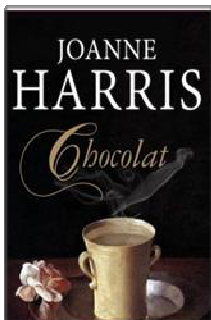


DISHIN' WITH DEBBIE!

FOOD FOR HIGH ACHIEVING INDIVIDUALS

Happy February, All. That darn Phil saw his shadow and now we're paying for it, but don't you think it's kind of cool to have a celebrity (albeit a rodent) right here in Penn's Woods? If that doesn't "float your boat", maybe you're all lovey dovey with your significant other for Valentine's Day, or feeling presidential for President's Day or waving in the breeze for Flag Day- there's a lot of "Holidaying" in February. Personally, I think there should be a holiday to celebrate chocolate. I realize that lots of people equate Valentine's day with chocolate, but I think it's important enough to rate its own holiday. Maybe in March when there's not a lot going on. Anybody with me? 😊



In honor of that lovely, silky and sweet substance, our literary inspiration for this month is Chocolat by Joanne Harris. Bet you can't guess what good recipes might have as a main ingredient?? ;)

Linda Avetta is a very faithful recipe provider who I have personally known to indulge in some chocolate yumminess. So who better to lead off this month's column? She relates that this is a Pampered Chef recipe.

Chocolate Fantasy Cake

Cake Ingredients:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup 70% vegetable oil spread
- 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Frosting Ingredients:

- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 3 tablespoons skim milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon 70% vegetable oil spread



Directions:

- 1.) Preheat oven to 400°F.
- 2.) Lightly spray 9x13 pan with vegetable oil.
- 3.) In large bowl, combine flour and sugar.
- 4.) Combine water, spread and cocoa powder in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil.
- 5.) Add to flour mixture stirring until well blended.
- 6.) Add remaining cake ingredients; mix well.
- 7.) Pour into prepared pan.
 - 8.) Bake 20-25 minutes or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean.
 - 9.) For frosting, combine powdered sugar and cocoa powder in small bowl.
 - 10.) Add milk, vanilla and melted spread; stir until smooth. Spread over warm cake.

Yield: 18 servings

I always put candy canes on my Christmas tree every year. I discovered that Hershey makes chocolate mint canes which are quite good, so I now I use those. However, every year they would still be hanging around in the summer. One year, in an effort to be "green" I decided to re-use. This is the result- very easy, but very delicious.

Easy Christmas Candy

Ingredients:

- Hershey's chocolate/mint candy canes
- Good quality white chocolate (like Lindt or Ghirardelli) (Editor's note: Yes, silly, I know that white chocolate isn't REALLY chocolate, but who cares?)

Directions:

- 1.) Crunch up the candy canes into small pieces. A food processor does a good job with this task, but it makes a LOT of noise, so don't do it when someone in your household is taking a nap or you will have a grumpy person on your hands!
 - 2.) Gently melt the white chocolate in a double boiler. You can do it in the microwave, but be careful. White chocolate burns more quickly than regular.
 - 3.) Stir chocolate until smooth and then gently stir in the candy cane pieces.
 - 4.) Spread the mixture thinly on a cookie sheet. At this point, if you work quickly, you can decorate with colored sugar, melted regular chocolate or other things that strike your fancy.
 - 5.) When it hardens, break into pieces and store in an airtight container.
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One of the good things about doing this column for a while is that I can reuse recipes- which I **WOULDN'T NEED TO DO IF YOU WOULD JUST SEND ME SOME!** (Do you feel guilty yet???) Good- my plan is working...)

Wicked Whoopie Pies

Batter

Ingredients:

- 2 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 2 cups packed dark brown sugar
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 3 teaspoons real vanilla extract (NOTE: I know people who say that artificial vanilla flavor is just as good as real vanilla. DO NOT BELIEVE THEM! If you are going to the trouble of baking from scratch, why would you use artificial ingredients?)
- 3 1/3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 2/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 3 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt



Filling Ingredients:

- 2 sticks of butter (no substitutes), softened
- One bag of confectioner's sugar
- 3 teaspoons vanilla (see NOTE: above)
- Milk
- 1 cup Creamy peanut butter (optional, based on whether you are a traditionalist or more adventurous!)

Directions:

- 1.) Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
- 2.) Beat together butter and brown sugar until fluffy.
- 3.) Beat in eggs until well mixed.
- 4.) Mix in vanilla.
- 5.) Measure dry ingredient together in a large bowl and stir to combine.
- 6.) Add to the butter mixture alternately with the buttermilk and beat on medium speed. Mix only enough to thoroughly combine ingredients.
- 7.) Drop by tablespoonfuls onto cookie sheets. Try to make the blobs all the same size.
- 8.) Bake about 8 minutes or until tops of cookies spring back when touched.
- 9.) Cool on a wire rack.
- 10.) For frosting, beat the butter (and peanut butter, if using) until fluffy.
- 11.) Beat in the sugar, vanilla and enough milk to make it creamy. The amount of milk can vary- so add a tablespoon at a time until it is of thick but creamy spreading consistency. If

the filling is too thin, your pies won't stay together and what's worse than a defective Whoopie pie?
- 12.) When the cookies are completely cool, match them up, two by two (sounds a little like Noah's ark! ☺) based on size.
- 13.) Spread a heaping tablespoon on filling on the flat side of one cookie and put another cookie on top (like an Oreo).
- 14.) Wrap the whoopie pies in plastic wrap to keep them fresh.
- 15.) Enjoy!

That's all for this month, but start thinking about what culinary delights are conjured up in your mind by [Where the Wild Things Are](#) by Maurice Sendak.

- April - Harry Potter (any one of the series)- J. K. Rowling
- May-To Kill a Mockingbird- Harper Lee
- June- Little Women (or Little Men) -Louisa May Alcott
- July- The Da Vinci Code- Dan Brown
- August -The Life of Pi - Yann Martell
- September - The Book Thief - Markus Zusak
- October - It- Stephen King
- November - The Hunger Games - Suzanne Collins
- December - Water for Elephants, Sara Gruen

Send me those recipes as soon as you can! I will be forever grateful to you to not have to come up with them all on my own.



Please send recipes to dereihart@pa.gov. Hurry up and do it now so you
Debbie

UNTIL NEXT MONTH- KEEP ON DISHIN'!