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Farm and home: A happy Christmas everybody - Pedigree seed

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WITH Christmas almost upon us are you one of those with everything under control so that you feel relaxed and happy? Or are you one of the majority, still with presents to buy, cakes to make, holidays to arrange and finding it hard to believe that December 25 is really so close? There are so many bazaars, parties, unexpected callers and so on just before Christmas that we know we have to get organised early if we are not to spoil our enjoyment of a very happy time by having a wild rush at the end.

Our preparations made well in advance can leave us free to hang out a really big welcome sign and to have leisure to enjoy the spirit of goodwill that prevails at this time of the year. Catering for fluctuating numbers can be a problem but if you possess a home freezer you will almost certainly be making good use of it this year with poultry, hams, sweets and even vegetables prepared well in advance.

The puddings, mincemeat and cakes that are so much a part of Christmas are usually made early. Traditionally, mincemeat is made 8 weeks before, to allow its flavour to develop but just in case yours is not made yet a couple of recipes are included in this issue. If you are not keen on the suet which is normally included, try the fruit mince without it. It is not quite so rich, is delicious and incidentally does not need so long standing before use.

Even if this year’s plum pudding is already made, the recipe given is well worth a place in your recipe file for next year’s use. It’s a very old English one and if you’ve a family that in spite of our warm climate likes to keep the traditional pudding on the Christmas dinner menu, you’ll love it with brandy sauce, hard sauce or ice-cream.

**MINCMEAT (Traditional Recipe)**

- ¾ lb. finely chopped beef suet.
- ¾ lb. chopped raisins.
- 1 lb. currants.
- 1 lb. chopped apples.
- 4 oz. chopped peel.
- ½ teaspoon mixed mace and cinnamon.
- ½ level teaspoon ground cloves.
- ¾ lb. castor sugar.
- ½ level teaspoon salt.
- Grated rind and juice of 1½ lemons.
- ½ gill brandy.
- ½ gill port wine.

Mix thoroughly and seal in jars till needed. (Keep in a cool place.)
FRUIT MINCE (Without Suet)

1½ lb. currants.
¼ lb. sultanas.
¼ lb. finely chopped peel.
Juice and zest of 1 lemon.
½ oz. spice.
1 lb. sugar.
3 lb. chopped apples.
1½ tablespoons rum.

Mix well and seal in jars. Store in a cool place, refrigerator if for long periods.

PLUM PUDDING

Ingredients.
½ lb. beef suet.
½ lb. raisins.
¼ lb. currants.
¼ lb. sultanas.
¼ lb. mixed peel.
4 oz. chopped apple.
4 oz. soft breadcrumbs.
4 oz. plain flour.
1 lemon (zest only).
½ lb. sugar.
4 eggs.
2 oz. almonds.
1 gill of milk.
1 wineglass brandy or rum.
½ a grated nutmeg.
½ teaspoon salt.

Method.

(1) Mince suet.
(2) Wash and dry fruit. Blanch almonds, cut in 2 or 3 pieces.
(3) Rub suet and flour together. Add crumbs, salt, fruit, sugar, nutmeg, almonds, lemon rind. Mix well.
(4) Beat eggs, stir in the milk and brandy, then add to flour fruit, etc. Mix very thoroughly.
(5) Cook in a greased basin, covering with a greased paper and pudding cloth, or in a scalded and floured pudding cloth. Put into boiling water and boil 5 to 6 hours.
(6) On day of serving cook for at least 1 hour more.

CHRISTMAS GIVING

The thought and care that go into a home-made Christmas gift make is priceless to the recipient and there are many ways in which you can use your sewing and culinary skill to help your gift budget. Where will you find a little miss who won’t love some new additions to her doll’s wardrobe? The scrap-bag can furnish the material and the makers of your own dress patterns, the patterns you need. The little miss herself will love some shortie ‘jamas like big sisters and sewing baskets, beach bags, etc., are quickly and easily made. And if dad or big brother go in for home-carpentry they will appreciate a carpenter’s apron with big divided pockets for tools, notebook, screws and a small one at the top for that pencil which is always disappearing. Denim or sail cloth are serviceable materials for the job. Only find the time and you can save a lot of money with your needle.

In the kitchen too you can produce gifts that please. Home made sweets and biscuits can be packed in the plastic refrigerator dish, or the shiny cake tin you are giving, or empty stocking boxes can be covered with coloured paper packed with sweets (some of them in “silver” paper perhaps) and with celophane over the top an attractive bow or piece of holly you have an attractive gift. The celluloid box that once held your new powder puffs or some glamour undies, can be pressed into service as a gift box. Remember that the packaging can make a wealth of difference. Some quick and easy recipes and ideas for variations are given. Your recipe books will yield you many more. If you have a favourite recipe why not use it and include a copy when packing your gift? There is no need to stop at sweets and biscuits either. Jams, pickles, lemon butter, etc., bottled in those pretty but inexpensive glass tumblers which are so handy when the crowd drops in will look attractive and are practical too.

BISCUITS

From any good rich biscuit dough you can make a variety of biscuits with plain or fancy cutters or a biscuit forcer and a few trimmings. Star or bell shapes are in keeping with the Christmas theme but if you have no fancy cutters crescent shapes and wreath shapes can be cut with plain cutters. Ice your ring (wreath) with plain white icing and pipe a simple bow or spray of flowers on one side to add a gay note.
Coloured sugar can be sprinkled on some, while cherries, almonds, walnuts, silver cachous can be used on others.

An attractive shape can be made by cutting thinly rolled biscuit dough into 2in. squares and with these on a cold greased tray cut in 1in. from the corners towards the centre. Fold alternate corners into the centre, press lightly and add a glace cherry and touch of angelica to garnish.

Almond fingers, made by spreading a plain biscuit dough in which the egg yolk only is used, with stiffly beaten egg white mixed with 4 oz. of sifted icing sugar, sprinkling with chopped almonds and cutting into finger lengths are baked in a moderate oven for 10-15 minutes.

Cheese straws are popular, and some variety can be added by cutting a few rings, and by twisting some of the straws together in pairs. The same recipe can be used to cut a variety of small shapes to be used as bases for savouries to be spread or piped with savoury butter when required and garnished with parsley, salted peanuts, red peppers, stuffed olives, radish, etc. A supply of these biscuits in your own tins are always handy.

**Cheese straws**

**Ingredients.**

- 6 oz. plain flour.
- Salt and cayenne pepper.
- 1 egg yolk.
- 3 oz. butter or margarine.
- 4 oz. grated cheese.
- A little water.

**Method.**

1. Sift flour, salt and cayenne.
2. Rub in the shortening.
3. Add the grated cheese and mix well.
4. Beat the egg yolk with about 1 tablespoon cold water and mix to a rather stiff paste.
5. Knead on lightly floured board.
6. Roll into a strip about 4in. wide.
7. Cut into narrow straws. Cut a few rings for serving straws in bundles.
8. Bake in a moderately hot oven (425°F) until firm and golden brown.

**Handy tip** for rolling biscuit dough or pastry—If you have trouble with dough sticking or crumbling roll between two sheets of greaseproof paper or plastic.

**Cheesies**

**Ingredients.**

- 3 oz. plain flour, 1 oz. S.R. flour, or all plain flour may be used.
- 4 oz. grated cheese.
- 4 oz. butter or margarine.
- Salt and cayenne pepper.
- Coconut.

**Method.**

1. Sift flour, salt and cayenne.
2. Rub in the fat.
3. Add the cheese and work together to form a firm dough. Do not let mixture become oily. Chill if necessary.
4. Roll into small balls between floured hands.
5. Coat with coconut and flatten slightly.
6. Bake in a moderately hot oven till a very light golden brown.

**Sweets**

The true fondant is made by sugar boiling but a handy uncooked fondant can be quickly made and owing to its versatility and ease of use one recipe for it is given here. Once prepared a variety of flavours can be added, melted cooking chocolate being one, peppermint another. Colourings can be kneaded into the mixture or in the case of fondant “apples” and bananas, etc., can be painted on with a fine camel hair paint brush dipped in food colour or to give the brown streaks, blended cocoa. The rind of an orange can be simulated by rolling little round balls of orange flavoured and coloured fondant on a nutmeg grater and a clove can be pushed into one end of an “apple.” Dates can be stuffed with fondant, or a half walnut may be pressed in to a ball of fondant, two colours may be rolled out thinly then placed one on top of the other, rolled firmly and cut into slices or blocks. Some may be rolled in coloured coconut or topped with a silver cachou, while into a ball of peppermint flavoured fondant, a chocolate bit may be pressed point first, giving a button like appearance and an interesting combination of flavours.
Apart from the fondants, marshmallows, fudges, coconut ices and toffees are popular but it is best to pack these separately or at least in individual wraps if put in one box.

UNCOOKED FONDANT

Ingredients.

1 lb. sifted icing sugar.
2 oz. glucose.
1 egg white.
2 teaspoons lemon juice.
Vanilla (a flavouring and colouring required).

Method.

(1) Heat glucose till liquid by putting it in a cup and standing in boiling water.
(2) Break up egg white with fork but do not beat.
(3) Make a well in centre of icing sugar and pour glucose, egg white and lemon juice into it.
(4) Gradually work the icing sugar into the middle, using a wooden spoon, till it is nearly combined, then knead.
(5) Turn on to a board dusted with sifted icing sugar and knead thoroughly for at least 5 minutes. Thorough kneading is essential to a smooth creamy result. Flavourings and colourings are kneaded into the mixture.
(6) The fondant not in actual use should be wrapped in greaseproof paper then a damp cloth.
(7) After shaping allow sweets to "set" on waxed paper.

PEDIGREE SEED

WHEAT, OATS AND BARLEY

THE Minister for Agriculture (the Hon. E. K. Hoar, M.L.A.), has advised that supplies of pedigreed seed wheat, oats and barley will be available for distribution from the forthcoming harvest at the Department's Research Stations.

Varieties available this season are:

Wheat

Midseason: Baroota Wonder (hay variety), Bencubbun, Bencubbun 48 (rust resistant), Eureka, Kondut.
Early: Gabo (rust resistant), Wongoondy (rust resistant), Insignia 49 (rust resistant).
Very Early: Bungulla.

Oats

Late: Algerian.
Midseason: Avon, Dale.
Early: Ballidu, Kent.

Barley

Atlas, Beecher, Prior.

Prices per bag of three bushels inclusive of rail freight to farmer's siding will be:

Wheat, 60s.; oats, 40s.; barley, 55s.

Prompt attention to orders will be ensured if the following directions are observed by intending applicants.

(1) Make early application direct to the Department of Agriculture, St. George's Terrace, Perth.
(2) Give clearly full name, postal address, and siding to which the seed is to be railed.
(3) As soon as possible after receipt of account, remittance should be forwarded. Statements are sent out in order of receipt of the application. No definite reservations can be made until the seed is paid for.
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