

March Madness!

Written by Debbi Covington
Tuesday, 02 March 2010 10:39



One doesn't usually think of March as a holiday month – but take a look at all of these reasons to celebrate! March is National Celery Month, National Flour Month, National Frozen Food Month, National Nutrition Month, National Noodle Month, National Peanut Month and National Sauce Month. Chocolate Chip Cookie Week is the second week of the month and American Chocolate Week is the third week. Each day of the month has something to celebrate. All you have to do is pick a date, plan a party and invite your friends to join in the festivities! This week's recipes represent some of the March Food Holidays. If you're too busy to host a food celebration in March, don't despair. There's a food honored just about every day of the year. For a complete listing of food holidays and more fun food holiday facts visit www.thenibble.com.

Peanut Butter Pie (*National Peanut Butter Lover's Day – March 1st*)

1 (18-ounce) jar crunchy peanut butter

1 (12-ounce) container frozen whipped topping

1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk

2 prebaked graham cracker pie crusts

Chocolate syrup

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Mix peanut butter with sweetened condensed milk. Fold in whipped topping. Spoon mixture into pie crusts, layering with chocolate syrup. Pour chocolate syrup on top of each pie. Freeze for 6 hours before serving. Makes 2 pies.

Crabmeat Imperial (*National Crabmeat Day – March 9th*)

1/4 cup green pepper, chopped

1/4 cup celery, chopped

2 tablespoons yellow onion, chopped

1 (2-ounce) jar diced pimento, drained

2 tablespoons butter, melted

1 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped

1/2 teaspoon Old Bay seasoning (crab boil)

1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard

Dash hot sauce

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Dash cayenne pepper

1 egg

3 tablespoons mayonnaise

1 pound fresh crabmeat

Saute green pepper, celery, onion, and pimento in melted butter in large skillet until tender. Stir in parsley, Old Bay seasoning, Dijon mustard, hot sauce, and red pepper. Combine egg and mayonnaise; stir in seasoned celery mixture. Gently stir in fresh lump crab meat. Spoon into four lightly greased baking shells. Bake in preheated 350 degree oven for 30 minutes. Garnish with fresh parsley. Serves 4.

Baked Scallops (*National Baked Scallops Day – March 12th*)

2 lbs sea scallops

1 cup dry white wine

Salt

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided

1 medium onion, finely chopped

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2-1/2 tablespoons flour

1/2 cup fine bread crumbs

Place scallops in a medium saute pan. Add the wine and a pinch of salt. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to a simmer, cover and simmer for 4 minutes. No longer. Remove the scallops to a 1-1/2 quart casserole baking dish. Pour off the cooking liquid to a separate container and reserve. Heat 3 tablespoons of butter in the saute pan over medium heat. Add the onions and cook until wilted, a couple minutes. Slowly sprinkle the flour and add the cooking liquid over the butter onion mixture, whisking vigorously while you do so. As soon as the sauce is thickened, add it to the scallops in the casserole baking dish. Stir to fully incorporate the scallops into the sauce. Sprinkle bread crumbs over the scallops and dot with the remaining 3 tablespoons butter. Bake until bubbly and brown, approximately 15 minutes. Serve with lemon slices. Serves 6.

Spinach and Artichokes (*National Artichoke Hearts Day – March 16th*)

12 ounces cream cheese, softened

4 (10-ounce) packages frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained

1/2 cup butter, melted

3 tablespoons lemon juice

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1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon pepper

1/2 teaspoon seasoning salt

1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg

2 (8-ounce) cans sliced water chestnuts, drained

2 (14-ounce) cans artichoke hearts, drained and quartered

1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Butter 3 quart casserole dish. In bowl with mixer at medium speed, beat cream cheese until smooth. Reduce speed to low, beat in spinach, butter, lemon juice, salt, pepper, seasoning salt, and nutmeg until thoroughly combined. Stir in water chestnuts. Arrange artichokes on bottom of baking dish. Pour spinach mixture over artichokes. Cover with foil. Cut several slits in the foil to vent. Bake in a preheated 350 degree oven for about 30 minutes. Uncover and sprinkle top with Parmesan cheese. Bake until golden brown about 15 minutes more. Serves 12.

Sea Island Strawberry Bread (*National Strawberry Day – March 21st*)

2 cups sliced fresh strawberries

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2 cups sugar (plus extra for sprinkling)

3 cups all-purpose flour

1-1/2 tablespoons cinnamon

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 cup vegetable oil

4 large eggs, beaten

1-1/4 cups chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour 2 (9x5-inch) loaf pans. Place the strawberries in a bowl. Sprinkle with a little sugar and set aside (to draw out juices). In another bowl, combine sugar with the flour, cinnamon, salt, and baking soda. Mix well. Combine the oil and eggs with the strawberries, then stir them into the flour mixture. Add the pecans and stir until the dry ingredients are just moistened. Divide the batter between the prepared pans and bake for 50 to 60 minutes or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Let the bread cool completely in the pans on a wire rack. Serves 16, 8 slices per loaf.

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Pralines (*National Pecan Day – March 25th*)

2 cups sugar

1 cup buttermilk

1/3 cup bourbon

2 tablespoons butter

1/8 teaspoon salt

2 cups pecan pieces

1 teaspoon baking soda

Combine first 5 ingredients in a large heavy saucepan. Cook over low heat, stirring gently, until sugar dissolves. Add pecans. Cover and cook over medium heat 2 to 3 minutes to wash down sugar crystals from sides of pan. Uncover and cook, without stirring, to softball stage or until candy thermometer registers 235 degrees. Remove from heat and stir in soda. Beat with a wooden spoon just until mixture begins to thicken (about 5 to 8 minutes). Working rapidly, drop by tablespoonfuls onto greased wax paper; let stand until firm.

Makes 24.

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Three Cheese Macaroni (*Gourmet Macaroni and Cheese Day – March 26th*)

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

1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

1/4 teaspoon salt

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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.

Celebration Potatoes (*National Tater Day – March 31st*)

4 cups sliced red potatoes

8 slices bacon

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1/4 cup chopped onions

1/3 cup white vinegar

1/4 cup water

1 tablespoon all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon sugar

1-1/2 teaspoons salt

Pepper, to taste

3 tablespoons salad dressing

Cook potatoes in boiling water until tender. Drain potatoes and place in a large bowl. Fry bacon in a skillet until crisp. Remove bacon, add onions and cook until tender. Crumble bacon. Add bacon and onions to potatoes. Combine vinegar, water, flour, sugar, salt, and pepper in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until thickened. Remove from heat and add salad dressing. Pour mixture over potatoes, bacon, and onions. Stir gently to coat. Pour into a lightly greased medium sized casserole dish. Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Serve warm. Serves 6 to 8.

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