



It's hard to believe that Christmas is less than four weeks away. So much to do, so little time! What it is about December that pulls us into our kitchens with bags of flour, sugar, nuts and cranberries? Why do we develop a sense of determination that makes us want to bake every Christmas sweet recipe that we've seen in magazines, on Pinterest and (hopefully) in Lowcountry Weekly's Celebrate Every Day columns?

Well, I'm not a philosopher so I can't answer either of those questions. However, I do know a thing or two about cooking. From my perspective, Christmas is a time for sharing, and gifts from the kitchen are the best presents of all. I've mentioned before that my maiden name is Baker. I've also noted that I don't really like to bake. I've had several magazine and Pinterest recipe fails over the years. My three dessert recipes in this gift guide are totally no-fail! They're fun to make, easy, delicious and impressive. One is even no-bake. Best of all, they all three make great gifts. Happy Christmas baking!

Cranberry Cake

If you don't have a 10-inch springform pan, this recipe will make four 4-cup loaves or 24 to 28 cupcakes. Just be sure to reduce the baking time.

3 large eggs

2 cups sugar

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter, cubed and softened at room temperature

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 teaspoon almond extract

2 cups all-purpose flour

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups fresh cranberries (12 ounces)

Confectioner's sugar, for dusting

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease and flour a 10-inch springform pan. Use an electric mixer to beat the eggs and sugar until very smooth, about 8 minutes. The egg and sugar mixture will double in volume and turn a very pale yellow, leaving ribbons on top of the batter when you lift the beaters. Beat in the butter, vanilla and almond extract until the butter is smooth and incorporated. Use a spatula to fold in the flour and cranberries. The batter will be thick. Spread gently into the prepared pan. Bake for 60 to 75 minutes, or until center is set. Cool for 20 minutes and then run a knife around the inside edge of the pan and remove the cake. Dust with confectioner's sugar before serving. Serves 10 to 12.

Hollyday Mint Pie



Mint Chocolate Chip Cookies, Lemon Kneaded Grasshopper, Fudge Mint Cookies, Girl Scout Thin Mints, and more!



With a simple twist, these fudge-filled well-loved!



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