tales From Fairy Falls*. When not writing, researching, or revising, she enjoys reading, exercising, anything arcane, and an occasional dram of scotch. Sharon lives a serene, yet busy, life in a southern tourist region of Ontario, Canada, with her hubby, one spoiled yellow Labrador and a moody calico cat.

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FEBRUARY FUDGE

Sara Daniel

It's February, the month when romantics, conformists, and panicked spouses converge on florists and chocolate shops. If you live in the northern two-thirds of the northern hemisphere, by all means, buy your loved one flowers. (Nothing's going to grow in my tundra of a front yard any time soon!) However, for a personal touch, step away from the candy aisle and pick up the kitchen spatula to make that special someone a pan of homemade fudge.

7 oz. marshmallow creme

1½ cups sugar

⅔ cup evaporated milk

¼ cup butter

¼ tsp. salt

2 cups milk chocolate chips

1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

1 tsp. vanilla

Combine marshmallow creme, sugar, evaporated milk, butter, and salt in a saucepan. Stirring constantly, bring to a full rolling boil over medium heat. Boil 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat.

Add both chocolate chips. Stir until chips are melted and mixture is smooth. Stir in vanilla.

Pour in foil-lined 8 x 8-inch pan. Chill until firm, roughly 2 hours.
Makes 2½ pounds.

From the basic recipe, you can add caramel, pecans, peanut butter, and more, depending on your loved one's preference. Use a cookie cutter to create hearts or pour it into heart-shaped bread or muffin/cookie tins while it is still warm. Make your fudge as unique as you are to delight your significant other and infuse decadent sweetness into your love life.

Sara Daniel writes what she loves to read—irresistible romance, from sweet to erotic and everything in between. She battles a serious NASCAR addiction, was once a landlord of two uninvited squirrels, and loses her car keys several times a day.

Learn more about Sara on her [website](#), [blog](#), and [Amazon Author Page](#).
Subscribe to Sara's [newsletter](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Pinterest](#).

PEANUT BUTTER BALLS

C.D. Hersh

If you're an Ohioan, these are BUCKEYES

2 cups peanut butter

1 lb. margarine

2 tsp. vanilla

2½ - 3 lb. powdered sugar

Mix peanut butter, margarine, and vanilla together.

Add powdered sugar. Mix together. Form into balls. Chill in refrigerator.

Dip in following mixture.

COATING

6 oz. semi-sweet chocolate bits

3 tbsp. food grade paraffin wax (grated)

Melt in double boiler. Dip in balls. Set on wax paper to cool.

You may need more chocolate mixture to coat the balls than this recipe calls for.

Putting words and stories on paper is second nature to co-authors **C.D. Hersh**. They've written separately since they were teenagers and

discovered their unique, collaborative abilities in the mid-90s. As high school sweethearts and husband and wife, they believe in true love and happily ever after. They look forward to many years of co-authoring and book sales, and a lifetime of happily-ever-after endings on the page and in real life.

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SINFUL SPONGE TOFFEE

Sharon Ledwith

Who doesn't love Crunchie® bars? Those were my go-to chocolate bars when I was a kid, and I still love 'em to this day. This angelic chocolate covered sponge toffee recipe will bring back memories of the good old days when a trip to the corner store armed only with a dollar bought more than just one candy bar. Create a batch for gifts or to add to the festivities, these melt-in-your-mouth treats will add life to any party.

1 cup white sugar

1 cup dark corn syrup

1 tbsp. vinegar

1 tbsp. baking soda

1 lb. chocolate confectioner's coating

Candy thermometer

Butter a 9 x 13-inch baking pan.

In a medium saucepan, over medium heat, combine sugar, corn syrup, and vinegar. Cook, stirring until sugar dissolves.

Set candy thermometer in place, and heat, without stirring until temperature reaches 300°F (150°C).

Remove from heat and stir in baking soda.

Pour into prepared pan. Do not spread. Allow to cool completely.

In the microwave (or over a double boiler) melt coating chocolate, stirring frequently until smooth.

Break cooled sponge toffee into bite sized pieces and dip into melted chocolate coating.

Place on waxed paper until the chocolate is set. Store in tightly covered container. Make sure to hide some pieces for yourself!

Sharon Ledwith is the author of the middle-grade/YA time travel series *The Last Timekeepers* and a teen psychic series *Mysterious Tales From Fairy Falls*. When not writing, researching, or revising, she enjoys reading, exercising, anything arcane, and an occasional dram of scotch. Sharon lives a serene, yet busy, life in a southern tourist region of Ontario, Canada, with her hubby, one spoiled yellow Labrador and a moody calico cat.

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TOFFEE FOR YOUR VALENTINE

Sara Daniel

Buying your valentine chocolates? Yep, you and millions of others.

Going with flowers? Ditto. Sorry.

How about making a sweet for your sweetie this year? It's sweet, chocolate-y, and easy to make. And the personal effort is worth far more than that bouquet of roses you were eyeing.

1½ cups butter

1½ cups sugar

½ tsp. vanilla

Pinch salt

2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

½ cup chopped almonds

½ cup chopped pecans

Sea salt

Combine butter, sugar, vanilla, and salt in a saucepan over medium heat 12 - 15 minutes. Stir constantly with a spatula.

Line baking sheet with parchment paper and spread toffee mixture.

Either microwave or heat chocolate chips on the stove. When chips begin to melt, spread over toffee.

Sprinkle with almonds, pecans, and/or sea salt.

Refrigerate for 1 hour then break into pieces.

Sara Daniel writes what she loves to read—irresistible romance, from sweet to erotic and everything in between. She battles a serious NASCAR addiction, was once a landlord of two uninvited squirrels, and loses her car keys several times a day.

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Cookies



BIG DADDY'S OATMEAL COCONUT COOKIES

Sharon Ledwith

These are the best oatmeal cookies you'll ever eat. Perfect for serving with tea or coffee during unexpected (or expected) visitor drop-ins, this recipe is guaranteed to make you smile with each bite.

1½ cups brown sugar

1 cup white sugar

¾ cup butter, softened

2 eggs

1 tbsp. vanilla extract

2 cups all-purpose flour

1 tsp. baking soda

½ tsp. salt

½ tsp. baking powder

1 cup oats

1 cup crispy rice cereal (such as Rice Krispies®)

1 cup flaked coconut

Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).

Beat sugars and butter together with an electric mixer in a large bowl until smooth. Add 1 egg at a time, allowing the first to blend into the mixture before adding the next. Add the vanilla.

Stir flour, baking soda, salt, and baking powder together in a bowl. Beat into the butter mixture until just incorporated into the dough.

Fold oats, crispy rice cereal, and coconut into the dough. Mix just enough to evenly combine.

Drop cookie dough by teaspoonful onto baking sheets.

Bake until browned, 8 - 9 minutes.

Cool cookies slightly on baking sheets before moving to cooling racks to cool completely. Store in airtight containers.

Sharon Ledwith is the author of the middle-grade/YA time travel series *The Last Timekeepers* and a teen psychic series *Mysterious Tales From Fairy Falls*. When not writing, researching, or revising, she enjoys reading, exercising, anything arcane, and an occasional dram of scotch. Sharon lives a serene, yet busy, life in a southern tourist region of Ontario, Canada, with her hubby, one spoiled yellow Labrador and a moody calico cat.

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COOKIE BARS

Chris Pavesic

This family favorite dessert is a little bit like a cookie, a little bit like a candy bar, and 100% delicious.

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup packed brown sugar
1 cup butter or margarine, softened
1 tbsp. vanilla
1 egg
 $2\frac{1}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. baking powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt
1 pkg. (12 oz.) semisweet chocolate chips
1 pkg. (12 oz.) butterscotch chips

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Mix sugars, butter, vanilla, and egg in large bowl. Stir in flour, baking soda, and salt (dough will be stiff). Divide dough. Set half of the dough aside for later.

Stir in chocolate chips. Press chocolate chip dough into one 9 x 13-inch pan.

Stir butterscotch chips into the second half of the dough. Press this dough into the second 9 x 13-inch pan.

Bake both pans for 25 - 30 minutes or until light brown (centers will be soft). The chocolate chip dough will cook faster than the butterscotch dough. Cool and then slice into bars.

Chris Pavesic writes fantasy and lives in the Midwestern United States. She loves Kona coffee, steampunk, fairy tales, and all types of speculative fiction. Between writing projects, Chris can most often be found reading, gaming, gardening, working on an endless list of DIY household projects, or hanging out with friends.

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CRUNCHY CINNAMON COOKIES

Carol Browne

The measurements for this recipe are not based on imperial or metric.
All you need is a tea cup and a teaspoon!

2 cups plain flour

2 tsp. baking soda

½ tsp. salt

½ tsp. cinnamon

1 cup sugar

½ cup vegetable oil

1 tsp. vanilla essence (vanilla extract)

¼ cup water

Preheat oven to gas mark 4/350°F/180°C.

Pour oil in a bowl and stir in sugar. Add water and vanilla. Mix well. Add this to the dry ingredients. Mix thoroughly and divide the mixture into cookie sheets or the individual sections of a bun tray or muffin pan. The mixture will be runny and will spread to accommodate whatever vehicle you use. The resulting cookies have a very homemade appearance that is quite satisfying!

Bake 5 minutes. Rotate the tin and bake another 5 minutes. Ovens vary and I found I needed to leave them in longer. What you are aiming for is to take the cookies out when they are still a little soft. They will harden as they cool.

This is a recipe you get better at the more you make it. The number of cookies per batch will also depend on what you cook the mixture in. I usually get a dozen but I gave the recipe to a friend and she only got nine. I didn't see what they looked like, however, as she ate the whole lot as soon as they came out of the oven!

You can alter the recipe to suit yourself; perhaps adding chocolate chips. My personal favourite is to use almond essence instead of cinnamon or vanilla.

Born in Stafford in the UK, **Carol Browne** was raised in Crewe, Cheshire, which she thinks of as her home town. Interested in reading and writing at an early age, Carol pursued her passions at Nottingham University and was awarded an honours degree in English Language and Literature. Now living and working in the Cambridgeshire countryside, Carol usually writes fiction and is a contracted author at Burning Willow Press. Her non-fiction book is available at Dilliebooks.

Learn more about Carol on her [website and blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

GINGER AND COCONUT VALENTINE COOKIES

Susan Lodge

These cookies are delicious and easy to whip up for that someone special in your life. They will be happy you did.

200 g (8 oz.) plain flour

1 tsp. bicarbonate of soda, baking soda

1-2 tsp. ground ginger

100 g (4 oz.) desiccated coconut

100 g (4 oz.) butter, softened

100 g (4 oz.) castor sugar, fine sugar

1 egg

4 pieces (3-4 oz.) preserved stem ginger, chopped

1 tbsp. icing (confectioners) sugar

100 g (4 oz.) of good quality chocolate (optional)

Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F).

Sift flour, bicarbonate of soda, and ground ginger together. Stir in coconut.

In another bowl combine butter and sugar. Gradually add egg until all combined to form a soft creamy mixture. (Takes only a couple of minutes with an electric mixer.)

Stir in the chopped ginger.

Fold in half the flour/coconut mix with a tablespoon. Add the rest, and using your hands form the mixture into a soft ball of dough. If the mixture is too sticky, then add a little more flour. If too firm add a little liquid from the preserved ginger jar.

Wrap the dough in cling film and let it rest for a few minutes in the fridge.

Remove cling film and lightly roll out the dough on a floured surface until $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick. Use a biscuit cutter to make your cookie shapes. I use a heart shaped cutter for Valentine's day. Keep the rolling pin and cutter well-floured to prevent sticking.

Lightly grease 2 baking trays with a little butter. Arrange cookies on trays leaving a couple of inches between each one, as they may spread a little. Cook for 10 – 14 minutes. The cookies should be a light golden colour and the base firm.

When the cookies have cooled, dredge with the sifted icing (confectioners) sugar.

Enjoy the cookies as they are, or you can decorate further with the chocolate. Break chocolate in a small bowl and melt in the microwave. Use a teaspoon to drizzle over the cookies.

Susan Lodge's first publishing success was a story purchased by a major UK magazine followed by a drawer full of rejections. Finally a breakthrough gave her the confidence to seek and secure a publisher for her historical romance novels.

After working in several cities including London and Bristol, she and her husband moved down to the Hampshire coast to raise their family.

Learn more about Susan and her books on her [website](#) and [blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

LAVENDER BISCUITS

Carol Browne

I have to thank my friend, Jane Easton, the Food & Cookery Manager at [Viva!](#), for giving me the recipe for these delicious cookies (or biscuits as we call them across the Pond).

Straight from the oven, these are simply divine! Who would have thought that lavender worked so well in sweet biscuits, but it gives them a lovely fresh flavour.

4 oz. vegan margarine or vegetable fat

Drop of vanilla essence or ½ fresh vanilla pod, scraped out

3 oz. castor sugar

5 oz. plain flour

Small amount of plant-based milk OR small amount of orange juice and zest of ¼ orange

5 lavender flower heads (in bloom), finely chopped or 1 tbsp.

rosemary, finely chopped

Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F).

Beat margarine, vanilla, and sugar until pale before adding the flour.

Gradually add a small amount of the plant-based milk OR orange zest and orange juice, a little at a time, until you form a stiff dough.

Stir in lavender until evenly distributed.

Roll into balls the size of a walnut. Place on baking sheet.

Bake 10 minutes or until the biscuits are golden brown.

Allow to cool a little before lifting off the baking tray.

Born in Stafford in the UK, **Carol Browne** was raised in Crewe, Cheshire, which she thinks of as her home town. Interested in reading and writing at an early age, Carol pursued her passions at Nottingham University and was awarded an honours degree in English Language and Literature. Now living and working in the Cambridgeshire countryside, Carol usually writes fiction and is a contracted author at Burning Willow Press. Her non-fiction book is available at Dilliebooks.

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NO BAKE CHOCOLATE OATMEAL COOKIES

Emma Lane

1 cup peanut butter, creamy or chunky

3¼ cups instant oats

4½ tbsp. cocoa

2 cups sugar, reserve a bit for sprinkling on top

1 tsp. vanilla

½ cup (1 stick) butter

½ cup milk

Pour milk, cocoa, and butter into a medium-sized saucepan. Bring to a rolling boil and cook for 1 minute 15 seconds.

Remove from the heat. Stir in peanut butter, oats, and vanilla. Mix well.

Drop onto wax paper by tablespoonfuls. Let set for 20 - 30 minutes.

Sprinkle very lightly with reserved sugar.

TA Da, easy and yummy.

Emma Lane is a gifted author who writes under several pen-names: Regency as Emma Lane, Janis Lane weaves cozy mysteries, and spice as exotic Sunny Lane. She lives with her patient husband on several acres

outside a typical American village in Western New York. Her day job is working with flowers at her son's plant nursery.

Learn more about Emma on her [Amazon Author Page](#), and her [website](#), where you can look for information about writing and plants, and leave a comment or a gardening question and put a smile on Emma's face. Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

RICOTTA COOKIES

Alicia Joseph

This is one of my favorite cookies, sweet and so good. I know you all will love them. Not only are they tasty, but they are easy to whip up. Make a double batch because they won't last long once your family gets a taste.

2 sticks margarine
1 lb. Ricotta cheese
3 eggs
2 tsp. vanilla
4 cups flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
2 cups sugar

Preheat 350°F.

Mix all ingredients together. Drop onto lightly greased pan by tablespoonful.

Bake 12 - 15 minutes.

FROSTING

1 cup powdered sugar
2 tbsp. milk

½ tsp. vanilla

Sprinkles, optional

Mix the three ingredients to your desired consistency. Spread on cooled cookies.

Enjoy!

Alicia Joseph grew up in Westchester, Illinois. Her books are sweet, romantic stories in the LGBT genre. Alicia's latest novel *A Penny on the Tracks* is a coming of age story about love and friendship. Alicia has many works-in-progress that she hopes to finish soon. When she is not writing, Alicia enjoys volunteering with animals, rooting for her favorite sports teams, and playing "awesome aunt" to her nine nieces and nephews.

Learn more about Alicia on her [blog](#) and [Amazon Author Page](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

SCORE BARS

Sharon Ledwith

Whether you call it a candy or a cookie, you'll love this must-make treat to cook for your favorite someone. The buttery toffee, rich chocolate, and crunchy nuts create a party-in-your-mouth experience, and will make you beg for a second (or third) piece. Perfect for family gatherings or parties, you'll score BIG with these treats nestled on your table, or wrapped as gifts.

1 cup sugar

1 cup butter

¼ cup water

½ cup semisweet chocolate

½ cup chopped pecans

Candy thermometer

In a heavy saucepan, combine the sugar, butter, and water. Set candy thermometer in place. Cook and stir over medium heat until the thermometer reaches 300°F (150°C).

Pour onto ungreased baking tray. Sprinkle with chocolate chips and spread with a knife when melted.

After 1 minute, pour chopped pecans over mixture. Let stand until set, about 1 hour.

Break into 2-inch pieces. Store in airtight container.

Add this tasty treat to gift baskets or wrap in see-through bags and place on dinner plates to be the hostess with the mostess.

Sharon Ledwith is the author of the middle-grade/YA time travel series *The Last Timekeepers* and a teen psychic series *Mysterious Tales From Fairy Falls*. When not writing, researching, or revising, she enjoys reading, exercising, anything arcane, and an occasional dram of scotch. Sharon lives a serene, yet busy, life in a southern tourist region of Ontario, Canada, with her hubby, one spoiled yellow Labrador and a moody calico cat.

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TWISTED CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

Anne Montgomery

When Ruth Graves Wakefield invented chocolate chip cookies in 1938 – henceforth named Toll House Cookies for the inn she owned in Whitman, Massachusetts – the confection became an instant American classic. So, perhaps, no one should be messing with these gooey, nutty hunks of near perfection. Ah, but I couldn't help myself. As I've gotten older my taste buds seem to dance less at the prospect of excessive sweetness and more for. . . something else. I began tinkering with Ruth's invention – I hope she doesn't mind – and came up with these jam-packed babies that I call Twisted Chocolate Chip Cookies.

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup packed brown sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract
8 tbsp. butter
1 egg, lightly beaten
 $2\frac{1}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
2 cups dark chocolate chips*

Frequent chocolate chip cookie bakers will note that here is where the recipe goes off the rails.

1 cup dried cranberries

1 cup dried blueberries

1 cup coconut, I prefer the type without added sugar, but either variety works

1 cup nuts

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Mix sugars, butter, vanilla, and egg in large bowl. Stir in flour, baking soda, and salt (dough will be stiff).

Stir in chocolate, dried fruit, coconut, and nuts.

Drop dough by rounded tablespoonfuls 2 inches apart onto ungreased cookie sheet.

Bake 8 - 10 minutes or until light brown round the edges (centers will be soft).

*Chocolate chips retain their shape because they contain less cocoa butter than high-end chocolate, so purists may want to chop their own chocolate to get more of the good stuff.

Anne Montgomery has worked as a television sportscaster, newspaper and magazine writer, teacher, amateur baseball umpire, and high school football referee. She also worked at ESPN in Bristol, Connecticut, where she anchored the Emmy and ACE award winning SportsCenter. Montgomery has been a freelance and staff writer for six publications, writing sports, features, movie reviews, and archeological pieces. When

she can, Anne indulges in her passions: rock collecting, scuba diving, football refereeing, and playing her guitar.

Learn more about Anne on her [website](#) and [blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

Desserts



CARAMEL BROWNIES

Alicia Joseph

BROWNIES

1 pkg. German chocolate cake mix
½ cup. butter, melted
⅓ cup evaporated milk
½ cup nuts, walnuts or pecans

TOPPING

1 lb. caramels
⅓ cup evaporated milk
6 oz. chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Combine cake mix, ¼ cup melted butter, evaporated milk, and nuts with a fork. Spread in a 9 x 13-inch pan. Bake 15 minutes.

Place caramels and evaporated milk in a saucepan. Carefully melt over medium heat. Spread mixture on top of baked brownies. Sprinkle chocolate chips on top and drizzle with dollops of remaining butter.

Bake 15 minutes. Cool completely before slicing.

Alicia Joseph grew up in Westchester, Illinois. Her books are sweet, romantic stories in the LGBT genre. Alicia's latest novel *A Penny on the Tracks* is a coming of age story about love and friendship. Alicia has many works-in-progress that she hopes to finish soon. When she is not writing, Alicia enjoys volunteering with animals, rooting for her favorite sports teams, and playing "awesome aunt" to her nine nieces and nephews.

Learn more about Alicia on her [blog](#) and [Amazon Author Page](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

CARROT COMFORT CAKE

Susan Lodge

3 eggs

200 g (7 oz. or just over $\frac{3}{4}$ cup) brown sugar

200 g (7 oz. or just over $\frac{3}{4}$ cup) plain flour

2 tsp. baking powder

1 tsp. bicarbonate of soda, baking soda

100 g (just under $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) chopped nuts, a mix you prefer

120 ml (4 oz.) sunflower oil

100 g (just under $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) sultanas

200 g (7oz.or just over $\frac{3}{4}$ cup) grated carrots

2-3 mashed, ripe bananas, depending on size

20 cm wide, or 8", spring based/loose based, round cake tin

Pre-heat oven to 170°C (340°F).

Grease cake tin. If you use a tin without a loose base, cut out a round of greaseproof paper and line the base to prevent sticking.

Whisk the eggs and sugar until thick and creamy. Sift together flour, baking powder, and bicarbonate of soda, then stir into egg mixture.

Add the nuts, oil, sultanas, and carrots and stir well. Finally add the mashed banana and make sure everything is evenly combined.

Pour into the prepared tin. Bake 1 hour – 1 hour 15 minutes.

Test the cake is done by inserting a skewer or thin bladed knife into the middle. It should come out clean.

When the cake has cooled, either dust the top with sifted icing sugar, confectioner's sugar, or top with an easy cream cheese frosting.

Susan Lodge's first publishing success was a story purchased by a major UK magazine followed by a drawer full of rejections. Finally a breakthrough gave her the confidence to seek and secure a publisher for her historical romance novels.

After working in several cities including London and Bristol, she and her husband moved down to the Hampshire coast to raise their family.

Learn more about Susan and her books on her [website](#) and [blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

CHOCOLATE RASPBERRY PARFAIT WITH HARVEY'S BRISTOL CREAM

Emma Lane

Chocolate pudding

Fresh raspberries

Harvey's Bristol Cream Sherry or rum

Whipped cream

Marinate eleven raspberries in a small cup with three tablespoons cream sherry. Let stand at least 1 hour.

Carefully layer ingredients into a parfait goblet in the following order:

A healthy dollop of chocolate pudding

5 raspberries on top of pudding

Spoon on whipped cream

Gently layer a second chocolate pudding, do not stir

Add 5 more raspberries

Cover raspberries with whipped cream

On last layer of whipped cream, dribble sparingly, the leftover sherry marinade

Place one raspberry on top and serve or chill for later. If the layers tend to run a bit, don't worry. Just looks more decorative and creative.

Makes one parfait.

Emma Lane is a gifted author who writes under several pen-names: Regency as Emma Lane, Janis Lane weaves cozy mysteries, and spice as exotic Sunny Lane. She lives with her patient husband on several acres outside a typical American village in Western New York. Her day job is working with flowers at her son's plant nursery.

Learn more about Emma on her [Amazon Author Page](#), and her [website](#), where you can look for information about writing and plants, and leave a comment or a gardening question and put a smile on Emma's face. Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

NO BAKE ICE CREAM SANDWICH CAKE

HL Carpenter

One pkg. (12 bars) ice cream sandwiches

One container (8 oz. or larger) whipped topping (or make your own with a pint of whipping cream and 3 tbsp. sugar)

Garnish of your choice: Sprinkles; chopped nuts; caramel, chocolate, or other syrup

Glass or plastic pan with a lid

Arrange six ice cream bars in a crisscross pattern in the bottom of the pan. You may have to cut the bars to make them fit. Of course, then you'll need to eat those little left-over pieces—who said chefs have an easy life?

Spread a layer of whipped cream over the bars.*

Crisscross the remaining six ice cream bars on top of the whipped cream.

Slather another layer of whipped cream over the top and sides.

Decorate with sprinkles or chopped nuts, or drizzle with caramel or chocolate syrup.

Cover and freeze 2 - 3 hours or overnight.

Remove from freezer 10 - 15 minutes before serving to soften.

*For a richer cake, add a layer of syrup and/or chopped nuts over the whipped cream.

HL Carpenter is a mother/daughter author duo who write family-friendly fiction from their studios in Carpenter Country, a magical place that, like their stories, is unreal but not untrue.

Learn more about HL and enjoy gift reads and excerpts and find out what's happening in Carpenter Country at their [website](#). Stay connected on [Pinterest](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Google+](#), and their [Amazon Author Page](#).

ONE DEVILISHLY CHARMING CHOCOLATE MOUSSE CAKE

Sharon Ledwith

½ cup chocolate syrup
1 pkg. (2-layer size) chocolate cake mix, preferably double fudge
1 cup water
⅓ cup oil
7 eggs
½ cup sour cream
1 pkg. (250 g or approx. ½ lb.) cream cheese brick, softened
1 cup sugar
1 can (370 mL or 12 oz.) evaporated milk
4 squares semi-sweet chocolate, melted
1 cup thawed whipped topping

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Spray 3-L (12 cup) fluted tube pan (Bundt) with cooking spray. Pour in chocolate syrup; tilt pan to evenly cover bottom with syrup.

Beat cake mix, water, oil, and 3 eggs with mixer for 2 minutes or until well blended. Add sour cream and mix well. Pour over syrup in pan.

Beat cream cheese and sugar with mixer until blended. Add remaining eggs and mix well. Blend in evaporated milk and melted chocolate. Gently spoon over cake batter. Cover with foil sprayed with cooking spray, sprayed-side down.

Place Bundt pan in large pan (like a lasagna pan). Add enough water to larger pan to come at least 2 inches up side of Bundt pan. Bake 1 hour 30 minutes or until toothpick inserted near center comes out clean. Cool completely in Bundt pan on wire rack. Refrigerate 2 hours. Invert cake onto plate; remove pan.

Serve with whipped topping.

NOTE: To unmold cooled cake, use a long thin spatula to loosen the cake from the sides of Bundt pan. Place plate over pan; invert cake onto plate. Spoon any chocolate syrup remaining in pan over cake.

Sharon Ledwith is the author of the middle-grade/YA time travel series *The Last Timekeepers* and a teen psychic series *Mysterious Tales From Fairy Falls*. When not writing, researching, or revising, she enjoys reading, exercising, anything arcane, and an occasional dram of scotch. Sharon lives a serene, yet busy, life in a southern tourist region of Ontario, Canada, with her hubby, one spoiled yellow Labrador and a moody calico cat.

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PEACH COBBLER

Sara Daniel

I love eating this dish while it's still warm with some milk poured over the top. It's the family way! Beware, if you plan to take a picture of your cobbler after you make it, you'll have to act faster than I did or someone will steal a serving before you get a chance!

¼ cup butter/margarine, melted

1 cup sugar

1 cup flour

1½ tsp. baking powder

¾ cup milk

1 can peaches (or other fruit, but then you'd have to rename your cobbler)

¼ cup sugar

½ - 1 tsp. cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Pour melted butter/margarine in 9 x 13-inch pan.

Mix together sugar, flour, baking powder and milk.

Pour batter over butter/margarine. Do not stir layers together.

Drain peaches and spoon evenly over batter. Again, do not stir layers together.

Mix together remaining sugar and cinnamon. Sprinkle over top.

Bake 30 minutes.

Sara Daniel writes what she loves to read—irresistible romance, from sweet to erotic and everything in between. She battles a serious NASCAR addiction, was once a landlord of two uninvited squirrels, and loses her car keys several times a day.

Learn more about Sara on her [website](#), [blog](#), and [Amazon Author Page](#).
Subscribe to Sara's [newsletter](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Pinterest](#).

PEANUT BUTTER PIE

Alicia Joseph

CRUST

1¼ cup chocolate cookie crumbs (20 cookies)

¼ cup sugar

¼ cup butter or margarine, melted

Preheat oven 375°F.

Combine ingredients in a small bowl. Press into a 9-inch pie plate.

Bake 10 minutes. Cool on wire rack.

FILLING

1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened

1 cup creamy peanut butter

1 cup sugar

1 tbsp. butter or margarine, softened

1 tsp. vanilla extract

1 cup heavy cream, whipped

In a medium-sized mixing bowl, beat cream cheese, peanut butter, sugar, butter, and vanilla until smooth. Fold in whipped cream.

Gently spoon into crust. Garnish with grated chocolate or chocolate cookie crumbs.

Refrigerate and enjoy!

Alicia Joseph grew up in Westchester, Illinois. Her books are sweet, romantic stories in the LGBT genre. Alicia's latest novel *A Penny on the Tracks* is a coming of age story about love and friendship. Alicia has many works-in-progress that she hopes to finish soon. When she is not writing, Alicia enjoys volunteering with animals, rooting for her favorite sports teams, and playing "awesome aunt" to her nine nieces and nephews.

Learn more about Alicia on her [blog](#) and [Amazon Author Page](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

REVERSE STRAWBERRY CHEESECAKE

Chris Pavesic

- 1 quart fresh strawberries
- 1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese
- 1 tbsp. vanilla
- 1 pkg. of Animal Crackers, my family likes the chocolate ones
- 1 Icing Decorator

Wash the strawberries and cut off the stem/leaves. Use the largest berries for the containers, reserving the smaller ones for the filling. Cut the bottom off the berries so they sit flat on a plate and hollow out the center so it can hold the filling.

Place the "container" berries on paper towels. This helps to dry them a bit so the juices do not run onto the plate after they are filled.

Blend the cream cheese, vanilla, and small strawberries well in a bowl. Put the mixture into the icing decorator and fill the container berries.

Place the filled berries on the plate and top with an animal cracker of your choice.

Serve immediately.

Chris Pavesic writes fantasy and lives in the Midwestern United States. She loves Kona coffee, steampunk, fairy tales, and all types of speculative fiction. Between writing projects, Chris can most often be found reading,

gaming, gardening, working on an endless list of DIY household projects, or hanging out with friends.

Learn more about Chris on her [website and blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

Treats

Morning Indulgences



ALMOND POPPY SEED SCONES

Sara Daniel

Scones are a specialty in my novel *Mr. Forever*. Olivia Wells makes scones and serves them with jam and hot tea. All her guests rave about them. Except Dr. Caleb Paden. He insists scones are dry and heavy and not to his liking at all. The moment Caleb bites into one of Olivia's scones, he is enraptured. He dubs her a "scone sorceress" and asks to marry her on the spot.

I can't guarantee instant marriage proposals or a sorceress-level following, but these scones are sure to inspire devotion from all who try them. And hey, if you've been waiting for years for a marriage proposal that hasn't come yet, they're certainly worth a shot.

1 cup flour

3 tbsp. sugar

1½ tsp. poppy seeds

1 tsp. baking powder

¼ tsp. salt

¼ cup unsalted butter

3 tbsp. sour cream

1 egg

1 tsp. almond extract

1 tbsp. milk

Powdered sugar

Sliced almonds

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Chill butter and cut into pieces. Combine dry ingredients in bowl. Add butter pieces. Use pastry cutter to mix butter and dry ingredients, until mixture is coarse.

In a small bowl, combine sour cream, egg, almond extract, and milk. Pour into dry ingredients and mix with a rubber spatula.

Finish mixing by kneading the dough with your hands. Pat into a 5-inch circle.

Set circle on cookie sheet and use a pizza cutter to cut into 8 triangle wedges. Spread pieces apart.

Bake 12 minutes or until golden brown.

Dip warm scones into powdered sugar and sprinkle with sliced almonds.

Optional but highly recommended: Serve to the person you love. Watch them kneel in front of you. Savor their vow of love and devotion. Accept proposal. Live happily ever after.

Sara Daniel writes what she loves to read—irresistible romance, from sweet to erotic and everything in between. She battles a serious NASCAR addiction, was once a landlord of two uninvited squirrels, and loses her car keys several times a day.

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CHOCOLATE OATMEAL BARS

Anne Montgomery

In my quest to discover the world's greatest chocolate dessert, I took a left turn and discovered the world's greatest chocolate breakfast. These delightful squares have wholesome ingredients, yes they do. Oatmeal. You know, the stuff with fiber and all those heart-healthy nutrients. Then there's dark chocolate that lowers blood pressure and provides antioxidants. And let's not forget the nuts: those wee power-packed pieces of protein that provide something delightfully called "good-fat." And then...and then...OK, there are some other things in these babies that are really unhealthy, but something's going to kill us. Death by Chocolate Oatmeal Bar might not be a bad way to go.

3 cups quick-cooking rolled oats
2½ cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. salt
1 cup butter
2 cups packed brown sugar
2 eggs
2 tsp. vanilla
1½ cups semisweet chocolate cut into pieces
1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
2 tbsp. butter
½ cup chopped walnuts
2 tbsp. vanilla

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Stir together oats, flour, baking soda, and salt.

Cream butter in a large mixer bowl. Add sugar. Beat until fluffy.

Add eggs and 2 tsp. vanilla. Beat well.

Add dry ingredients. Beat well.

Melt chocolate pieces, condensed milk, and butter in a heavy saucepan or double boiler. Remove from heat. Stir in chopped nuts and 2 tbsp. vanilla.

Pat $\frac{2}{3}$ of oat mixture into the bottom of a 15 x 10 x 1-inch baking dish.

Spread chocolate mixture on top.

Dot with remaining oat mixture.

Bake 25 - 30 minutes or until oat mixture is lightly browned. The chocolate layer will still look moist.

Cool on a wire rack.

Anne Montgomery has worked as a television sportscaster, newspaper and magazine writer, teacher, amateur baseball umpire, and high school football referee. She also worked at ESPN in Bristol, Connecticut, where she anchored the Emmy and ACE award winning SportsCenter. Montgomery has been a freelance and staff writer for six publications, writing sports, features, movie reviews, and archeological pieces. When

she can, Anne indulges in her passions: rock collecting, scuba diving, football refereeing, and playing her guitar.

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COFFEECAKE

Chris Pavesic

This is one of my family favorites for breakfast. Served with fresh fruit, it can even be considered a somewhat healthy weekend breakfast treat.

COFFEECAKE

2 cups all-purpose flour

½ cup brown sugar, packed

3 tsp. baking powder

1 tsp. salt

½ tsp. cinnamon

½ cup butter or margarine

1 cup milk

1 egg

Extra butter or margarine and flour to coat the pan

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Butter a 10-inch Bundt pan and lightly coat with flour.

Add flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and cinnamon into a large bowl and stir well to blend.

Mix or whisk butter/margarine, milk, and egg into the flour mixture until it forms a batter.

Pour in the batter into the prepared pan.

TOPPING

⅓ cup brown sugar, packed

1 tbsp. butter or margarine, softened

¼ tsp. cinnamon

2 tbsp. all-purpose flour

¼ cup walnuts, chopped fine

Powdered sugar, optional

In a small bowl, combine the sugar, walnuts, butter/margarine, and cinnamon.

Mix until crumbly. Sprinkle evenly on top of the batter.

Bake 35 - 65 minutes until a sharp knife inserted in the center comes out clean.

Sprinkle lightly with powdered sugar.

Serve warm.

Makes 9 - 12 servings.

TIP: If you use a food processor to chop the nuts, process them until they are a coarse powder. Do not let them form a paste.

Chris Pavesic writes fantasy and lives in the Midwestern United States. She loves Kona coffee, steampunk, fairy tales, and all types of speculative fiction. Between writing projects, Chris can most often be found reading,

gaming, gardening, working on an endless list of DIY household projects, or hanging out with friends.

Learn more about Chris on her [website and blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

LAKESIDE PUMPKIN BREAD

Sharon Ledwith

The following moist and spicy recipe is geared to enjoy with coffee on the dock, snacks around the card table, or a hot cup of tea before the fireplace. This pumpkin bread actually tastes even better the day after it is baked, and the smell of it coming out of the oven may take you back to a favorite tourist bakery shop while vacationing with your family.

1 (15 oz.) can of pumpkin puree

4 eggs

1 cup vegetable oil

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup water

3 cups white sugar

$3\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour

2 tsp. baking soda

$1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

1 tsp. ground nutmeg

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cloves

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground ginger

Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease and flour three 7 x 3-inch loaf pans.

In a large bowl, mix together pumpkin puree, eggs, oil, water and sugar until well blended.

Whisk together the flour, baking soda, salt, and spices in a medium bowl.

Stir the dry ingredients into the pumpkin mixture until just blended.

Pour into the prepared pans.

Bake 50 minutes. Loaves are done when toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.

Sharon Ledwith is the author of the middle-grade/YA time travel series *The Last Timekeepers* and a teen psychic series *Mysterious Tales From Fairy Falls*. When not writing, researching, or revising, she enjoys reading, exercising, anything arcane, and an occasional dram of scotch. Sharon lives a serene, yet busy, life in a southern tourist region of Ontario, Canada, with her hubby, one spoiled yellow Labrador and a moody calico cat.

Learn more about Sharon on her [website](#) and [blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), [Google+](#), [Goodreads](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

NEVER-FAIL DATE & NUT BREAD

Vonnie Hughes

1 overflowing cup dates
Boiling water
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tbsp. butter
¼ cup brown sugar
1 egg
½ cup chopped walnuts or dried apricots or raisins
3 drops vanilla essence (extract)
2 cups white flour or whole meal if you prefer
1 tsp. baking powder
1 pinch salt

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Place dates in a medium-size bowl. Cover with boiling water. Add baking soda and soak for 1 hour.

Beat butter with sugar. Add egg and beat well.

Blend walnuts and vanilla with the date mixture.

Lastly, stir in flour, baking powder, and salt.

Bake in a greased loaf tin (with baking paper is easier) 50 minutes.

Keep in a sealed container for freshness.

NEVER FAILS.

Vonnie Hughes is a multi-published author in both Regency books and contemporary suspense. Vonnie was born in New Zealand, but she and her husband now live happily in Australia. If you visit Hamilton Gardens in New Zealand be sure to stroll through the Japanese Garden. There is a bronze plaque engraved with a haiku describing the peacefulness of that environment. The poem was written by Vonnie.

Learn more about Vonnie on her [website](#), [blog](#), and [Amazon Author Page](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Goodreads](#).

PERFECT ENGLISH MUFFINS

HL Carpenter

You don't have to be British to enjoy hand-made English muffins, which is good because we're fans of fun, easy menu additions for Sunday morning brunch or a special breakfast. English muffins are a snap to prepare, require only 1 hour to rise, cook quickly on a griddle or frying pan (no heating the oven!) and taste great, either plain or with butter, jam, or your favorite topping. An added bonus is the delicious, yeasty scent of fresh bread that fills the kitchen.

1 pkg. yeast

1 cup warm water

Cornmeal

3 cups flour (all-purpose or whole wheat)

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup shortening

2 tbsp. honey

1 tsp. salt

Dissolve yeast in warm water 5 minutes. While yeast is dissolving, sprinkle cookie sheet with a light coating of cornmeal.

Stir flour, shortening, honey, and salt into yeast-and-water-mixture to form dough.

Coat dough with flour and then knead until elastic.

Divide dough into 12 equal balls. Use a hamburger patty mold or the flat end of a glass dipped in flour or sprayed with cooking spray to flatten each ball into a 3-inch circle. Put the muffins on the cookie sheet as you form them.

Cover the cookie sheet and let the muffins rise 1 hour.

Heat griddle or frying pan to 375°F. No oil necessary.

Cook the muffins, turning once, until golden brown on both sides.

Split with a fork, toast, and enjoy with your favorite topping.

Here are tips to help you make perfect muffins:

1. While the yeast is dissolving, fill a 9 x 13-inch pan with hot water and place it in your unheated oven. Muffins rise best in a warm, humid environment.
2. If your recipe calls for honey, spritz your measuring spoon with cooking spray. The honey will slide right off the spoon.
3. Instead of using a rolling pin and cookie cutter to form your muffins, divide the dough into even parts. Then press out the dough pieces in your hamburger patty mold. You'll get just-the-right-size, perfectly round muffins.
4. Once the muffins have risen, hand-transfer them to the heated griddle. They'll keep their shape better than if you try to slip a spatula beneath them.

(Bonus tip: Prefer using a spatula? Dip the edge in cornmeal so it slides easily under the muffins.)

5. To test for doneness, lightly tap the top of the muffins with your fingertip. A hollow sound means the muffins are cooked.

6. When you're ready to toast, split the muffins with a fork instead of a knife. Your toppings will fill the resulting nooks and crannies.

HL Carpenter is a mother/daughter author duo who write family-friendly fiction from their studios in Carpenter Country, a magical place that, like their stories, is unreal but not untrue.

Learn more about HL and enjoy gift reads and excerpts and find out what's happening in Carpenter Country at their [website](#). Stay connected on [Pinterest](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Google+](#), and their [Amazon Author Page](#).

QUICK & EASY BLUEBERRY MUFFINS

Chris Pavesic

These muffins are naturally sweetened with seasonal, local fruit (blueberries). A touch of sugar is added to help cream the butter and is also sprinkled on top. You can eat them warm or prepare them the day before for a breakfast treat.

½ cup butter, softened

¼ cup granulated sugar

2 large eggs

1 tsp. vanilla

2 tsp. baking powder

¼ tsp. salt

2 cups all-purpose flour

1 cup vanilla yogurt

2½ cups fresh blueberries

1 tbsp. granulated sugar for topping

Extra butter for greasing the muffin pan

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Grease muffin pan with butter.

Mix butter until creamy in a medium-sized bowl. Add sugar and beat until pale and fluffy.

Add eggs, beating well.

Stir in vanilla, baking powder, and salt.

With spoon, fold half of flour then half of yogurt into batter; repeat.

Fold in blueberries. Do not over-mix.

Spoon into muffin cups and then sprinkle sugar topping onto each muffin.

Bake 15 - 20 minutes, until golden brown and springy to touch.

Chris Pavesic writes fantasy and lives in the Midwestern United States. She loves Kona coffee, steampunk, fairy tales, and all types of speculative fiction. Between writing projects, Chris can most often be found reading, gaming, gardening, working on an endless list of DIY household projects, or hanging out with friends.

Learn more about Chris on her [website and blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

ZUCCHINI BREAD

Marci Boudreaux

For all the disasters I have in the kitchen (and there are plenty), there is one tried and true recipe that never fails. My zucchini bread. It's yummy. That is all. I need not say more.

I've replaced the zucchini with carrots as well, and it was almost as good. The carrots didn't have as much moisture so the bread was a tad bit drier, but wash it down with a nice hot cup of Earl Grey and you'll never notice the difference.

This recipe makes two loaves. That may seem like overkill, but the first loaf never even has a chance to cool down. It's gone that fast.

3 cups shredded zucchini, about 3 medium

1²/₃ cups sugar

²/₃ cup vegetable oil

2 tsp. vanilla

4 eggs

3 cups all-purpose flour

2 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. salt

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

¹/₂ tsp. ground cloves

¹/₂ tsp. baking powder

¹/₂ to 1 cup chopped walnuts, optional

¹/₂ cup raisins, optional

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Grease bottoms of two loaf pans.

Mix zucchini, sugar, oil, vanilla, and eggs in large bowl. Stir in remaining ingredients.

Pour into pans and bake 50 - 60 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean.

Cool 10 minutes, then turn out onto a plate.

As a teen, **Marci Boudreaux** skipped over young adult books and jumped right into the world of romance novels. She's never left. Marci lives with her husband, two kiddos, and their numerous pets. Until recently, she was a freelance writer appearing monthly in a variety of local magazines. She now focuses on writing and her work as a content editor.

Romance is her preferred reading and writing genre because nothing feels better than falling in love with someone new and her husband doesn't like when she does that in real life.

Learn more about Marci on her [website and blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

Breakfast



BAKED APPLE FRENCH TOAST

Lizzie T. Leaf

1 cup butter

½ cup brown sugar

3 – 5 granny smith apples, peeled, cored, and sliced

8 oz. cream cheese, cubed

½ cup dried cranberries

12 slices firm bread, diced

8 eggs

4 cups milk

2 tbsp. vanilla

Cinnamon sugar to taste

Melt butter and sugar in a skillet. Add apples and then cook 2 - 3 minutes. Transfer ingredients to a 9 x 13-inch baking dish.

Scatter cream cheese over the apples. Sprinkle on cranberries. Top evenly with bread.

Beat eggs, milk, and vanilla together in a medium-sized bowl. Carefully pour over the bread.

Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar. Cover with cling wrap. Store in refrigerator overnight.

THE NEXT DAY

Remove from the refrigerator no less than 45 minutes before baking.

Place large cookie sheet in oven and preheat to 350°F. The cookie sheet is to catch any bubble-over.

Bake 50 – 60 minutes or until firm to the touch. Sprinkle with powdered sugar. Serve with your favorite syrup.

Lizzie T. Leaf loved books since she opened her first one. Her dream was to write them herself. Lost in the hectic day to day world of family, job, laundry, and housework, writing became a distant memory. When the twinkling ember did spark, it was usually doused by someone demanding their share of her time.

Lizzie's life went full circle. The desire to put the stories that continued to play in her head on paper emerged stronger than ever, and at a time when there was someone who encouraged. Now she lives her dream.

Learn more about Lizzie T. Leaf on her [website and blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

BROCCOLI FRITTATA

Vonnie Hughes

2 cups broccoli florets

4 eggs (yeah, I know. 4!! But that's the way to make it work)

1 cup milk

1 packet of thick vegetable soup

1/3 cup grated tasty cheese

Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F).

Put broccoli into a greased quiche dish or a shallow ovenproof dish.

Beat eggs with the milk and soup mix. Pour over broccoli.

Sprinkle cheese on top.

Bake 40 minutes. Serve with croissants and mimosas for a party atmosphere.

Vonnie Hughes is a multi-published author in both Regency books and contemporary suspense. Vonnie was born in New Zealand, but she and her husband now live happily in Australia. If you visit Hamilton Gardens in New Zealand be sure to stroll through the Japanese Garden. There is a bronze plaque engraved with a haiku describing the peacefulness of that environment. The poem was written by Vonnie.

Learn more about Vonnie on her [website](#), [blog](#), and [Amazon Author Page](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Goodreads](#).

GRAND BREAKFAST BAKE

Sloane Taylor

Cooking spray

1 cup cubed ham or bulk breakfast sausage

8 oz. sharp cheddar cheese, shredded

½ cup cream or half & half

5 eggs

⅓ cup onion, chopped

Pepper to taste

1 can flaky Grand biscuits

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Lightly coat a large ovenproof casserole dish with cooking spray.

Sauté ham in a small skillet to remove the excess water. If you prefer sausage, fry until no pink shows and be sure to break up any clumps. Drain in a colander to remove grease.

Combine all ingredients except biscuits in a medium-sized bowl.

Quarter the biscuits and gently stir into the bowl. Pour mixture into casserole.

Bake 25 – 40 minutes or until a thin knife inserted in center comes out clean.

Serve with hash browns, fruit salad, and mimosas for a special occasion.

Sloane Taylor is an award-winning author of erotic romance books released by Toque & Dagger Publishing.

Learn more about Sloane and read excerpts from her books on her [website](#), [blog](#), and [Amazon Author Page](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

MAKE AHEAD BREAKFAST SOUFFLÉ

Sloane Taylor

Make Valentine's Day special with this delicious and easy make-ahead meal. Serve with mini croissants or French bread, butter and jelly. Hash browns and fruit salad are nice accompaniments. Mimosas are a lovely drink to top off your breakfast/brunch.

1 lb. ham, bacon, or breakfast sausage

9 eggs, lightly beaten

3 cups milk

1 tsp. dry mustard

Diced green, red, and/or yellow pepper to taste

½ lb. sharp cheddar cheese, grated

½ lb. Swiss or Gruyere cheese, or a combination of the two, grated

Diced onion to taste

Freshly ground black pepper to taste

4 – 1 inch slices Vienna or French bread, cubed

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Dice the ham or bacon. If you use ham, set aside in the bowl you use for the eggs. Fry bacon to the crispness you prefer. Drain on paper towels. If you use breakfast sausage, fry the meat until no longer pink. Be sure to break up any clumps. Drain the meat in a colander while you continue to prepare the soufflé.

Add all ingredients, except the bread, to the eggs. Stir well.

Stir in bread.

Pour mixture into an ungreased 9 x 13-inch glass dish. Bake 1 hour or until a knife inserted in the center has no egg clinging to it.

This dish can be assembled one or two days ahead of time. Allow the soufflé to sit on your counter 1 – 2 hours before you bake it.

Leftovers are excellent from the microwave.

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MELTED CHEESE SANDWICH

HL Carpenter

Cheese sandwiches for breakfast anyone? Oh yes—and this simple-to-make chewy and crunchy cheese melt combo is the sandwich of choice. Chewy mozzarella, crunchy fresh green peppers and onions, spicy pepperoni, and Italian seasonings deliciously stacked on buttery English muffin rounds make breaking your night's fast a pleasure.

6 English muffins, store-bought or hand-baked

1 tbsp. butter, softened

12 slices (1 oz. each) mozzarella cheese

1 sweet onion, sliced

1 large green pepper, sliced

6 oz. sliced pepperoni, divided

Garlic salt to taste

Italian seasoning to taste

Split each muffin and lightly butter the outer side. Place one-half of each muffin buttered-side down in frying pan.

Top each muffin half with 1 slice of mozzarella, 1 sweet onion ring, 1 green pepper ring, and 1 oz. of pepperoni. Season the muffins with garlic salt and Italian seasoning. Add another layer of mozzarella. Place remaining half of muffin on top, buttered-side up.

Fry sandwiches in covered skillet, turning once, until cheese melts and sandwich is heated through. Remove from heat and serve immediately.

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SALMON SMEAR

Lizzie T. Leaf

I love smoked salmon and enjoy the sides of thinly sliced red onions, sour cream, and capers usually served with them. Then I came up with the idea of having it for breakfast, but turning into a smear. After trying several different smoked salmons the one we enjoyed the most in the smear version was honey smoked.

1 cup honey smoked salmon, flaked

¼ cup red onion, chopped

½ cup sour cream

2 tbsp. capers

Mini-bagels or slider buns

Honey mustard to taste (store bought is easier)

Mix first four ingredients together in a medium-sized bowl.

Spread a large dollop of Smear on one side of the bread of your choice.

Bagels are chewier, but slider buns are softer.

Drizzle mustard over the Smear. Top with other piece of roll and enjoy.

Lizzie T. Leaf loved books since she opened her first one. Her dream was to write them herself. Lost in the hectic day to day world of family, job, laundry, and housework, writing became a distant memory. When the

twinkling ember did spark, it was usually doused by someone demanding their share of her time.

Lizzie's life went full circle. The desire to put the stories that continued to play in her head on paper emerged stronger than ever, and at a time when there was someone who encouraged. Now she lives her dream.

Learn more about Lizzie T. Leaf on her [website and blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

SHACK-WACKY PUMPKIN PANCAKES

Sharon Ledwith

Have you ever been shack-whacky? You may be familiar with other terms for this word—cabin fever or stir crazy. All of which mean the state of being restless or irritable from staying indoors or in one location for a long period. Yup, I'm sure we've all been there. So to turn a bad situation into a good one, why not indulge yourself and your motley crew with a hearty meal? These stick-to-your-ribs pancakes are good any season but taste best on cool weekends.

1½ cups milk
1 cup pumpkin puree
1 egg
2 tbsp. vegetable oil
2 tbsp. vinegar
2 cups all-purpose flour
3 tbsp. brown sugar
2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. ground allspice
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
½ tsp. ground ginger
½ tsp. salt

Mix together milk, pumpkin, egg, oil, and vinegar in a large bowl.

Combine the remaining ingredients in a separate bowl. Gradually stir this blend into pumpkin mixture, just enough to combine.

Heat a lightly oiled griddle or frying pan over medium heat.

Pour or scoop the batter onto the griddle, using approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ cup for each pancake. Brown on both sides and serve hot, topped with your favorite brand of maple syrup.

Sharon Ledwith is the author of the middle-grade/YA time travel series *The Last Timekeepers* and a teen psychic series *Mysterious Tales From Fairy Falls*. When not writing, researching, or revising, she enjoys reading, exercising, anything arcane, and an occasional dram of scotch. Sharon lives a serene, yet busy, life in a southern tourist region of Ontario, Canada, with her hubby, one spoiled yellow Labrador and a moody calico cat.

Learn more about Sharon on her [website](#) and [blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), [Google+](#), [Goodreads](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

SPICY BREAKFAST SANDWICHES

Lizzie T. Leaf

2 sausage patties
2 eggs
2 tbsp. butter
2 slider buns
2 tbsp. jalapeno cream cheese
2 tbsp. salsa

Preheat oven to 210°F.

Fry sausage on medium heat. Place pan in oven to keep warm while you continue.

Break eggs in a small bowl. Mix well. Melt butter in a small frying pan. Add eggs and scramble. Cut in half and then fold over. Place pan in oven to keep warm while you continue.

Spread cream cheese across the bottom of each bun. Smear salsa on top of cheese. Layer on sausage and then egg.

Place top bun on your masterpiece and indulge.

Makes 2 sandwiches

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twinkling ember did spark, it was usually doused by someone demanding their share of her time.

Lizzie's life went full circle. The desire to put the stories that continued to play in her head on paper emerged stronger than ever, and at a time when there was someone who encouraged. Now she lives her dream.

Learn more about Lizzie T. Leaf on her [website and blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

THE PERFECT OMELET

Sloane Taylor

1½ tbsp. butter

2 tbsp. onion, coarsely chopped

2 large eggs

Freshly ground pepper to taste

Pinch of ground thyme

Small handful extra sharp cheddar cheese, shredded

Small handful aged Swiss cheese, shredded

Chives or parsley, optional

Preheat oven to 220°F.

Use an 8-inch, non-stick skillet, to melt butter over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until translucent. Shuffle the pan often so the onion doesn't burn.

Turn the heat to almost medium-high. Whisk together eggs, pepper, and thyme, then pour into the hot pan. Gently swirl the pan to prevent the eggs from sticking. As they set, carefully lift the edges to allow raw egg to flow onto the hot pan.

Sprinkle the cheeses evenly across the eggs. Flip one side of the omelet over the other to make a half-moon. Slide onto a plate and set in the oven while you prepare more omelets.

The finished omelet will be a nice yellow color with the cheese melted. Sometimes they will have browned a bit. Don't worry; this does not affect the delicate taste. Sprinkle with the chives or parsley and serve.

An added treat is a handful of chopped ham strewn across the egg mixture right before you sprinkle on the cheese.

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Dinner



ALMOST HOMEMADE PIZZA WITH BELGIAN ENDIVE SALAD

Sloane Taylor

Greeting card manufacturers have decided Valentine's Day is the most romantic holiday of the year. Okay, I'll almost give them that, but there are 364 other days that shouldn't be ignored. Below is an easy menu that is not only romantic, but also satisfies all your hunger on any day of the year.

Think Tom Jones, the old movie not the singer, and the eating scene. Fingers and food are made for one another. Forget utensils and let your digits have free rein. Go for it. These cold winter nights might just heat up for you!

PIZZA

1 (12 inch) pre-baked Italian bread pizza crust

1 cup pizza sauce

1¼ cups shredded mozzarella

½ lb. Italian sausage, pinched into dime sized pieces

Fresh Parmesan or Romano to grate over the top

Mushrooms, peppers, or whatever else you enjoy can be added

Preheat the oven to the temperature recommended on the crust package.

Lay the crust onto a baking sheet of appropriate size. Spread the sauce over the crust. Sprinkle with half the mozzarella. Lay your other sausage etc. on top. Cover the pie with the remaining mozzarella then grate fresh Parmesan or Romano over that.

Bake according to the crust package directions or until the sausage is no longer pink and the cheese is melted.

The pizza makes a great leftover lunch, but the salad will turn bitter and limp.

SALAD

1 tbsp. Dijon mustard

1 tbsp. red wine vinegar

½ tbsp. lemon juice

3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, or as needed

Pepper to taste

4 heads Belgian endive

⅓ cup pine nuts

1 tbsp. chopped fresh parsley, optional

In a medium bowl, whisk together the mustard, vinegar, and lemon juice. Whisk in olive oil slowly until you have an almost creamy consistency. Taste and season with pepper. Set aside.

Cut endive heads crosswise into rings. Remove the hard end of the stems and discard. Rinse in a colander, shaking to separate the slices into rings. Set aside to drain.

In a large skillet toast pine nuts over medium heat. Stir constantly so that they do not burn. Once the nuts are golden, add the endive rings. Warm slightly, then pour in the dressing and toss to coat. Reduce the heat a bit if the endive is wilting too quickly. You want to maintain some crispness and texture.

If you want to impress your someone special, sprinkle on the parsley. The sharp green flecks will brighten the dish and enhance the flavor, but the salad is in no way lacking without.

Serve immediately.

It is best served directly from the pan to the plate. If put in a bowl, the dressing will settle at the bottom and be difficult to toss again without damaging the endive.

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BAKED FISH FILLETS & HUSH PUPPIES

HL Carpenter

Fellow cooks, the time is now—the time to flop your fish out of the frying pan and into the oven, that is. Sure, deep-fried candy bars have a place in every healthy diet. But on days besides Fryday, you might want to make a meal using that other appliance that takes up space in your kitchen.

You can start with this oven-baked version of a recipe that's usually fried. We promise the end result is every bit as delicious. And remember, you can always deep-fry a Twinkie for dessert.

FISH

3 lb. fresh fish fillets or strips (we used pollock)

2 tbsp. butter

½ box Cajun seafood fry mix or fish seasoning mix of your choice (for less spicy version, use ¼ box)

Preheat oven to 425°F.

Set baking pan in oven until the pan is warm (not hot). Remove pan from oven. Put butter on pan, let melt, and spread over pan.

Pour Cajun seasoning mix in a large plastic bag. Add fish and then shake gently to coat evenly. Remove fish from bag, place on buttered pan. Bake 15 minutes or until fish is flaky.

HUSH PUPPIES

This recipe makes 12 mini pups

Cooking spray

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup cornmeal

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup flour

1 tsp. baking powder

1 tsp. onion powder

1 tsp. garlic salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. black pepper

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup coconut milk

1 egg

1 tbsp. oil

While the fish is baking, coat a mini muffin tin with cooking spray.

Measure dry ingredients in a bowl and mix with a fork. Add wet ingredients and stir with fork until blended. Spoon the batter into the muffin tin.

Remove the fish from the oven and turn the oven up to 450°F.

Bake the hush puppies 10 minutes or until a tester pick comes out with a few moist crumbs.

Serve fish and hush puppies with ready-made coleslaw.

Tips and tricks

If the fish you're using is not moist, dipping the fillets into milk or water before coating will help the seasoning mix stick.

For the hush puppy recipe, you can substitute full-fat cow milk for the coconut milk.

Coleslaw helps cut the effect of the spiciness of the Cajun seasoning on your tongue, but potato salad is a good substitute.

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DAMNED GOOD POT ROAST

Sloane Taylor

1 clove garlic, pressed
1 tsp. dried oregano
½ tsp. lemon pepper
3 – 3½ lb. boneless chuck roast
3 tbsp. olive oil
1 cup or so beef broth
1 medium onion, quartered
5 red potatoes, quartered
15 mini carrots
2 tsp. cornstarch
¼ cup beef stock

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

Combine garlic, oregano, and lemon pepper to form an herb paste.
Rub evenly over the meat.

Heat the olive oil in a Dutch oven on medium-high. When the oil shimmers, carefully brown the roast on all sides.

Pour in beef stock until it is half way or so up the meat. Add the onion.
Cover and bake in the oven for 1 hour 45 minutes.

Spread the potatoes and carrots around the meat. Roast another 30 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

Remove the meat and vegetables to a serving platter. Keep warm under foil while you prepare the gravy.

Strain the liquid and skim off any fat. Return the liquid to the Dutch oven. Heat on medium. Combine the cornstarch and remaining beef stock. Pour into the simmering liquid. Increase heat and boil the mixture for 1 minute or until thickened, stirring constantly.

Serve the roast and vegetables with the gravy on the side. French bread is marvelous for dipping!

This is a perfect leftover for another dinner or lunch. It freezes beautifully.

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EASY TOMATO & BACON PASTA BAKE

Susan Lodge

This recipe makes two generous portions. Spruce up your dinner with a green salad and some crusty bread. A little red wine is a bonus.

4 rashers (slices) thick bacon, chopped into bite size pieces

1 - 2 tbsp. olive oil, divided

300 g (10 oz.) dried pasta shapes, penne works well

1 large onion, chopped

3 garlic cloves, crushed

400 g (14 oz.) tin of plum tomatoes, roughly chopped

125 ml (4 oz.) red wine

Small bunch of fresh basil leaves, roughly chopped

Salt and pepper to taste

110 g (4 oz.) Parmesan cheese, grated or mozzarella, sliced

Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F).

Fry bacon in a little oil and put aside.

Cook the pasta in boiling water for the prescribed time on the packet.

In a large pan gently fry onion and garlic in oil for a few minutes until soft and transparent.

Add tomatoes, wine, cooked bacon pieces, and most of the chopped basil (retaining a little for garnish). Season well with salt and pepper.

Simmer gently 5 - 10 minutes until the sauce has thickened slightly.

Combine the drained pasta and tomato mixture and turn into an ovenproof dish.

Sprinkle with cheese and scatter the remaining basil on the top. Bake 10 - 15 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and bubbling.

Susan Lodge's first publishing success was a story purchased by a major UK magazine followed by a drawer full of rejections. Finally a breakthrough gave her the confidence to seek and secure a publisher for her historical romance novels.

After working in several cities including London and Bristol, she and her husband moved down to the Hampshire coast to raise their family.

Learn more about Susan and her books on her [website](#) and [blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

HOBO CHICKEN

Marci Boudreaux

Sometimes dinner just needs to be simple. And cheap. That is why I love making Hobo Chicken. Easy, cheap, and a snap to clean up. The best thing though, everyone (including my picky 8 year old) loves it!

This is a dish that can be done in the oven, on the grill, or if you're the outdoorsy type over a camp fire. I don't have a fancy recipe for this, that's kind of the point, right?

Here's the official recipe (if you can call it that).

1 whole chicken, cut up

Seasoning of your choice

Corn, potatoes, onion, carrots or veggies you prefer

Butter

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Prepare a separate foil packet for each person.

Rub chicken with seasoning.

Set the chicken in the middle of a large piece of heavy duty foil.

Surround it with your favorite veggies.

Add 2 tbsp. of butter. Wrap tight.

Bake 1½ hours. Roll back foil to expose chicken and bake another 15 minutes at 450°F if you want darker/crispier skin.

That's it. The entire meal in a foil packet. Plop one of those down on a plate and serve it up. If you are going to do this on a grill or open campfire, it will take about 3 hours for the chicken to cook, but the smokiness of the chicken will be divine and well worth the wait.

Serve and let the family be amazed by your awesomeness.

As a teen, **Marci Boudreaux** skipped over young adult books and jumped right into the world of romance novels. She's never left. Marci lives with her husband, two kiddos, and their numerous pets. Until recently, she was a freelance writer appearing monthly in a variety of local magazines. She now focuses on writing and her work as a content editor.

Romance is her preferred reading and writing genre because nothing feels better than falling in love with someone new and her husband doesn't like when she does that in real life.

Learn more about Marci on her [website and blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

HONEY-SOY GLAZED PORK TENDERLOIN

Sharon Ledwith

This hassle free meal is sure to win you the heart of your special someone. Serve with mashed potatoes, pork gravy, and mixed vegetables. A bottle of crisp white wine sets this dinner a cut above.

2 tbsp. Asian sesame dressing
2 tbsp. honey
2 tbsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce
1 tbsp. minced garlic
1 tbsp. grated fresh ginger root
1 pork tenderloin (1 lb./450 g)

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Mix all ingredients except meat in a small bowl. Lay meat in a shallow dish or a sealed plastic bag. Pour the marinade over the meat and then turn to evenly coat the tenderloin.

Refrigerate 6 hours. We find marinating the longer the better, so if you prefer, mix the marinade the night before. Turn the meat occasionally to be sure all of it is coated.

Remove meat from marinade. Place pork in a shallow dish. Discard marinade.

Bake 25 - 35 minutes or until meat is done (160°F). We always use a meat thermometer.

Sharon Ledwith is the author of the middle-grade/YA time travel series *The Last Timekeepers* and a teen psychic series *Mysterious Tales From Fairy Falls*. When not writing, researching, or revising, she enjoys reading, exercising, anything arcane, and an occasional dram of scotch. Sharon lives a serene, yet busy, life in a southern tourist region of Ontario, Canada, with her hubby, one spoiled yellow Labrador and a moody calico cat.

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ITALIAN MEATLOAF

Alicia Joseph

2 slices rye bread
2 slices white bread
½ cup milk
1 medium onion, chopped fine
4 sprigs parsley, chopped fine
1 lb. lean ground beef
3 tbsp. Parmesan cheese, grated
1 egg, beaten
1 tsp. salt
¼ tsp. pepper
2 tbsp. butter or margarine
1 8 oz. can tomato sauce
1 tsp. oregano or Italian seasoning

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Tear both breads into soft bread crumbs. Soak them in milk 5 minutes.

Combine onion, parsley, meat, cheese, egg, salt, and pepper in a large bowl. Drain milk from bread. Add bread to the bowl and mix until well blended. Shape into a loaf. Place in shallow baking dish. Dot with butter or margarine.

Bake 30 minutes. Remove from oven.

Pour tomato sauce over the loaf and sprinkle with oregano or Italian seasoning.

Bake 20 - 30 minutes longer or until done.

Alicia Joseph grew up in Westchester, Illinois. Her books are sweet, romantic stories in the LGBT genre. Alicia's latest novel *A Penny on the Tracks* is a coming of age story about love and friendship. Alicia has many works-in-progress that she hopes to finish soon. When she is not writing, Alicia enjoys volunteering with animals, rooting for her favorite sports teams, and playing "awesome aunt" to her nine nieces and nephews.

Learn more about Alicia on her [blog](#) and [Amazon Author Page](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

LINGUINE WITH PARSLEY & PARMESAN

Alicia Joseph

Fresh Italian bread, salad, and chilled white wine are the perfect additions for this easy meal.

8 oz. linguine

1 tsp. butter

1/3 cup onion, minced

2 garlic cloves, pressed

8 oz. sour cream at room temperature

1/2 tsp. cracked pepper

2 tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped

2 tbsp. Parmesan cheese, freshly grated

Cook linguine as stated on package. Drain and set aside.

Melt butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion and garlic and sauté until softened. Stir often. Be careful not to let this burn or the sauce will be bitter. Remove from heat and cool.

Stir in sour cream, pepper, and parsley. Mix with linguine. Warm over medium-low heat.

Sprinkle with cheese and serve.

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works-in-progress that she hopes to finish soon. When she is not writing, Alicia enjoys volunteering with animals, rooting for her favorite sports teams, and playing "awesome aunt" to her nine nieces and nephews.

Learn more about Alicia on her [blog](#) and [Amazon Author Page](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

MARCI'S BBQ CHICKEN

Marci Boudreaux

Though July is associated with barbeque pits and charred bits of meat, there is another way to get great tasting BBQ chicken or pork without risking the loss of facial hair no matter the season.

This year will be known (at least in my family) as the year I discovered the glorious wonders of a slow cooker. Yes, my friends, I no longer stand over a hot stove (or pit) for hours cooking for my starving family. Our home cooked meals are now done slowly, with minimal effort from me.

And this recipe is one of my personal favorites!

1 bottle of your favorite BBQ sauce (Hey, this still counts as homemade!)

¼ cup white vinegar

1 tsp. red pepper flakes

¼ cup brown sugar

1 tsp. minced garlic

½ small onion diced

4 - 6 uncooked boneless chicken breasts or small pork roast

Mix BBQ sauce, vinegar, pepper flakes, brown sugar, garlic, and onion in medium sized bowl.

Place meat in slow cooker. Pour mixture over meat. Cook on low 4 - 6 hours.

Done!

Seriously?? YES! And it is delicious!

I shred mine and put it on a bun with coleslaw, but my kids eat it straight up with a side of baked beans.

This is a great way to have summer flavor even if you're knee-deep in snow. And it's so easy!

As a teen, **Marci Boudreaux** skipped over young adult books and jumped right into the world of romance novels. She's never left. Marci lives with her husband, two kiddos, and their numerous pets. Until recently, she was a freelance writer appearing monthly in a variety of local magazines. She now focuses on writing and her work as a content editor.

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MARINATED PORK CHOPS, BOILED POTATOES, & ASPARAGUS

Sloane Taylor

I always had trouble cooking pork chops. They tasted good, but were always tougher than the soles of my shoes. After years of failed recipes, not to mention embarrassment, I finally took matters in hand and created this recipe. This has been prepared many times for tough critics and has always been well received. Give it a try and, please, let me know how your critics respond.

PORK CHOPS

1 tsp. dried sage or 4 fresh leaves

1 tsp. dried rosemary or 5 fresh sprigs

1 tsp. dried thyme or 5 fresh sprigs

1 tsp. garlic, pressed or finely chopped

Olive oil

Freshly ground pepper to taste

4 pork chops with or without bones, 1 inch thick

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup dry white wine

2 tbsp. butter

1 tbsp. parsley freshly chopped or dried – optional

Lay herbs in a glass dish large enough to hold the chops in one layer. Sprinkle garlic over the herbs. Carefully pour 1 cup olive oil into dish so as not to disturb the herbs, then add the pepper. Lay the chops

across the herb mixture. Add more olive oil until the chops are barely covered.

Marinate in the refrigerator 2 - 5 hours. Turn the chops once during the time you've allowed.

Remove dish from fridge 1 hour or a little less before cooking. The meat cooks better if it's nearer room temperature.

Preheat the oven to 250°F (120°C).

Add a little of the marinade to a medium-sized frying pan and heat on medium high until the oil shimmers. Add the chops and brown 3 - 4 minutes on each side until golden brown.

Transfer the meat to an ovenproof plate. Pour off all but a thin film of oil, add ½ cup of wine, and bring to a boil. Return the chops to the pan. Cover and reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook 30 minutes, basting with the pan juices occasionally, until the chops are tender when pierced with the tip of a sharp knife. Return the meat to the ovenproof plate, cover, and set in oven while you finish the potatoes and asparagus.

Prepare the sauce just before serving dinner. Skim as much fat as you can from the braising liquid and pour in the remaining ¼ cup wine. Boil over high heat, stirring and scraping in any brown bits that cling to the bottom and sides of the pan, until the liquid has reduced to a syrupy glaze.

Off the heat, swirl in the butter and parsley, pour over the pork chops, and serve.

POTATOES

1 russet potato per person

1 cup chicken stock

1 bay leaf or 1 tbsp. dried basil

Water

Butter to taste

Freshly ground pepper to taste

In a medium-sized saucepan add chicken stock and the herb you choose. Peel potatoes, rinse, then slice in thirds. Place in pot. Add water to cover the potatoes by 1 inch. Too much water and the potatoes will be soggy. Not enough and they'll be raw on the sections above the water.

Cover the pot and heat on medium until the water comes to a boil. Adjust the heat and/or the lid to maintain a decent boil, but not a hard one, until potatoes are fork tender. It takes about 15 minutes after they begin to boil.

Drain and return potatoes to pot. Discard bay leaf. Stir in butter and pepper and serve.

ASPARAGUS

1 bunch asparagus

½ cup chicken stock

¼ cup dry vermouth or white wine

Water

2 tbsp. butter

Metal vegetable steamer

Add chicken stock and dry vermouth or wine to a medium-sized saucepan. Insert vegetable steamer, then add water to just below the bottom holes.

Snap off the ends of the asparagus and trim the spears to fit your saucepan. Add spears and cover. Bring to a boil over medium heat, adjusting the heat to a strong simmer. In 4 - 5 minutes the asparagus should be crisp-tender.

Lay asparagus in a serving bowl. Spread the butter over them and serve.

Sloane Taylor is an award-winning author of erotic romance books released by Toque & Dagger Publishing.

Learn more about Sloane and read excerpts from her books on her [website](#), [blog](#), and [Amazon Author Page](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

MARINATED SALMON WITH CARMELIZED ONIONS, ROASTED SWEET POTATOES & STIR-FRY GREEN BEANS

Lizzie T. Leaf

I used sesame chicken sauce on a chicken and one day I decided to give it a try on fresh salmon. End result was yummy!

SALMON

1 8 oz. salmon with bottom skin

1 small onion, sliced thin

½ - ¾ cup of Sesame Chicken sauce

Pull bones from salmon filet. I use tweezers for best results.

Place in plastic bag with sliced onions. Pour sauce over and massage to work sauce over the salmon and onions.

Marinate in refrigerator at least 2 - 3 hours (or night before if you work). Occasionally turn so sauce contacts all of the fish. If you refrigerated the night before then turn the bag in the morning before you leave.

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Place salmon skin side down in an oiled skillet. Lay onions on top.

Bake 20 minutes or until fish flakes.

ROASTED SWEET POTATOES

1 sweet potato per person

Olive oil

Salt, optional

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Peel and cut potatoes into chunks. Place potatoes in an ovenproof dish.

Add oil and salt. Toss to coat well.

Roast approximately 30 minutes or until fork tender.

STIR-FRY GREEN BEANS

½ bag frozen shoestring green beans

1 tbsp. olive oil

Pinch cayenne pepper

Pinch salt, optional

Heat frying pan on medium-high. Carefully add oil.

Scatter beans into hot pan. Stir 4 minutes.

Add cayenne pepper, according to your spice preference, and salt. Stir 1 minute and serve.

Lizzie T. Leaf loved books since she opened her first one. Her dream was to write them herself. Lost in the hectic day to day world of family, job, laundry, and housework, writing became a distant memory. When the

twinkling ember did spark, it was usually doused by someone demanding their share of her time.

Lizzie's life went full circle. The desire to put the stories that continued to play in her head on paper emerged stronger than ever, and at a time when there was someone who encouraged. Now she lives her dream.

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MUSHROOM ZUCCHINI LASAGNA

C.D. Hersh

Who doesn't love a delicious pasta dish? We do, but it's something we don't eat a lot of because of the high carb content. Recently, we've begun experimenting with ways to make high-carb pasta meals friendlier, because we do miss our pasta. In the process, we've discovered ingredients like lentil and soybean noodles that are great substitutes for the wheat version. They have a high fiber to carb ratio, which not only puts more fiber in the diet, but also slows the release of sugars into the blood stream, both of which are great boons to people with insulin resistance issues. The soybean pasta is fantastic and has become our go-to for spaghetti.

We haven't found a soybean lasagna so Catherine got creative and made a meatless version of lasagna that substitutes sliced zucchini for the pasta in most layers. Putting a single layer of pasta on the bottom provides the traditional taste of lasagna and helps the servings come out of the dish better, without the added high-glycemic carbohydrates.

2 small zucchinis, ends trimmed and sliced into scant $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick ribbons

8 oz. mushrooms, cleaned and sliced

2 tbsp. water

2 sheets oven-ready lasagna pasta

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup spaghetti or marina sauce, any flavor you prefer

2-3 oz. fresh baby spinach, 2-3 handfuls

1 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded

12 tbsp. low-fat ricotta cheese

Fit the zucchini into a square 1½ quart baking dish. Trim to fit the dish snugly. Remove to a plate and salt liberally both sides. Let stand 1 hour to draw out the excess moisture. Rinse off salt and pat slices dry with a paper towel. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Using two sharp-bladed spatulas, coarsely chop mushrooms in a large saucepan or skillet. You could use a knife and cutting board, but Catherine found this method to be quicker. Sauté mushrooms in water until they darken and excess water from the fungi has appeared in the pan. Drain and set aside.

Fit the pasta into the bottom of the dish, breaking edges off as necessary so it lays flat. Remove pasta and broken pieces from the dish.

Pour ⅓ cup pasta sauce in the dish. Lay pasta sheets and broken pieces on top.

Next, layer ⅓ cup pasta sauce, ¼ cup mozzarella, ⅓ cup mushrooms, and a handful of spinach. Dot 4 tbsp. of ricotta cheese over the top of the spinach. Lay on enough zucchini slices to cover the ingredients. Spread so they are evenly layered. Repeat layers, ending with a layer of zucchini, sauce, ricotta cheese and mozzarella cheese.

Bake 45 minutes.

Let stand a couple of minutes before cutting. Catherine found a chef's knife cut through the food best so as not to destroy the layers.

Serve with a fresh salad and warm garlic bread for a complete meal.

Note: We went light on the cheeses, which gave each square of lasagna 1 serving each of the cheeses. If you like a heavier cheese taste, add more cheese to each layer.

Putting words and stories on paper is second nature to co-authors **C.D. Hersh**. They've written separately since they were teenagers and discovered their unique, collaborative abilities in the mid-90s. As high school sweethearts and husband and wife, they believe in true love and happily ever after. They look forward to many years of co-authoring and book sales, and a lifetime of happily-ever-after endings on the page and in real life.

Learn more about C.D. Hersh on their [website](#) and [blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Goodreads](#), and their [Amazon Author Page](#).

PULLED PORK & EASY POTATO SOUP

HL Carpenter

Anticipation. That's the title of a great song, the jingle for an ancient advertisement, and a marketing tool for authors. Oh, and anticipation makes good food better too. What more could you ask of a word?

You already know the classic song (thanks, Carly Simon!), and if you're of a…ummm…certain age, you probably remember the ketchup commercial too. (Sorry if the jingle is now an earwig! Confess—you're humming, aren't you?)

As far as making good food better—our barbecue pulled pork recipe is DEFINITELY worth waiting for! Put all the ingredients together, then grab a good book to read while you're anticipating the meal to come.

½ cup ketchup

1½ cups barbecue sauce, divided

1 cup water

1 onion, chopped (or a similar amount of frozen chopped onions)

1 tsp. garlic, chopped

3½ lb. pork roast (a shoulder cut works well)

Hamburger buns

Mix ketchup, ½ cup barbecue sauce, and water in a small bowl. Stir in the onions and garlic.

Set meat in the crock pot and pour sauce mixture over it, coating the meat well. The liquid should almost cover the meat. Add more if necessary. Cook on low for 10 - 12 hours.

Remove the pork roast from the crock-pot, let cool, and shred with a fork. Set aside.

Empty the liquid from the crock-pot. Put the pulled pork back into the crock-pot, add the remaining barbecue sauce, and mix well.

Cook on low for 2 more hours; then reduce setting to warm until ready to serve.

Serve on buns.

TIPS and TRICKS

Crock pots are ideal for tenderizing less expensive cuts of meat. The longer the cooking time, the more tender the meat becomes.

Feel free to add more sauce to the first cooking. Meat cooked in liquid is moister.

For an added crunch, serve chips of your choice as a side dish.

If you want to serve the pulled pork for lunch, set up the crock pot to cook overnight.

EASY POTATO SOUP

1 tbsp. butter

4 - 5 potatoes, peeled and diced

Chopped or diced onion to taste
1 tbsp. cornstarch or flour
¼ cup water
2 cups water
1 cup milk (whole, evaporated, or 2%)
1 tsp. salt
1 packet chicken bouillon
Shredded cheese optional

Melt butter in 2 quart saucepan.

Add potatoes and onions. Cook until soft, 5 - 10 minutes.

Mix cornstarch with ¼ cup water (pre-mixing prevents annoying lumps). Add cornstarch mixture, 2 cups water, milk, salt, and bouillon to softened potatoes and onions in saucepan.

Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer 20 - 25 minutes.

Serve with a topping of shredded cheese and a chunk of fresh bread.

Bonus goodness:

Crave added richness? Substitute whipping cream for half the milk.

Are you a vegetable fan? Toss in the veggie of your choice, either frozen or fresh, when you add the milk and water. We like frozen carrots and corn. They add color and they cook right along with the potatoes.

Like things meatier? Put in leftover ham or chicken.

Bland potatoes? Mix in sweet pickle juice. Six teaspoons give the soup a little zing.

Want some zest? A ½ teaspoon dry mustard provides zip.

Need more soup? Add more stuff. The converse works too.

Fighting off vampires? Switch out the regular salt for a teaspoon of garlic salt. If you have a bad infestation, add ½ teaspoon crushed garlic to the soup and serve with a wood spoon.

HL Carpenter is a mother/daughter author duo who write family-friendly fiction from their studios in Carpenter Country, a magical place that, like their stories, is unreal but not untrue.

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QUICK PORK FRIED RICE

Sharon Ledwith

Simple and easy to make, this recipe is a crowd pleaser. The secret is truly in the sauce. This recipe serves two. I suggest you double (or triple) the ingredients just in case you have any surprise stragglers for supper.

1 egg

1 tsp. water

2 tbsp. Asian sesame salad dressing (yup, that's the secret sauce)

1 cup cooked pork tenderloin, chopped

1½ cups cooked long-grain rice, cooled slightly

1 tbsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce

1 carrot, coarsely shredded

2 green onions, sliced thin

2 tbsp. dry roasted peanuts, chopped, optional

Beat egg and water with fork until well blended. Add to large nonstick skillet; cook on medium heat 1 - 2 minutes or until set, stirring occasionally. Transfer to bowl; cut into small pieces. Wipe skillet with paper towel.

Add dressing and pork to hot skillet. Stir-fry on medium-high heat 2 minutes. Add rice and soy sauce. Stir-fry 3 minutes. Add carrots and onions. Stir-fry 1 minute or until heated through. Remove from heat and stir in egg.

Top with nuts (if desired).

NOTE: This is a great way to use leftover cooked rice. Just warm it in the microwave for 1 - 2 minutes before using.

Sharon Ledwith is the author of the middle-grade/YA time travel series *The Last Timekeepers* and a teen psychic series *Mysterious Tales From Fairy Falls*. When not writing, researching, or revising, she enjoys reading, exercising, anything arcane, and an occasional dram of scotch. Sharon lives a serene, yet busy, life in a southern tourist region of Ontario, Canada, with her hubby, one spoiled yellow Labrador and a moody calico cat.

Learn more about Sharon on her [website](#) and [blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), [Google+](#), [Goodreads](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

ROMANTIC RISOTTO FOR TWO

Susan Lodge

75 g (3 oz.) butter

1 small onion, chopped

3 cloves garlic, crushed or finely chopped

200 g (7 oz.) Arborio risotto rice

150 ml (5 oz.) white wine

75 g (3 oz.) mushrooms, cleaned and sliced

A few sprigs fresh thyme leaves, stripped from the stalks

500 ml (18 oz.) fish or chicken stock

1 lemon

100 g (4 oz.) green string beans, cooked and halved

200 g (7 oz.) prawns (large shrimp), peeled and cooked

3 - 4 thin slices of salami or chorizo, chopped, for garnish

Melt half the butter in a large saucepan and sauté the onion and garlic 3 - 4 minutes over moderate heat.

Stir in the rice and mix well to coat the grains with the onion mixture.

Add the wine, mushrooms, and thyme. Stir well. Let the wine bubble and evaporate for a few seconds then stir in a ladle of stock. Cook gently until the moisture has been absorbed by the rice. Add the rest of the stock, a ladle at a time, making sure all the liquid is absorbed between additions. Stir frequently to prevent the rice from sticking to the bottom of the pan. This process should take 15 - 20 minutes. Taste the risotto. The mixture should be a moist texture and the rice tender.

Stir in the rest of the butter, juice from half the lemon, beans, and prawns. Take a few seconds to warm everything through then turn off the heat. Place a lid on the saucepan and let the risotto stand for a few minutes before serving.

Meanwhile fry the meat until crisp and use as a garnish for the risotto.

Serve with a wedge of lemon.

Susan Lodge's first publishing success was a story purchased by a major UK magazine followed by a drawer full of rejections. Finally a breakthrough gave her the confidence to seek and secure a publisher for her historical romance novels.

After working in several cities including London and Bristol, she and her husband moved down to the Hampshire coast to raise their family.

Learn more about Susan and her books on her [website](#) and [blog](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and her [Amazon Author Page](#).

SAGE BUTTERED PASTA WITH SAUTÉED CHICKEN BREASTS

Sloane Taylor

This is a tasty meal that is easy to do, especially on busy days when you don't have time to spend over the stove. The pasta works well as a meal on its own, but it is especially good when combined with sautéed chicken breasts. Be sure to prepare the breasts while the pasta is cooking. Keep them warm tented with foil or in a 210°F oven until ready to serve.

PASTA

8 tbsp. (1 stick) butter, room temperature

6 – 10 sage leaves

2 cups curly pasta

Parmesan cheese, grated

Cook pasta according to package directions. Set aside while you make the sauce.

Melt butter in a 10-inch frying pan over medium heat.

Add sage. Allow butter to brown. Watch carefully and stir often as once this starts to brown it can quickly burn. Cook until the butter reaches a medium caramel color. Remove sage leaves and discard.

Stir in pasta. Be sure to coat the noodles well. Heat through and then serve with plenty of Parmesan cheese.

CHICKEN

2 chicken breasts, boneless, skinless

Milk

2 tbsp. olive oil

1 clove garlic, chopped

½ tsp. thyme

Freshly ground pepper to taste

¼ cup dry white wine

Place the breasts in a glass dish, cover with milk and soak 3 – 9 hours. If you choose to soak more than 3 hours be sure to refrigerate. The milk adds flavor and also tenderizes the meat. I learned this from a very talented chef in Austria.

Preheat the oven to 210°F.

Heat oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium heat. Pat breasts dry and then add to the pan with the garlic. Sprinkle on the thyme and pepper.

Sauté 15 – 20 minutes until the juices run clear. Be careful not to overdo or the breasts will be dry.

Move the chicken to a plate, cover with foil, and set in the oven while you deglaze the pan.

Turn temperature to medium-high. Carefully pour in the wine. Stir in the browned bits that cling to the sides and bottom of the pan. Reduce this sauce by at least one-third.

Drizzle the sauce over the breasts and serve.

Sloane Taylor is an award-winning author of erotic romance books released by Toque & Dagger Publishing.

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SALMON WITH CUCUMBER SAUCE

Lizzie T. Leaf

This salmon recipe has a wonderful flavor and is a breeze to prepare. It also tastes good without the sauce. Add fresh green beans, a little pasta, and a chilled bottle of white wine and you have a meal fit for royalty.

FISH

2 salmon fillets (6 oz. each)
2 tbsp. mayonnaise
½ cup finely chopped pecans
½ cup seasoned bread crumbs
2 tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese
1 tbsp. minced fresh parsley
1 tbsp. butter, melted

CUCUMBER SAUCE

½ cup chopped seeded peeled cucumber
½ cup vanilla yogurt
½ tsp. snipped fresh dill or ¼ tsp. dried dill
¼ tsp. garlic powder

Preheat oven to 425°F.

Lay salmon skin side down in a greased 11 x 7-inch baking dish.
Spread 1 tbsp. mayonnaise over each fillet.

In a small bowl, combine pecans, bread crumbs, Parmesan cheese, parsley, and butter. Spoon over salmon.

Bake 10 - 15 minutes or until the fish flakes easily with a fork.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, combine the cucumber sauce ingredients. Serve with the salmon.

Lizzie T. Leaf loved books since she opened her first one. Her dream was to write them herself. Lost in the hectic day to day world of family, job, laundry, and housework, writing became a distant memory. When the twinkling ember did spark, it was usually doused by someone demanding their share of her time.

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TANGY CURRY

Vonnie Hughes

Now don't wrinkle your nose if you've never tried curry and have convinced yourself it's too spicy. This is a tried and true, very successful, recipe for 8 people. Best served with rice and a tossed green salad. Enjoy! It is tasty and virtually mistake-proof.

2½ lb. cheap steak, cubed (it will be simmered for ages so cheap steak is fine)

2 onions, chopped fine

1 apple, chopped

2 carrots, chopped

2 tbsp. flour

Juice of ½ a lemon

2 tbsp. golden syrup (light treacle is corn syrup)

1 tsp. mild curry powder

1 small tin pineapple pieces with juice

1 medium tin tomato soup

Place the steak in a large pot. Add the onions, apple, and carrots.

In a bowl mix the flour, lemon juice, golden syrup, curry powder, and a little of the pineapple juice. Stir this flavored thickening and add to the pot.

Add tomato soup and pineapple pieces.

Cook on very low heat 2 hours, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. A little extra liquid may be needed. Water is fine.

Vonnie Hughes is a multi-published author in both Regency books and contemporary suspense. Vonnie was born in New Zealand, but she and her husband now live happily in Australia. If you visit Hamilton Gardens in New Zealand be sure to stroll through the Japanese Garden. There is a bronze plaque engraved with a haiku describing the peacefulness of that environment. The poem was written by Vonnie.

Learn more about Vonnie on her [website](#), [blog](#), and [Amazon Author Page](#). Stay connected on [Facebook](#) and [Goodreads](#).

VENISON STEW

HL Carpenter

One of the largest quick-service fast-food sandwich restaurant chains in the U.S. (in number of restaurants) offered a venison sandwich again—for a single day. The sandwich sold out quickly.

If you missed your opportunity, here's a healthy, fast, one-pot venison stew you can make in the comfort of your own home without having to wait in line.

2 tbsp. oil

3 lb. thinly sliced venison shoulder steaks*

1 cup water

1 tsp. onion powder

1 tsp. garlic salt

½ tsp. black pepper

1 packet beef bouillon

1 cup quick cooking brown rice

1 - 3 cups fresh or frozen mixed vegetables

Coat the frying pan with oil (you'll want to do this even if you have a nonstick pan, as venison has very little fat). Add the venison to the cold pan, cover, and set the thermostat control to 300°F. Cook 8 - 10 minutes or until browned through. Remove from pan and cut into cubes or pieces.

Put the venison back in the frying pan. Add remaining ingredients. Stir. Make sure rice is immersed in the liquid. Add more liquid if necessary.

Cover the frying pan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to simmer, and cook 6 minutes or until rice is done.

Turn the frying pan to low-simmer (or off) and let the stew sit covered in the pan 5 - 10 minutes or until the liquid is fully absorbed by the rice.

Serve with freshly-baked rolls.

Tips and tricks

*You can substitute beef or pork stew cubes for the venison.

If you want your vegetables to look more colorful, add them to the pan after the rice is cooked and let simmer 4 - 5 minutes.

Applesauce is a delicious accompaniment to venison stew.

For a slightly different flavor, add ½ cup red wine with the rest of the ingredients.

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COOKING TIPS

General

Always cook with a sink of hot soapy water at the ready. It makes for easier cleanup.

Write the date and your opinion along with any adjustments on your recipes. Make a note in the index, i.e., VG (very good), etc. for future reference.

Sponges are a manmade cleaning treasure that is a breeding ground for bacteria. Discard your used sponge, no matter how clean it looks, monthly.

No one needs a whole sponge for doing dishes. Cut the sponge into quarters. Use one now and save the remainder for the following month.

Meats

Do not flour roasts before you brown them. All you're browning is the flour and the meat is not sealed to hold in its juices.

Always allow roasts, steaks, etc. to sit on a cutting board for 10 minutes, with a foil tent over, before you carve it. This allows the juices to sink back into the meat.

Fruits

Avocados

Do not toss the pits when you make guacamole or another dip that uses avocados. Save them to plunge into the serving dish. The dip will stay green and fresh for at least two days.

Bananas

The easiest method to peel a stubborn banana is from the bottom up. That's right, flip it end over end and strip away.

Cantaloupes

For the sweetest fruit, skip the smooth rinds, and look for the rinds that have cellulite-looking wrinkles.

Pineapples

The day prior to serving cut off the top. Turn the pineapple upside down on a plate and allow it to sit on your counter. All the beautiful juices return to the cut end and make the entire pineapple more flavorful.

Strawberries

What you see is what you get. Strawberries are the only fruit that does not ripen more once it is picked. Those big white sections you see in the plastic container are with you forever.

You can store fresh strawberries in the refrigerator for up to four days. Do not wash them. Lay a paper towel on a plate or low dish, then add the strawberries, but do not mound them. Wash when ready to use.

Tomatoes

Place unripe tomatoes in a brown paper bag. Store in a cool dark spot. This is also great for all the green tomatoes you rescue from your garden at the end of summer.

Do not store tomatoes in the refrigerator. They lose their flavor.

Vegetables

Steam fresh vegetables to retain bright color and crispness. Place a metal steamer in your saucepan. Add chicken stock, white wine, and water to just below the bottom steamer holes. The stock and wine add a little extra flavor and the alcohol cooks away.

Dried and Canned Beans

When cooking beans for soup, stews, and the like, add a teaspoon or so of baking soda to the mixture. This cuts the negative intestinal reactions to beans and does not affect the flavor or cooking.

Fresh Green Beans

Add a paper towel to the plastic bag when you store green beans in the refrigerator. It absorbs the excess moisture so the beans stay fresh for a longer period of time.

Celery

What to do with those extra stalks that you don't need, but don't want to throw out at today's prices? Chop and sauté in a mix of olive oil and butter. Store in small containers, and freeze until needed for soups, stews, and the like.

Garlic - Fresh

Use a garlic press instead of chopping. The press brings out more flavor and you'll use less garlic.

Lettuce

All types need moisture to stay fresh. When buying head lettuce, look for the longest stem. Scratch the nub with your nail, sprinkle with water, and place in an open plastic bag. Store in the fridge, preferably the crisper drawer.

Leaf lettuces should be rinsed in cool water, wrapped in a dish towel or other cloth, and stored in the crisper drawer of your fridge.

Remoisten the lettuce after each use to retain freshness.

Mushrooms

Clean mushrooms just before using. Wipe with a dry paper towel to remove the growing soil.

Loose mushrooms keep reasonably well in a paper bag and stored in the refrigerator.

After you use a portion of mushrooms that come in a plastic container, cover the remainder with cling wrap and store in the refrigerator.

Onions

Cut the root end off onions first. This allows the gas that makes your eyes water to escape.

After you cut the roots off a green onion, use a piece of paper towel to pull off the slippery end. Stops your fingers from smelling and being sticky.

What to do with the rest of an onion when the recipe calls for a small amount? Sauté the remainder. Freeze in small containers for your next recipe.

Salads

Make your salad early in the day and never worry about it turning brown or mushy. Add your salad ingredients, without the dressing, to a large bowl. Gently toss until well mixed. Cover with a damp paper towel and store in fridge until you're ready to add dressing and serve.

Herbs

Chop fresh herb leaves easily. Place the leaves, without stems, into a cup and snip with scissors.

Dairy

Cheese

Spray your cheese grater with a little non-stick cooking spray. The cheese won't stick and cleanup is a breeze.

Grate your own Parmesan, Asiago, Swiss, etc. fresh when you need it. The remainder of the block will keep in your fridge for months if you cover tightly with cling wrap or aluminum foil, then store in a plastic bag. Should a little mold appear simply scrape it off with a knife. Surprisingly the cheese is still good.

Eggs

Make hardboiled eggs easily. Eggs should be in your refrigerator no less than 5 days otherwise they are devils to peel. Set eggs in a saucepan and then fill with cold water to cover. Be sure to add the lid so the pan boils faster. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Turn off the burner and keep the pan on the burner for 8 - 9 minutes.

Peeling hard boiled eggs is easy. After the eggs are boiled, pour out the hot water. Add cold to the pot. Crack the end of each egg against your sink gently, then place them back in the cold water while you do the others. Roll the eggs along the counter or the middle part of your sink with a little pressure. This takes a little practice to master so you don't mush the egg. The shell peels off easily.

Store peeled hardboiled eggs for up to five days in a glass container. Cover the eggs with water. Change the water every other day.

Milk

Children of any age should not drink expired milk, but adults can for an additional day or two without a problem.

Additional Tips

Bread

Don't store bread in the refrigerator. This dries it out.

Bread freezes well for up to one month.

Brown Sugar

When light or dark brown sugar hardens place it into a plastic bag. Add a slice of white bread and seal. Within hours the sugar is back to a usable state.

Cooking Oil

Test if the oil is hot enough for frying by adding a small piece of white bread to the heated pan. When the bread toasts golden quickly the oil is ready.

Ice Ring

The following recipe is simple and adds a festive look to any punch bowl.

Water

1 orange, peeled and sliced thin

10 maraschino cherries, halved
15 seedless red grapes, halved
10 strawberries, halved
25 blueberries

Arrange thin citrus slices and another fruit of your choice, or any combination of fruits omitting the orange, in an attractive design in a Bundt pan. Pour water into mold to partially cover fruit. Freeze.

When frozen, add water to fill mold $\frac{3}{4}$ full. Another option is to use orange juice, another juice, or ginger ale whichever works best with your recipe in place of water. This keeps the punch cold without diluting it. Refreeze.

At serving time, unmold by dipping the pan in hot water to loosen the ice. Float the ring fruit side up in punch bowl.

Pasta

Don't add oil or salt to the cooking water. Those additions make it difficult for the sauce to cling to the pasta.

After pasta is cooked *al dente* and drained, return it to the pot. Stir in a few ladles of hot sauce. Allow to sit for a few minutes before serving. This stops the watery ring that forms on your dinner plate or bowl.

From all of us to all of you,

Happy Cooking!