

Some sweet desserts for the month of sweethearts

February is the month for sweethearts, so thought I'd feature some of the favorite sweet desserts requested around my farmhouse kitchen table. Whether it's a hearty mountain apple crisp, a classic lemon pie or a dark chocolate torte, I figure you'll be able to find something here to satisfy all.

For the chocoholics

I love to use fruit as a basis for most of my desserts, but occasionally a dark chocolate treat just barely highlighted with a little fresh fruit is a good substitute. I got this recipe from a friend, Kay, who runs a bed and breakfast in South Carolina. I was looking for the perfect dessert to celebrate one of our chocolate loving guest's anniversary and it was a hit. This chocolate torte is rich in flavor and concentrates on the basics: great quality chocolate. No flour is used and the cake exudes richness so just a small slice is needed. A torte doesn't rise as high as a traditional cake and this one does not use any flour so those with gluten intolerances can enjoy it as well.

The trick is good apples

As I said earlier, fruit makes great desserts and I love farm apples just about anyway - baked, fried, dried, or in cob-

blers and pies. The trick is good apples. Buy the best you can find and make sure they have some flavor.



By Papa Phil Bourne

An all time favorite of mine is a classic hearty mountain apple crisp that warms you up from head to toe and fills your tummy with wholesomeness - as well as your soul. I even eat a little crisp from time to time for breakfast with my cup of coffee and pretend like its oatmeal with apples.

A blast of lemon in winter

When it's not apples, I am usually looking to the citrus family for inspiration. For pure lemon joy, my tried and true is a classic lemon pie, piled high with meringue, that has just enough mix of sweet and sour mix to make your lips smack. Make this when you can have enough folks around to eat it all as it just doesn't save well.

So here's to all you sweethearts out there - may there forever be a little sugar in your pantry!

For more information on Papa Phil's vacation cottage rentals on his 145 acre Cumberland Plateau organic farm, (guests services include catered breakfast picnics and other homemade treats with delivery to the cottages) please go to www.grandviewmountaincottages.com.

Kay's No Flour Dark Chocolate Torte

Yield: 10-12 servings (small slices)

Preheat oven to 350 F degrees

Ingredients

8 oz chopped top quality dark bittersweet chocolate
2 sticks unsalted butter
1 ½ cups sugar
6 large farm eggs
1 cup dark cocoa powder
Butter a 9" spring form cake pan, line the bottom with parchment and butter it too..

Batter: Melt the dark chocolate and butter together and remove from the heat. Whisk in the sugar and add the eggs one at

a time, beating well after each egg. Sift the cocoa into the mixture and whisk until just combined. Pour the batter into your spring form pan. Bake 30- 35 minutes. Check with toothpick at 28-30 minutes: it should be slightly under cooked when you remove. Cool for 10 minutes and remove the side of spring form pan. Cool completely.

Dust cake with a little extra cocoa powder and a little powdered sugar. I like to serve it with fresh fruit syrup dribbled over the cut piece of cake and a topping of fresh whipped cream, crème fraiche or sour cream. I prefer fresh made raspberry syrup but any red fruit syrup works well and a few berries sprinkled on top. Ideally your torte should be dry and a little crunchy on the outside and very rich and moist on the inside. It does not rise as high as a normal cake.

Hearty Mountain Apple Crisp

Pre-heat oven to 450 F degrees

Servings: 8-10

Apple Filling (make first)

7 medium tart apples cut in 1/2 inch pieces
1/4 cup granulated organic sugar
1 cup apple cider
2 teaspoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
Crunchy Oat Topping (make last)
3/4 cup sifted unbleached flour
3/4 cup chopped pecan nuts
3/4 cup rolled oats (can substitute quick oats if necessary)
1/2 cup light packed brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
1 stick melted unsalted butter

Apple Filling: Reduce the cider in a small sauce pan to ½ cup and add the lemon juice and set aside. Toss the cut apples with sugar. Melt the butter in large skillet and add the apple mixture and cook stirring frequently until apples begin to soften (about 12 minutes). Adjust the sugar to your liking. Do not fully cook (apples should still be a bit crunchy). Remove apples from heat and add the reduced cider and lemon juice and mix in. Place the filling mixture in a 9" X 13" ovenproof casserole dish. If you prefer you can make this in small ramekins and serve individual dishes direct from the oven.

Crunchy Oat Topping: Combine all topping ingredients in large bowl and mix until evenly moistened and spread evenly over the apple filling in the casserole dish.

Bake uncovered about 20 or so minutes (350 F preheated oven) until the topping is a deep golden brown. Cool casserole dish on a wire rack until warm and serve. It's good cold too if you are making it in summer. You can top with sour cream, crème fraiche or ice cream if you like but I like it as is.

"Good Ole Days" Lemon Pie

Servings 6-8

Position rack in center of oven and preheat to 450 F degrees.

Pie Shell: 1 unbaked pie shell at room temperature (I make my own but refrigerated store bought work fine)

Lemon Filling

Pie Crust: Unfold or roll out pie crust and flour one side. Place floured side down in 9 inch glass pie pan. Fold over edges and crimp decoratively. Pierce crust all over with a fork. Bake at 450F degrees until crust is pale golden (about 12 minutes). Cool crust completely. Turn oven down to 350F after pie crust is baked.

Filling: Whisk 1 ¼ cups sugar, 1 ½ c water, 5 tablespoons cornstarch, 5 egg yolks, 1 tablespoon lemon peel and a pinch salt in a heavy sauce pan over medium heat to blend. Whisk continuously until the mixture comes to a boil and after that for about 2 minutes more until the mixture thickens. Remove from heat and then add the ½ cup of lemon juice and 2 tablespoons butter and whisk until smooth. Cool until just warm (about ½ hour).

Meringue: Mix 1/3 cup sugar and 1 tablespoon cornstarch in a

1 teaspoon flour

1 ¼ cups sugar

1 ½ cups water

5 tablespoons cornstarch

5 large farm eggs (separate whites and

yellows and put whites aside for meringue)

1 tablespoon grated lemon peel

1 pinch of sea salt

½ cup fresh squeezed lemon juice;

2 tablespoons unsalted butter (room temperature)

Meringue

5 egg whites

1/3 cup sugar

1 tablespoon cornstarch

1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar

small bowl. Beat 5 egg whites in a large bowl or mixer until foamy. Add cream of tartar and beat until soft peaks form. Continue beating, adding a little of the sugar at a time until fully incorporated and stiff peaks start to form. Set aside.

Pie: Spread warm lemon filling onto baked pie crust. Spoon dollops of meringue around the edge of the pie filling and the remaining meringue onto the center of the pie. Spread the meringue so that it entirely covers the filling, mounding in the center and sealing completely to crust edge. Using a rubber spatula or spoon, decoratively swirl the meringue to form peaks. Bake the complete pie at 350 degrees for about 10 minutes until the peaks are light brown. Remove from oven and let cool completely. Refrigerate pie until chilled (about 1 ½ hours). Best eaten within 3 hours