



HOLIDAY TREATS

Too busy to bake most of the time? 'Tis the season to shut down your computer, turn on the oven and cook up these internationally inspired sweets. Family and friends will say *merci, Danke*—and thanks!

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM REAVELL RECIPES ADAPTED AND EDITED BY JENNIFER PERILLO

Lebkuchen

MAKES: 16 • **PREP TIME:** 20 MINUTES
PLUS COOLING TIME • **COOK TIME:** 15 TO
20 MINUTES

These spicy meringues, a variation on a traditional German Christmas cookie, are reminiscent of gingerbread—only lighter since they're made with egg whites and no flour or butter.

Plan-ahead tip: The baked cookies can be stored in an airtight container in a cool, dry place up to four days.

- ¾ cup almonds
- 8 ounces bittersweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 2 tablespoons mixed candied peel, chopped
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon allspice
- 2 extra-large egg whites
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar, sifted

1. Heat oven to 300F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone liner. Put almonds and 1 ounce of the chopped chocolate into bowl of food processor; process until mixture forms fine crumbs, about 1 minute. Add candied



peel and all the spices and process 1 more minute, or until well combined.

2. Place egg whites in a clean, grease-free bowl and beat with an electric mixer, using the whisk attachment, until stiff peaks form. Gradually whisk in confectioners' sugar, then beat 1 minute, or until mixture is very stiff and glossy. Sprinkle the spice mixture over the meringue and gently fold until combined.

3. Drop tablespoons of meringue mixture 2 inches apart onto the prepared baking sheets. Use a small offset spatula or rounded knife to spread each dollop into a 3-inch disk. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, until pale golden and firm. Set baking sheets on

a wire rack. When completely cool, peel cookies off parchment.

4. Melt the remaining chopped chocolate in a heatproof bowl set above a small pot of boiling water, making sure the bottom of the bowl does not touch the water. Stir gently until melted and smooth; remove from heat. Spread the flat side of each cookie with a thin layer of melted chocolate. Place cookies on a wire rack or lined baking sheet and leave in a cool, dry place to let chocolate set.

NOTE: You can also melt the chocolate in a bowl in the microwave on medium power in 30-second intervals until melted and smooth.

kids in the mix

Pistachio Sablés

MAKES: 32 • **PREP TIME:** 12 MINUTES PLUS 15 MINUTES FOR CHILLING • **COOK TIME:** 17 TO 20 MINUTES

Kids will love making and eating these buttery French cutout cookies. Please picky eaters by substituting almonds or hazelnuts for the pistachios.

Plan-ahead tip: The dough can be prepared through step 2 and stored in the refrigerator, tightly wrapped, for up to two days. The baked cookies can be stored in an airtight container for up to a week or in the freezer for up to a month (thaw at room temperature before serving).

- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1 extra-large egg yolk

- 1¼ cups flour
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup shelled pistachios, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons raw sugar

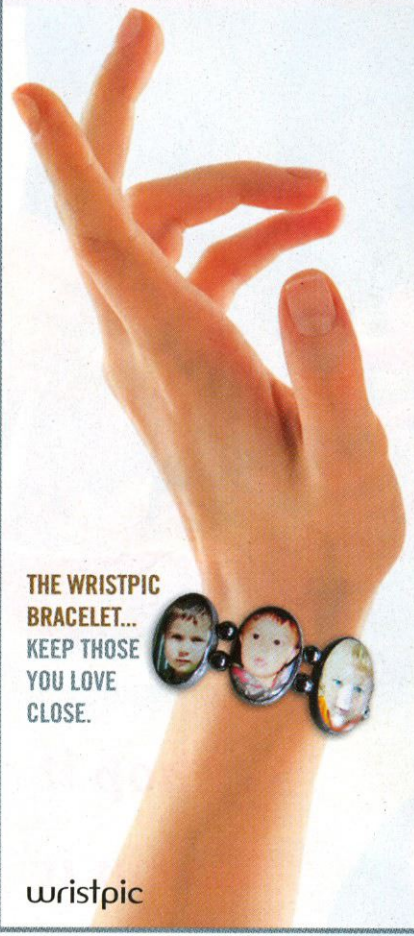
1. Beat together butter, vanilla and confectioners' sugar until light and fluffy. Add egg yolk and beat until combined.

2. Meanwhile, let kids sift flour, baking powder and salt into a medium bowl. Gradually add flour mixture to butter-and-egg mixture, beating with an electric mixer on slow speed. Add pistachios and beat on medium speed until just

combined. Kids can shape dough into a ball and then wrap in plastic wrap. Chill until firm, about 15 minutes. (If you've made the dough in advance, let stand at room temperature a few minutes for easier rolling.)

3. Heat oven to 325F. Line 2 or 3 baking sheets with parchment paper. Divide chilled dough in half. On a lightly floured surface, let kids roll each piece of dough to ¼ inch thick. Help kids use a cookie cutter dipped in flour to cut out shapes; transfer cut cookies to prepared baking sheets. Kids can sprinkle tops with raw sugar.

4. Bake 17 to 20 minutes, until edges are golden. Cool on baking sheet 5 minutes; transfer to wire rack and cool completely.



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Cider Fruit Squares

MAKES: 24 • PREP TIME: 8 MINUTES PLUS 20 MINUTES COOLING TIME • COOK TIME: 25 MINUTES

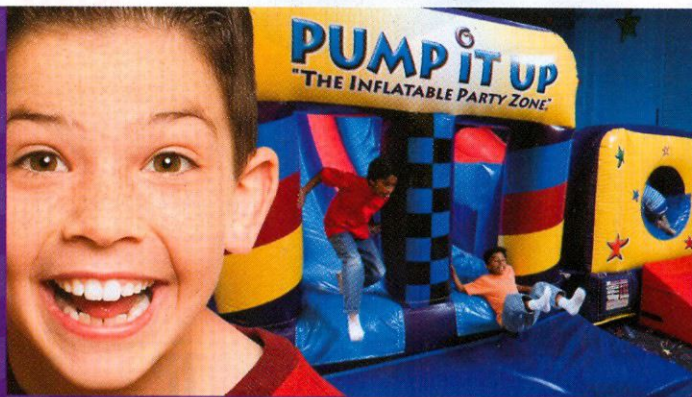
These British-inspired apricot-and-raisin-studded bars are brimming with traditional holiday flavors. They're also a great gift because they taste better the next day.

Plan-ahead tip: The squares can be baked up to three days in advance. Store in an airtight container and dust with confectioners' sugar just before serving.

- 1/2 stick unsalted butter
- 1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 2/3 cup raisins
- 2/3 cup golden raisins
- 1/3 cup roughly chopped dried apricots
- 3/4 cup apple cider or natural-style apple juice
- 1 teaspoon apple-pie spice
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 3/4 cup water
- 1 2/3 cups whole-wheat flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

1. Heat oven to 350F. Coat an 8-by-10-inch baking pan with nonstick spray. Line with parchment paper and set aside.
2. Put butter, sugar, both kinds of raisins, apricots, cider, apple-pie spice, ginger and water in a 3 1/2-quart pot; bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat to a gentle simmer and cook 2 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool 20 minutes.
3. Sift flour, baking powder and salt into the pot with cooled mixture; mix with a wooden spoon until thoroughly combined. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and spread evenly to the edges. Bake 25 minutes or until deep golden brown and firm to the touch. Cool completely on a wire rack. Cut into 24 squares and dust with confectioners' sugar just before serving.

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Holiday cookies

and other festive treats

Linda Collister



cookbook of the month

Spread sweet holiday cheer with help from Linda Collister, baking aficionado and author of numerous cookbooks, including this month's featured *Holiday Cookies and Other Festive Treats*. Collister's collection of international recipes like *Lebkuchen*, a chocolate-coated, spice-scented meringue from Germany, and *Pistachio Sablés*, a traditional French shortbread, offers delicious multi-cultural ways to share the season with loved ones. ■

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