

# Holiday Baking Classics From Around the World

## Cozonac

### Sweet Bread with Walnut Filling from Romania

Serves: 4

Preparation Time: 1 hour

Cooking Time: 50-60 minutes

#### Ingredients

- 1¼ cups milk, scalded and divided, hot

#### For the scalded flour:

- ⅓ cup plus 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons fresh yeast
- ½ teaspoon sugar

#### For the dough:

- 4 egg yolks
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon vanilla sugar
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon rum
- 1 ½ tablespoons vegetable oil
- ½ cup butter, melted, divided
- 3 ⅔ cups all-purpose flour

#### For the filling:

- 2 egg whites
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons cocoa powder (optional)
- ½ teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon rum
- ⅔ cup toasted walnuts, ground to a powder
- Other optional fillings: diced Turkish delight or raisins (presoaked in hot water and drained)

#### Directions

##### For the scalded flour

1. Place the flour to be scalded in a large bowl. Carefully scoop out ⅓ cup plus 1 tablespoon of the hot scalded milk, and pour it over the flour. (Set the rest of the milk aside to cool.)
2. Mix until a smooth paste forms. Set it aside to cool.
3. Meanwhile, combine the yeast and sugar in a small bowl, mixing until it becomes liquid.
4. Add the yeast mixture to the cooled scalded flour (if the mixture is too hot, it will kill the yeast) and mix well.
5. Cover with a towel or plastic wrap, and let it rise until doubled in volume (about 15–20 minutes).

##### For the dough

1. Combine the egg yolks and salt, beating lightly.
2. Stir in the sugars, lemon zest, rum, oil, and half the melted butter.
3. Pour the mixture into the yeast-flour mixture and combine well.
4. Stir in remaining (cooled) milk.
5. Sift the flour over the mixture and mix until incorporated.
6. Knead the dough while it is still in the bowl. Bring the sides to the center with your fist until the dough begins to separate slightly from the bowl (about 15 minutes). The dough will still be very sticky at this point.
7. Add the remaining butter and continue kneading to incorporate and until the dough is slippery.
8. Cover, and let it proof until doubled in volume (about 15–20 minutes).

##### For the filling

1. Place the egg whites in a clean, grease-free bowl and whisk until stiff peaks are formed.

2. Gradually add the sugar, cocoa, lemon zest (optional) and rum, whisking after each addition.
3. Gently fold in the walnuts.

#### To assemble the loaf

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Grease or butter two loaf pans.
2. Place the dough on a floured surface and roll out into an ⅛-inch-thick rectangle, about 12–14 inches wide.
3. Sprinkle with Turkish delight or raisins, if using. Press down with a rolling pin to embed.
4. Spread the dough evenly with filling, leaving about ¾ inch free around the edge.
5. Cut the dough into two equal parts.
6. Roll up one part and place it, seam down, in a prepared pan, tucking in the ends. Do the same with the remaining dough.
7. Place the pans in a warm place and let the dough rise for about 10 minutes.
8. Cover loosely with aluminum foil and bake until golden brown (about 50–60 minutes).
9. Remove the bread from the pans and wrap it with thick kitchen towels.
10. Let the loaves cool before slicing.

# Melomakarona

## Greek Honey and Walnut Cookies

*Serves: 30 (Yield: about 60)*

*Preparation Time: 25 minutes*

*Cooking Time: 30 minutes*

### **Ingredients**

#### For the syrup:

- 1 cup honey
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 ½ cups water
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 4 whole cloves
- 1 2-inch piece lemon or orange rind
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice

#### For the cookies:

- 7 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup sugar
- Zest of 1 orange
- 1 cup olive oil
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- ¾ cup orange juice
- ¼ cup brandy
- Honey, for drizzling
- ¾ cup walnuts, coarsely ground, for sprinkling
- Cinnamon, for sprinkling

### **Directions**

1. Prepare the syrup in advance. Combine all the syrup ingredients EXCEPT the lemon juice in a saucepan and bring it to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Remove the saucepan from the heat and discard the cinnamon, cloves, and orange rind. Stir in the lemon juice. Set the syrup aside.
2. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment.
3. In a bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Set aside.
4. Make orange sugar. Using your fingers, rub the grains of sugar against the orange zest until the fragrance is released.
5. Add the orange sugar to the oils and use a stand or hand mixer to combine well.
6. Pour in the orange juice and brandy, and mix.
7. Add the flour mixture by the cupful, mixing briefly after addition, just to incorporate the flour to make a wet dough. Do not overmix.
8. Scoop out a walnut-sized portion of the dough and roll it between the palms of your hands to make an egg shape. Make crisscross depressions with a fork over the surface. Do the same for the rest of the dough, keeping the cookie pieces as uniform as possible.
9. Bake until lightly browned (about 25-30 minutes).
10. Remove the cookies from the oven and, while hot, submerge the cookies in syrup for about 10 seconds.
11. Fish the cookies out with a fork or slotted spoon and transfer them to a wire rack or colander to drip.
12. When they have dried somewhat, transfer them to a serving dish.
13. Drizzle with honey and sprinkle with ground walnuts and cinnamon.
14. Store in an airtight container.

# Galette des Rois

## Epiphany Tart from France

Serves: 16

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

### Ingredients

- 1 (17 ¼ ounce) package frozen puff pastry, thawed
- 1 dry kidney bean, as “feve” or lucky charm
- 1 egg, beaten
- Confectioners’ sugar, for dusting

### For the filling:

- ½ cup almond paste
- ¼ cup white sugar, divided
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 2 eggs, divided
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon almond extract
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- Pinch of salt

### Directions

1. Prepare the filling. In a food processor or blender, combine the almond paste and 2 tablespoons of sugar. Pulse to blend well. Add the butter and remaining sugar and process until smooth. Blend in 1 egg, the extracts, flour, and salt. Set aside.
2. Preheat the oven to 425°F, and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
3. Roll out one sheet of puff pastry into an 11-inch square. Be careful not to stretch the dough. Cut the square into an 11-inch diameter circle, and lay it on the prepared baking sheet. Repeat with a second sheet of puff pastry.
4. Refrigerate the second piece of dough.
5. Bake the first piece of dough until slightly puffed and browned at the edges (about 5 minutes). Remove it from the oven and let it cool slightly.
6. Scrape the almond filling onto the center of the cooked pastry. Spread it evenly, leaving a 1 ½-inch margin at the edge. Insert the bean anywhere you like into the filling.
7. Top with the second circle of dough, and press it down at the edges to seal.
8. Score the top to make a criss-cross pattern.
9. Beat the remaining egg and brush it over the top.
10. Prick the top dough with a fork or skewer for the steam to vent out while baking.
11. Bake for 15 minutes. Remove it from the oven and dust it generously with confectioners’ sugar.
12. Return it to the oven and bake until golden brown (about 15 minutes).
13. Transfer to a wire rack to cool slightly.
14. Place a paper crown on top for the one who gets the feve.
15. May be served warm or cold.

# Kurisumasu Keki

## Japanese Christmas Cake

Serves: 8

Preparation Time: 45 minutes

Cooking Time: 20–25 minutes

### Ingredients

#### For the cake:

- 3 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon milk
- ½ cup sugar
- ¾ cup cake flour, sifted

#### For the syrup:

- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 3 tablespoons water
- ½ teaspoon almond extract
- 1 tablespoon kirsch (optional)

#### For the frosting:

- 1 ⅔ cups whipping cream, chilled (not frozen)
- Confectioners' sugar, for dusting
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 pound strawberries, sliced vertically (leave the best-looking pieces unsliced)

### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F. Line the bottom and sides of a cake pan with parchment paper.
2. Prepare a saucepan or pot and 2 metal or heat-proof bowls that fit snugly over it. Crack the eggs into one bowl. In the other, place the milk and butter.
3. Fill the saucepan with water, just under half full, and bring it to a boil. Reduce the heat, but keep it hot.
4. Meanwhile, beat the eggs with a wire whisk or hand mixer at low speed. Add the sugar and beat for a few more seconds to incorporate.
5. Place the bowl over the pot with boiling water, and continue beating the eggs at high speed until they're light, fluffy and warm (about 1–2 minutes).
6. Remove the warmed egg mixture from the heat. Place the butter with milk over the hot pot. Turn off the heat, but leave the bowl until the butter begins to melt, and then remove it from the pot.
7. While the milk is warming, continue beating the warm eggs until soft peaks begin to form.
8. Gradually add the sifted flour, folding it in gently.
9. Whisk the melted butter in milk and gradually fold it into the batter until it's well incorporated.
10. Pour the batter into a cake pan, and spread it with a spatula. Lift the pan slightly and drop it a couple of times on a level surface to break any air bubbles in the batter.
11. Bake until toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean (about 20–25 minutes).
12. Flip the pan upside down on a wire rack. Let it cool completely.
13. While the cake is cooling, whisk the syrup ingredients together in a bowl and set them aside.
14. Loosen the sides of the cake with a knife and remove it from the pan.
15. Cut the cake in half horizontally and brush inside with syrup, moistening thoroughly. (This cake dries easily so it needs to be soaked in syrup.)
16. Meanwhile, prepare the toppings. Set aside the best-looking strawberries for decorating the cake. Cut the others lengthwise. Pat them dry with paper towels.
17. Place the whipping cream in a bowl over another bowl filled with ice. Gradually add the sugar while whipping, until stiff peaks form.
18. Spread whipped cream over the bottom layer and then add a layer of strawberry slices. Add another layer of cream.
19. Place the other cake half on top and cover the whole cake with cream.
20. Decorate using reserved whole strawberries, and dust with confectioners' sugar.
21. Chill well before serving.

# Bûche De Noël

Yule Log from France and North America

Serves: 12

Preparation time: 1 hour

Cooking time: 12 minutes

## Ingredients

### For the cake:

- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup white sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons cacao
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder

### For the chestnut cream:

- 2 cups unsalted butter
- 1 (15.5 ounce) can chestnut vanilla purée
- 1 tablespoon dark rum
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups confectioners' sugar

### For the chocolate frosting:

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 3 semi-sweet chocolate squares, melted
- 3 tablespoons strong coffee
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 cups icing sugar

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F, and place the oven rack in the middle position.
2. Grease a jumbo-sized rimmed baking sheet (15 x 20 inches), and line it with parchment paper.
3. In a large mixing bowl, beat the eggs and sugar until light and fluffy (about 2–3 minutes). Add the flour, cocoa, salt, and baking powder. Beat until well combined.
4. Pour the cake batter on the prepared baking sheet. The batter should be spread out evenly. Bang the baking sheet two or three times on the counter to make sure no air bubbles formed in the batter.
5. Place the pan in the oven, and bake for 12 minutes.
6. While the cake is cooking, dampen a large, clean kitchen towel, and place it flat on a working surface. Dust the towel with some powdered sugar.
7. When ready, remove the cake from the oven, and place the dusted side of the damp towel flat on the cake. Reverse the cake immediately.
8. Roll the cake with the towel to give it the rolled shape, and set it aside.
9. To make the chestnut cream, start by beating the butter at high speed until creamy. Add the chestnut purée and rum. Mix until well combined. Add half a cup of the icing sugar at a time and beat on high speed. Repeat until all the icing sugar has been used.
10. The cake should have had time to cool down enough while you prepared the chestnut cream. Unroll the cake, and with a spatula, smear the chestnut cream all over the cake. Roll it back, and place it on a serving plate. You can prepare the bûche up to this point, and freeze it for up to four weeks.
11. Prepare the chocolate frosting. In another mixing bowl, beat the butter until creamy. Add the melted chocolate, vanilla, and coffee to the butter. Add the icing sugar by increments, half a cup at a time. Beat on high speed until you get a fluffy frosting.
12. Cut off 3 inches of cake from one end of the roll and place it on the side to make a branch. Frost the log cake with a spatula. With a fork, in long stroke, make some long lines to reproduce tree bark. Decorate with your favorite small Christmassy ornaments.
13. Refrigerate the bûche de Noël until ready to serve. Let it sit at room temperature for at least thirty minutes before serving.

*NOTE: Chestnut vanilla cream can be found in grocery stores with the baking products. If you cannot find it, you can use the regular chestnut purée, just add two teaspoons of pure vanilla extract in the recipe.*

# Christmas Pudding

## English Traditional Fruit Pudding

*Serves: 12*

*Preparation Time: 30 minutes*

*Cooking Time: 1 ½ hours*

### **Ingredients**

#### Ingredients for the pudding:

- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon water
- ½ cup butter
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon mace
- ¼ teaspoon allspice
- Pinch of nutmeg
- Fruit mix (see below)
- 2 small eggs

#### For the fruit mix:

- 1 ¾ cups mixed dried and candied fruits of choice like dates, raisins, sultanas, cherries, prunes, figs, apricots, etc., finely chopped
- ¼ cup candied orange or lemon peel
- Zest of 1 orange, grated
- ½ cup orange juice
- 2 tablespoons brandy

#### For the brandy butter (optional):

- ½ cup unsalted butter, softened
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- 3 tablespoons brandy

### **Directions**

1. Prepare the brandy butter in advance. Whip the butter until fluffy. Add confectioners' sugar and whip to incorporate. Add the brandy gradually, while stirring. If curdling occurs, add a little more confectioners' sugar. Keeps for 5 days, refrigerated.
2. Prepare the fruit mix. In a saucepan, combine the dried fruit, candied peel, grated zest, and orange juice. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the juice is absorbed (3–5 minutes). Remove it from the heat and let it cool. Transfer it to a large bowl, stir in the brandy, and set it aside.
3. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter an aluminum pudding mold.
4. Combine the sugar and water in a pan over low heat. Stir to melt the sugar. Remove the pan from the heat as soon as the sugar is fully dissolved, and set it aside to cool.
5. Melt the butter over low heat, or in the microwave. Set it aside.
6. Sift the flour, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon, ginger, mace, allspice, and nutmeg together and whisk to blend thoroughly.
7. Add the flour mixture to the fruit mixture and stir well to combine.
8. Stir in the dissolved sugar and melted butter.
9. Add the eggs one at a time, mixing well after each addition.
10. Fill the buttered pudding mold, leaving space for the pudding to rise.
11. Cut out aluminum foil to cover the mold. Butter the side facing the pudding, and fit the foil over the mouth of the mold. Tie with string to secure.
12. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean (about 1 ½ hours).
13. Remove the pudding from the oven and let it cool on a wet towel.
14. Remove it from the pan and serve it with the brandy butter.

\*\*\*These recipes and more are found in Sarah Spencer's *Holiday Baking: Traditional Baking Recipes from Around the World*. To get your own copy, click on the cover below or click [here](#).

