

Cheers! A Toast to the New Year

Written by Debbi Covington
Monday, 21 December 2009 06:46

This week's menu features a twist on the traditional Southern New Year's Day feast. All you need to add to make it complete is a festive sparkling champagne!



Your guests can snack on Cranberry Brie while you're preparing dinner. Start your meal with black-eyed pea-laden Hoppin' John Soup. Blackeyed peas have been fundamental to the Southern diet for over 300 years. They are traditionally served on New Year's Day to bring good luck throughout the coming year. This delicious soup is even better when paired with a hot slice of Jalapeno Cornbread. A simple Goat Cheese Salad is a great selection for the salad course. Bourboned Pork Roast Flambe is an easy and impressive entree. Bourbon and brown sugar give the roast a slightly sweet taste. Even the pandrippings are fantastic! Lowcountry Collard Greens are eaten on New Year's Day for prosperity. When purchasing collards be sure to select young greens. They take less time to cook than older plants, and they're much more tender. All greens should be washed well, several times, to remove dirt and sand before cooking. Remove stems and drain well. Collards are traditionally prepared with a piece of pork for seasoning. They should only need a grinding of black pepper, a touch of vinegar, and a dab of pickled hot peppers for completion. Three Cheese Macaroni and Pineapple Au Gratin are excellent accompaniments! End your New Year's meal with comforting Bread Pudding with Rum Sauce. Have a safe, healthy, prosperous and Happy New Year!

Cranberry Brie

1 cup whole-berry cranberry sauce, crushed

2 tablespoons brown sugar

1/4 teaspoon rum extract

1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg

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1 (14-ounce) round Brie

1/4 cup slivered almonds, toasted

Whole wheat crackers

Delicious apples, sliced

Combine the cranberry sauce, brown sugar, rum extract and nutmeg in a bowl; mix well. Top the Brie with the cranberry mixture. Sprinkle with slivered almonds. Bake at 375 degrees for 12 to 15 minutes. Serve with crackers and sliced apples. Serves 12.

Hoppin' John Soup

2 cups dried black-eyed peas

Water to cover

1 large onion, chopped

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1 tablespoon butter

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8 cups water

1 tomato, chopped

2 bay leaves

1 tablespoon chili powder

3 leaves collard greens (torn into little bites)

1 meaty ham hock

Salt and pepper to taste

Cayenne pepper to taste

2/3 cup dry sherry

Sour cream

Fresh salsa

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Place dried black-eyed peas into a pot with water. Bring to a boil. Cover and remove from heat. Let pot stand for 1 hour. Drain peas and set aside. Place a stock pot on medium high heat and quickly saute the onion and garlic in the butter. Do not brown. Add the water, tomato, bay leaves, chili powder, collard greens, ham hock, salt, pepper, cayenne pepper, and black-eyed peas. Cook on medium low heat until peas are tender. Add water if the soup becomes too thick. Cook for about 3 hours. Remove ham hock and add sherry. Garnish with a dollop of sour cream and a little fresh salsa. Serves 6 to 8.

Jalapeno Cornbread

1 (8.5-ounce) package cornbread mix (Jiffy)

3/4 cup canned yellow corn, drained

1/2 cup pickled jalapeno peppers, diced

3/4 cup Cheddar cheese, grated

Prepare cornbread according to package instructions. Add corn, jalapeno

peppers, and cheese to cornbread mixture. Bake according to package

instructions. Serves 6.

Goat Cheese Salad

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1/4 cup orange juice

3 tablespoons white wine vinegar

1/8 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon ground white pepper

1/3 cup vegetable oil

1/4 cup olive oil

6 ounces goat cheese, cut into 1/4-inch thick slices

8 cups mixed salad greens

Fresh raspberries, blueberries, or blackberries Combine first 4 ingredients in container of an electric blender. With blender on high, gradually add oils in a slow steady stream, processing until blended. Place goat cheese slices on a lightly greased baking sheet. Heat in a preheated 300* oven for 4 to 5 minutes. Toss salad greens with vinaigrette. Arrange salad greens and warm goat cheese slices on individual salad plates. Garnish with fresh berries. Serves 6.

Bourboned Pork Roast Flambe

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1 (3 to 5 pound) pork loin roast

2 tablespoons spicy brown mustard

Salt

Pepper

2 garlic cloves, minced

2 tablespoons flour

1 cup brown sugar

1-1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1/2 cup bourbon

Rub roast with mustard, salt, pepper, and garlic. Mix together flour and brown sugar. Press mixture onto roast. Brown meat on top of stove in vegetable oil in a large skillet. Place browned roast in a preheated 450 degree oven for 15 to 20 minutes, until very brown. Remove pan from oven. Place in a safe place. Carefully pour bourbon over roast. Standing back with an outstretched arm, ignite with a long match. Use caution — it will ignite immediately, shooting up blue flames a couple of feet into the air. Let the flames burn out naturally, about 1 minute. Cover roast with aluminum foil. Return to oven and reduce heat to 350 degrees. Roast for an additional 20 minutes per pound. Serve roast with pan drippings. Serves 8 to 12.

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Lowcountry Collard Greens

12 slices bacon

1 large sweet onion, diced

1 bunch collard greens, washed thoroughly (or 1 (16-ounce) bag cut collards)

Water (approximately 2 cups)

2 tablespoons hot sauce

2 tablespoons vinegar

1/4 cup sugar

1 teaspoon black pepper

Salt, to taste

Pickled hot peppers

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Dice bacon and brown in Dutch oven. Remove and drain bacon, reserving 1 tablespoon pan drippings. Cook diced onion in 1 tablespoon pan drippings and saute until tender. Add collard greens and cover with water. Add remaining ingredients, including bacon, and simmer until tender. Adjust seasonings. Serve with pickled hot peppers. Serves 8 to 12.

Three Cheese Macaroni

1 (16-ounce) package mini penne or elbow macaroni

1/4 cup butter

1/4 cup all-purpose flour

1 (12-ounce) can evaporated milk

1/2 cup milk

2 cups (8 ounces) shredded sharp cheddar cheese

1 cup blue cheese crumbles

1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

1 tablespoon dried minced onion

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1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon pepper

1/4 teaspoon dry mustard

2 tablespoons butter, melted

1/3 cup dry bread crumbs

Cook penne according to package directions. Drain and set aside. Melt 1/4 cup butter in a large heavy saucepan over low heat. Whisk in flour until smooth. Cook 1 minute, whisking constantly. Gradually whisk in milk. Cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, until mixture is thickened and bubbly. Reduce heat. Stir in three cheeses, onion, Worcestershire sauce, salt, pepper, and dry mustard. Stir until cheese melts. Pour mixture over pasta and mix well. Place macaroni and cheese mixture in a lightly greased 2-quart casserole. Melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter. In a small bowl combine melted butter with bread crumbs. Sprinkle bread crumb mixture over macaroni and cheese. Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees for 30 minutes until casserole is bubbly and bread crumbs are toasted. Serves 6 to 8.

Pineapple Au Gratin

2 large cans chunk pineapple. Drained

6 tablespoons all-purpose flour

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1 cup sugar

2 cups grated Cheddar cheese (sharp or medium)

1 stick butter, melted

1 roll butter flavored crackers, crushed

Combine pineapple, flour, sugar, and Cheddar cheese in a medium bowl. Spread in lightly greased casserole dish. Combine crushed crackers with melted butter. Spread evenly over the pineapple-cheese mixture. Bake uncovered, at 350 degrees, for 25 to 35 minutes. Serves 8-12.

Bread Pudding with Rum Sauce

3 cups French bread (about 1/2 loaf)

2 eggs

2 egg yolks

1/4 cup sugar

1/2 cup heavy cream

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1/2 cup milk

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Pinch salt

1/4 teaspoon nutmeg

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1/4 cup golden raisins

2 ounces rum

1/2 cup pecan pieces, toasted

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided

4 tablespoons light brown sugar

1/4 cup rum

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2 tablespoons cream

Cube bread and place in a large bowl. (Day old, dry bread is best.) Combine eggs, egg yolks, sugar, cream, milk, and vanilla. Mix well. Season with salt, nutmeg, and cinnamon. Pour mixture over bread cubes and refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight. Do not mix or crush bread. Soak raisins in 2 ounces of rum for 8 hours or overnight. Gently fold raisins and pecans into bread mixture. Do not over-mix. Grease a 2-quart baking dish and fill with the pudding mixture. Cut 1 tablespoon of butter into tiny pieces. Dot the surface of the pudding with butter pieces. Cover with aluminum foil. Place baking dish into larger baking dish and fill with hot water up to half the height of the smaller baking dish. Bake in a preheated 350 degree oven for 45 minutes. Remove foil. Continue to bake for 10 to 15 minutes or until top is golden brown and center of pudding is set. Remove from water and cool slightly. In a small saucepan, melt remaining 3 tablespoons butter. Add brown sugar and rum. Cook over low heat until smooth. Add cream and warm through. Serve with bread pudding. Serves 6.

The writer owns Catering by Debbi Covington and is the author of the cookbook, Dining Under the Carolina Moon. Debbi's website address is www.cateringbydebbicovington.com . She may be reached at 525-0350 or by

email at debbic@cateringbydebbicovington.com.