

Run for the Roses

Written by Debbi Covington
Tuesday, 23 April 2013 11:55



And they're off! More than just a horse race, the Kentucky Derby is a wonderful reason for hosting a gathering. This year the 139th Kentucky Derby will be held on Saturday, May 4. Since the race only lasts for about two minutes, Derby Day food and drink will be needed to make your party a grand success.

For this week's menu I've chosen three traditional Derby recipes. Start your party with Benedictine. This spread was made popular at Louisville's Benedict's restaurant and can be used as a dip or a sandwich filling. What's a Derby party without the drink of the day? A Mint Julep is traditionally served in a silver julep cup but is still very tasty served in a glass. The Kentucky Hot Brown is a regional favorite that originated at Louisville's Brown Hotel earlier this century. Many variations can be found, most commonly mushrooms are added and cheddar sauce is substituted. To host an elegant southern affair you should use your finest silver, crystal, china and linens. For a more casual bash, plan a southern barbeque theme using red and white checked tablecloths and fresh flowers. If you decide to join the action this year either theme will capture the flavor of the day. Enjoy!



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Benedictine

1 large cucumber

8 ounces cream cheese, softened

2 tablespoons grated onion

¼ teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon mayonnaise

Bread rounds, for tea sandwiches

Sliced cucumbers, for tea sandwiches

Peel and remove seeds from cucumber. Pare, grate and drain cucumber. Combine with remaining ingredients in a food processor. Serve with vegetables or as a tea sandwich spread.



Mint Juleps

¼ cup fresh mint leaves

2 cups water, heated

2 cups sugar

Cracked ice

Kentucky bourbon

To make syrup:

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Heat water. Whisk in sugar until dissolved. Remove from heat. Add mint and allow to steep for at least 40 minutes. Remove mint and strain syrup.

For each Mint Julep:

Add cracked ice to julep tumbler or glass. Add 1½ ounces bourbon. Add 2½ teaspoons syrup. Stir lightly. Garnish with fresh mint leaf.



Kentucky Hot Brown

For the sauce:

- ½ stick butter
- 6 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 3 cups warm milk
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese, divided
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 ounce heavy cream, whipped

For the hot browns:

- 1 tomato, thinly sliced
- 1 pound roasted turkey, thinly sliced
- 8 slices bacon, cooked and drained

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8 slices bread, toasted

In a large skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Stir in flour. Slowly whisk in the milk and 6 tablespoons of the Parmesan cheese. Stir in egg to thicken the sauce. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Remove from heat. Fold in whipped cream. For each serving, place two slices of toast onto a heat-proof dish. Cover the toast with tomato slices and turkey. Pour a very liberal amount of sauce over the top. Sprinkle with additional Parmesan cheese. Place under broiler until sauce is bubbly. Remove from broiler and criss-cross two slices of bacon on top. Serve immediately. Serves 4.

The writer owns Catering by Debbi Covington and is the author of two cookbooks, Celebrate Everything! and Dining Under the Carolina Moon. Debbi's website address is www.cateringbydebbicovington.com. She may be reached at 525-0350 or by email at dbc@cateringbydebbicovington.com.

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