



From the Kitchen



The Twelve Days of Christmas

12 Surprises from Neighbor to Neighbor; see article at right

On the **1st Day** of Christmas
We bring for you to see
An ornament to hang upon your tree

On the **2nd Day** of Christmas
A magic brew we bring
It's hot and sweet to make you want to sing

On the **3rd Day** of Christmas
You'll find a candy treat
Lollipops and jelly bellies
all pretty hard for you to beat

On the **4th Day** of Christmas
A yummy popcorn treat
Set upon your doorstep
so go right ahead and start to eat

On the **5th Day** of Christmas
A story for you to read
With a warm and fuzzy message you may need

On the **6th Day** of Christmas
A Yule log comes to thee
A toasty warmth you'll find is very free

On the **7th Day** of Christmas
A bear to hug and squeeze
Here to make you happy
for we're just trying to please

On the **8th Day** of Christmas
We leave a joyful tape
When you hear it, we know
Your family will go ape

On the **9th Day** of Christmas
Are candy canes of red and white
Special goodies to enjoy this chilly win-
tery night

On the **10th Day** of Christmas
A rose to feast your eyes.
Its color and scent will surely make your
spirits rise

On the **11th Day** of Christmas
We bring you something yummy
Some fudgy brownie squares
To tickle all the little tummies

Special note to our Neighbors...
Will you be home in the late afternoon or early evening on Christmas eve or Christmas morning? We'd like to drop by our last treat in person - for just a few minutes.

Please leave your answer for our speedy messenger tomorrow night to let us know what time is best for you. If not at home, we'll just set it on your doorstep.

On the **12th Day** of Christmas
Our family brings a special treat
Something tasty for you all of you to eat!

*Surprise! It's us.
Merry Christmas Neighbor!*



Christy Fletcher
From the Kitchen
Editor



The old saying that it is better to give than to receive is something I am trying to teach my kids. One December a couple years ago, I came home from a long day of work to find a colorful package on our doorstep. Next to the big bow was a note that read: "On the first day of Christmas..." We opened it, and inside was a molded candy cane ornament for our tree with no mention of who it was from.

On successive nights, our doorstep was the site for more surprises, little packages decked out with notes and small gifts inside. The notes were poems (see 12 Days on the left) for each of the Twelve Days of Christmas. Our favorite gift was a sweet teddy bear wrapped up with the recipes for hot chocolate and spicy popcorn.

The anticipation built until finally on the 12th night we answered the door and discovered which neighbor family had kept the secret for so long. To think they were tiptoeing to our door for 11 straight evenings without ever being caught!

I won't forget how fun it was for our family to receive these thoughtful gifts. This year, as part of our giving, we will see if we too can pull off a surprise for the new neighbor down the street. I think my kids will agree that it just may be true: as fun as it is to receive, it's even more fun to give.

To do your own rendition, see the 12 Days poems to the left that came with our treats. If you can't handle all 12 days, surprise someone with homemade goodies. See the two recipes on the opposite page that came with the surprises we received. ◆ ◆ ◆

How to Get Your Family Back to the Table

- Emphasize the importance of mealtime and encourage your family to make it a priority.
- Make mealtime pleasurable for everyone.
- Keep meals simple. Serve more elaborate meals when you have more time to cook.
- Let all family members help with some part of the meal, including setting the table and cleaning up.
- Let your children help in a *variety* of ways, so that they don't get bored with the same old task.
- Be flexible. On occasion, the "family table" might be at a restaurant, or a picnic blanket in the park.

GIFTS To Give

From the kitchen

& Enjoy

Goodies

To Make for Christmas



Best Brownies

From Virginia Jones

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup butter or margarine, melted
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup cocoa powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts (optional)

Instructions

Heat oven to 350°. Grease 9-inch square baking pan.

In large bowl, blend butter, sugar and vanilla. Add eggs using spoon and blend well.

Combine flour, cocoa, baking powder and salt. Gradually add to egg mixture, beating until well blended.

Stir in nuts, if desired. Spread into prepared pan. Bake 20-25 minutes or until brownies pull away from sides of pan.

Cool completely. Frost with Creamy Brownie Frosting. Cut into squares and garnish with walnut halves.

Makes about 16 brownies

Creamy Brownie Frosting

Ingredients

- 3 Tablespoons butter or margarine, softened
- 3 Tablespoons cocoa powder
- 1 Tablespoon light corn syrup or honey
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup confectioner's sugar
- 1 - 2 Tablespoons milk

Instructions

In small mixing bowl, beat butter, cocoa, corn syrup and vanilla. Add confectioner's sugar plus milk. Beat to spreading consistency. Makes 1 cup of frosting

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Magic

Hot Chocolate

- 1 can Eagle brand milk
- 1 4oz pkg Baker's German Chocolate
- 1 sm. whipping cream (whipped without sugar)

Heat milk and chocolate in a small saucepan.

Remove from heat and fold in whipped cream.

Use 1/4 cup chocolate mix per cup of hot milk.

Mix will keep for a week in the fridge.

Spicy Popcorn

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup popcorn kernels
- 4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons packed light brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons sea salt or kosher salt (a more crunchy texture than table salt)

Instructions

Pop the kernels according to package directions and transfer to a large serving bowl.

Melt the butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Mix in the remaining ingredients until well combined. Pour the spiced butter over the popcorn and toss until evenly coated. Serve.

Do you have a recipe to share? Everyone loves new recipes to cook. Mail your recipe with your name, address and tel number. We'll publish it with only your name and town. You'll see it in a future edition and online at www.AroundHereMagazine.com at Recipes! Send to *Around Here Magazine*, POB 737, Shingle Springs, CA 95682

From the Kitchen

Turn Ordinary Foods
Into *Extraordinary* Delights

Grilled Pork Chops

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup water
- 1/3 cup light soy sauce
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 3 tablespoons lemon pepper seasoning
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 6 pork loin chops, fat removed

Instructions

In deep bowl mix all marinade ingredients. Add chops and marinate in refrigerator at least 2 hours.

Remove chops from marinade and

cook over medium-high heat on greased grill for no more than 8 minutes on first side. (Shorten the cooking time for the second side by 1-2 minutes.) If chop is 3/4" or thinner, grill 5-6 minutes maximum per side. If thicker than 3/4", grill 6-7 minutes maximum per side. Internal temp should be 170°. Do not overgrill as chops will be tough. **Tips:** After grilling on a side for 2 minutes, rotate chops 45 degrees for even cooking. Turn over when juices pool on upper surface and meat appears to be cooked half-way through. ♦

Grilled Sausage w/ Apples, Onions & Mustard

Ingredients

- 1 medium onion
- 1 medium red apple
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/3 cup Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 6 fresh Italian sausages
- 6 bratwurst sandwich buns

Instructions

Slice the onion thinly and separate into rings. Core the apple and slice thinly. Mix mustard and oregano together. Prick sausages in several places with a fork.

In a medium bowl toss together the on-

ions, apple, and olive oil. Fold a 36"x18" sheet of heavy foil in half. Place onion/apple mixture on the foil. Fold edges together and crimp to seal.

Heat the grill to medium heat. Place foil packet on grill; close and grill for 10 minutes.

Add sausages to the grill rack (leave the foil packet on). Brush with mustard mix. Grill a total of 16-18 minutes until no longer pink, turning occasionally and brushing with mustard mix.

Serve sausages in the buns, topped with the onion/apple mixture. ♦



Christy Fletcher
From the Kitchen
Editor

Grilling 'Taking It Outside'

Our sensitive smoke alarm goes off when the oven preheats, and my kids love to tease: "Mom's cooking again!" Poor Milo, our sweet yellow Labrador, runs for the door begging to be let out and away from the shrill alarm.

Thank goodness the grill is a quieter experience! Luckily, we Californians have the climate to grill outside year-round, and the recipes on these pages are perfect for that. Plus, they don't take much tending-to. The recipe for the pork chops says to marinate for at least 2 hours, but sometimes I just don't have 2 hours! So I place chops in a sealed bag for about 30 minutes in the fridge while I assemble the rest of dinner. This still gets a lot of flavor in the meat.

There are many different kinds of gourmet sausages you can buy these days. But why not make your own topping and turn a platter of plain sausages into a gourmet feast using this recipe: Grilled Sausage with Apples, Onions and Mustard.

For another tasty dish, try Honey Shrimp Skewers. It could become your favorite for summer gatherings or casual family dinners. Remember to first soak the wooden skewers in water for 10 minutes to avoid burning. Oh, one last tidbit of advice I've learned from experience: When the delectable food comes off the grill, place it in a high place so a sweet Lab doesn't get his revenge. ♦

From the Kitchen



Honey Shrimp Skewers

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon cracked black pepper

- 12 slices (6 ounces) prosciutto, halved lengthwise
- 1 pound (about 24) large shrimp
- 24 nectarine or pineapple wedges
- garnish: sliced chives, sesame seed

Instructions

Combine first 7 ingredients in a large bowl.

Wrap 1 piece prosciutto around each shrimp. Thread shrimp and nectarines (or pineapple) alternately on eight 8-inch skewers. Place skewers in a shallow dish; drizzle with 1/2 cup of the soy sauce mixture, turning to coat. Cover and refrigerate 30 minutes.

Preheat grill to medium-high heat (350° to 400°). Remove skewers from marinade; discard marinade. Grill skewers 3 minutes on each side or until shrimp turn opaque. Serve with remaining soy sauce mixture. Garnish, if desired. Makes 4 servings. ♦

Common Kitchen Conversions

Liquid Equivalents:

- 1 teaspoon = 1/3 Tablespoon, 1/6 fl oz
- 1 Cup = 8 fl oz, 1/2 pint, 225 ml
- 1 Tablespoon = 3 tsp, 1/2 fl oz
- 1 Pint = 16 fl oz, 2 cups, 450 ml
- 1 Fluid Ounce = 2 Tbs, 1/8 cup
- 1 Quart = 2 pints, 4 cups
- 1 Gallon = 4 quarts, 8 pints



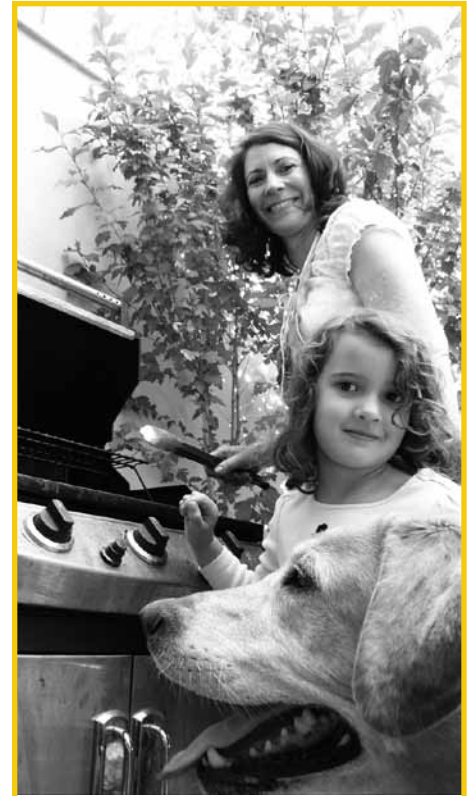
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Christy, *From the Kitchen* editor, and special assistants, daughter Lily and super-dog Milo, grill pork chops. Photo taken by Christy's husband Brian, who also grills savory meals.

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Enjoy!

First Gifts of
Spring:



From the Kitchen

Rhubarb & Cherries

Christy Fletcher
From the Kitchen
Editor



Rhubarb is actually a *vegetable* but may often be thought of as a *fruit* because of its typical use. It has an acidic flavor when eaten raw but when cooked and sweetened, the tartness disappears! Although rhubarb can be found nearly year-round in our stores, its peak season is January through June. Choose firm, medium-size stalks. If you store it in your frig's crisper drawer and use it within a few days, rhubarb will maintain its crispness (at room-temperature, it wilts rapidly).

◆
**Rhubarb
Crush**

Ingredients

- 1 pound fresh rhubarb, cut into 1/2 inch pieces (3 cups)
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 6-ounce can frozen pink lemonade concentrate
- crushed ice
- 1 16-ounce bottle lemon-lime carbonated beverage, chilled

Instructions

In a saucepan combine rhubarb, sugar, lemonade concentrate and 3 cups water. Bring to boiling; reduce heat.

Cover and simmer for 10 minutes or till rhubarb is very tender. Strain to remove pulp; chill the syrup.

Just before serving, pour rhubarb syrup over the crushed ice in tall glasses, filling glasses about 2/3 full. Carefully pour carbonated beverage in each glass. Garnish with lemon slices. Makes 6 (8-ounce) servings. ◆

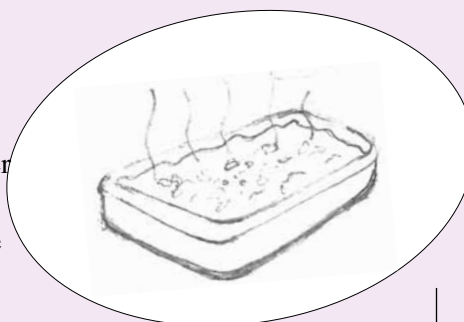
Rhubarb-Strawberry Coffee Cake

Ingredients

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup butter or margarine
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 slightly beaten eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Rhubarb Filling (see below)

- Topping:** 3/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/4 cup butter or margarine



Instructions

Stir together 3 cups flour, 1 cup sugar, soda, baking powder and salt. Cut in 1 cup butter to fine crumb consistency. Beat together buttermilk, eggs and vanilla; add to dry ingredients. Stir to moisten.

Spread half the batter in greased 13x9x2-inch baking pan. Spread cooled rhubarb filling over batter in pan. Spoon remaining batter in small mounds atop filling.

Topping • Combine remaining sugar and flour; cut in 1/4 cup butter to fine crumbs. Sprinkle crumbs over batter in pan. Bake in 350° oven for 40 to 45 minutes. Makes 12-15 servings.

Rhubarb Filling • In saucepan combine 1 pound fresh rhubarb, cut into 1-inch pieces (3 cups) or one 16-ounce package frozen rhubarb, and one 16-ounce package frozen sliced strawberries, thawed. Cover and cook about 5 minutes. Add 2 Tablespoons lemon juice. Combine 1 cup sugar and 1/3 cup cornstarch; add to rhubarb mixture. Cook and stir till thickened and bubbly; cool.



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From the kitchen

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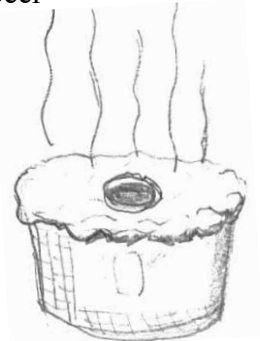
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This beautiful layered cake is light and airy and uses whipped egg whites and cream of tartar like an angel food cake. It's made with a *sweet* cherry — the most popular being the Bing — and is available fresh from May into August. Choose cherries that are firm, plump and bold-colored. Store in the refrigerator, lightly covered, for up to several days. Rinse and sort just before using.

Orange - Cherry Cake

Ingredients

- 8 egg yolks
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon finely shredded orange peel
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1 cup sifted cake flour
- 8 egg whites (1 cup)
- 1 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 2 cups whipping cream
- 2 Tablespoons sugar
- 4 cups fresh dark sweet cherries, pitted



Instructions

Beat egg yolks at high speed of electric mixer till thick and lemon-colored. Gradually add 2/3 cup sugar, beating until sugar dissolves. Combine orange peel and orange juice. Beat juice mixture and cake flour alternately into yolk mixture

Beat egg whites with cream of tartar and 1/2 teaspoon salt until soft peaks form. Gradually add 2/3 cup sugar, beating until stiff peaks form. Pour yolk mixture in thin stream over egg whites; fold in.

Pour into ungreased 10-inch tube pan. Bake in 325° oven for 60 to 70 minutes. Invert cake in pan; cool. Remove cake from pan; cut into 3 layers with a serrated knife.

Quarter the cherries. Whip cream with 2 Tablespoons sugar until stiff peaks form. If desired, fold in 2 Tablespoons brandy.

Assemble cake by alternating layers of cake, whipped cream, and cherries.



Some winter days when the house is cold and quiet, I think of making soup. Homemade soup takes the chill off and doesn't have to take hours to prepare and cook. The soups here cook in less than one and a half hours. They'll warm you and your family and friends from the inside out.

For a little heat in the Coconut Lime Chicken Soup, add 1/2 teaspoon (or more to taste) of hot chile oil. And in the Velvet Corn and Mushroom Soup, give a few shakes of hot pepper sauce (to taste). Serve the chicken soup with jasmine rice and the other soups with a hot crusty French bread. Or, make your own breadsticks! **Enjoy!**

Coconut Lime Chicken Soup

Ingredients

- 2 to 2 1/2 pound deli-roasted chicken
- 1 (15 oz) can unsweetened coconut milk
- 2 cups water
- 1/4 cup lime juice (2 medium limes)
- 3 medium carrots, thin sliced diagonally (about 1 1/2 cups)
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1 Tablespoon Thai seasoning (find in specialty ethnic grocery store)
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- Fresh cilantro (optional)
- Lime wedges

Instructions

Remove and discard skin and bones from chicken. Shred chicken.

In large saucepan combine shredded chicken with coconut milk, water, lime juice, sliced carrots, soy sauce, 2 teaspoons of Thai seasoning and salt.

Bring to boiling; reduce heat and simmer, covered, 8 minutes or until carrots are crisp-tender.

To serve, sprinkle bowls of soup with rest of Thai seasoning and cilantro. Serve with lime wedges.

Serves 4



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Tip for Nutritious Meals Every Day

It's certainly possible to eat healthy without spending a lot of time shopping, preparing, and cooking. The key is to plan ahead.

Peruse your cookbook or recipe file and plan on a week's worth of dinners. Plan to make use of leftovers so one or two evenings you don't need to cook. Make your grocery list and shop for the items you'll need. When you're ready to cook dinner, you'll have everything on hand. Be sure to stagger simple recipes with more time-consuming ones during the week.

You'll find you can enjoy nutritious meals made with fresh ingredients on a regular basis. But don't beat yourself up if one night you don't want to cook and getting To Go makes "more sense!"

Split Pea Soup w/ Carrots, Cilantro & Cumin

Ingredients

- 3 Tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 3/4 teaspoon whole cumin seed
- 1/2 large yellow onion, minced
- 1-2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 1/2 cups (about 12 ounces) green or yellow split peas
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 cups chicken broth (low sodium) diluted with 3 cups water
- 1/2 pound carrots, peeled, halved lengthwise if large, sliced 1/4-inch thick
- 2 Tablespoons chopped cilantro
- Salt and pepper

Instructions

Heat the olive oil in a 4-quart saucepan over moderate heat. When the oil is hot, add the cumin seed. When the cumin seed begins to darken and give off its aroma (less than a minute), add the onion.

Cook, stirring, until the onion softens (about 3 to 4 minutes), then add the garlic and stir for 1 minute.

Add the split peas, bay leaf and broth water mixture. Bring to a boil.

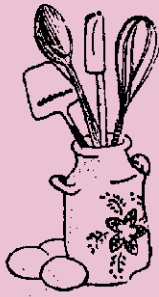
Cover and adjust the heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the split peas are very soft, about 40 minutes.

Stir in the carrots, cover and simmer gently until the carrots are tender, about 20 minutes.

Remove the bay leaf and stir in the cilantro. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve in warm bowls.

Serves 6

FRESH!



From the Kitchen

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Velvet Corn & Mushroom Soup



Instructions

Soak mushrooms in 2 cups boiling water. Let stand for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Drain, reserving soaking liquid. Remove stems. Cut caps into slivers. Mix 1/3 cup of the soaking liquid with cornstarch and set aside.

Mix remaining liquid in a large pot with chicken broth to make 6 cups of liquid. Add soy sauce and mirin.

Bring to a boil over high heat. Add mushrooms and both types of corn. Reduce heat and simmer for approximately 20 minutes, until mushrooms are tender.

Give cornstarch mixture a stir, then add to the soup. Bring to a boil over high heat stirring constantly, until soup has thickened enough to coat the back of a spoon.

Remove from heat, and slowly pour in eggwhites while stirring constantly until ribbons of egg are formed.

Stir in green onions and vinegar. Season with salt and pepper.

Serves 6-8

Ingredients

- 1 ounce dried shiitake mushrooms
- 3 Tablespoons cornstarch
- 5 to 6 cups chicken broth
- 1 Tablespoon soy sauce
- 2 Tablespoons mirin (rice cooking wine)
- 1 (14.75- ounce) can cream style corn
- 1 (9 ounce) can whole kernel corn
- 2 egg whites, lightly beaten
- 2 green onions, sliced thin on the bias
- 1 Tablespoon sherry vinegar or rice vinegar
- Kosher salt, and ground black pepper

Parmesan Breadsticks

- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 Tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 Tablespoon snipped, fresh rosemary
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 jar oil-packed dried tomatoes (7 to 8 ounces)
- 3/4 cup milk
- 3 Tablespoons olive oil

Preheat oven to 450° F. In medium bowl, stir together flour, cheese, rosemary, baking powder & 1 teaspoon salt. Drain tomatoes

and finely chop. In small bowl blend milk and olive oil. With fork, stir milk mixture and chopped tomatoes into flour mixture just until moistened.

On well-floured surface, knead dough 10 to 12 strokes or till smooth. Roll dough to 16 X 8 inch rectangle. Cut into 32 strips. Twist two strips together. Place on parchment-lined baking sheet. Brush with additional milk. Bake 8 to 9 minutes or until golden. Cool on racks. Makes 16