

Celebrate With Cherries

This season and into the New Year!

Old Fashioned Cherry Cake*

Makes 8 servings.

Nonstick cooking spray
 1/2 cups sliced almonds, divided
 1/2 cups maraschino cherries, quartered
 1/2 cups all purpose flour
 1 teaspoon baking powder
 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
 3/4 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
 1 cup sugar
 3 large eggs at room temperature
 1 lemon
 1 tablespoon turbinado sugar
 Freshly whipped cream (optional)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray 8- or 9-inch cake pan well with cooking spray. Line with parchment paper on the bottom and sides. Finely grind 1/2 cups almonds in food processor (you should end up with 1 cup); combine with cherries in small bowl.

In separate bowl, place flour; take out 1 tablespoon flour and stir into cherry mixture. In the remaining flour add baking powder and salt; whisk to combine. Cream butter and sugar with electric mixer for 3 minutes, or until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well and scraping down sides of bowl after each addition. Add flour mixture and fold together. Stir in the cherry mixture. Finely grate lemon peel into the batter and add juice of the lemon, stir to combine. Flour the batter into the prepared pan. Sprinkle with remaining 1/4 cup sliced almonds and turbinado sugar on top. Bake 50 to 75 minutes or until cake is golden brown and toothpick inserted into center comes out clean. Cool in pan 15 minutes then remove from pan to wire rack. Cool completely.

Notes: Serve topped with whipped cream if desired. Cake is best eaten in first day or two. To store left overs wrap tightly in plastic wrap and freeze.



Cherry Heart Cupcakes*

Makes 12 cupcakes

Chocolate Covered Cherries
 12 maraschino cherries with stems
 1/3 cup dark chocolate chips

Cupcakes
 4 large eggs
 1/2 cup buttermilk
 1/2 cup melted butter
 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
 1 package Chocolate Cake mix*

Frosting and filling
 8 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
 1/2 cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
 Pinch kosher or fine sea salt
 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
 2 tablespoons maraschino cherry juice
 2 cups (maybe a bit more) powdered sugar
 12 maraschino cherries without stems

Chocolate Covered Cherries:
 Line a baking sheet with wax or parchment paper and then dry. Place the cherries on some paper towels and let them dry. Melt the chocolate chips in the microwave until they are almost all melted, about 1 1/2 - 2 minutes. Stir the chocolate until it is all melted and glossy. Dip the cherries into the chocolate and place on the prepared baking sheet, pressing down a little to create a flat surface. Refrigerate for 1/2 an hour or until the chocolate has hardened.

Chocolate Covered Cherries also make an easy and thoughtful homemade gift all on their own!

Cupcakes:
 Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line 12 standard muffin cups with paper liners.

In the bowl of an electric mixer, beat the eggs, buttermilk, butter and vanilla on medium speed for 2 minutes. Turn the mixer to low and slowly add the cake mix. Beat just until combined. Divide the mixture evenly among the prepared muffin cups, filling almost full. Bake for 20 minutes or until the tops are springy to the touch and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool for 5 minutes in the pan then remove to a cooling rack to finish cooling.

Frosting and filling:
 Beat the cream cheese, butter, salt, vanilla and cherry juice together until blended. Sift in 2 cups powdered sugar and mix to combine. If the frosting seems too soft, beat in a little more to stiffen it. The mixture should be a little thicker than heavily whipped cream.

Take about 1/2 cup of the frosting and put in a plastic food storage bag. Snip off the end of the bag so you can pipe the mixture into the cupcakes. Refrigerate the rest of the frosting until time to finish the cupcakes.

Assembly:
 Cut an inverted cone out of the top of each cupcake about the size of a nickel. Remove the cone and save it. With the end of a wooden spoon (or your finger) gently push the hole in the cupcake to widen it. Pipe a little frosting (about 1 teaspoon) into the hole. Place a cherry on the frosting and then pipe in a little more frosting to cover the cherry. Cut the end off the reserved cone and place it back on top of the cupcake to cover the hole. Repeat with remaining cupcakes.

Frost the cupcakes and place a chocolate covered cherry on top of each, gently pressing the cherry into the frosting. Can be made a day ahead. To store, keep refrigerated but take out of fridge about 10 minutes prior to serving to take the chill off.

*Substitute 1 package of King of Hearts Chocolate Cake Mix to make these cupcakes gluten-free.

When family and neighbors gather to celebrate you will want to be prepared for all the fun. Creating festive and delicious recipes has never been so simple. Maraschino cherries are the secret ingredient to adding taste, flavor and color to your favorite recipes.

From joyful holiday gatherings to simple milestone celebrations cookies are always a crowd pleaser. *Cherry Pecan Chews* will be picture-perfect at those neighborhood cookie exchanges. *Old Fashioned Cherry Cake* or *Cherry Florentines* will take center stage on your Holiday buffet this winter. For a New Year's open house or special celebration event be sure to serve *Cherry Heart Cupcakes*. Everyone loves cupcakes and the kids can assist with the preparation and score points helping decorate with *Chocolate Covered Cherries* as toppers.

Whatever the reason to celebrate - Thanksgiving, December's many holidays, New Year's, romantic Valentine's Day or a big/little birthday party you will find the perfect recipe at www.nationalcherries.com. Maraschino cherries are beautiful in beverages or as a colorful recipe ingredient. Kids love them and little hands can manage the task of decorating for a finished success. Celebrate life and enjoy the great taste of cherries all year!



Cherry Pecan Chews**

Makes 5 dozen.

2/3 cups flour
 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1 cup unsalted butter, softened
 1/2 cups sugar
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
 1 large egg
 1/3 cup finely chopped maraschino cherries
 1 cup toasted and finely chopped pecans

Note: The dough must chill before baking; preheat oven to 350°F when ready to bake.

Whisk flour, baking powder and salt together; set aside. Beat together butter, sugar, vanilla, and almond extracts until creamy. Beat in egg. Mix in cherries and pecans. Add flour mixture, mixing until well incorporated.

Pat dough into a disk, wrap in plastic wrap or wax paper, and chill for at least 1 hour, although overnight is best.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or spray with non-stick spray. Using a small cookie scoop, portion dough onto prepared baking sheet, spacing cookies 2" apart.

Bake for 11-12 minutes, or until lightly brown around the edges. Allow cookies to cool for at least 5 minutes before removing to a cooling rack.



Cherry Florentines*

Makes 24 cookies

1 tablespoon butter or butter substitute
 1/3 cup honey
 1/2 cup sliced almonds
 Zest of 1 large orange, finely grated
 2 tablespoons milk (or rice milk)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Heat butter over low heat in large saucepan. Add honey; increase the heat to medium-high and add the cherries, pine nuts, almonds and orange zest. Bring to a boil, stirring to coat all ingredients. Add milk. Continue to boil, stirring, until liquid has reduced and the mixture starts to hold together. Place well-spaced tablespoons of the mixture on prepared baking sheets. Bake 8 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from oven. Let cool in a dry place on baking sheets until crisp. Carefully peel cookies off the paper. Store in a cool, dry place-humidity will make them sticky.



*Courtesy of Carol Kivits at simplygluten-free.com, recipes have been adapted.
 **Courtesy of Louanne Bertrand at louanneskitchen.com

Maraschino Cherry Fun Facts

- Gluten Free
- Fat Free
- Sodium Free
- Only 10 calories per serving
- 2 grams sugar per serving
- Easy to keep on hand to add taste, flavor and texture to your favorite recipe, beverage, sundae or yogurt.
- Kids love them!
- Perfect for decorating cookies, cakes & cupcakes.

For more delicious recipes visit nationalcherries.com