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pacific services
software and training

Christmas Cookbook

2021

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Introduction

I wrote a Christmas cookbook for the last few years that I ran South Pacific Software Services. This is the first year of the Pacific Software Services and Training. I hope that you enjoy this book. Let me know how you go at sue@psst.net.au

This year I have chosen festive recipes from various countries that I have visited, outside the Pacific Islands. They are all quite simple, don't use expensive ingredients, and don't need special equipment.

I hope that you enjoy my recipes and have a wonderful time eating what you create.

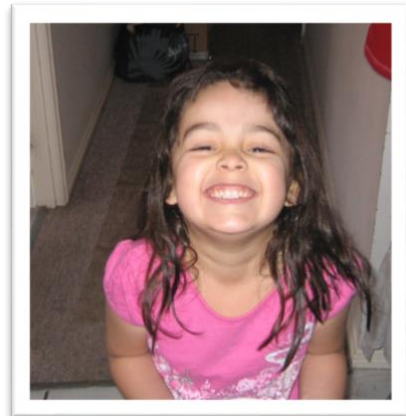
As a lot of these recipes come from my mother, here is a picture of my parents, Tutzi and Oskar, around 1950.



Starters

Japanese Wasabi Devilled Eggs

A few years ago, I took my granddaughter Tish (James's daughter) to Japan to walk the Kumano Kodo Trail www.kumanokodo.com.au/ in case you are interested. We both loved the Japanese food. Try this! Not strictly speaking Japanese but using their flavours. The photo is of Tish, many years ago.



- 8 eggs
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 3 tablespoons minced green onions
- 2 teaspoons rice wine vinegar
- 1 ½ teaspoons wasabi paste
- coarse salt
- ½ cup fresh pea shoots, or as needed, if you like them – I do not
- 16 pickled ginger slices

Method

1. Place eggs in a saucepan; cover with water. Bring to a boil, remove from heat, and let eggs stand in hot water for 15 minutes. Remove eggs from hot water, cool under cold running water, and peel.
2. Cut each egg in half lengthwise, place egg yolks in a bowl.
3. Mash yolks with a fork until smooth
4. Stir in mayonnaise, green onions, rice wine vinegar, and wasabi paste. Season with salt.
5. Arrange egg white halves cut-side-up on a serving platter. Spoon yolk mixture into whites; garnish each egg half with pickled ginger and pea shoots.



Slovakian Liptauer

Liptauer is a paprika-infused cheese spread that is perfect for a party. Liptauer (pronounced LIP-tower) is a popular appetizer spread throughout Hungary, Austria, and Slovakia.

My father lived for many years in Vienna, the capital of Australia, and he loved this. The name comes from the Liptov region of Slovakia.



Again, this is an adaptation of my mother's recipe.

2 1/2 cups Greek yogurt
120 grams salted butter, softened
1 garlic clove, minced
2 Tbsp onion, finely chopped
1 Tbsp capers, chopped
1 ½ tsp sweet paprika – if you can get it Hungarian, if not anything but smoked
1 tsp caraway seeds, ground
1 tsp prepared mustard
¼ tsp salt

Method

1. The day before you will make this, line a sieve with cheesecloth, or I use a clean Chux cloth, and put the yogurt in it.
2. Let it drain overnight, out of the fridge.
3. Refrigerate in the morning, still straining out the whey.
4. When you are ready to make the Liptauer, give the whey to your dog or cat.
5. Combine all ingredients in a medium mixing bowl and blend using an electric hand mixer, until everything is well mixed, and the cheese is fluffy.
6. Refrigerate the spread in an airtight container for at least 1 hour before serving.

Liptauer is traditionally served on rye or pumpernickel bread, but it is tasty when spread on any kind of bread or crackers.

Spread will last for 1-2 weeks in the refrigerator.



Soups

Ikarian Fish Soup

Ikaria is an island in Greece, where the people live much longer lives than most people on the planet. The recipe comes from a book and TV series by Diane Kochilas. It is totally delicious as well as healthy.



- 1 cup extra virgin Greek olive oil
- 2 large red onions
- 1 ½ cups cupped celery
- 2 large potatoes, cut into 2 cm cubes
- 3 large carrots, cut into 2 cm cubes
- 1 kilo fresh fish either one large one or a variety of smaller soup fish, cleaned and gutted
- 6 cups water
- 2 large eggs
- Strained fresh juice of 2 large lemons
- Salt pepper to taste
- 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 cup fresh Greek virgin olive oil

Method

1. Season the fish inside and out with salt and pepper.

2. Place the vegetables in a large stock pot/ Place the fish above the vegetables. If there are bones in the fish you could put them in a cheesecloth bag, tied loosely, to avoid bones in the soup.
3. Pour in enough water to barely cover the fish.
4. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, and cook 20 minutes or so until the fish is cooked.
5. Remove the fish and cover the fish to keep warm.
6. Add remaining water to the soup, and boil until the vegetables are cooked.
7. In a separate bowl, beat the eggs until very frothy, about 5 minutes.
8. Slowly drizzle in the lemon juice, whisking constantly.
9. Add a spoon full of hot fish broth, while stirring constantly. Then add another, and when that is incorporated add a third spoon of hot soup.
10. Take the soup off the heat.
11. Add your egg and lemon mixture back into your soup. Swirl until evenly distributed.
12. Add back the fish.
13. Serve immediately, with the oil and lemon juice in separate bowls to be added as people want to.

Eat this with thick slices of fresh crusty bread.



Ukrainian Borscht

Where my dad was born was the Austro-Hungarian empire at the time he was born, became Poland, and is currently in the Ukraine.

5 medium fresh beets
Kosher salt
2 cups vegetable stock, preferably homemade
16 ounces sour cream, plus extra for serving
1/2 cup plain yogurt
1/8 cup sugar
2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
2 teaspoons white vinegar
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 cups medium-diced Lebanese cucumbers, seeds removed
1/2 cup chopped green onions, white and green parts
2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill, plus extra for serving



1. Place the beets in a large pot of boiling salted water and cook uncovered until the beets are tender, 30 to 40 minutes.
2. Remove the beets to a bowl with a slotted spoon and set aside to cool. Strain the cooking liquid through a fine sieve and set aside to cool.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together 1 1/2 cups of the beet cooking liquid, the vegetable stock, sour cream, yogurt, sugar, lemon juice, vinegar, 1 tablespoon salt, and the pepper.
4. Peel the cooled beets with a small paring knife or rub the skins off with your hands.
5. Cut the beets in small to medium dice.
6. Add the beets, cucumber, scallions, and dill to the soup.
7. Cover with plastic wrap and chill for at least 4 hours or overnight. Season, to taste, and serve cold with a dollop of sour cream and an extra sprig of fresh dill, or alternatively, serve the cold soup with hot boiled potatoes in the middle.



Main courses

Icelandic Herring Salad

About 10 years ago I went to Iceland and sailed from there to Greenland. It is a beautiful country with very friendly people, and great food – except for their delicacy called Rotten Shark.

Today fermented shark or “kæstur hákarl” as it is called in Icelandic is simply a way for Icelanders to stay in touch with their roots and ancestry.

Soft, white hákarl from the shark's body has a cheese-like texture, while reddish meat from the belly is chewier. Those who sample it describe the flavor in far-ranging terms, from fishy and mild to strong like blue cheese. Most agree that the lingering aftertaste can be described only as urine.



This recipe is delicious, and I guarantee you has no urine aftertaste!

3 salted herring
1 green apple
75 gm pickled beetroot
4-5 pickled gherkins
¼ red onion, chopped
100 ml sour cream
100 ml mayonnaise
Salt and pepper
3 hard-boiled eggs
A few sprigs of parsley

1. Soak the herring overnight in cold water.
2. Pat dry and cut into small pieces.
3. Peel and core the apple and cut into small pieces, along with the beetroot and gerkins.
4. Mix all ingredients except the eggs and parsley.
5. Chill.
6. When ready to serve, decorate with the eggs cut into wedges and the parsley.

Serve with rye bread.



Turkish Stuffed Peppers

A lifetime ago (1978), I backpacked around the world, and on my travels met the man who I eventually married, Mac. In our travels we stayed for a while in Turkey. The easiest way to travel around Turkey is by bus. Each bus station was like a mini bazaar, and there were always huge platters of the most delicious stuffed vegetables imaginable. Here is my version.



Serves 6

Is great as a cold lunch

1 large onion, finely chopped
6 tablespoons of olive oil
1 ¼ cups short grain rice
2 teaspoons sugar
3 tablespoons pine nuts, or galip nuts*
3 tablespoons of tiny black raisins
1 tomato, peeled and chopped
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon allspice
2 tablespoons chopped mint
2 tablespoons chopped dill
2 tablespoons chopped flat parsley
Juice of 1 lemon
6 medium red capsicum (bell peppers), or eggplant, or tomatoes
Salt and pepper to taste



1. Fry the onion in ½ the oil.
2. Stir in the rice and continue to stir until the rice is translucent.
3. Add 2 cups of water, salt pepper and sugar,
4. Stir well and cook on low heat until all the water is absorbed, but the rice is still a bit underdone.
5. Stir in rest of ingredient, including the oil. Use dried herbs if you don't have fresh.
6. Cut the tops off the peppers and keep as lids.
7. Clean out the peppers, or for the other vegetables. Clear out a good space for the filling.
8. Fill the peppers and replace the caps.

9. Arrange the peppers side by side in a baking dish,
10. Pour about 1 cm water into the dish and bake in the preheated 190 degrees oven for about 45 minutes until the peppers are soft but not falling apart.

Serve hot or cold, and with a bowl of yogurt with a crushed garlic clove stirred though it.



**Canarium indicum* is a tall indigenous tree that grows throughout the South Pacific and produces edible nuts as well as timber. The nuts are known in Vanuatu as nangai, in the Solomon Islands as ngali and in Papua New Guinea as galip. The genus *Canarium* (Burseraceae) contains approximately 100 species, with eight species having edible kernels and *Canarium indicum* being the most widely utilized species in the Pacific.



Desserts

American Santa Strawberries

I lived in Princeton, New Jersey, USA from 1972-1975. Americans take Christmas super seriously and are fantastically generous to foreigners. The amounts that they ate at Christmas were amazing, and they always shared everything.



This are hardly a recipe though.

Sweetened whipped cream

Strawberries

Tiny raisins, or cut pieces off raisins

Put together and use a Q-tip to put the Santa pom-poms and buttons on.



Canadian Maple Leche Flan

Leche Flan is a favourite dessert in the Philippines. Like creme caramel, it's a rich, baked custard made with egg yolks and sweetened condensed milk. The Canadian version uses maple syrup as well.

I lived in Canada for 6 years, as my husband was Canadian. This was a Christmas dessert that we all loved.



1 ¼ cups sugar, divided
¼ cup water, more for dish
7 tbsp maple syrup, divided
2 cups skim milk, or regular
1 tsp vanilla essence
6 egg yolks
½ tsp salt

1. Preheat oven to 160°C. Place a small baking dish in a large casserole or deep baking dish.
2. In a small saucepan, heat 1 cup of sugar with water over high. Without agitating, let mixture come to a boil and cook until deep golden and fragrant, about 6 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in 3 tbsp maple syrup. Immediately tip hot caramel onto the small baking dish.
3. In a medium saucepan, heat milk over medium. Bring to a simmer but do not boil; remove from heat.
4. In a large bowl, add egg yolks and mix in remaining ¼ cup sugar, 4 tbsp maple syrup, and salt. In a slow, thin stream, stir warm milk into yolk mixture. Stir to combine then strain through a fine mesh sieve into a large clean bowl, preferably with a pour spout (a heatproof blender container also works). Tip into the small baking dish. Fill kettle with water and bring to a boil.
5. To the large baking dish, carefully pour recently boiling water around the smaller dish until half the dish is immersed, being sure to avoid splashing custard with water. Gently transfer to oven and bake until flan is set about 35 -45 minutes.

6. Using tongs and a kitchen towel to protect hands, remove smaller dish from baking dish and place on a cooling rack or clean baking sheet. Cool slightly, then refrigerate custards until fully set and chilled, about 3 hours.
7. Upon serving, run a sharp knife around the periphery of the custard to separate from dish. Flip onto plate, remove baking dish and serve.

This is very sweet, so serve with whipped unsweetened cream.



German Apple Cake

This recipe was given to me by my aunt Wally with many others, for my 21st birthday. Yes, it is baking, but we always had it for dessert, with heaps of sweetened whipped cream.



It is known as Apfelkuchen in German, prepared with raw harvest time apples and is traditionally from Bavaria in Germany, Bavaria Germany.

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 40 minutes

Total Time: 1 hour

120 grams butter, softened
120 grams pure icing sugar
3 eggs
pinch salt
2 teaspoons baking powder
200 grams plain flour
3 apples medium to large sized
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon ground
Whipped sweetened cream for serving

Method

1. Place the soft butter into a mixing bowl with the sugar. Mix and whisk the butter-sugar into a creamy consistency.
2. Add the eggs to the mix and blend smooth.

3. Now add in the salt and baking powder. Add some flour. Start to blend the mixture and continue to add in the flour, step by step, until you have used up everything.
4. Mix the whole content to a smooth batter.
5. Peel your apples, cut into slices.
6. Heat up your oven to 180 Celsius.
7. Prepare a springform with a layer of baking paper at the bottom.
8. Pour the batter into the mold and spread evenly.
9. Arrange your apple slices on top.
10. Sprinkle the cinnamon and brown sugar over the apple slices.
11. Bake the cake for about 40 minutes or until the cake is golden on the outside and baked on the inside. Test if it's done by going into the cake with a knife. If the knife comes back clean, it's baked through.

This is lovely served hot. And on the off chance that any is left, it is nice cold too.



Baking

British Rock Cakes

These are similar to the ones my mother made when I was a kid, but she rarely used spices. As my mother never measured anything when she cooked, I adapted this from Christina's recipe. She is a Scottish Italian cook living in Los Angeles. www.christinascucina.com



1 1/2 cups plain flour
1 1/2 tsp baking powder
85 grams butter
1/3 cup sugar
1/2 cup currants or golden raisins
1 egg
70 grams milk
(Optional: ½ teaspoon of mixed spice – see the Gifts section)

1. Preheat oven to 215°C.
2. Line baking sheets with baking sheets.
3. Sift the flour, baking powder (and mixed spice, if using) and set aside.
4. Cream the butter and sugar until creamy and smooth. Add the egg. Next, mix in the sifted flour and milk. As it comes together, add the dried fruit.
5. Mix just until combined. Do not over mix.
6. With two forks, make "rock-like" cookies on the tray about 4 cm apart. They should not be smooth.
7. Sprinkle with a little sugar and bake in the upper part of the oven for about 12 minutes. (It could range from 10 to 15 minutes, depending on your oven.)
8. Remove from tray and place on cooling rack.



Polish Poppy Seed Roll



Makes 2 rolls

A soft yeast bread wrapped around a poppy seed filling.

My father's family was Polish, from Stryjj, which is near L'vov. I grew up with a lot of Polish food, which I mistakenly thought was German, as my mother was German. It took a trip to Poland when I was 68 to discover that I was wrong.

Dough

1 cup (250 ml) milk
4 teaspoons (15 g) sugar
2 packets (14 g) yeast
4 cups (500 g) all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
2 egg yolks
1/4 cup (50 g) butter
1 teaspoon vanilla

Filling

300 g poppy seeds
1/2 cup (100 g) sugar
2 teaspoons butter
2 egg whites
3 tablespoons honey
1 cup raisins
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
1 egg
1 tablespoon oil

Glaze

2 cups pure icing sugar
1/4 cup milk

Method

1. Cover the poppy seeds in boiling water and let sit for a few hours or overnight
2. Heat the milk to 43 C, pour into a large bowl
3. Stir in the sugar and the yeast, let sit for 5 minutes

4. Stir in the flour, salt, egg yolk, butter, and vanilla, kneading my hand to work in all of the flour
5. Cover the bowl with a dish towel and let rise until doubled in size about 90 minutes
6. While the dough rises, strain the water from the poppy seeds using a paper towel lined colander
7. Grind the poppy seeds in a spice (clean electric coffee grinder) or a food processor, you'll get the best results with a spice grinder, but you'll have to process in batches
8. Mix sugar, butter, egg whites, honey, ground raisins (process in your spice grinder or just add to the food processor and mix) and almond extract
9. Punch down the dough, and divide in two
10. Roll each piece into a 35 x 25 cm rectangle
11. Spread half of the poppy seed filling in each rectangle, avoiding the edges
12. Roll up (on the long side), pinching to seal the dough, tucking the end underneath, and pinching to keep the filling from leaking out
13. Place the rolls on a parchment lined baking sheet, seam side down
14. Cover with dish towel and let rise 35-40 minutes
15. Preheat oven to 175 C
16. Brush with egg beaten with oil, bake for 35 minutes
17. Cool
18. Stir milk into icing sugar and pour/drizzle over the rolls
19. Cut into 1/2-inch slices



Russian Tea Cakes

Russian Tea Cakes is a kind of pastry, often eaten around Christmas time in the US. Similar varieties are known as Mexican Wedding Cookies, Italian Wedding Cookies, and Snowball Cookies.

This is not one of Mum's recipes. I learned this one from my friend Sandy when I lived in Vancouver.



1 cup (226g) unsalted butter, partly melted
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
½ cup icing, plus extra for rolling
2 ½ cups plain flour
¼ teaspoon salt
¾ cup finely chopped nuts, or ground if you prefer the texture

1. Preheat the oven to 180C, and line a baking tray with parchment paper, or a silicone mat. Set aside.
2. Whisk together the butter, vanilla, and icing sugar until smooth and combined.
3. Add the flour and salt, and mix to form a soft, but not sticky, dough. Fold in the chopped nuts.
4. Roll the dough into tablespoon-sized balls and place them 5 cm apart on the prepared baking tray.
5. Bake for 12 - 14 minutes until firm but not brown. Transfer them to a wire rack to cool slightly.
6. Roll the warm cookies in icing sugar and allow to cool completely on the wire rack. Once cool, roll them in icing sugar again.

These are lovely with a cup of tea or coffee.



Gifts to make

Caribbean Banana Jam

Try using different tropical banana varieties for various results and flavor experience. I like my banana jam on a slice of bread for breakfast.

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 40 minutes

Total Time: 45 minutes



1 kg bananas peeled

4 cups sugar

Juice of 3 limes

Method

1. Slice your banana and place it into the bowl. Add sugar and lemon Juice.
2. Mix the whole content well and pour it into a large pot.
3. Cook on higher heat until you have a strong rolling boil, then reduce heat and let the jam cook very slowly. Cooking the jam should take you no more than 30 minutes altogether. Check if the jam is set by placing a few drops of cooked hot jam into a very cold spoon. If it runs, the jam needs some more cooking. repeat the test to see if it has set. Once the jam is ready pour into clean sterilized jars. Put in a few drips of rum, but this is optional. Tighten the lid over the jar. Turn the jam upside down to create a vacuum, then store it in a dry, dark, and cool place.
4. Store the opened jam jar in the fridge!



Caribbean Pineapple Jam

This one is super easy, cheap to make, and seriously impressive. My cousin Andy Hinds comes from Trinidad and is one of the nicest people you could meet. And Andy has the sweetest tooth you can imagine. His favourite drink is a glass of coke with 3 scoops of vanilla ice cream.



1 kg ripe pineapple after peeling and removing the core *see notes

3 cups Sugar

Optional: rum

Method

Cut your pineapple. To cut pineapple without wasting too much of the skin. Cut out the center too because the pineapple center is too hard. You can eat the pineapple center, there is nothing wrong with it (some people get an itching in the throat).

Place the pineapple pieces into a pot and add in the sugar. Mix the content. Let it sit for a little while so that the juices can mingle.

Place the pot on the heat and bring slowly to a rolling boil. Then bring down the heat to a low flame and let the jam simmer slowly.

Check with your thermometer if the jam is ready or do the running jam test with a cold spoon or plate.

If the jam is set, get your clean immersion blender and just blend the jam real quick into a smooth consistency. Or use a food processor or blender. Be super careful, as boiling jam will give you a nasty burn. Keep on the heat for a few more minutes after that just to make sure to kill all germs.

Then grab your sterilized jar and lid and fill up your jar with the jam up to the rim. Up to the rim is a must!)

Close the jar with the lid very well and quickly turn the jar upside down to create a vacuum. That way your jam will preserve very well for a long period of time.

Keep your jar upside down overnight and then store your jam in a cool, dark and dry place (not in the hot attic or wet cellar!). That way you can store your jars for more than 8 months. Once you open the jars store in the fridge.

Notes

Sterilize your glass jar and lids by placing them into the oven or boiling them. Sterilizing means the germs are all killed. Then touch only the glass jar with proper jamming tongue and kit.

Turning your jam jars once sealed upside down creates a vacuum. That's an old French trick. How is jam tested?

The easiest way to test your jam is by using a sugar thermometer, bring the jam to 105C. For an alternate method, put your plate in the freezer for about fifteen minutes before taking it out to test a spoonful of hot jam. Take the jam off the heat while testing.



English Mixed Spice

Mixed spice is a blend of several spices that is frequently used in British baked goods such as hot cross buns, Christmas pudding, and Welsh cakes.

Allspice is actually one spice. Allspice berries are ground and used in a lot of Jamaican recipes. It is not the same as mixed spice.

American pumpkin pie spice is NOT the same as mixed spice.



- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 2 tsp nutmeg
- 2 tsp coriander (dried spice)
- 1 tsp ginger
- 1 tsp allspice
- 1/2 tsp mace
- 1/2 tsp ground cloves

Method

1. Mix all the spices together and place in a glass jar or container.
2. Keep sealed in a sealed container in a dry place.



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