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**12 Special Occasion Food Articles From from January to December.**

**January: New Year's Buffet On a Budget - 526 words**

**February: How to Make a Romantic Valentine's Day Dinner With No Cooking - 561 words**

**March: Delicious, Fast and Easy Dinner Menus for St. Patrick's Day - 559 Words**

**April: Easter Breakfast Ideas for Kids to Make - 423 words**

**May: Make Mom an Extra Special Mother's Day Dinner- 565 words**

**June: Father's Day Breakfast For Dad - 460 words**

**July: Fourth of July Snacks - 448 words**

**August: Almost the End of Summer Picnic - 567 words**

**September: Football Tailgate Menu: Pork Tenderloin Cutlets - 425 words**

**October: Ghoulish Goodies Halloween Fabulous Food - 468 words**

**November: Gifts From Your Kitchen And no…. 425 words**

**December: Merry Christmas Dinner 421 words**

**January**

**New Year's Buffet On a Budget**

Start off the New Year with a buffet that offers your guests healthy choices and won't break your budget. Serve two or three stunning platters surrounded by mini appetizers. Plated creatively and elegantly, your guests won't even realize you're cutting back on costs. Keep cold food cold by placing the serving plate on a bed of ice. Hot dishes stay hot in a slow cooker or warming tray. Garnish the serving plates with ruffled kale, a bed of butter lettuce, or thinly sliced citrus fruit. Garnishes don't get eaten (usually) and cost much less than the food, yet they take up space on the plate and enhance the attractiveness of the food.

Your piece de resistance is your choice of ham or turkey. Both should be on sale during the holidays. Carve into slivers rather than hearty slices. Pile them high on the serving platter. Offer a few sauces such as honey mustard, chipotle low-fat mayonnaise and herb dressing made with non-fat yogurt.

Add a platter of breads cut into small sandwich size. Use dinner rolls rather than sandwich size rolls. Cut a baguette of French bread into half inch slices. Add some cocktail rye bread as well.

On the other side of the ham or turkey platter, arrange thin slices of tomatoes, shredded lettuce, thinly sliced cucumbers, sweet peppers, red onions and soft lettuce leaves such as butter lettuce. Your guests can make mini sandwiches with the breads or use the butter lettuce to make a wrap.

**Mini-Appetizer Suggestions**

Salmon flavored cream cheese on cucumber slices topped with a sprig of dill.

Cherry tomatoes stuffed with cottage cheese, basil, and Parmesan cheese.

Chicken wings served with dipping sauces such as honey mustard, teriyaki, or spicy BBQ.

Salad to go - tiny grape tomatoes, shredded carrots, diced cucumber, baby lettuces, topped with a dab of raspberry dressing, served in a small, clear, plastic 4 ounce cup.

Mini burritos. Stuff the smallest size flour tortillas with your favorite burrito mixture, then cut in half.

Layer cheese and salsa between two flour tortillas. Briefly heat in the oven until the cheese melts. Cut in wedges.

Chili in scoop-shaped corn chips, topped with grated cheese.

Deviled eggs in a variety of flavors. Classic deviled eggs -- mix mayonnaise and mustard with the egg yolk. Mix the egg yolk with sour cream, caviar (use inexpensive jarred caviar, you'll find it with the canned fish) and a spritz of lemon juice. Another option is mayonnaise, bacon bits and finely chopped tomatoes.

Augment the mini appetizers with a lavish display of veggies and dip. Offer at least one dip made with non-fat yogurt. It helps to label the dips for the diet conscious. Carrots, celery, cucumbers, broccoli, and cauliflower are relative inexpensive, so use these to bulk up your display. Add some color with orange, yellow, and red, mini sweet peppers, cherry tomatoes, radishes, and thinly sliced baby beets.

End the buffet table with fresh fruit cut in bite-sized pieces rather than a dessert tray. Losing weight is one of the most common New Year's resolutions, by skipping desserts and offering fruit you'll be helping your guests to a healthy year ahead.

**February**

**How to Make a Romantic Valentine's Day Dinner With No Cooking**

Valentine's Day is probably one of the most difficult days to make dinner reservations at a restaurant. You'll be lucky to find a spot at your local fast food joint. Don't let that stop you from giving your special someone a scrumptious Valentine's dinner. The trick is to make it yourself. No cooking skills? No problem. If you can shop and chop you can put this dinner together. If you want to stick with a healthy dinner recipe, omit the cream in the avocado soup and use olive oil instead of butter with the vegetables.

Spicy Shrimp Cocktail

Fat, sweet, juicy shrimp served in a martini glass and dolloped with a savory spicy sauce starts off your dinner with class. Purchase eight, big, peeled, deveined and cooked shrimp with their tails intact. Fill the bottom of the martini glass with chopped lettuce. You'll find chopped lettuce ready to serve in the produce section. Mix purchased seafood cocktail sauce with a squeeze of lemon juice and a few drops of hot sauce. Place two tablespoons of the sauce right on top of the lettuce. Hook the tops of the shrimp around the rim of the glass so their tails are inside the glass.

Smooth and Creamy Cold Avocado Soup

The light green color of this sauce complements the pink of the shrimp. Purchase a package of guacamole. Put it in a blender with one cup of cream, once cup of cold canned chicken broth and the juice of half a lime. Blend till smooth. Keep icy cold until served. The second soup course of your Valentine's dinner is complete so on to the entree.

Stuffed Chicken Breasts

Don't panic. You won't be actually cooking the chicken. The deli section has roasted chicken breasts -- as well as other parts but you won't be needing them. Purchase three breasts, which gives you an extra. While you're at the deli counter purchase 1/4 pound of prosciutto and 1/4 pound of Parmesan cheese, both sliced thinly. If you can't find prosciutto which is a highly flavored air-dried Italian ham, substitute another good quality ham. Make a slit in the chicken breast to form a pocket. Stuff in two slices of prosciutto and two slices of parmesan cheese. Wrap each breast in aluminum foil so it doesn't dry out. Reheat in a 350 F. degree oven for about 20 minutes until the chicken is heated through and the cheese has melted. Unwrap before serving.

Side Dishes

You don't need much for side dishes, a vegetable and potato or two vegetables. Go to the produce section and find the bags of baby vegetables that are pre-cleaned and ready to cook in the bag. Sometimes they're called steamers. Steam in the microwave per package directions. Melt a tablespoon of butter -- yes real butter -- and drizzle over the veggies right before serving.

Dessert

No Valentine's Day dinner would be complete without chocolate and strawberries. Chocolate covered strawberries are available this time of year all ready for you. But it's more fun to dip your own. Clean large berries under running water. Pat dry. Arrange the berries on a plate with a mound of whipped cream, a small bowl of brown sugar, small bowl of powdered sugar and small bowl of chocolate syrup, the kind you use to make chocolate milk. Dip to your and your sweetheart's content.

**March**

**Delicious, Fast and Easy Dinner Menus for St. Patrick's Day**

St. Patrick's Day is a holiday for both adults and children. It doesn't matter if you're Irish or Italian, you still get to wear the green and look for that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Putting together a St. Paddy's day dinner menu is a snap. Use low fat ingredients to keep them healthy dinner recipes.  
  
**Traditional Irish St. Patrick's Menu**

Corned beef and cabbage: add carrots and potatoes. Believe it or not, kids like corned beef and will most likely eat two out of the three side dishes, especially if displayed in separate dishes. You can buy prepared corned beef at the grocery store deli. The potatoes can be ready to heat and serve. Carrots can be carrot sticks or baby carrots. Serve with bread or rolls. This is an easy dinner if you don't want to cook.

**All American St. Patrick's Menu**

Hot dogs served with pickle relish, "green" ketchup and "green" mustard. Add liquid green food coloring to change both to green colors. Ketchup takes more color to change and is sort of a brownish green. Be sure to label them, they end up looking the same.

Cole slaw can be store bought or homemade. Homemade is one package of shredded cabbage or bagged coleslaw mix. Add ½ cup of mayonnaise, a tablespoon of apple cider vinegar, and a tablespoon of sugar. Mix well. Salt to taste.

Crackers with green cream cheese spread or cheese wiz/spray sprinkled with dried or fresh parsley.

Green apple salad: Here is a fast easy recipe: 3 chopped green apples with skin on, 1 cup of chopped celery, ½ cup chopped walnuts, 1 cup of green grapes, ¼ - ½ cup of mayo. Salt and pepper if desired. Mix everything together in a bowl with a fair amount of mayo coating all ingredients. Use enough mayo so that the ingredients can absorb the mayo. Refrigerate at least two hours.

**Italian St. Patrick's Menu**

Spinach pasta with Alfredo sauce. Sprinkle minced parsley or basil over top for more "green" effect or your choice of plain pasta with pesto sauce. Serve pesto on the side if you want to have plain pasta for the children available, although kids like pesto sauce.

Baked French bread: Take loaf of French bread and cut lengthwise. Spread butter or margarine on both halves. Sprinkle grated parmesan cheese, parsley, and basil. Bake in a 350 degree oven watching carefully. Bake until toasted.

Cooked asparagus or broccoli with melted Velveeta cheese. Caesar salad or simple garden salad with Italian dressing.

**Mexican Food St. Patrick's Menu**

Tostadas: Top corn tostadas with warm refried beans, cheddar cheese and shredded lettuce. Top with green salsa or verde sauce. You can add taco seasoned hamburger if you like, just end up with the green lettuce and salsa on the top.

Cheese quesadillas topped with sprinkled parsley or cilantro.

Nacho cheese dip: Melted pasteurized process cheese spread with green color added.

Guacamole: Homemade or store bought. Guacamole is easy to make, simply mash an avocado. Add finely chopped onions, a splash of lime juice, hot sauce, and tomatoes. Serve with tortilla chips

Corn muffins: Use favorite corn muffin mix add diced green bell pepper or chopped cilantro, jalapeno and/or cheese. Any combination works well. You can add some green food coloring if you like. Bake Following the muffin mix directions.

**April**

**Easter Breakfast Ideas for Kids to Make**

Easter means chocolate bunnies, a rainbow of marshmallow peeps and, of course, a lovely Easter brunch. This year have a menu that kids can make along with some adult supervision. Add in a platter of slivered ham, precooked bacon, or precooked sausages. Pitchers of orange juice, hot tea and coffee round out the menu. Don't worry about dessert, with all the Easter basket candy you won't need one.

Breakfast Rollups   
Spread a burrito size flour tortilla with cream cheese, whipped cream cheese is easy for little hands to spread. Sprinkle the cream cheese with brown sugar and dried cranberries. Roll up, put in a zip lock bag and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Have an adult cut the rolled burrito into three slices. Arrange the slices around a bowl of fresh strawberries sprinkled with brown sugar and a dollop of whipped cream or whipped topping.

Breakfast Parfait   
Use a large ice cream sundae glass. Put cornflakes (or your favorite breakfast cereal) in the bottom of the glass to about 1/3 full. Place a scoop of ice cream next and press down a bit so the ice cream is smooshed down in the glass. Put another layer of cornflakes and then another scoop of ice cream. Finish it off with chocolate syrup, caramel sauce, butter scotch sauce or fresh fruit.

Fabulous French Toast   
Use frozen French toast. Cut into heart shapes with a cookie cutter. Cover the top of the heart with sliced fresh strawberries. Outline the heart shape with canned whipped cream topping. If you don't like strawberries use whole raspberries. Or make a two toned heart with blueberries and raspberries.

Easy Eggs Benedict   
These aren't the real deal because hollandaise sauce is a little tricky for kids to make. Toast an English muffin. Spread with butter. Add fresh spinach leaves, topped with a slice of deli ham or bacon if you prefer on top of each muffin half. Slice a hardboiled egg on top of the muffin. Mix together one tablespoon of mayonnaise with 1/2 teaspoon of mustard. Place a dollop of the mixture on top of the eggs.

Elegant Scrambled Eggs   
Mix together two well-beaten eggs with one tablespoon of cream or half and half. Scramble over low heat. When the eggs are set but still creamy add 1 tablespoon of cream cheese, 1/4 cup of tiny cooked shrimp and 1/2 teaspoon of snipped dill. Stir through to heat and melt the cream cheese. Serve on toast points. This recipe is more appropriate for older children since there is cooking involved.

**May**

**Make Mom an Extra Special Mother's Day Dinner**

If you've ever tried to get reservations for Mother's Day brunch or dinner, you probably realize it's next to impossible unless you book months in advance. This year treat Mom to a festive dinner at home. The menu is impressive but not difficult. Start with a raspberry vinaigrette salad with grapefruit slices, lettuce and walnuts. The main course are turkey breast slices wrapped around prepared stuffing mix, the kind that takes on a minute or so to make accompanied by rice pilaf and carrots glazed with orange juice. Purchase Mom's favorite dessert to finish the meal.

What you'll need:   
Package of pre-washed ready-to-serve salad   
Raspberries   
Apple cider vinegar   
Mild cooking oil   
Walnuts   
Fresh grapefruit slices   
Turkey slices from the deli about ¼ inch thick

Cream cheese  
Prepared stuffing mix

Rice   
Cream of chicken soup   
Frozen peas   
Frozen chopped onions   
Frozen carrots   
Orange juice concentrate   
Butter   
Cooking utensils

Salad   
The tang of the grapefruit slices is complimented by the crunch of the walnuts and sweetness of the raspberries in this easy to pull together salad. For four servings you'll need two packages of ready-to-serve lettuce, 1/4 cup of apple cider vinegar, 1/2 cup of cooking oil, and 4 to 6 ounces of fresh raspberries. If you can't find fresh, use frozen unsweetened berries. Mix the vinegar, oil and raspberries together and set aside. When you're ready to serve, toss the dressing with the lettuce and divide onto four plates. Arrange four to five grapefruit slices on the lettuce and sprinkle with walnuts.

Turkey   
Moms will be impressed when you bring out this turkey dish. It looks like it took lots of time and talent to make. Surprise, since it starts with purchased cooked turkey slices, you don't need much time or talent. About 30 minutes before dinner is ready, spread the slices with cream cheese and then prepared stuffing mix. Roll up. Place in a baking dish then cover with foil. Bake in a 350 F oven for 15 minutes or so until hot. Remove the foil to serve.

Rice Pilaf   
All right so this isn't the traditional rice pilaf but it's easy to put together. For four servings put one cup of rice, one 15 ounce can of cream of chicken soup and one cup of low sodium chicken broth in a baking dish. Add 1 cup of frozen peas and 1 cup of frozen chopped onions. Stir. Bake in a 350 F oven for 40 minutes until the rice is cooked. You can bake this at the same time the chicken is warming, just give it a head start. Triple the recipe for leftovers so Mom doesn't have to cook dinner the next day. Put in a fresh baking dish and cover with slices of provolone cheese. Heat until the cheese is gooey.

Carrots   
If you start with packaged frozen carrots there's no peeling or chopping required. Since the carrots have been blanched before they've been frozen, they don't need much cooking time. You'll need three cups of carrots for four servings. Place in a microwave safe bowl. Nuke on high for one minute at a time until the carrots still have some crunch to them, probably no more than three minutes total. Before the last minute of cooking time, add 1/4 cup of orange juice concentrate and 1/4 cup of butter. It's Mother's day so splurge on real butter not the fake stuff.

**June**

**Father's Day Breakfast For Dad**

Most men enjoy a hearty breakfast so start your Father's Day off with a meal the kids can help with. Fruit fizzies, Toad in the Hole and frozen melon pops are easy and kid friendly to prepare.

Fruit fizzies are fun and frothy. Fill a glass with ice, then half full with lemon lime soda, plain carbonated soda, or sparkling mineral water. Top it off with your favorite fruit juice. Garnish with an orange slice.

The frozen melon pops should be prepared the night before so they have time to freeze. Cut watermelon, cantaloupe and honeydew melons in bite size pieces. For faster preparation, buy prepared melon chunks from the grocer's produce case. Dip in a mixture of half lime juice and half water for flavor and to prevent discoloration. Thread the melon chunks onto a wooden skewer and freeze overnight. Serve as they are or with a dip of yogurt sweetened with honey.

Toad in the Hole is a fun dish for kids. It doesn't take a lot of expertise to assemble and is pretty hard to wreck. Spray an oversized muffin pan with cooking spray. This is important. Cooked egg can be very difficult to remove from a baking dish. The cooking spray makes it much easier. If you don't have the large size muffin pan, use an oven proof 8 oz. glass dish. You will need a slice of bread, cooked bacon, pat of butter, and an egg for each serving. The toad is the egg and the hole is the slice of bread.

Put 1/2 a pat of butter in the bottom of each muffin tin. Gently place a slice of bread in the tin pushing it down to form a hollow. Break an egg into a measuring cup and then slide the egg from the cup into the bread hollow. Breaking the egg into the cup allows you to remove any pieces of shell. Salt and pepper to taste. Place the other half of the pat of butter on top of the egg. Crumble one slice of bacon over the top of the egg.

If your Dad really loves bacon, before you add the egg to the bread hollow, crumble a slice of bacon directly over the bread in the muffin tin, add the egg and then crumble a second piece of bacon on top. Bake in a preheated 350 degree oven for about 8 minutes. Check the egg to see if it's done by jiggling it. If it's wobbly it probably needs another minute or two of baking.

Remove the Toad in the Hole with two spoons. If Dad has a big appetite add some toaster hash browns to the plate. Start Father's Day off with a hearty breakfast of Toad in the Hole.

**July**

**Fourth of July Snacks**

Fourth of July is a favorite holiday. There’s no pressure to decorate the house, buy gifts or send out cards. Just relax, eat good food and watch the fireworks. Incorporate red, white and blue colors into your menu. Here are a few ideas to get you going.

**Sweet Red Pepper Poppers**   
Cut off the tops of the red mini sweet peppers. Discard the top and remove any seeds. Lightly salt and pepper. Mix 1 cup of low fat cottage cheese with 1/4 cup grated or shredded parmesan cheese. Fill each pepper to the brim with the cheese mixture. Bake in a 350 degree oven until the cheese is hot. If you want a spicy hot version use ripened jalapeno peppers instead of sweet. Mini sweet peppers also come in yellow and orange as well as red.

**Independence Day Veggies and Dip**   
Dip: Put a jar of roasted red (not hot peppers) peppers in the blender with a cup of sour cream. Salt and pepper to taste. If you don’t like red peppers, substitute fresh tomatoes that have had the skins and seeds removed. To remove the skins, dip the whole tomato in boiling water for 60 seconds, then plunge into an ice water bath. The skins should slip right off. Cut the tomatoes in half horizontally and gently squeeze out the seeds.

Surround the dip with red and white vegetables such as peeled cucumber slices, wedges of radicchio, cherry tomatoes, cooked baby beets, red pepper slices, peeled summer squash, Jicama slices, inner stalks of celery that are almost white, and cauliflower.

**Fourth of July Beet Salad**

Mix two cans of sliced beets and ¼ cup of their liquid with 1/2 cup of apple cider vinegar, and a tablespoon of sugar. Add one large thinly red onion and one large thinly sliced peeled cucumber. This salad is best if it sits overnight in the fridge.

**Red, White, and Blue Potato Salad**   
Cook two pounds of small red potatoes until fork tender. Cut in quarters and mix with 1/2 cup crumbled bacon, 1/2 cup chopped red onions, 1/2 cup chopped celery, 1/2 cup to a cup of mayonnaise, and 1/2 cup blue cheese.

**Red, White, and Blue Fruit Platter**

Red fruits include raspberries, strawberries, apples, and watermelons. White fruit includes peeled apples and pears. Dip apples and pears in diluted lemon juice (three tablespoons lemon juice in one cup water) to prevent browning. Blue fruit include blueberries and grapes, well grapes are actually more purple than blue, but no one is going to notice. Serve with a blueberry based yogurt dip. Mash a cup of blueberries into a cup of yogurt. Add a few drops of food coloring if necessary.

**August**

**Almost the End of Summer Picnic**

Don’t limit yourself to the good ole American menu of hamburgers and hotdogs. There’s lots more to grilling than that. The first task is deciding on a menu that offers something for everyone. If yours is going to be a family affair then take the kids’ preferences into consideration.

Mini burritos are easy and quick. Fill a small flour tortilla with a tablespoon of cooked hamburger, shredded chicken, or sliced steak. Add a slice of tomato, a tablespoon of shredded cheese and roll up burrito fashion tucking in the ends so you end up with a nice little package. Grill for a minute or two on each side to heat up the meat and melt the cheese and there you have it. Serve with an interesting salsa of chopped grapefruit, cilantro, onions, jalapeno peppers, and jicama for the adults to munch on as appetizers until the main course is ready. If you don’t like grapefruit substitute seedless watermelon.

Why not serve fish tacos? Brush mild boneless fish fillets like halibut or tilapia with a marinade of lemon juice, minced garlic, minced onion, and a touch of cumin. Grill until the fish is cooked through but not over cooked. About 5 minutes per inch of thickness of the fillet. Cut the fillets into about 4 inch by 2 inch servings. Cover with foil and set on the back of the grill to keep warm, in a warming drawer, or in a 200 hundred degree oven. Set up a taco bar with corn and flour tortillas, toppings of tomatoes, sliced onions, cheese, shredded cabbage, sliced jalapenos, salsa in both mild and hot varieties, cucumbers, chopped cilantro, sweet red peppers, cooked corn, black beans, and pinto beans. Consider putting a sign with a flame and the word HOT in front of any topping that you feel might be too spicy for children.

Your guests including the little ones will have a great time building their fish tacos. If you’re not sure everyone will like fish, grill some boneless chicken breasts as an alternative.

Serve a grilled and raw veggie platter with several dips. Try some new vegetables you might not have thought about grilling such as carrots, endive spears, cherry tomatoes, broccoli spear slices, or summer squash slices. Toss the vegetables with a marinade of olive oil, citrus juice, garlic, and herbs for at least an hour before grilling. Use bottled Italian salad dressing if you’re in a hurry.

Echo the marinade flavors in the dips you offer. Mix some Italian salad dressing in a cup of cottage cheese add 1/4 cup of parmesan cheese, extra chopped fresh basil and whirl in the blender until smooth.

A quick citrus dip is simply sour cream with lemon, lime, and orange juice. Add a teaspoon of grated citrus peel to boost the flavor with some freshly grated pepper.

Grilled fruit kabobs make a great dessert for both children and adults. Cut peaches, plums, pineapple, in one inch chunks, add seedless grapes and halved apricots. Thread fruit on a short wood skewer and brush with lime juice. You can do all this ahead. The lime juice will keep the peaches from turning brown. Grill over a low fire until grill marks are barely visible. Remove from the grill and brush with a glaze made from equal parts honey and lime juice.

Your guests will be happy and satisfied until the sun goes down.

**September**

**Football Tailgate Menu: Pork Tenderloin Cutlets**

Breaded pork tenderloin is a traditional Midwest dish. And professional football originated in the heartland. Here, instead of plain white bread crumbs, sourdough bread will be used kicked up a notch with parsley, sage and rosemary. Accompany the crusty pork cutlets with a macaroni salad, cucumbers and onions in sour cream and nutty popcorn sundaes for dessert in honor of Orville Redenbacher, who started his company in the Midwest.

Lay the thin-cut pork chops on a cutting board. Remove any bone and excess fat. Place on a sheet and waxed paper. Cover with another sheet of wax paper and pound away. Since the thin cutlets cook quickly this activity is great to do during the game if it gets close.

When the pork chops are twice as big as when you started put them aside for moment.

Mix 1/4 cup cream cheese, 1/4 cup goat cheese, 1/2 tsp. each chopped parsley, sage and rosemary. Throw in 1 tbsp. of chopped walnuts for crunch. Mix well.

Put about 2 tbsp. of the stuffing in the middle on each cutlet. Fold the cutlet around the stuffing as if you were making a burrito or egg roll. Fasten with toothpicks. None of the filling should be showing.

Dust the little stuffed cutlets with flour. Dip in beaten egg and then in breadcrumbs. The easiest way to make bread crumbs is in the blender. Cut the loaf in 1 inch cubes until you have 2 cups. Add 1 tsp. each parsley, sage and rosemary. Hit the puree button.

Roll the cutlets in the bread crumbs until well-coated. Add 2 tbsp. olive oil to a sauté pan. Place over medium heat. Brown the cutlets on all sides lower to low and finish cooking, probably no more than 10 minutes. The cutlets are tender from all the pounding and crusty on the outside. The stuffing is hot and creamy with a fresh herbal note and a bit of tang from the goat cheese. If you don't like goat cheese use another soft cheese.

The macaroni salad is easy. Use store bought. Thinly slice one onion and two large cucumbers. Add 1 tbsp. of apple cider vinegar and 1/4 cup sour cream. Salads are done.

The sundaes are best made at the last minute. Top a generous serving of vanilla ice cream with freshly popped corn. If it's hot from the popper so much the better. Drizzle caramel sauce over the popcorn and ice cream Throw in a few salted peanuts if you like.

Now that tailgate menu wasn't so hard was it?

**October**

**Ghoulish Goodies Halloween Fabulous Food**

Here are a few ideas for your Halloween Party Food. Easy and fast, most take only a few minutes to make and will be a hit with the kids and the adults.

Spooky Spiders

Spread peanut butter or process cheese spread onto round butter crackers then place four chow mien noodles or small pretzel sticks on each side of the cracker making eight spider legs then stack a cracker on top making a sandwich then dip raisins into peanut butter or cheese spread and place on top as spider eyes. Peter butter makes a great glue.

Bloody Bones

Spare ribs with your favorite barbecue sauce. Arrange ribs to resemble a human rib cage. Place a half of a red pepper or tomato in the middle as the heart and put a real knife or fake knife into the heart.

Bloody Brains

Any type of cooked spaghetti or spiral pasta with red sauce.

Monster Hands

Place a candy corn into each finger of a plastic deli glove then fill with popcorn until plump and tie off at the wrist of the glove.

Yummy Eyeballs

Slice carrots, cucumbers or radishes in bite size circles. Put a dab of cream cheese on top and then put 1/2 a pitted black or green olive on top.

Fingers and Dip

Peel and slice carrots length wise into finger size pieces. Attach almond slices or plain potato chips pieces onto one end of the carrots with cream cheese as the fingernail. Use the same idea using pretzel rods. Supply your favorite dip.

Apple Bites

Core and slice an apple. Spread peanut butter to one side of the apple slice. Put three or four tiny marshmallows for teeth on top of the peanut butter. Top with another apple slice, peanut butter side down.

Mummy roll-ups

Use a cooked hot dog or breaded chicken strips or nuggets place in tortilla with ketchup and roll up burrito style leaving one end open. Use ketchup to dot on eyes of mummy.

Food Faces

Create scary, silly, or jack-o-lantern faces using meat, cheese and vegetables pieces on round foods such as pizzas, cheese crisps, quesadilla or tostadas. You can use homemade pizzas or frozen cheese pizzas. Use pepperoni and black olives as eyes, red pepper pieces to form a nose or diced onions to create teeth. For cheese crisps use black olives for eyes shredded lettuce for a mouth, salsa or sour cream for noses or mouths. Be creative.

Bagel Monsters

Slice bagel in half. Spread on cream cheese fill with meat and use a piece of ham to make a tongue coming out of center of the bagel hole. Attach black olive or pepperoni eyes with cream cheese put lettuce leaves as hair and a carrot nose.

Hope you have a fun and safe Halloween Party for kids!

**November**

**Gifts From Your Kitchen And no….**

You don’t have to stay up all night on a cookie baking binge. These gifts take a little preparation in drying the fruit but after that it’s mostly putting the packages together. If you can slice, bag and tie a bow, you can do this.

Keep guests warm after a holiday open house providing packages of drink mixes you’ve made yourself as favors. If it’s in the budget add a small, one-serving size bottle of wine to the spiced wine package. These gifts take up space so it looks like you’re generous but they don’t cost much at all to put together. Consider borrowing a dehydrator for a few days to dry the fruits and save even more money.

Gourmet Hot Chocolate  
Fill a cellophane bag with mini marshmallows, five or six foil wrapped chocolate candies, peppermints or hard candy raspberry drops. Add directions to add to a cup of hot milk. Tie with ribbons. You could add a purchased package of cocoa to add to the package for less than fifty cents.

Spiced Cider  
Add four dried orange slices. Don’t use orange peel because it doesn’t take up much space and people won’t know what it is at first glance. Add several cinnamon sticks and a 1/2 teaspoon of whole cloves with one or two whole star anise. Add a card that says to add the spice mixture with the orange slices to 3 cups of hot apple cider.

Mulled Wine  
Place a couple of slices each of dried orange slices, apple slices and lemon slices to the cellophane bag. Dip the apple slices into a solution of half lemon juice and half water to keep them from browning while they’re drying. Add your choice of spices including allspice, nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves, even a few black peppercorns to add a bit of heat to the wine. Finish with 1/2 cup of raisins.

Tropical Tea  
Dry 1/4 inch thick half slices of fresh pineapple, mangos and dried raspberries or strawberry halves. Place two tea bags either black, green or fruit flavored into each cellophane bag and tie with ribbons that match.

If you feel that the drink mixes alone aren’t quite enough for a favor. Put the bags into a wine glass for the mulled wine, clear glass coffee cup for the cider and cocoa and a smaller clear glass tea cup for the tropical tea. You could put colored excelsior in the bottom of the glass or cup for added color and bulk. These favors cost less than a dollar apiece but look fabulous.

**December**

**Merry Christmas Dinner**

Christmas is a favorite holiday. Prime rib with whipped potatoes and gravy is classic. This year try something a little different. An orange- glazed, stuffed, rolled pork roast. Now it may sound complicated and time consuming but it’s not.

The pork is moist and succulent with a hint of sweetness. The stuffing is a combination of tangy sourdough bread crumbs with the pleasant bitterness of spinach and crunch from walnuts.

For 8 guests you’ll need  
Boneless pork loin roast 4 lbs. — not pork tenderloin  
Sourdough bread crumbs 1 1/2 cups  
Assorts herbs 1 cup. Sage and rosemary can be overpowering so keep those herbs to a minimum — no more than 1 teaspoon chopped. I like mostly parsley.  
Scallions 1 bunch  
Spinach 1 package finally chopped  
Walnut pieces 1/2 cup  
Oranges 2  
Butchers twine

Chop the herbs, scallions and spinach and add to the breadcrumbs. Stir in the walnuts. Add about 1/4 orange juice to each cup of stuffing.

Pork loins are pretty much round. What you’re going to do is cut the round into a flat sheet. Insert your knife about one inch from the top of the roast and slice turning the roast as you slice. Think of peeling an apple into one long strip. If you don’t want to do this you can either cut a pocket into the roast and push the stuffing into the pocket or ask your butcher to butterfly the roast.

Lay out the flat sheet of pork. Put the stuffing over the pork in an even layer. Pat the stuffing down. Roll the pork sheet back into its original cylinder shape, pushing the stuffing back inside the roll if it comes out.

Cut the butchers twine long enough to wrap around the roast. Tie in four of five places. Put the roast into a roasting pan.

Slice an orange thinly and arrange the slices over the pork. The oranges add flavor and keep the roast moist.

Put in a preheated 350 degree oven for 45 to 60 minutes. Exactly how long depends on how heavy the roast is. When you think it’s ready take it out of the oven to rest for 15 minutes then cut a slice towards the middle. The meat should be white and juices run clear. If the juices are pink, put back in the oven for another 15 minutes.

If you want to save time, throw in baby red potatoes, carrots and Brussels sprouts into the pan with the pork. It’s a one dish meal fit for a holiday.