



WELCOME THE SEASON

HOLIDAY CENTERPIECE IDEAS ♦ FRESH TAKES ON HOLIDAY SIDES
HOLIDAY COOKIES ARE SWEET STRESS BUSTERS



A special publication of The Eagle-Tribune, The Salem News, Gloucester Daily Times and The Daily News of Newburyport

Friday, November 18, 2022

8 easy holiday centerpiece ideas

The holiday season is a great time to make any home a bit more merry and bright. Most individuals let their personalities show through their home décor, and holiday decorating is just as personal as decorating throughout the rest of the year.

The main living areas of a home get the most decorating attention, with a Christmas tree or menorah taking a prominent position in the front window. Garlands, candles and other accoutrements also may dress up spaces. However, when it comes to holiday hosting, attention also should be given to the dining table — which can benefit from a festive centerpiece.

Premade centerpieces are undeniably attractive, but adding a homespun touch can be a fun creative pursuit and become a family

tradition. Explore these eight simple ideas to dress up your holiday table.

1. Frosted pine cones: Take advantage of a crisp winter's day to venture into a forest or park that is rich with evergreen trees. Gather pine cones from the forest floor and, if possible, a few evergreen boughs. Give the pine cones a touch of winter whimsy with a little faux snow in a can or even white paint. Nestle the boughs and pine cones into a wide-mouthed vase or bowl in the center of the table. Individual pine cones can later be turned into place cards for seating guests.

2. Holiday thanks: Cut many strips of paper roughly 6 inches in length from various colored pieces of paper to match the holiday theme. When guests arrive, ask them to write

a favorite holiday memory or two, or what they're thankful for. Twirl the paper strips around a pencil to curl them, and then place the curlicues into a decorative bowl in the center of the table. Later in the evening, the host or hostess can read some of the sentiments.

3. Magical forest: Use green and silver conical party hats to turn a table or sideboard into a veritable evergreen forest. Arrange them on a blanket of faux snow or white confetti.

4. Freshly cut: Select attractive flowers in vibrant holiday hues from a florist or even the supermarket floral section. Cut the stems and place them into an unusual display container, such as holiday themed mugs or a punch bowl.

5. Glass baubles: Who says ornaments should be exclusive to the tree? A



COURTESY PHOTO

Explore these eight simple ideas to dress up your holiday table.

crystal or glass cake stand can be transformed into an icy delight when topped with silver and clear glass ornaments.

6. Birch wood: The crisp white coloring of birch bark is right at home with holiday decor. Go stark with pieces of the cut wood in varying heights intermingled with white candles that mimic the shapes and

scale of the wood.

7. Fruit and vegetables: If guests are coming over and the race is on for a fast centerpiece, look no further than the kitchen. Lemons, artichokes, pears, or pomegranates look festive in a bowl interspersed with some greenery and baby's breath.

8. Cornucopia: The horn of plenty can be customized

to any holiday. Purchase a horn in wicker or woven grapevine and fill with flowers, fruit and greenery, or even painted gourds or miniature pumpkins.

Holiday hosts and hostesses should not neglect the dining table when they decorate. Festive centerpieces can be handmade without much effort on the part of hosts.



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Recycle and reduce waste for the holidays

The holiday season is a special time of year. Individuals often spend a little more on gifts, indulge a little more on rich foods and treats and make a concerted effort to enjoy more time with their loved ones during the holidays.

The tendency to overdo things during the holiday season can create a lot of waste. In fact, Americans produce 25 percent more garbage from Thanksgiving through the end of the year, according to Waste Advantage magazine, a publication of the waste and recycling industry. That uptick equates to one million tons of extra trash per week throughout the holidays.

Extra food, plastic and paper waste is generated this time of year, but people

can be mindful of the potential to go overboard and take some steps to be more waste-conscious as they entertain.

■ Reuse a small portion of wrapping paper or look for other wrapping items. Sunday comics, newsprint, colorful magazine pages, and even pieces of fabric can be used to wrap gifts in lieu of purchasing new wrapping paper. Otherwise, collect used wrapping paper and reuse it next year, doing the same with boxes and bows. According to researchers at Stanford University, if every American family wrapped just three presents in reused materials, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields.

■ Skip disposable party items. It's certainly easy

to use disposable plates, napkins and cups when hosting holiday parties, but that is very wasteful. Opt for durable, reusable products that can be packed away and used each year during holiday events.

■ Buy durable and reusable items as gifts. Avoid fad gifts and focus on items that will have staying power. Homemade gifts, such as foods, knitted scarves, artwork, and more, are generally eco-friendly.

■ Set up marked trash and recycling receptacles. Remind party guests to recycle the appropriate materials by clearly marking a pail designed for collecting recyclables, such as cans, plastic beverage bottles and glass wine bottles. Most hard plastics can be recycled.



COURTESY PHOTO

Waste can get out of control during the holidays, but there are ways to tame the excess.

■ Remove your name from catalog lists. Call companies and ask to be taken off promotional mailing lists to reduce paper waste.

■ Send a photo. Mail holiday card recipients photos


of the kids or the entire family in lieu of cards. They're apt to save the photos and display them, helping to keep even more paper trash out of landfills.

■ Research new recipes


for leftovers. With an abundance of food remaining after entertaining, turn leftovers into new meals by exploring recipes from friends or by doing a little research online.


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SWEET STRESS BUSTERS

Holiday cookies deliver more than taste

DEBBIE ARRINGTON
The Sacramento Bee (TNS)

You look like you need a cookie.

Nothing quite buoys our spirits like a sweet little treat. During the holiday season, we like to give cookies almost as much as we like to munch, spreading some edible cheer. According to a study by OnePoll.com, three out of every four

Americans would consider giving cookies as a holiday gift, and even more expect to eat some.

Why? Besides the obvious appeal to our national sweet tooth, cookies pack some emotional extras, triggering fond memories and feelings of well being. Nearly four out of five Americans say a good cookie definitely can make them feel happy. According to the same

study, almost two-thirds of adults associate cookies with a sense of comfort; even more say that a good cookie is an automatic mood lifter. One out of every three people say a cookie break helps them relax.

Doesn't that sound like a good excuse for a cookie right now?

The holiday baking season gives us more



proof that we are a cookie nation. Less than 1 percent of Americans say they don't like cookies. What other gift ideas have that kind of baked-in appeal?

Be it basic chocolate chip or delicate macaroons, cookies rank as our favorite quick dessert or snack. An

See **COOKIES**, Page S10



This holiday season,
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that last a **lifetime**.

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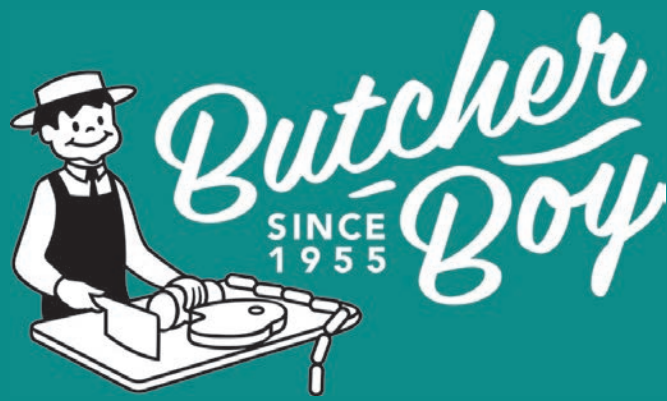
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COOKIES

■ Continued from Page S6

average American will consume roughly 19,000 cookies in adulthood. That's about a cookie a day from age 18 to 70.

And if you guessed that cookie consumption tends to peak in December, grab another snickerdoodle. That combination of gifting and needed stress relief puts us in a serious baking mode for something that brings smiles.

Looking for some fresh ideas for your cookie tray? Here are a selection of old and new favorites, compiled by The Washington Post for its 13th annual holiday cookie collection.

So, what are you waiting for? Preheat that oven and make someone happy – starting with you.

BETTYANNE'S FLORENTINES

Yield: 36 to 40 cookies.

These buttery-tasting, crispy-crunchy cookies

couldn't be easier to make. Some folks coat the florentine bottoms with dark or white chocolate, but we like these just as they are.

You will need a nonstick, 12-well muffin pan, or you can use a regular muffin pan and foil baking cup liners.

Make ahead: Store between layers of parchment or wax paper in an airtight container at room temperature. These freeze well, for up to 3 months; bring to room temperature before serving.

From Winnipeg, Manitoba, home baker Bettyanne Hershfield.

8 ounces (2 sticks) unsalted butter

1 cup sugar

1/3 cup honey

1/3 cup heavy cream

4 1/2 cups skinless sliced

blanched almonds

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.

Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the sugar and honey; stir until dissolved and smooth. Stir in the heavy cream for a few

minutes, forming a light caramel. Turn off the heat. Stir in the almonds until they are all well coated.

Use about a third of the mixture to fill the bottoms of the muffin wells, compacting each portion into a disk. Bake (middle rack) for 8 to 9 minutes, until bubbling and just golden brown at the edges.

Let cool in the muffin pan for 7 to 10 minutes, then use a small offset spatula or table knife to release each florentine; some may still be a little flexible. Transfer to a sheet of parchment or wax paper to cool and set completely.

Repeat with the remaining almond mixture. If you are using foil liners, replace with new ones for subsequent batches.

Nutrition — Per cookie (based on 40): 170 calories, 4 g protein, 10 g carbohydrates, 14 g fat, 4 g saturated fat, 15 mg cholesterol, 0 mg sodium, 2 g dietary fiber, 8 g sugar



CARDAMOM AND CURRANT SNICKERDOODLE SKILLET COOKIE

Yield: 8 to 10 servings.

This recipe combines the snickerdoodle spice so many people love with the ease of a skillet cookie.

Make ahead: Wedges of this skillet cookie should be cut as soon as you can, rather than storing the uncut slab from the skillet.

Adapted from a holiday recipe at TheFeedFeed.com.

3/4 cup granulated sugar

1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

3/4 teaspoon ground cardamom

8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature

1/4 cup packed light brown sugar

2 large eggs

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 1/2 cups flour

1 teaspoon cream of tartar

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons (a scant 1/2 cup) dried currants

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Whisk together 1/4 cup of the granulated sugar, all the cinnamon and 1/2

teaspoon of the cardamom in a medium bowl. Sprinkle half this mixture in an 8-inch cast-iron skillet.

Combine the butter, the remaining 1/2 cup of granulated sugar and the brown sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer or use a handheld electric mixer. Beat on medium-low speed until well incorporated. Add the eggs one at a time, then the vanilla extract. Stop to scrape down the bowl.

Add the flour, cream of tartar, the remaining 1/4 teaspoon of cardamom, the baking soda and salt; beat on medium speed to form a dough that gathers together. Reduce the speed to low; add the currants and beat until just evenly distributed.

Gently press the dough into the skillet in an even layer, trying to keep that bottom coating of spiced sugar in place. Sprinkle the remaining spiced sugar mixture evenly over the top. Bake (middle rack) for about 40 minutes; if it seems like it's browning too quickly, lay a large piece of aluminum foil over the top.

Let cool in the pan (where it will continue to bake a little) for at least 15 minutes

before cutting into wedges.

Nutrition — Per serving (based on 10): 260 calories, 4 g protein, 39 g carbohydrates, 10 g fat, 6 g saturated fat, 60 mg cholesterol, 170 mg sodium, 0 g dietary fiber, 24 g sugar

CRANBERRY DIVINITY

Yield: 24 to 30 pieces.

This creamy sweet confection first appeared in the 1950 edition of "Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book." Chopped pecans are typically mixed in, but we've used dried cranberries instead for a festive Christmas touch.

You'll need an instant-read or candy thermometer.

Make ahead: The divinity can be stored between sheets of wax paper in an airtight container at room temperature for a week or two; it will become chewier over time.

Adapted from "Betty Crocker Lost Recipes: Beloved Vintage Recipes for Today's Kitchen" (Betty Crocker, 2017).

2 large egg whites

1/2 cup water

1/2 cup light corn syrup

2 cups sugar

1/4 teaspoon salt (optional)

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

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1 cup dried
cranberries,
chopped

Line two baking
sheets with wax
paper.

Beat the egg whites
in the bowl of a stand
mixer (paddle attach-
ment) or use a hand-
held electric mixer on
high speed until soft
peaks form.

Combine the water,
corn syrup, sugar
and salt, if using, in a
large saucepan over
medium heat, stir-
ring until the sugar
has dissolved. Cook,
without stirring, for 8
to 10 minutes or until
the temperature of
the mixture registers
250 degrees F. on an
instant-read thermometer.

While the egg whites are
being beaten on high speed,
gradually add the syrup
mixture. Beat for a total of 9
or 10 minutes, or until stiff
peaks form. The surface of
the meringue mixture will
turn from glossy to textured.

Use a spatula to fold in

the vanilla extract and
dried cranberries by hand,
then quickly create 24 to 30
rounded teaspoonfuls on the
baking sheets. Let stand for
about 30 minutes, or until
completely set, before serv-
ing or storing.

Nutrition — Per piece
(based on 30): 80 calories,

0 g protein, 21 g carbohy-
drates, 0 g fat, 0 g saturated
fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 10 mg
sodium, 0 g dietary fiber, 20
g sugar

GINGER GINGER COOKIES

Yield: 24 cookies.

These slice-and-bake
cookies are crisp on the
outside and chewy on the



inside. They have the
added zip of crystallized
ginger.

We found that chilling
a wrapped log of dough
seated inside a cardboard
tube (from a paper towel
roll) that has been split
open end-to-end will
ensure the logs keep their
rounded shape.

Make ahead: The logs of
dough need to be refrigerated
for a total of 3 hours, or up to
overnight. The logs also can
be frozen for up to 3 months;
defrost frozen logs for 3
hours in the refrigerator, or
overnight. The cookies can
be stored in an airtight con-
tainer for up to 3 days.

Adapted from "Slice and
Bake Cookies: Fast Recipes
From Your Refrigerator or
Freezer" by Elinor Klivans
(Chronicle, 2013).

2 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground
cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon freshly grated
nutmeg

½ cup canola oil
½ cup molasses
1 cup packed dark brown
sugar
1 large egg
4 tablespoons granulated
sugar
½ cup crystallized ginger,
coarsely chopped

Whisk together the flour,
baking soda, salt, cinnamon,
ginger, cloves and nutmeg in
a medium bowl.

Combine the oil, molasses,
brown sugar and egg in the
bowl of a stand mixer, or use
a handheld electric mixer;
beat for about 20 seconds on
medium speed until smooth.
Reduce the speed to low;
add the flour mixture, beat-
ing just long enough to form
a dough with no trace of dry
ingredients.

Divide the dough in half,
and place each portion on a
large piece of plastic wrap.
Shape each one into a
12-inch log, then sprinkle 1
½ tablespoons of the gran-
ulated sugar over each one,
rolling it back and forth
until evenly coated. Next,
use half the chopped crys-
tallized ginger to sprinkle

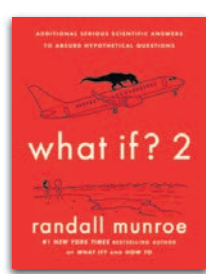
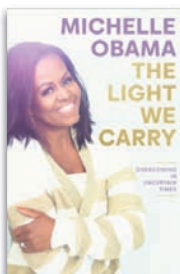
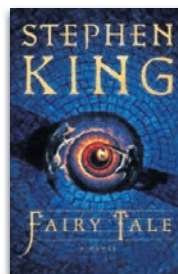
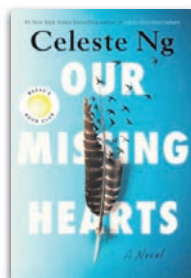
over the logs; roll them
back and forth to press in
and coat evenly. Wrap in
plastic wrap and seat each
log inside one of the split
cardboard tubes. Refrig-
erate for 3 hours, or up to
overnight.

When ready to bake, pre-
heat the oven to 350 degrees
F. Line a few baking sheets
with parchment paper or
silicone liners.

Unwrap the logs. Cut each
one into 12 equal slices,
spacing them on the baking
sheets at least 1 inch apart.
Sprinkle them with the
remaining granulated sugar
and the remaining chopped
crystallized ginger. Bake
(middle rack) one sheet at
a time, for 10 minutes, until
they flatten a bit and cracks
form on the tops. Let cool
on the baking sheet for 10
minutes, then transfer the
cookies to a wire rack to
cool completely.

Nutrition — Per cookie:
150 calories, 1 g protein, 26
g carbohydrates, 5 g fat, 0
g saturated fat, 10 mg cho-
lesterol, 125 mg sodium, 0 g
dietary fiber, 16 g sugar

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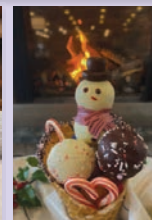
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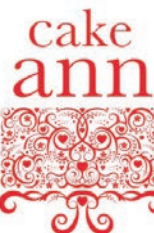


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While it's frustrating for hosts doing a culinary balancing act when guests do not heed etiquette and show up on time, there are some ways to plan ahead for late arrivals.

Entertaining options to accommodate late arrivals

In a perfect entertaining scenario, all guests arrive on time and food comes out of the oven at the ideal temperature. Even though holiday hosts can hope for the best, it's a good idea to plan for instances when guests take liberties in regard to when they show up to dinner.

People have their own interpretations of what qualifies as "on time." For example, for an event that begins at 4 p.m., some guests may turn up at exactly 4 p.m., while others may arrive an hour or more later. According to etiquette expert Miss Manners, ordinarily it is understood that dinner is served roughly a half hour after the stated invitation time. While it's frustrating for hosts doing a culinary balancing act when guests do not heed etiquette and show up on time, there are some ways to plan ahead for late arrivals.

■ **Know your audience.** If you have perpetual late arrivals, you likely know who the culprits will be.

Adjust their invitations so that their proposed arrival times are one hour earlier than the rest of the invitees.

■ **Shift accountability.** On the invitation, clearly state your desires with something such as, "Arrive at 3, dinner will be served at 5." This gives guests a window of flexibility. Plus, you'll be largely off the hook if the meal is already on the table when late comers arrive. Simply say, "We knew you wouldn't want us to wait for you." Plus, if guests know exactly when food will be served, they can fortify themselves with snacks if they must be late.

■ **Plan make-ahead dishes.** Some meals taste even better when they've been allowed to sit and the flavors meld. These include quiches, layered pasta dishes, casseroles, and even stews. Incorporate them into holiday entertaining plans, and then you can reheat as needed prior to dinner being served.

■ **Use the oven as a warmer.** Even something like a roast or turkey can be kept warm for some time

without compromising on quality. Foods can typically be kept hot in a preheated oven set to 200 F to 250 F. Even lower temperatures between 160 F and 170 F will keep food safe at an internal temperature of 140 F without it actually being cooked more. If it goes above 140 F, turn off the oven and then back on as needed.

■ **Choose foods that cook quickly.** If you prefer to cook to order for guests, then have appetizers on hand to keep early guests satisfied. Then when everyone has arrived you can rely on fast-cooking items like steaks, chops and cutlets. Thin cuts of meats and poultry will take much less time to cook than bris-kets and roasts. Give them a holiday makeover with innovative flavors and impressive garnishes.

■ **Consider catering.** Catering companies are masters at keeping food at the ready for guests. A buffet service will keep food hot in chafing dishes, which is perfect for a holiday party with an open door policy on arrival time.

A classic cocktail toasts the season with a twist

People indulge just a little bit more when the holidays arrive. That may translate into enjoying an extra meal at a favorite neighborhood restaurant, buying one or two additional gifts to stash under the tree or hosting a gathering with close friends that stretches into the wee hours of the morning.

Some choose to indulge by sipping a cocktail while watching the snowflakes fall. A whiskey sour is a classic that can be given a makeover with some ingredients that are tailor-made for the holiday season. In this recipe for "Rosemary Cranberry Whiskey Sour," courtesy of the editors of American Lifestyle, fragrant and flavorful fruit and herbs blend well with the tartness of the drink.

Rosemary Cranberry Whiskey Sour
Makes 4



COURTESY PHOTO

Rosemary Cranberry Whiskey Sour.

Rosemary Simple Syrup:

1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup water
2 tablespoons fresh rosemary

Cocktail:

6 ounces whiskey

3 ounces sour mix
16 ounces cranberry juice
Cranberries, for garnish
Rosemary sprigs, for garnish

1. In a small pot over medium heat, whisk together the sugar, water and rosemary. Simmer for 2 to 3 minutes, creating a syrup. Remove from the heat, strain to remove the rosemary, and refrigerate.

2. Fill a shaker with ice, and pour in the whiskey, sour mix, simple syrup, and cranberry juice. Shake, and pour into ice-filled glasses. Garnish with cranberries and rosemary before serving.

Tip: This recipe is great without the whiskey, as a classy, adult "zero proof" drink. You can make a big batch as a lovely punch — leave some cranberries and rosemary on the side for garnish.

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Bored with traditional holiday sides? Here are ways to mix it up

AMANDA CUSHMAN
The Charlotte Observer (TNS)

Holidays are a time of year for entertaining and family gatherings with food taking center stage.

Dishes can be wonderfully traditional or you can mix it up with a new twist on the classics. I love side dishes and often make a meal out of the various side offerings at a holiday table. The creativity, variety and choice of flavors make side dishes a great vehicle to try something new.

Most of us prepare the traditional entrees, such as roast turkey or ham or possibly a beef tenderloin, but the sides are where you can kick it up a notch and experiment with something new. I tend to lean toward texture and color to add pop to my holiday sides and enjoy trying different herbs, spices and nuts to create delicious results.

An added benefit of side dishes is that most can be prepared ahead and either frozen or refrigerated with just a quick heating before serving. I recommend doing as many dishes as possible ahead of time for a stress-free holiday.

Try the following ways to mix up your sides for the holidays and enjoy your time with friends and family.

ADD TEXTURE

I always have a variety of nuts and dried fruit on hand to add crunch or chewiness to a rice or grain dish. I love almonds, pine nuts, walnuts, hazelnuts and cashews.

The best way to store nuts is in the freezer to ensure freshness. Remember to toast them in a dry skillet to bring out the nutty flavor.

Dried cranberries, currants, raisins and apricots are all wonderful and add a touch of sweetness as well as color. Adding thinly sliced scallion, shallots or finely diced red onion is another way to get some added texture and flavor to your side dishes.

SPICE IT UP

Indian spices are wonderful with just about any dish as they add depth and warmth, especially in the colder months. Cumin, coriander, turmeric, cardamom, mustard seeds and ground ginger are great with roasted vegetables, grains, beans and sautéed vegetables.

I often add toasted spices to mashed potatoes for an extra kick. Sumac is a spice that has gained popularity and has a citrus flavor that works well with any vegetable or bean spread, such as hummus.

COOKING METHODS

Vegetables and starches, including potatoes, are well suited to roasting, pureeing, sautéing and grilling. I find it fun to try a new method of preparing your standard side dish, such as pureeing your vegetables, for a beautiful presentation. There's the added bonus of being able to prepare them ahead. Parsnip, butternut squash and pea puree are especially delicious.

TRY SOMETHING NEW

There are so many vegetables, grains and carbohydrates, why not try something new this year?

— The roasted fennel and carrot recipe here is a great example. Fennel lends itself well to a number of preparations, such as roasting, grilling, steaming, pureeing and thinly sliced in a salad. With its unique anise flavor and versatility, I use it regularly in all kinds of side dishes.

— Cauliflower mashed “potatoes” could be your new go-to dish for the holidays. Flavor it with butter and milk or cream, and you'll never miss potatoes.

— Try sweet potato oven fries. Simple to make and good for you as well, these vitamin packed spuds are perfect to include in your repertoire.

The following recipes are versatile and easy to prepare ahead. All three dishes



can be made the day before and heated before serving for about 10 to 15 minutes, covered, in a serving dish.

The rice can be made with a variety of grains from quinoa to bulgur to couscous. Remember, you can create your own wonderful side dishes by mixing it up and choosing an ingredient that you may not have used before.

ACORN SQUASH WEDGES WITH PARSLEY WALNUT PESTO

I make this dish often as an entrée when I want to serve a meatless meal. You can substitute any nut for the walnuts, such as pine nuts, almonds, hazelnuts or pistachios. Basil is commonly used for pesto and can be used if desired.

- 2 medium acorn squash, halved, seeded and cut in 3-inch wedges
- Olive oil for drizzling
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 cups Italian parsley, stems removed, washed
- ½ cup walnut pieces, lightly toasted
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- ⅓ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ cup olive oil

Heat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit. Transfer the wedges of squash to a rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle lightly with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast until tender, about 40

minutes. Set aside, covered with foil. Lower the oven to 350 degrees.

Meanwhile, combine the parsley, walnuts, garlic and parmesan in a food processor and blend until smooth, add the oil slowly with the machine running and season well with salt and pepper to taste.

Spoon some of the pesto into each wedge of squash and return to the oven. Bake for about 10 minutes until the filling is hot. Transfer to a serving dish and serve warm.

Yield: 8 servings.

WILD AND BROWN RICE PILAF WITH CRANBERRIES, ALMONDS AND PARSLEY

This is one of my favorite side dishes for any time of the year. The combination of brown and wild rice makes for a wonderful chewy, nutty flavor. The addition of the toasted almonds, slightly sweet cranberries and fresh herbs makes this dish a hit. You can also substitute rice with a variety of grains, such as quinoa, bulgur to couscous.

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 cup short grain brown rice
- 5 ½ cups chicken or vegetable broth
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 cup wild rice
- ½ cup sliced or slivered

- almonds, toasted
- ⅓ cup dried cranberries
- 3 tablespoons chopped Italian parsley
- 1 tablespoon thyme, chopped
- 4 scallions, thinly sliced

Heat a medium saucepan over medium heat and add the olive oil. Sauté the onion until tender, about 3 minutes. Add the brown rice and sauté 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add two and a half cups of the broth and a pinch of salt and bring to a boil. Cover the pan and reduce the heat to low. Cook until tender, about 25 to 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine the wild rice, a pinch of salt and the remaining three cups of broth in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium high heat and cover. Lower the heat to medium and cook until tender, about 35 to 40 minutes.

Allow both rices to sit, covered for about 5 to 10 minutes, off the heat. Drain the wild rice if needed.

Combine the almonds, cranberries, parsley, thyme and scallions in a serving dish. Add the warm rice and mix well. Add salt and pepper to taste and serve warm.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings.

ROASTED FENNEL, CARROTS AND SHALLOTS

Roasted vegetables can be made with your favorite veggies, such as

Brussels sprouts, zucchini, mushrooms, cauliflower and red peppers. The caramelization that happens when you cook vegetables not only is delicious but makes for an appetizing presentation. You can use any toasted nut for this dish such as almonds, walnuts or hazelnuts.

- 2 large fennel bulbs, stalks removed, halved, core removed
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 6 medium carrots, peeled and cut into ¼-inch rounds on the diagonal
- 8 medium shallots, peeled and halved
- 1 head garlic, peeled and cut in half lengthwise
- 1 tablespoon thyme, chopped
- 2 teaspoons rosemary, chopped
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 3 tablespoons toasted pine nuts

Heat the oven to 425 degrees. Slice the fennel bulbs into ¼-inch wedges and transfer to a large bowl. Add the olive oil, carrots, shallots, garlic, thyme, rosemary, salt and pepper and toss well. Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet and roast until tender, about 35 to 40 minutes. Spoon into a serving dish and scatter the pine nuts over the top and serve.

Yield: 6 servings



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