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LIFE

Religion 8B

Section



Cinnamon
Hazelnut
Crescents

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Meringue Bars

THE GREAT
Exchange

Cookie exchanges are the perfect way to give and receive this holiday season.

FAMILY FEATURES EDITORIAL SYNDCATE

Time is tight for everyone during the holidays, so why not host a cookie exchange this year and check off two important items on your "to do" list? Not only will you have a great opportunity to reconnect with friends, co-workers and neighbors, but you'll also end up with a delicious assortment of holiday cookies.

FIVE TIPS FOR THE PERFECT COOKIE EXCHANGE

- ◆ Invite five to 12 friends to bake and bring one batch of home-baked cookies to exchange with the others. A good rule of thumb is to have everyone bake six to 12 cookies for every person attending. Bar and drop cookies are easiest to make and transport in large batches.
- ◆ When guests RSVP, ask them which cookie they're bringing, to prevent duplicates. Additionally, ask them to bring copies of the recipe to share with everyone.
- ◆ Serve a variety of beverages and simple appetizers to snack on. While the cookies are the focus of this party, the true purpose is to reconnect with friends and neighbors. Be sure to have an ample supply of food in case the conversations last long into the evening.
- ◆ Display everyone's cookies on a dining room table or kitchen island so that it will be easy for your guests to walk around and fill their containers.
- ◆ Provide large containers for everyone to bring home their cookies. Bakery boxes and aluminum roasting pans work well. Or, for a more festive feel, find large, holiday-themed trays or cookie tins at your local party supply store.

COOKIE BAKING TIPS

- ◆ Read the entire recipe before baking to make sure you have all the ingredients and utensils on hand.
- ◆ Measure all ingredients accurately. Line them up on your countertop or island in the order they appear in the recipe for quick, easy preparation.
- ◆ Follow baking directions to the "T." Be sure to use the correct pan size and begin checking for doneness at the minimum baking time given in the recipe.
- ◆ Bar cookies should cool in the pan on a wire rack. For a festive holiday touch, try cutting them in triangle or diamond shapes.

Lemon-Cranberry Crumb Bars

- 1 can (15 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
- 1/2 cup lemon juice
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1-1/2 teaspoons grated lemon peel
- 3/4 cup dried cranberries
- 1 cup (2 sticks) Shedd's Spread Country Crock Spreadable Sticks
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1-1/2 cups Quaker oats (quick or old fashioned, uncooked)*
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Confectioners' sugar, for sprinkling

*If using old fashioned oats, add additional 2 tablespoons flour.

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Generously spray 15-1/2 x 10-1/2 x 1-inch jelly roll pan with no-stick cooking spray.
2. Combine condensed milk, lemon juice, egg and lemon peel in medium bowl; whisk until well blended. Stir in cranberries; set aside.
3. Beat spread and sugars in large bowl with electric mixer until blended. Add combined flour, oats, baking powder and salt; beat well. Reserve 2 cups oat mixture for topping. Press remainder evenly onto bottom of pan. Pour lemon mixture over crust. Crumble reserved oat mixture evenly over lemon mixture.
4. Bake until edges begin to brown, about 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool in pan on wire rack 15 minutes. Cut into 1-1/2-inch squares. Cool completely. Cover and refrigerate. Sprinkle with confectioners' sugar before serving.

Makes 60 bars

Holiday Oatmeal Drops

- 1 cup (2 sticks) Shedd's Spread Country Crock Spreadable Sticks
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3 cups Quaker oats (quick or old fashioned, uncooked)*
- 1-1/2 cups holiday (red and green) candy-coated chocolate pieces
- 1 cup white chocolate chips

*If using old fashioned oats, add additional 2 tablespoons flour.

1. Heat oven to 375°F. Grease or line cookie sheets with parchment paper.
2. Beat spread and sugars in large bowl with electric mixer until creamy. Add eggs and vanilla; beat well. Add combined flour, baking soda and salt; beat well. Stir in

- combined oats, candies and chips.
3. Drop dough by rounded measuring tablespoonfuls onto prepared cookie sheets.
4. Bake 9 to 10 minutes, just until set and light brown. Cool 1 minute on cookie sheets; remove to wire racks. Cool completely. Store tightly covered at room temperature.

Makes about 6 dozen cookies

Cinnamon Hazelnut Crescents

- 1 cup (2 sticks) Shedd's Spread Country Crock Spreadable Sticks
- 1-1/2 cups sifted confectioners' sugar, divided
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup (3 ounces) toasted ground hazelnuts
- 2-1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon, divided
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup Quaker oats (quick or old fashioned, uncooked)*

1. Beat spread, 3/4 cup confectioners' sugar and vanilla in large bowl with electric mixer until creamy. Add combined flour, hazelnuts, 1 teaspoon cinnamon and salt; beat just until combined. Add oats; beat until combined. Cover and refrigerate dough until firm, about 2 hours or overnight.*
2. Heat oven to 350°F. Combine remaining 1-1/2 teaspoons cinnamon in medium bowl; set aside.
3. Roll rounded measuring teaspoonfuls of dough into 2-inch ropes. Place ropes about 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets; shape into crescents.
4. Bake 10 to 13 minutes, until golden brown. Cool 2 minutes on cookie sheets. Roll cookies, a few at a time, in cinnamon-sugar. Transfer to wire racks. Sift remaining cinnamon-sugar over tops of cookies. Cool completely. Store loosely covered at room temperature.

Makes about 6 dozen cookies

*If dough is too cold to shape easily, let stand at room temperature 15 minutes.

Cook's Tip: To toast and grind chopped hazelnuts: Spread 3 ounces chopped hazelnuts in single layer on cookie sheet. Bake at 350°F until fragrant, 6 to 8 minutes. Cool completely. Process toasted nuts in food processor until finely ground.

Choc-Oat Chip Meringue Bars

- 2-1/2 cups firmly packed brown sugar, divided
- 1 cup (2 sticks) Shedd's Spread Country Crock Spreadable Sticks
- 3 eggs, separated
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1-1/2 cups Quaker oats (quick or old fashioned, uncooked)*
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup (6 ounces) semisweet chocolate chips
- 3/4 cup shredded coconut
- 3/4 cup chopped pecans

*If using old fashioned oats, add additional 2 tablespoons flour.

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Generously spray 15-1/2 x 10-1/2 x 1-inch jelly roll pan with no-stick cooking spray.
2. Beat 1-1/2 cups brown sugar, spread, egg yolks and vanilla in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until well blended. Add combined oats, flour, baking powder and salt; beat just until dry ingredients are incorporated. Stir in chocolate chips. Spread evenly onto bottom of pan. Sprinkle with coconut. Bake 25 minutes. Remove to wire rack; leave oven on.
3. Beat egg whites (at room temperature) in clean dry bowl with electric mixer on high speed until foamy. Gradually add remaining 1 cup brown sugar beating until stiff peaks form. Gently fold in pecans. Spread meringue evenly onto warm cookie layer.
4. Return pan to oven. Bake 15 minutes until meringue is light brown.
5. Cool bars completely in pan on wire rack. Cut into 1-1/2-inch squares with thin, wet knife. Store tightly covered at room temperature.

Makes 60 bars

For more delicious cookie recipes, visit www.quakeroatmeal.com and www.countrycrock.com.