

OMA'S COUNTRY HEARTH BREAD



SylvieKurtz.com

From *Broken Wings*

I remember my mother's bread bowl—a big, beige ceramic bowl with a cream interior that bulged with the fragrant scent of yeast. I can still see the corner of sunlight falling on that bowl, then flour motes dancing in the sun while my mother kneaded the dough. Of course, the best part was eating a slice of still-warm bread with butter melting in all the nooks and crannies.

1 package active dry yeast	1/4 cup nonfat dry milk
1 cup warm water (105°-115° F)	2 tablespoons wheat germ
2 tablespoons molasses	2 – 2 1/2 cups whole-wheat flour
1 tablespoon melted butter	Milk to brush over top
1 teaspoon salt	Rolled oats to sprinkle over top

In a large mixing bowl, dissolve yeast in warm water; add molasses and let rest 5 minutes until yeast foams. Stir in butter, salt, dry milk, wheat germ and half the flour. Add remaining flour slowly to keep dough smooth. Let rest 15 minutes. Turn dough out onto lightly floured board and knead for 5 minutes until smooth and elastic. Wash bowl, grease it, add dough back to bowl, turn over to grease top, cover, and let rise until doubled—about an hour. Lightly grease a baking sheet and roll or pat dough into an 8-inch circle. Let rise in a warm place until doubled—about 45 minutes. Brush the top of the loaf with milk and sprinkle with oats. Preheat oven to 375° F. Bake for 25-30 minutes, or until loaf sounds hollow when tapped. Remove from oven and cool on a wire rack. Makes 1 loaf.

MAC'S BAKED RAVIOLI CASSEROLE



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From *Silver Shadows*

When my kids were younger and I'd spent a harried day running after them, one of my fantasies was a man that cooked. Mac fulfilled that fantasy for me ☺.

1 can (14.5 oz) diced tomatoes	1 teaspoon dried basil
1 tablespoon olive oil	1/4 teaspoon fennel seeds, crushed
1 medium-size onion, chopped fine	1/8 teaspoon black pepper
1 can (8 oz) tomato sauce	8 ounces ravioli
3 cloves garlic, minced	1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
1/4 teaspoon dried oregano	2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 375°F. Heat the olive oil in a heavy 10-inch skillet over moderate heat for 1 minute. Add the onion and cook until soft. Add the tomatoes, tomato sauce, garlic, oregano, basil, fennel and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low and simmer uncovered for 10 minutes, stirring often.

Meanwhile cook the ravioli according to package directions. Rinse with cold water, drain well, and place in an ungreased shallow 1-1/2 quart casserole. Cover with the sauce and sprinkle with the mozzarella and Parmesan cheeses. Bake uncovered for 30-35 minutes or until bubbly and golden. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving. Makes 4 servings.

GRADY'S COCONUT CAKE

From *One Texas Night*



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1 1/2 cups flour
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
8 tablespoons butter, softened
1 cup sugar
2 large eggs
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla
1/4 teaspoon almond extract

3/4 cup milk
1 1/4 cup coconut

Buttercream Icing:
6 tablespoons butter, softened
1 cup confectioners' sugar
3-4 tablespoons milk
3/4 cup coconut, divided

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter an 8 X 8 square cake pan. Combine flour, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl. Use an electric mixer in a large bowl to beat the butter and sugar together until well blended. Add the eggs, vanilla and almond extract, and beat until light and fluffy. Sprinkle in half of the flour mixture and pour in half the milk. Beat until well blended. Repeat with remaining flour mixture and milk. Stir in the coconut. Scrape into a prepared pan and bake 40-45 minutes. Cool completely on a wire rack (at least 2 hours.)

To make the buttercream, combine the butter and confectioners' sugar in a large bowl and beat with an electric mixer until somewhat blended. Add the milk one tablespoon at a time and beat just until fluffy. Stir in 1/2 cup of the coconut. The icing will look curdly because of the coconut. When the cake is cool, spread the icing on top. Sprinkle with the remaining 1/4 cup of coconut. Makes 6-9 servings.

VALENTIN'S PIZZA

From *Blackmailed Bride*



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Valentin's way of showing he liked Cathlynn was to bake the muffins and pizza she asked for, even if they were out of his usual repertoire. Blame Bertucci's for this recipe. I have no idea what the real recipe is for their Carmine Pizza, but this is my version.

1 pizza dough recipe (homemade or store bought) Prepare pizza dough according to recipe.

5 tablespoons olive oil, divided
3 large onions, thinly sliced
6 plum tomatoes, seeded and chopped
4 garlic cloves, minced

Salt and pepper to taste
4 oz. sliced fresh mozzarella
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
12 large basil leaves, tightly rolled and thinly sliced

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onions and salt and pepper to taste. Toss to coat well, then cover the skillet. Cook, tossing occasionally, until the onions are soft and are caramel brown all over. To get that lovely color, the onions need to be cooked slowly over low heat and this can take up to 45 minutes.

Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add the tomatoes and garlic, sauté for 10-15 minutes or until tomatoes are softened and sauce thickened. Season with salt and pepper and cool. Spoon little mounds over the crust and spread with the back of a spoon. Scatter the mozzarella and Parmesan over the tomato sauce. Sprinkle with the basil. Bake for 15-20 minutes or until the crust and cheese are golden. Remove pizza from oven, brush 1 tablespoon of olive oil over the crust. Makes one large pizza.

BROOKE'S CHOCOLATE-COVERED STRAWBERRIES

From *Alyssa Again*

These are so easy to make and so impressive to look at. The good part is that, if you use dark chocolate, the combination of chocolate and strawberries makes this a treat that's chock full of antioxidants. At least that's how I rationalize making them so often.

16 strawberries with stems
3 ounces dark chocolate, coarsely chopped

Rinse berries. Pat completely dry (or the chocolate won't stick).

Place chocolate in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high for 45 seconds, or until almost melted. Stir until smooth.

Dip the bottom half of each strawberry into the melted chocolate. Let the excess drip off. Place on a wax paper-lined baking sheet. Chill 5 minutes or until set.



BETH'S RUSSIAN TEACAKES

From *A Little Christmas Magic*



One of the comments I got often from this book was that the readers were hungry after reading it. With the timeline going from Thanksgiving to Christmas, it's easy to see why the pages brimmed with food. Which made it hard to decide which recipe to use. This cookie recipe happens to be one of my husband's favorites.

1 cup butter, softened
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 1/4 cups flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup finely chopped pecans

Heat oven to 400°F. Mix butter, sugar and vanilla thoroughly. Work in flour, salt and nuts until dough holds together. Shape the dough into 1-inch balls. Place on an ungreased baking sheet.

Bake 10-12 minutes or until set, but not brown. While warm, roll in confectioners' sugar. Cool. Roll in sugar again. Makes about 4 dozen cookies.

BETH'S SHEPHERD PIE

From *A Little Christmas Magic*



2 pounds potatoes, peeled and quartered
1/2 cup milk
1 tablespoon butter

1/2 teaspoon chives
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Filling:

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 pound extra-lean ground beef *
1 onion, chopped
1 cup beef or vegetable broth
2 tablespoons ketchup

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 1/2 teaspoons cornstarch
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 1/2 cups corn kernels
1 tablespoon parsley, chopped

In a medium saucepan, cover potatoes with water, bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to medium, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes until tender. Drain and return to pot (off the heat). Add the milk, butter, salt, pepper and chives. Mash until smooth.

Filling: In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add the beef and onion and, breaking up the meat, cook for 10 minutes or until meat is no longer pink and the onions are softened. Drain the fat. In a measuring cup, combine the broth, ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, cornstarch, salt and pepper. Add to the beef and cook, stirring, until bubbly and thickened. Stir in the parsley. Preheat oven to 350°. Transfer beef to shallow 2-quart casserole. Top with corn kernels. Drop large spoonfuls of mashed potatoes on top of the meat mixture. Smooth the potatoes over the meat. Bake for 40 minutes or until the potatoes are golden.

* Note – soy crumbles work well, too—just skip the browning stage. I've also made this with ground lamb.

TARYN'S ANGEL BISCUITS

From *Remembering Red Thunder, Flesh & Blood*, Book 1



Now biscuits aren't a tradition in my family, but they are in my husband's. And for whatever reason, I could never make biscuits that were fluffy. Mine tended to come out like rocky lumps—until I found this recipe.

2 cups flour
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 cup vegetable shortening
1 package quick-rising yeast
1 1/4 cup buttermilk, warmed
Melted butter

In a large bowl, sift the flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and baking soda. Cut in the shortening until the mixture resembles coarse meal. Add yeast. Set aside.

Add the warm milk to the dry ingredients and stir with a fork until moistened. The dough will be sticky.

Turn out the dough onto a floured surface and knead gently until smooth, about 30 seconds. Gently roll out the dough to a half-inch thickness. Cut with a floured cutter. Place two inches apart on an ungreased baking sheet. Let rise for 15 minutes.

Preheat oven to 400°F while the biscuits rise. Bake 12-15 minutes. If desired, brush the tops of the hot biscuits with melted butter. Makes 12.

ELLEN'S EASY SPAGHETTI SAUCE

From *Red Thunder Reckoning*, *Flesh & Blood*, Book 2



SylvieKurtz.com

On busy nights, I'm all for something quick and easy and this recipe falls into that mold. The bonus, it makes a lot, which leaves enough sauce to make another family favorite—Lazy Day Lasagna.

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| 1 28 oz. can of crushed tomatoes | 1 celery stalk, diced |
| 1 15 oz. can of tomato sauce | 1 garlic clove, minced |
| 1 14.5 oz. can of diced tomatoes | 1 tablespoon olive oil |
| 1 6 oz. can of tomato paste | 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning |
| 1 onion, diced | 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper |
| 1 green pepper, seeded and diced | |

Sauté vegetables and garlic in olive oil until onions are soft and transparent. Add crushed tomatoes, tomato sauce, diced tomatoes, tomato paste, Italian seasonings and crushed red pepper. Bring to boil, lower heat and simmer for twenty minutes.

This sauce can also be placed in a crockpot and slow cooked all day for an easy dinner after a long day at work. Leftovers freeze well.

Variation: Add one pound of browned hamburger, meatballs or a bag of soy crumbles to sauce, then simmer.

LAZY DAY LASAGNA

To use with leftover sauce from Ellen's recipe

I couldn't tease you with the recipe, then not give it, so here it is.

- 8 ounces pasta of your choice
- 2 cups of spaghetti sauce
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 1 10 oz package of frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Cook pasta according to directions. In bottom of a 2-quart casserole put a few spoonfuls of the sauce. Arrange half the pasta in the pan, cover with all of the cottage cheese and spinach. Top with half the sauce, half the mozzarella and half the Parmesan cheese. Arrange in layers the remaining pasta, sauce, mozzarella and Parmesan cheese.

Bake at 375°F for 25 minutes. Makes 4 to 6 servings.



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GRACE'S CHOCOLATE CHUNK PECAN BROWNIES

From *Under Lock and Key*

What can I say about brownies? They're the perfect get-over-the-blues food.

4 oz. unsweetened dark chocolate	1 teaspoon vanilla
3/4 cup butter	1 cup flour
2 cups sugar	1 cup coarsely chopped pecans (toast them to bring out the flavor)
3 eggs	1 cup of chocolate chunks

Heat oven at 350°F. Line a 13" X 9" pan with foil, extending over the edges to form handles. Grease the foil.

Microwave the unsweetened chocolate and butter in a large bowl on High for 2 minutes or until the butter is melted. Stir until the chocolate melts all the way. Stir sugar into the chocolate mixture until well blended. Mix in the eggs and vanilla. Stir in the flour, nuts and chocolate chunks until well blended. Spread in the pan.

Bake 30-35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the corners comes out with fudgy crumbs. Don't overbake. Cool in pan. Lift out by foil handles.

Place on a cutting board and cut into squares. Makes 24.

If there are leftovers (ha!), store in a cool, dry place, but don't refrigerate.



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OLIVIA'S CHOCOLATE ORANGE SNACK CAKE

From *Heart of a Hunter, The Seekers, Book 1*

A family favorite is chocolate oranges in Christmas stockings. I've tried to replicate the taste and this recipe comes the closest. Use good quality cocoa and dark chocolate to increase the richness. Bonus, the taste will be so satisfying, one piece will be enough. Maybe.

1 2/3 cups flour	1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup packed brown sugar	1 cup orange juice
1/4 cup cocoa	1 teaspoon vinegar
1 teaspoon baking soda	1/2 teaspoon orange extract
	1/2 cup dark chocolate chips

Heat over to 350°. Mix flour, brown sugar, cocoa, baking soda and salt with fork in ungreased square pan, 8 X 8 X 2 inches. Mix in remaining ingredients except chocolate chips. Sprinkle with chocolate chips. Bake 35 – 40 minutes or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. 9 servings



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FELICIA'S MONSTER COOKIES

From *Heart of a Hunter*, *The Seekers*, Book 2



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My kids used to love it when I made these cookies, because the cookie tin bulged. I'd save some of the mini candy-coated chocolate pieces and make smiley faces or their initials on some of the cookies for an extra treat.

- 1 cup brown sugar, packed
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 3 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 1/2 cups peanut butter
- 2 teaspoon baking soda
- 4 1/2 cups oatmeal
- 1 cup dark chocolate chips
- 1 cup mini candy-coated chocolate pieces

Mix ingredients together in the order listed. Drop by teaspoonful on ungreased cookie sheets. Bake at 350°F for 15 minutes. Yield: 7 dozen average size cookies.

FRANCINE'S ALMOND COFFEECAKE

From *A Rose at Midnight*



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My family complains that I never make the same recipe twice. What can I say, I like to fiddle. I've made this recipe with dried cranberries or dried cherries in place of the raisins or changed the almond extract to lemon extract, the cinnamon to nutmeg, and the raisins to dried blueberries as variations.

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| 1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour | 1 teaspoon almond extract |
| 3/4 cup whole-wheat pastry flour | 1/2 cup currants or raisins |
| 3 teaspoons baking powder | 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon |
| 1/2 teaspoon salt | 2 tablespoons cold butter |
| 1/3 cup sugar | 1/3 cup light brown sugar |
| 1 large egg | 1/3 cup slivered almonds |
| 1 cup skim milk | |
| 1/4 cup light olive oil | |

Lightly grease an 8" square pan. Heat oven to 400°F. Sift first five ingredients in a bowl, stir to blend and make a well in the center. In a small bowl, whisk egg, milk, oil and almond extract, then add all at once to the flour mixture. Stir only until flour is moistened. Gently fold in currants, then pour into prepared pan. Lightly dust with cinnamon. Prepare topping: in a small bowl, cut butter into fine pieces, add brown sugar and almonds. Sprinkle evenly on top of batter. Bake in a preheated oven for about 25-30 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Makes 9 servings.

PETER'S POTATO-BROCCOLI FRITTATA

From *Personal Enemy*



SylvieKurtz.com

This is a quick, easy, healthy recipe. Serve with a salad and you've got a light evening meal.

1 1/4 pounds potatoes (3 medium-large), peeled and finely diced	4 whole eggs
2 tablespoons olive oil	1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
10 oz chopped broccoli (fresh or frozen)	2 tablespoons Italian seasonings
6 green onions, cut into 1/4-inch slices	1/2 teaspoon salt
4 egg whites	1/4 teaspoon black pepper

In a large, covered ovenproof skillet, cook the potatoes in the oil over medium heat, stirring once or twice, for about 10 minutes, until they are tender and lightly browned. Add the broccoli and the green onions, cover the skillet and cook the mixture another 5 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. In a medium bowl, beat the egg whites and the whole eggs with the Parmesan, Italian seasonings, salt and pepper. Pour this over the vegetable mixture and cook the frittata for about 5 minutes, pushing the ingredients occasionally with a spatula to allow any uncooked egg to make contact with the skillet. Place the skillet in the preheated oven for 5 minutes or until the eggs are set on top.

LIV'S ORANGE DATE MUFFINS

From *Eye of a Hunter, The Seekers, Book 3*



SylvieKurtz.com

Muffins are such versatile things. You can pack them with nutrition or make them decadent. This recipe is a bit of both

3/4 cup of pitted dates	1-cup whole-wheat flour
1/2-cup flour	3/4-cup flour
1 orange, unpeeled, cut into eight sections	3/4-cup sugar
1/2 cup orange juice	2 teaspoons baking powder
2 eggs	1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2-cup cold butter	1 teaspoon salt

Put dates and 1/2 cup flour into the bowl of a food processor with a cutting blade. Pulse until the dates are chopped uniformly. Add the pieces of orange and pulse again. Add the orange juice, eggs and butter and pulse until a homogeneous mixture forms.

Mix together the dry ingredients and add to the food processor. Pulse until all the ingredients are wet (don't overmix).

Drop mixture into prepared muffin tins. Fill to just below the edge. Bake in a 400° F oven for 15-20 minutes. Makes 12 big muffins.

LUCI'S COUNTRY APPLE TART

From *Pride of a Hunter*, *The Seekers*, Book 4



SylvieKurtz.com

The first time I made this recipe I misread two teaspoons of lemon juice as two tablespoons, and I was worried about the results. But the extra tartness added something extra, and I've made it with the extra lemon since.

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| 1 lemon | 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon |
| 1 pound tart apples (2-3), peeled, cored and thinly sliced | 1 pie crust (homemade or 1/2 of a 15 oz. store-bought package) |
| 1/2 cup sugar (reserve 2 tsps. for crust) | 1 tablespoon butter, cut into six pieces |
| 1 tablespoon flour | |

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Grate 1 tsp. of lemon peel and squeeze 2 tablespoons of juice from the lemon. Set aside. Toss the apples with the sugar, flour, cinnamon, lemon peel and juice.

Place the piecrust on a rimless baking sheet lightly dusted with flour. Dust a rolling pin with flour and roll the pastry to a 13-inch round. Heap the apples on the pastry, leaving a 2-inch border all around. Scatter the butter on the apples. Fold the pastry border back over the apples to make an uneven rustic edge of about 1 1/2 inches, leaving the slices in the center exposed. Sprinkle the reserved sugar on the pastry border.

Bake 12 minutes, then reduce the temperature to 425°F and bake until the apples are softened and bubbly and the pastry is golden brown (12-15 mins. longer). Serve warm. Makes 4 servings.

ALEXA'S FAVORITE SCONES

From *Ms. Longshot*



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While growing up, Sundays were the special food days. Pancakes or waffles for breakfast and a "dress-up" dinner, either at home or at my grandparents' house. I make these scones often as Sunday breakfast treats. And of course, I can't help myself, I play with the ingredients, adding nuts, substituting different dried fruits for the raisins—or even cinnamon or chocolate chips.

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| 2 tablespoons butter | 1/2 teaspoon baking soda |
| 1 1/4 cups rolled oats | 1/2 teaspoon salt |
| 3/4 cups white flour | 1/2 cup raisins |
| 3/4 cups whole-wheat flour | 1 egg, lightly beaten |
| 1/4 cup sugar | 1/2 cup low-fat yogurt |
| 1 tablespoon baking powder | 2 tablespoons walnut oil |

Preheat oven to 425°F. Melt butter in microwave. In a large bowl, stir together the oats, flours, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Stir in raisins and make a well in the center of the dry ingredients.

Combined the melted butter, egg, yogurt and oil and add to the dry ingredients, stirring until just moistened. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and gently knead several times to form a ball. Pat the ball into an 8-inch circle and cut into 8 wedges.

Place the wedges on a lightly oiled baking sheet and bake for about 12 minutes, or until firm to the touch. Transfer to rack and cool slightly. Serve warm. Serves 8.

SYLVIE'S YULE LOG

From my December 2005 newsletter



I like decorating the tree with the collection of mismatched ornaments accumulated over the years, each with its own special memory. I love to bake the few special treats that have come to mean Christmas to my family—my mother-in-law's Cinnamon Sticky Buns, my mother's walnut bread, a variation of my mother's Yule Log and ginger star cookies. And I love that Christmas is my family's own holiday. Others are welcomed to visit, but we stay home.

1 cup all-purpose flour	3 eggs
1/4 cup cocoa	1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder	1/3 cup water
1/4 teaspoon salt	1 teaspoon vanilla

Preheat the oven to 375 F. Grease a 10 X 15 X 3/4" pan, then cover with a piece of wax paper that fits the bottom. Sift the flour, cocoa, baking powder and salt together. Using a mixer, beat the eggs in a bowl until thick and pale yellow. While continuing to mix, add the sugar gradually. Add the water and vanilla. Add the dry ingredients while beating at the lowest setting of the mixer. Spread the batter on the prepared pan. Bake 12 minutes. Immediately turn over a dishtowel sprinkled with cocoa. Remove the wax paper. Roll the cake, starting with the narrower side. Cool on a rack with the cake's edge on the bottom.

CHOCOLATE CREAM FROSTING

for Yule Log



2 cups whipping cream
1/4 cup chocolate liqueur or strong cold coffee
1/2 cup cocoa

Mix whipping cream, cocoa and liqueur/coffee. Cover and refrigerate for an hour. Whip the cream until soft peaks form. Unroll the cake. Spread half the chocolate cream on the cake. Reroll the cake. Cut a small slice from one end of the cake. Garnish the top of the cake with the rest of the chocolate cream, saving a few dollops. Make "wood grain" on the "log" with a knife edge. Using the slice of cake, make a couple of branch nubs and place on either side of the cake. Frost nubs with the leftover chocolate cream. Decorate with toasted almond slivers.

LORRAINE'S ONE-BOWL BROWNIES

From *Detour*



I know, that's two brownie recipes. But as Sierra's T-shirt says, "Chocolate Heals All Wounds." There can never be enough brownies around.

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| 1 bag (12 oz) dark chocolate chips | 1 cup flour |
| 1/4 cup butter | 1/4 teaspoon salt |
| 3/4 cup sugar | 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons of chopped walnuts |
| 2 eggs | 1 teaspoon vanilla |

Heat oven to 350°F. Line an 8-inch square pan with aluminum foil. Combine 1 cup of the chocolate chips and butter in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high for 1 minute. Stir until smooth. Whisk in sugar, then eggs. Stir in flour and salt until smooth. Fold in 1/2 cup of the chopped walnuts and the vanilla. Transfer batter to the prepared pan.

Bake brownie for 23-25 minutes. Finely chop remaining 2 tablespoons of walnuts. Sprinkle the remaining 1 cup of chocolate chips over the brownie and return to oven for 2 minutes. Remove from the oven and spread the melted chips until smooth to form frosting. Top with finely chopped walnuts. Refrigerate for 20 minutes to firm chocolate. Cut into squares. Store at room temperature.

TEX-MEX TUNA FAJITAS

From *Detour*



I didn't grow up eating spicy, so when we first moved to Fort Worth, even the mild salsa was too hot. But over the years we lived there, I learned to love the taste of chili, cumin and jalapeño peppers.

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| 1 pound ahi tuna, cut into strips | Tortillas, warmed |
| 1 packet of McCormick's Mesquite Marinade | Salsa |
| 1 onion, cut in rings | Shredded cheese (cheddar or Mexican blend) |
| 1 green pepper, cut in strips | Sour cream |

Prepare the marinade according to instructions. Add tuna. Marinate for 30 minutes.

Grill onions and peppers. Grill tuna. Warm the tortillas. Put everything on the table and let everyone fill their tortillas with whatever they want.

Serve with saffron or Spanish rice and green beans for a complete feast.

VALERIE'S FAVORITE BIRTHDAY CAKE

From *Pull of the Moon*



Valerie and I share a taste for chocolate and this is also my favorite birthday cake recipe. Good quality chocolate makes a huge difference. I love the 60% cocoa dark chocolate for melt-in-your-mouth sinfulness. Don't eat this cake too late at night, though. All the caffeine will keep you awake!

3/4 cup milk	1/2 teaspoon baking powder
2 teaspoons instant coffee powder	1/4 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa	1 cup butter, softened (no substitutions)
1/2 cup plain yogurt	1 1/2 cups sugar
1 1/4 cups flour	3 eggs
1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda	2 teaspoons vanilla

Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease three 8-inch cake pans. Line bottoms with wax paper. Grease and flour paper. Heat milk and coffee in small saucepan until small bubbles form around the edge. Add to cocoa and whisk until smooth. Whisk in yogurt. Cool.

In medium bowl, combine flour, baking soda, baking powder and salt. Beat butter in mixer bowl until light. Gradually beat in sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time. Add vanilla. At low speed, gradually beat in dry ingredients alternating with chocolate mixture. Beat at medium speed two minutes. Pour into prepared pans.

CREAMY FUDGE FROSTING



4 ounces unsweetened dark chocolate, chopped
1 2/3 cups confectioners' sugar
3/4 cup whipping cream
2 teaspoons vanilla
6 tablespoons butter, softened (no substitutions)

Heat chocolate, sugar and cream, stirring constantly, in saucepan over medium heat until smooth. Remove from heat; stir in vanilla. Transfer to mixer bowl, and place in larger bowl of ice water. Let stand, stirring occasionally, until cold and thick. Remove from ice bath. Gradually beat in butter at high speed; beat until fluffy and stiff enough to hold its shape.

Place one layer on cake plate and spread with 3/4 cup frosting. Top with second layer and another 3/4 cup frosting. Spread top and sides with remaining frosting.

Makes 12 servings.



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