



Hill Country Sweets

A Dessert Cookbook

Inspired by Cimarron Sweets and Polly's Place



Compiled by
AMANDA CABOT



A decorative rectangular frame with ornate, symmetrical scrollwork and floral motifs at each corner. The word "Introduction" is written in a blue, cursive script font in the center of the frame.

Introduction

For me, there's always a story behind the story, and that's true even for this cookbook.

It all started a few years ago when I asked my Facebook friends for help naming the restaurant that plays a key role in *Out of the Embers*. Not only did fellow author Jen Gentry weigh in on a possible name for the restaurant, but she suggested that her grandmother's Mandarin Orange Cream Pie, which was Jen's favorite dessert, could be my heroine's signature dish.

It was a great idea, but—and this is a big “but”—Evelyn, my heroine, wouldn't have had access to mandarin oranges in nineteenth-century Texas. Still, the idea of that pie and why it was so special kept bouncing through my brain. That's when inspiration struck. I realized it would be fun to create a cookbook that included more than recipes. The cookbook would also have the reasons why those recipes are special to the people who contributed them.

I reached out to family, friends, and fellow writers, asking them to share their favorite desserts and the stories behind them. I've also included recipes that Evelyn would have served at Polly's Place, and since so many readers told me that they were hungry for candy when they read *A Stolen Heart*, you'll find recipes for some of the candies Lydia created. The result is *Hill Country Sweets*, a collection of thirty recipes for what I consider to be the best part of a meal.

I hope you enjoy it.

Amanda



Evelyn's Chocolate Cake

A POLLY'S PLACE RECIPE

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Grease and flour bottom of 9x13 pan.

In large bowl, stir together until well combined:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cocoa
- $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup applesauce
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons vanilla
- 2 egg whites

In small bowl, stir together until well combined:

- $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

Add dry ingredients to large bowl alternately with:

- 1 cup boiling water

Add:

- 1 cup hot coffee

Stir by hand until smooth, then pour batter into prepared pan.

Bake 25 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.

Frost as desired.

Note: This is a reduced-calorie, reduced-cholesterol version of Evelyn's recipe. Because it's lower in fat, it's important to mix by hand rather than using an electric mixer.

Mrs. Mark Shell's Spice Cake

AMANDA CABOT

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Grease and flour bottoms of two 9-inch round cake pans or one 9x13 pan.

In small bowl, mix together:

- 1 cup quick oats
- 1 cup raisins

Pour 1 cup boiling water over oat and raisin mixture, and let it cool.

Mix together until creamy and smooth:

- 2 cups brown sugar
- ½ cup butter
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Mix together and stir into butter and sugar mixture:

- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon baking powder

- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon salt

Stir in:

- Oat and raisin mixture
- ½ cup chopped walnuts

Pour batter into prepared pans.

Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.

Caramel Icing:

Boil two minutes, then let cool:

- ½ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup butter
- 3 tablespoons milk

Add:

- 1½ cups powdered sugar

Beat until smooth and spreadable.

Amanda's Story

The first time I had this cake I was eleven years old and visiting my grandmother. It was a special visit for many reasons, including the fact that Grandma told me the story behind what had become her favorite cake. You see, Mrs. Mark Shell (whose first name I never did learn) was one of Grandma's best friends. She'd died the previous year, but Grandma said that every time she made the cake, she felt close to her. For me, this cake has always been a symbol of the enduring power of friendship.

Aunt Mildred's Icebox Cake

VICKIE MCDONOUGH
www.vickiemcdonough.com

Have on hand:

Vanilla wafers
3–4 bananas
8-ounce carton nondairy
whipped topping, thawed

Mix well and slightly cool:

- 1 small package strawberry gelatin
- 3/4 cup boiling water
- Scant 1/2 cup sugar

Add:

- 1 small can crushed pineapple with juice
- 1 cup miniature marshmallows
- Scant 1/2 cup chopped pecans (optional)

Fold in:

- 3/4 of 8-ounce container of nondairy whipped topping (Reserve final 1/4 to smooth over top when done.)

Line 9x13 pan with vanilla wafers.

Top with layer of sliced bananas (3–4 medium).

Spoon gelatin mixture over bananas and smooth out.

Spread with remaining nondairy whipped topping.

Cover with plastic wrap and keep refrigerated.

Serves 12–16 people.

Vickie's Story

My dad was the youngest of ten children, and I had gobs of aunts, uncles, and cousins. When I was a girl, we'd have family gatherings regularly at my aunt Mildred's house. We'd have all kinds of yummy food, but my favorite was a strawberry Jell-O icebox cake with bananas and crushed pineapple. I called it "pink stuff." Every time I went to my aunt's house, I'd ask her if she had any of the pink stuff. I've continued the tradition and just made pink stuff last week for my son's birthday.

Dense, Moist, and Heavenly Sour Cream Cake

LESLIE ANN SARTOR
www.lesliesartor.com

- 6 eggs
- 3 cups + 2 tablespoons sifted all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon + ⅛ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 cups sugar
- 1 cup shortening
- 1 cup sour cream (not low-fat)
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
Separate eggs.

Mix flour, baking soda, and salt. Set aside.

Beat egg whites until stiff.
Set aside.

Beat egg yolks with fork.

Cream sugar and shortening.

Add egg yolks and beat well.

Alternately beat in sour cream and dry ingredients.

Fold in stiff egg whites and gently stir in vanilla.

Pour into ungreased tube cake pan and bake at 325 degrees for 1½ hours.

Leslie Ann's Story

This is the cake my mother would bake for all of my birthdays. She'd "ice" the cake with whipped cream just before serving. Every year she'd decorate the top of the cake with violets from the yard. I wish I'd taken pictures of it. It's a family tradition now to make this cake for all our birthdays. A few years ago, for Mom's ninety-fourth birthday, my brother baked the cake, glazed it with chocolate, added some pirate flags, and buried a sack of foil-covered chocolate coins in the middle of the hollow area. She adored it. Who wouldn't? Cake, chocolate, and gold coins of chocolate. A treasure hunt. Have fun, enjoy, and hopefully this cake will become a tradition in your home.

Granny Dukes White Fruit Cake

LEIGH DUNCAN

www.leighduncan.com

- ½ pound butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 5 large eggs
- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- 1 pound glazed red cherries, roughly chopped
- 1 pound glazed pineapple, roughly chopped
- 4 cups shelled pecans, chopped
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon lemon extract

Cream butter.

Gradually add sugar and cream until fluffy.

Beat eggs well and blend into creamed mixture.

Mix fruits and nuts with part of flour.

Sift remaining flour and baking powder together.

Fold flour into egg and butter mixture.

Add flavorings and stir well.

Fold in fruit and nuts.

Pour into greased, parchment-lined tube pan or 2 small loaf pans.

Place in cold oven and set temperature to 250 degrees.

Bake 3 hours for tube pan or 2½ hours for small loaf pans.

Cool in pans.

Leigh's Story

Granny Duke was born in 1900. Married at sixteen, she spent the rest of her ninety-five years on a farm near Andalusia, Alabama. Her husband died at age thirty-four, leaving her to raise their six children and tend to the farm on her own. She was too busy hoeing, picking, or canning vegetables to sit much. When she did, she usually held her Bible, a crochet hook, or a needle. She was one of the strongest, most God-fearing women I've ever known, and I give thanks every day that I had her in my life. She taught me how to sew on a foot-pedal sewing machine, how to crochet, and how to make everything from biscuits to watermelon rind pickles. I treasure my collection of her recipes. Granny Duke's White Fruit Cake is the best I've ever had, the only fruit cake I've ever liked. I make it every Christmas.





Buttermilk Pralines

A CIMARRON SWEETS RECIPE

Using a candy thermometer, bring the following ingredients to soft-ball stage (234 degrees) in medium saucepan:

- 2 cups dark brown sugar
- 1 cup buttermilk
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Add but do not stir:

- ¼ cup butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Cook to 150 degrees.

Stir in:

- 2 cups chopped pecans

Beat 3 minutes.

Drop by spoonfuls onto waxed paper and let cool.

Peanut Brittle

A CIMARRON SWEETS RECIPE

Place in large heavy saucepan and stir over low heat until dissolved:

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup*
- ½ cup water
- 1 teaspoon salt

Cover, bring to boil, and boil for three minutes.

Remove cover and cook until temperature reaches 250 degrees on candy thermometer.

Add:

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 cups raw peanuts, chopped as desired

Cook slowly to 300 degrees.

Stir in quickly:

- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1½ teaspoons baking soda

Pour onto a flat surface (plates or marble).

Let cool. Break into small pieces

Store in moisture-proof container.

Note: If using roasted peanuts rather than raw, add them last and decrease salt to 1/2 teaspoon.

**Because corn syrup wasn't available when Lydia owned Cimarron Sweets, she would have used molasses.*

Easy Fudge

INSPIRED BY CIMARRON SWEETS

Butter 9x9 baking pan.

Bring to boil and let boil for 5 minutes:

- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups sugar
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup evaporated milk (5-ounce can)
- 2 tablespoons butter
- Dash salt

Add and stir until melted:

- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups chocolate chips
- 22 marshmallows, quartered

Spread in buttered pan.

Chill.

This recipe is for anyone who enjoys fudge but doesn't want to spend the time and effort to cook it the way Lydia would have at Cimarron Sweets. While it may not be authentic fudge, it's an easy way to get a sugar high.

No-Cook Peanuttty Fudge

INSPIRED BY CIMARRON SWEETS

Butter 8x8 baking pan.

Place steel knife in food processor bowl.

Add and process the following ingredients until smooth:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup peanut butter (smooth or chunky)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup light corn syrup
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups powdered sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cocoa
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup peanuts

Spread in prepared pan and let cool.

Like the Easy Fudge recipe, this one is designed for modern cooks who don't want to spend time making candy the old-fashioned way.

Mint Chocolate Balls

KAREN A. KISH

- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup butterscotch chips
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sifted powdered sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sour cream
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon mint extract
- $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups vanilla wafer crumbs
- Chocolate jimmies

Melt chocolate and butterscotch chips together.

Remove from heat.

Add and mix well powdered sugar, sour cream, salt, and mint extract.

Stir in vanilla wafer crumbs.

Chill 10 minutes.

Shape into 1-inch balls.

Roll in jimmies.

Karen's Story

This was a Christmas favorite for my children, made by their Hungarian grandmother. She was a wonderful baker and made many Hungarian fancy cookies and dishes. We all felt so blessed to enjoy her Hungarian specialties, but it was ironic that this was the kids' favorite. I had asked her for some of her special recipes (which I found to be fairly difficult and time consuming). She had laughingly given me this recipe as well because the kids liked it so much. This was a typical "American" recipe, easy and made with convenient ingredients. After she passed away, both of my children called to make sure I had this recipe. My son even made it with his son, Henry, when his school was looking for recipes showing the students' "heritage." I'm not sure Henry's Hungarian ancestors would agree that this is a classic, but Mint Chocolate Balls are a Christmas staple for our family.

Caramels

JILL HAYMAKER

www.jillhaymaker.com

- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, melted
- 2¼ cups brown sugar, firmly packed
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Using a candy thermometer, boil all ingredients slowly to 238 degrees, stirring constantly. (Caramel will turn a darker color shortly before it's done.)

Pour into 9x13 pan and refrigerate.
Cut into 1-inch squares and enjoy.

Jill's Story

This recipe is special to me because it has been passed down through six generations in my family. I remember as a little girl helping my grandmother make it, and her telling me it was her favorite thing to do with her mom. When Grandma passed, my mom picked up the tradition, and I have since passed it on to my daughters and granddaughters. We usually make them at Christmas, but they could be enjoyed anytime during the year.



Grammy's Doll Cookies

DIANNE BAILEY ALTON

Day 1

In small bowl, sift together and set aside:

- 3½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

In large bowl, cream until smooth:

- 1 cup (2 sticks) salted butter
- 1 cup sugar

Add to creamed mixture and mix well:

- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Stir in flour mixture.

Form dough into ball, wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate overnight.

Day 2

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Cut dough in quarters and roll out only a quarter at a time. Keep remaining dough refrigerated. Flour counter surface, rolling pin, and cookie cutter.

Roll dough out to approximately 1/4 inch thick.

Cut out cookies.

Bake on ungreased cookie sheets for approximately 7 minutes. Cookies should be pale on top and light brown on the bottom.

Cool thoroughly.

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Grammy's Doll Cookies

CONTINUED

Day 3 (or later on Day 2 if you have enough time)

Make frosting.

Cream:

- 2 cups powdered sugar
- ¼ cup (1/2 stick) salted butter
- ¾ teaspoon vanilla
- 2–3 tablespoons milk

Add milk a little at a time until frosting is soft enough to spread with knife.

Frost cookies. To give them an authentic doll look, draw fork through frosting from top to bottom of each cookie.

Add red and green sugar or other embellishments if desired.

Place cookies on waxed paper and let dry overnight.

Day 4

Place cookies in storage boxes or tins with waxed paper between layers. They can also be frozen and will last a long time.

Dianne's Story

I think, and I've had lots of people tell me the same thing, that these are the best sugar cookies I've ever had. I'm at least the third generation to make these cookies for family and friends, and although I use other cookie cutter shapes, the doll shapes that my grandmother, Charlotte Preble Bailey, used are still my favorite. My dad said he never remembered a year when he didn't have these cookies during the Christmas holidays. After Grammy died, the two old tin doll cookie cutters went to my mom, who continued the tradition until her death. Now they belong to my sister-in-law and me and will one day be my daughter's.

Lemon Bars

JANE MCBRIDE CHOATE
www.janemchoate.blogspot.com

Crust:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup powdered sugar
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter (not margarine)
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Filling:

- 2 eggs
- 5 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup sugar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Lightly grease and flour 9x9 pan.

Make crust by mixing flour, salt, and powdered sugar together, then cutting in butter with pastry cutter or fork.

Press mixture into pan and bake 12 minutes.

While it's baking, combine filling ingredients.

Remove from oven and pour filling over crust.

Bake another 20 minutes.

Remove from oven.

Refrigerate.

Before serving, sprinkle bars with powdered sugar.

Jane's Story

I learned the recipe for lemon bars in our church's women's organization, the Relief Society. When my children were in elementary school, parents were often asked to bring treats for parties. (This was in the days before homemade treats were not allowed and only store treats could be brought to school functions.) My children always requested that I bring lemon bars. I quickly became known in the school and neighborhood as the Lemon Bar Lady. Some parents did not know my name but only by this title and would greet me with "Hi, Lemon Bar Lady."

Aunt Martha's Gumdrops Cookies

CATHERINE L. BAILEY

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup gumdrops, quartered
(more to top cookies)
- ¾ cup (1½ sticks) butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 egg
- ¼ cup milk

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

In small bowl, sift together
flour, baking powder, and salt.

Mix ½ cup flour mixture with
cut up gumdrops.

In large bowl, cream butter.

Add vanilla and sugar. Beat
until fluffy.

Add egg and beat.

Add sifted ingredients
alternately with milk.

Stir in gumdrops.

Drop by teaspoon 2 inches
apart on greased cookie sheet.

Press gumdrop slice on top of
each cookie.

Bake 12–15 minutes.

Catherine's Story

I remember with a smile my visits to my aunt Martha's home in Indiana. She would always tell me about housekeeping and baking ideas that I now use on a fairly regular basis. One of my favorite recipes from her is colorful and tasty Gumdrops Cookies. I like to make these as a special and happy treat to go with tea and to share with friends.

Diamond-O Squares

JAMES H. FRANCKUM

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Grease and flour 8x8 inch baking pan.

Beat together until smooth and creamy:

- ½ cup butter
- ½ cup sugar
- 6 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon water
- 1 egg

Combine and add to creamed mixture:

- 1 cup + 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ⅛ teaspoon salt

Stir in:

- ½ cup chopped nuts
- 1 cup chocolate chips

Spread in prepared pan.

Bake 12–15 minutes.

Jim's Story

During the 1960s, I spent several summers working as a youth counselor at Camp Diamond-O in the Sierras near Yosemite. Communication with the outside world was limited, as there were no phones or stores nearby. A few times each summer, my mother mailed me a shoebox full of her home-baked chocolate chip bars we called "Diamond-O Squares." She cut and wrapped each bar to keep the pieces fresh. They were incredibly delicious! More than just a yummy treat, I enjoyed the token of my mother's love.

Peanut Bars

DONNA WICHELMAN

www.donnawichelman.com

Grease and flour 9x13 pan.

Prepare and bake yellow cake mix as directed on box.

Remove cake from pan and place on waxed paper.

Freeze for at least a half hour, preferably an hour.

While cake is freezing, prepare peanut coating ingredients.

Mix in shallow dish:

- 4 cups powdered sugar
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter, melted
- Enough milk to create a thick but drippy consistency.

Chop dry-roasted unsalted peanuts into coarse pieces and place them in a second shallow dish.

Cut frozen cake into 2 inch squares.

Roll cake pieces in powdered sugar mixture, then roll in peanuts.

Place cake pieces on plate.

Thaw slightly before eating.

Donna's Story

This Peanut Bar recipe has been a Wichelman family favorite for three generations and was traditionally reserved as a Christmas treat. Among all the thumbprints, fudge, sugar cookies, Rice Krispy Bars, Haystacks, M&M cookies, Snowballs, and Chocolate Mint Bars, this one was especially beloved by Jim's dad. Even after Jim's mother passed away in 1995, his father continued to make the Peanut Bars until the year of his death in 2006. The tradition carries on by both of his children—Jim and Wendy.

Cowless Cow Patties

KATHY FLINCHUM

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Cream in large bowl:

- 1 cup shortening
- 1 cup butter
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 cups brown sugar

Add:

- 4 eggs, beaten
- 2 teaspoons vanilla

Stir together in medium bowl, then add to creamed mixture, mixing well:

- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

Stir in:

- 1 cup walnut pieces
- 1 cup shredded coconut
- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 2 cups cornflakes

Drop by large spoonfuls onto cookie sheet.

Spread each one slightly with back of spoon.

Bake 15 minutes.

Kathy's Story

My husband, John, found this recipe in an old Capper's Weekly, which my neighbor Dorothy Best would give me to read when she finished them. That was twenty or twenty-five years ago or more. Cowless Cow Patties are a favorite around here. I entered them in the fair one year, won the class, and got a note from the judge saying, "What an appropriate recipe for a county fair!"

Finnish Cookie Press Spritz Cookies

APRIL KIHLMSTROM

www.aprilkihlstrom.blogspot.com

- 2½ cups all-purpose flour sifted
 - ¾ cup sugar
 - ½ teaspoon salt
 - ¼ teaspoon baking powder
 - ½ teaspoon cardamom
 - 1 cup butter
 - 1 large egg
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Mix dry ingredients in large bowl.

Cut in butter.

Add egg and vanilla.

Mix well.

Use cookie press to form cookies on ungreased cookie sheets (or lined with parchment paper to make them easier to remove).

Bake 10 to 12 minutes.

Notes:

Keep a close eye on these cookies so they don't burn. In a pinch or if you don't have a cookie press, you can simply scoop small spoonfuls of batter onto cookie sheets and shape them with your fingers. Sometimes we topped these cookies with chocolate chips or peanut butter chips—depending on the shape we chose and what was feasible.

April's Story

Every year at Christmas, I would make these cookies with my mother. The cardamom is what set them apart from ordinary spritz cookies, because cardamom is a key ingredient in Finnish coffee bread. My mother made that, too, but that was a lot more work, and spritz cookies were something I could make with her. I loved pressing out the shapes and feeling close to my heritage. I made cookie press cookies with my children and look forward to continuing the tradition with my granddaughters as they get old enough to help.

Gingerbread Cutout Christmas Cookies

JUDITH STUMPF

Mix together thoroughly in large bowl:

- 1/3 cup shortening
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1½ cups black molasses

Stir in:

- ½ cup cold water

Sift together and stir in:

- 7 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon allspice
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

Stir in:

- 2 teaspoons baking soda dissolved in 3 tablespoons cold water

Chill dough.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Roll out dough to desired thickness and cut out with cookie cutters.

Bake on greased baking sheet until, when touched lightly with finger, no imprint remains (approximately 14–17 minutes).

Frost and decorate when cool.

Simple White Icing

Blend together:

- 1 cup sifted powdered sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla

Add enough water to make easy spreading consistency (about 1½ tablespoons).

Part of icing may be colored by adding a drop or two of food coloring.

Judys Story

My most memorable holiday dessert is Gingerbread Cutout Christmas Cookies. We baked dozens and dozens of them. Everyone had her or his own decorating style, but the decorations became a little less elaborate as the frosting progressed. When we needed a break, even our father would help out and do some "speed frosting." Baking and decorating these cookies was a very fun two-day process. The best part, of course, was eating them! I cherish this holiday memory.

Mom Case's English Shortbread

DONNA TAYNTOR

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

Place in food processor with steel knife attachment and process until blended and dough is soft:

- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups butter, softened
- 1¼ cup powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Note: Alternate dry ingredients with butter so it blends more evenly.

Pat into ungreased 9x13 pan and prick dough with fork.

Bake 45 minutes or until golden.

While still warm, cut into squares with sharp knife.

Donna's Story

This recipe for English Shortbread was given to my mother by a Scottish friend she worked with in a factory. Mr. Grant was from Scotland, and one day he asked my mother if she would make him the cookie his mother made for him growing up. My mother was known for all her wonderful desserts, so he must have been confident she would be able to produce a worthy cookie. Needless to say, the cookie passed the taste test, and every year at Christmas it became a family favorite in our house. Now I continue the tradition, not just at Christmas but for special occasions as well. Our daughter-in-law asks for this shortbread throughout the year as her favorite cookie choice.

Grandma MacRae's Butterscotch Whirls

LEEANNE PATTON

Cookie Dough

In large bowl, cream until fluffy:

- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter

Add gradually and beat well:

- 2 cups brown sugar
- ¼ cup sugar

Add one at a time, beating well after each addition:

- 2 eggs

Add:

- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Sift together and stir into creamed mixture until well blended:

- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt

Divide dough into two portions.

Place first portion on lightly floured surface, sprinkle it with flour, and roll it into rectangle about 16 inches by 9 inches and ¼ inch thick.

Spread half of cooled date filling on dough.

Roll like a jelly roll.

Lift roll with pancake turner and place on wax-paper lined cookie sheet.

Repeat with second portion.

Chill several hours or overnight. (I freeze mine sometimes.)

Slice roll into cookies and place on lightly greased baking sheet.

Bake 10 minutes at 350 degrees.

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Grandma MacRae's Butterscotch Whirls

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Date Filling

Simmer until dates are tender:

- 1 pound chopped dates
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup sugar

Stir until smooth.

Cool thoroughly.

Stir in:

- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 cup chopped walnuts

Lee Anne's Story

My paternal grandparents immigrated from Scotland in the 1920s. They settled in Midwest, Wyoming, where my grandpa worked in the oil fields. After he retired, they moved to Casper, Wyoming. I remember as a little girl visiting them often, and these cookies were always in Grandma's cookie tin. Being Scottish, my grandparents would always stop what they were doing at 10:00 a.m. to have tea and cookies Monday through Saturday. Their neighbor would also join them every day. As an adult, I realized why I always had plastic lemons to play with as a child: Grandma used lemon juice in her cookies! They were my dad's favorite cookie. I don't make these nearly as often as Grandma did, but every Christmas I make some and send them in a cookie tin to my brother. No one knows why Grandma called them Butterscotch Whirls, since most people would call them Date Pinwheels, but to me they'll always be Grandma's Butterscotch Whirls.



Mandarin Orange Cream Pie

JEN GENTRY

www.cwwriters.com/readers

Mandarin Orange Filling

Place:

- 3-ounce package orange gelatin in large bowl.

Add and stir until completely dissolved:

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup boiling water

Add:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cold water
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup ice cubes

Stir until slightly thickened.

Let sit for ten minutes to thicken slightly before adding thawed nondairy whipped topping. Otherwise it won't set up.

Whisk into gelatin mixture until light and fluffy:

- 8-ounce carton nondairy whipped topping, reserving a spoonful for garnish

Stir in:

- 2 (15-ounce) cans mandarin oranges, well drained, reserving 2 or 3 slices for garnish

Refrigerate 30 minutes or until mixture has thickened.

Pour filling into piecrust.

Refrigerate six hours or until firm.

Garnish with reserved nondairy whipped topping and mandarin oranges before serving.

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Mandarin Orange Cream Pie

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Graham Cracker Crust

Combine:

- 1½ cups graham cracker crumbs
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- ⅓ cup butter, melted

Press into 9-inch springform pan.

Place in refrigerator to chill while you make filling.

Jen's Story

I fondly remember Sunday afternoons as a child because my grandmother always made a magnificent meal. When I was old enough to stand on a chair next to the countertop, my grandmother began teaching me to cook. By the time I was ten, I could fry chicken and make a mean Sunday pot roast. One thing I always loved was the days she would make her Mandarin Orange Cream Pie. On the days I was not cooking with my grandmother, I made mud pies on the old wood cookstove my grandfather had moved from the kitchen to just outside the backdoor of their old homestead in New Mexico.

When my grandmother died, my father pulled me aside to ask me if I wanted anything. My cousins and sister all wanted the china, the china cabinet, and the other trinkets left behind. I asked for and received the cookbooks. My cherished memories and southern-style cooking skills live on through my grandmother's cookbooks.

Emmeline Radcliffe's Oatmeal Pecan Pie

A POLLY'S PLACE RECIPE

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

Combine:

- ½ cup butter, melted and cooled
- ⅔ cup sugar
- ⅔ cup dark corn syrup*
- ¾ cup quick oats
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ cup chopped pecans

Pour into unbaked 9-inch piecrust.

Cover edges with aluminum foil to prevent excessive browning.

Bake 25 minutes.

Uncover edges.

Bake another 20 to 25 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean.

**Because corn syrup wasn't available in 1856, Evelyn and her mother would have used molasses.*



Pilgrim Pie

A POLLY'S PLACE RECIPE

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Stir together until well blended:

- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon cloves
- ¼ cup molasses
- 1½ cups cooked and
mashed butternut squash
- ½ cup milk

Pour into prepared 9-inch piecrust.

Bake 40 minutes or until knife
inserted in center comes out clean.

Raisin Pie

A POLLY'S PLACE RECIPE

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Separate:

- 4 eggs

Beat egg whites until stiff, then set aside.

Beat together until creamy and smooth:

- ½ cup (1 stick) plus 2 tablespoons butter
- 4 egg yolks
- 1¾ cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

Add:

- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 cup seedless raisins

Fold in:

- 4 egg whites, beaten

Pour into 9-inch unbaked piecrust.

Bake at 425 degrees for 10 minutes.

Reduce heat to 325 degrees, and bake another 30 to 35 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean.

Homemade Mince Pie

BRIAN AND GINNY CHAPMAN

- 10 Braeburn, Granny Smith, or Gala apples, diced
- Zest from one lemon
- 1 cup organic raisins
- 1 cup golden raisins
- ½ cup dried currants
- 4–5 dried figs, chopped
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ cup chopped walnuts
- 1 cup apple juice
- 1½ cups brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons brandy (added to cooling mixture before letting mixture stand overnight in refrigerator)

Place all ingredients except brandy in Dutch oven.

Simmer, stirring frequently until apples are soft and all of mixture is cooked down and liquid is reduced by one-half. This takes at least a half hour.

Let mixture cool, and then refrigerate overnight. Before refrigerating, add brandy.

To prepare pie, stir and adjust flavor.

Place mixture in unbaked 9-inch piecrust and top with lattice.

Bake at 450 degrees for one hour.

Cover crust with foil after 15 minutes to avoid burning.

Serve with vanilla ice cream.

Ginny's Story

Every Christmas when I was growing up in Cheektowaga, New York, my family's favorite pie was mince pie. Watching my dad, who was born in Scotland, relish that first bite of mince pie was a sight to behold. He would take a bite and then lean back and savor its sweet warm and cold temperatures. Warm from the oven, served with cold vanilla ice cream, it was the perfect cold December evening treat. I concocted this recipe in 2014 when I could not find the Nonesuch Mince at any grocery store. The internet proved invaluable that morning! I found a good recipe and then, with the help of my son Brian, modified the recipe. My dad would have been pleased at the sight of the next two generations making his favorite dessert.



Chocolate Tapioca Pudding

A POLLY'S PLACE RECIPE

Mix thoroughly in medium saucepan:

- 6 tablespoons sugar
- 6 tablespoons cocoa
- 1 teaspoon coffee powder
- 3 tablespoons tapioca

Add the following ingredients, mix thoroughly, and let sit for five minutes:

- 1 egg
- 3 cups milk

Cook to full boil, stirring constantly.

Remove from heat and let cool 20 minutes.

Add and stir thoroughly:

- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Pour into six serving bowls.

Cover with plastic wrap.

Chill.

Mama Cleo's Custard

CINDY KEEN REYNDERS

www.cindykeenreyners.com

- 3 large, slightly beaten eggs
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Dash of salt
- 2½ cups very warm milk
- Ground nutmeg

Heat oven to 350 degrees.

Whip together eggs, sugar, vanilla, and salt with whisk or fork.

Slowly stir in milk.

Pour into six 6-ounce glass custard cups.

Sprinkle with nutmeg.

Place cups on oven rack in 13x9-inch pan.

Pour hot water into pan to within ½ inch of tops of cups.

Bake approximately 45 minutes or until knife inserted halfway between center and edge comes out clean.

Remove cups from water.

Cool about 30 minutes.

Unmold and serve warm, or refrigerate and unmold before serving.

Store covered in refrigerator.

Cindy's Story

When I was a little girl, my family lived on a farm in Oregon. My parents grew berries, all kinds of fruit, nuts, and vegetables. We had goats, cows, pigs, cats, and chickens. What an amazing world I lived in, hiding in my secret spot beneath a peach tree in the orchard, scrambling atop bales of hay, and twirling in the old tire swing. Mama grew up on a farm in Idaho, and boy could she cook! In her kitchen, she always had plenty of fresh eggs, cream, milk, meats, and vegetables to create her tasty, satisfying meals. Her homemade bread and scones tasted like heaven. My favorite part of every meal was dessert. To me, her custard was especially delightful. The boxed version from local grocery stores doesn't hold a candle to her smooth, yellow version sprinkled with brown nutmeg. I can almost smell it cooking now!

Dessert Chimichangas

ANITA GORDON, AKA KATHLEEN KIRKWOOD

www.kathleenkirkwoodhistoricals.com

- Pie filling—canned or homemade, any flavor
- Taco-size flour tortillas (6 inch) at room temperature
- Oil for frying
- Powdered sugar

Spoon $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (rounded) pie filling in center of each tortilla.

Fold sides in toward center; fold bottom up and roll, burrito style; place seam-side down on plate. (These should hold their shape but can be secured with toothpicks.)

Heat approximately an inch of oil in pan.

Transfer “chimis” seam-side down to oil.

Fry to golden brown on both sides, turning once.

Transfer to plate.

Dust with powdered sugar.

Hints: If desired, tortillas can be softened in microwave to make more pliable. Cover with a dampened paper towel and microwave for a few seconds. Larger, burrito-sized tortillas can also be used; just adjust the amount of filling. For variety, chimis may be rolled in cinnamon and sugar mixture instead of powdered sugar.

Anita's Story

I fell in love with the Arizona-Sonoran cuisine when I first arrived in Tucson to attend the U of A in the late 1960s. Cheese crisps and chimichangas topped my list of favorites. When I married an Arizonan, my fledgling cooking skills embraced southwestern fare. This super-easy yet elegant dessert version of the “chimi” (a savory, deep-fried burrito) has delighted my family and friends over the years, across many states and overseas, holding countless memories each time served.

Vafler—Norwegian Sour Cream Dessert Waffles

JANET BEARD

Mix together:

- 6 eggs
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cardamom

Mix together and stir into egg mixture:

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- Pinch of salt

Beat in until smooth:

- 1 cup sour cream
- ½ cup butter, melted

Let batter sit about 20 minutes before making your waffles.

While waffle iron is heating, melt 3 tablespoons butter.

Brush some of the butter on surface of waffle iron.

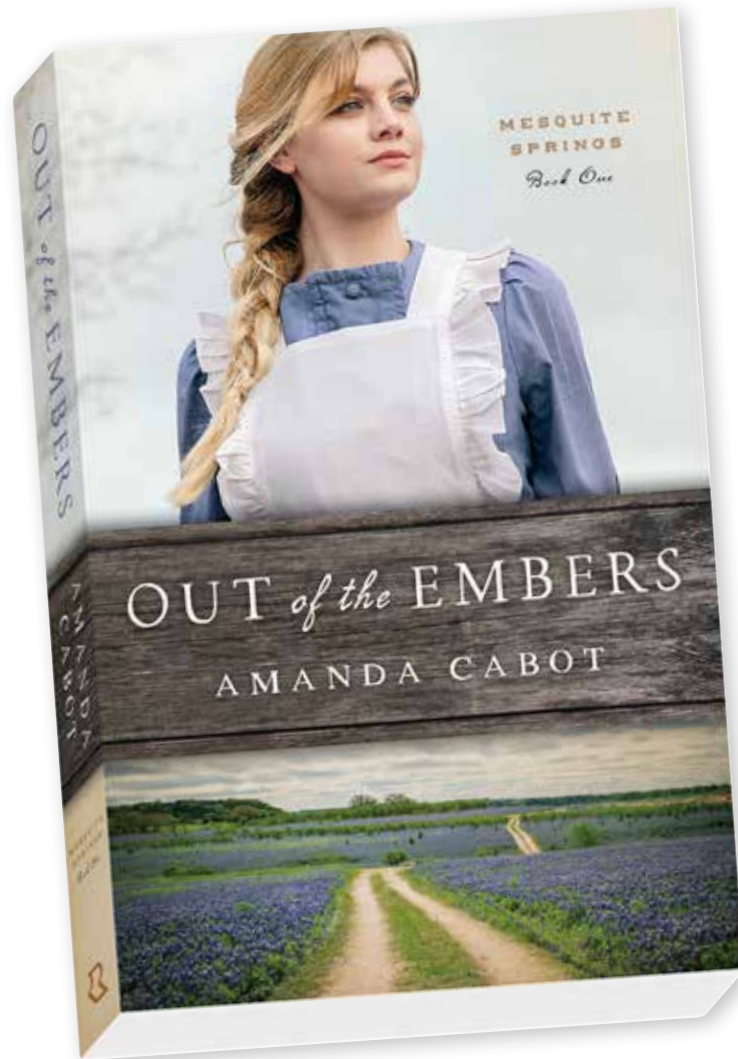
Pour ¼ cup batter on waffle iron and bake until waffle is golden brown.

Serve warm with jam, whipped cream, and your favorite berries.

Janet's Story

These Norwegian waffles always remind me of my grandma and all the wonderful times we gathered as a family around her table and enjoyed eating them. What makes these waffles special is the sour cream in the batter. The eggs make them fluffy, and the special cardamom spice sets these waffles apart from ordinary waffles. When I eat these waffles, I am reminded of my Norwegian heritage and of my grandma who came all the way from Norway many years ago to make a life for herself in America. I hope you enjoy this recipe as much as I've enjoyed sharing it with you.

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