

HOLIDAY RECIPE BOOK

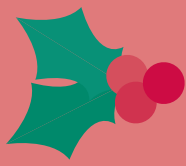
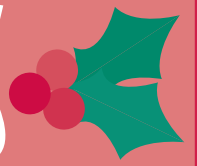


TABLE OF CONTENTS



SIDES

BLT STEAK GRUYERE POPOVERS	3
ELIZABETH'S POTATOES - YUM!!	4
HOLIDAY OYSTER DRESSING	5
INA GARTEN'S ROSEMARY ROASTED CASHEWS	6
KNORR SPINACH DIP	7
LOBSTER SCRAMBLED EGGS	8
ROASTED PARMESAN BRUSSELS SPROUTS	9
SAUSAGE DIP	10
SINFUL POTATOES	11
SPINACH SALAD	12

ENTREES

CHILI CASEOSO	14
CHILI POR CAMILLO	15
JAY'S ITALIAN MEATLOAF	16
MAKE-AHEAD BREAKFAST CASSEROLE ...	17
MEXICAN CHILI	18
SLOW-COOKED GOAT CHEESE SWEET POTATOES	19
TORTELLINI SOUP	20
TURKEY LOAF	21

DRINKS

COQUITO	23
HOLIDAY CIDER	24
HOLIDAY EGG NOG	25

DESSERTS

ALMOND BARK DROP COOKIE CLUSTERS	27
BREAD PUDDING ('BUDÍN DE PAN')	28
ERIC'S CHOCOLATE CRINKLE HOLIDAY COOKIES	29
ITALIAN RICOTTA CHEESECAKE	30
ORANGE OATMEAL COOKIES	31
OREO COOKIE BALLS (JOSÉ'S EXTRA EDITION)	32
WHAT'S IN THESE COOKIES? WHAT'S NOT?	33



 **SIDES** 

BLT STEAK GRUYERE POPOVERS

Recipe courtesy of BLT Steak.

These are my Christmas dinner specialty!

INGREDIENTS:

3 cups milk
3 cups all-purpose flour
1 Tablespoon kosher salt
6 eggs
6 ounces Gruyere cheese, grated

DIRECTIONS:

- Place a 6-cup popover pan in the bottom third of the oven. Place a baking sheet on a rack underneath to catch any drips. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
- In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, warm the milk until small bubbles form around the edges. Put the flour and salt in a fine-mesh sieve and sift onto a sheet of waxed paper. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs until frothy, about 2 minutes. Slowly whisk in the hot milk, whisking constantly so the eggs don't cook, then gradually whisk in the flour mixture until almost smooth.
- Remove the popover pan from the oven and spray the cups with nonstick vegetable spray. Fill the prepared cups about three-fourths full with batter and sprinkle each with ½ ounces of cheese.
- Return the pan to the oven and bake for 15 minutes, then rotate the pan 180 degrees. Continue baking until the popovers are browned and puffed, 30 minutes more; do not open the oven after rotating the pan.
- Invert the pan and remove the popovers. Serve immediately. Using a paper towel, wipe out the excess fat from the popover cups. Heat the pan in the oven for 5 to 10 minutes. Repeat to bake the remaining batter. Makes 12 popovers.

Emily Walsh is president and publisher of The Observer.



ELIZABETH'S POTATOES - YUM!!

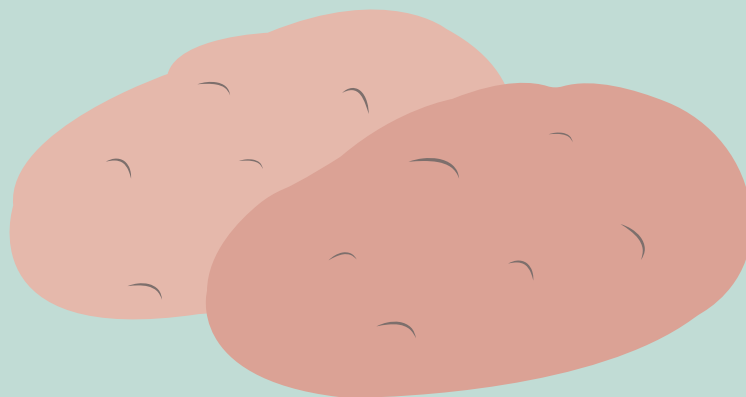
INGREDIENTS:

2 pounds of frozen hashbrowns
1 can cream of mushroom soup
1 onion, chopped
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup melted butter
2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded
1 can French fried onions

DIRECTIONS:

- Mix all ingredients but the fried onions together and put in a 13 inch-by-9 inch pan.
- Sprinkle with the French fried onions. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Wa-la!

Brenda Lee is a multimedia advertising consultant with The Observer.



HOLIDAY OYSTER DRESSING

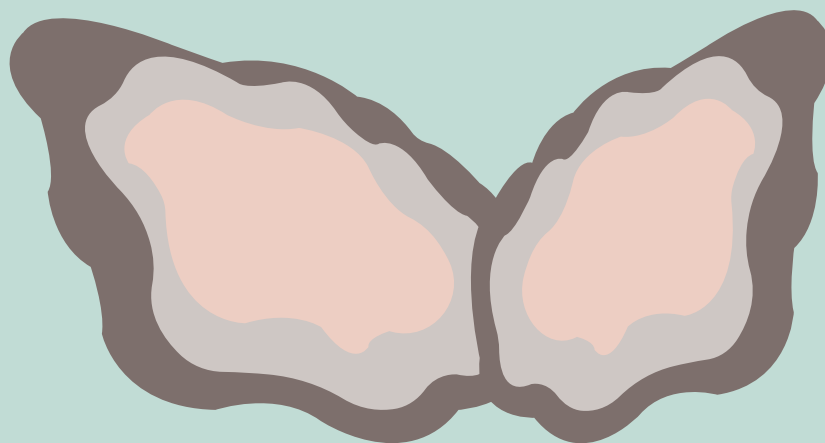
INGREDIENTS:

2 (12 ounce) Pepperidge Farm Classic Stuffing Mix
8 ounces thick cut bacon (about 6 slices), cut into ½ -inch pieces
1 stick butter
2 large onion, chopped (about 2 cups)
3 stalks celery, diced (about 1 ½ cups)
2 cloves garlic, chopped/minced
2 teaspoons crushed dried thyme
2 cups chicken broth (EYEBALL THIS to your desired consistency)
2 cans (8 ounces each) whole canned oysters, drained, reserving liquid

DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook the bacon over medium heat until crisp, stirring occasionally. Drain the bacon on paper towels. Pour off any fat.
- Heat the butter in the saucepan. Add the onions, celery, garlic and thyme and cook until the vegetables are tender, stirring occasionally. Stir in the broth and oyster liquid. Remove the saucepan from the heat. Add stuffing mix, bacon and oysters and mix lightly. Add additional broth, if needed. Spoon the stuffing mixture into a greased 3 ½ quart casserole. Cover the casserole.
- Bake for 30 minutes or until the stuffing mixture is hot.

Lori Downey is the sales coordinator/accounts manager at The Observer.



INA GARTEN'S ROSEMARY ROASTED CASHEWS

Recipe courtesy of Ina Garten.

This is a lazy recipe but SOOOOOO yummy. They are the surprise hit of every party. If I'm being honest I double the brown sugar. You can ramp up the spicy level as well. These also keep beautifully in a mason jar and make a lovely hostess gift.

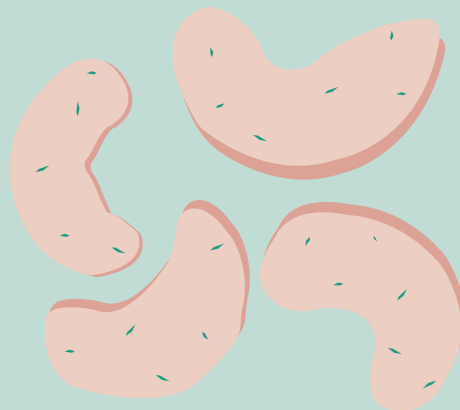
INGREDIENTS:

1 ¼ pounds cashews
2 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh rosemary leaves
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
2 teaspoons drk brown sugar
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 tablespoon melted butter

DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
- Place the nuts on an ungreased baking sheet and bake for about 10 minutes until they are warmed through. Meanwhile, combine the rosemary, pepper, sugar, salt and butter in a large bowl. Toss the warm nuts with the rosemary mixture until the nuts are completely coated. Serve warm.

Penny Nowicki is an advertising sales manager with The Observer.



KNORR SPINACH DIP

Cook time: About 10 minutes, with 2 hours of chill time

Servings: Makes 4 cups dip

INGREDIENTS:

10 ounces fresh baby spinach, chopped OR 10-ounce package of frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry

16 ounces of sour cream

1 cup mayonnaise

1 8-ounce can of water chestnuts, drained and chopped (optional)

3 green onions, chopped (optional)

DIRECTIONS:

- Combine all ingredients in a bowl.
- Cover and chill in the refrigerator about 2 hours.
- Serve with your favorite dippers to your favorite people.

Kristen Boothroyd is director of legal advertising for the Business Observer.



LOBSTER SCRAMBLED EGGS

INGREDIENTS:

8 large eggs
3 tablespoons cream cheese, softened
2 tablespoons shredded cheddar cheese
3 ounces lobster meat, chopped (fresh or frozen)
2 tablespoons finely diced red bell pepper
2 tablespoons finely diced yellow onion
Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 teaspoon canola oil

DIRECTIONS:

- Whisk the eggs and cream cheese together well. Add the cheddar, lobster, bell pepper and yellow onion. Season with salt and pepper and combine well.
- In a large, nonstick skillet, heat the oil over very low heat. Add the egg mixture to the pan and cook over low heat, stirring frequently with a wooden spoon, until cooked to desired consistency.

Mark Bergin covers town government for the Longboat Observer.



ROASTED PARMESAN BRUSSELS SPROUTS

My father scarred me with stinky boiled sprouts as a kid, but on Thanksgiving 2019, I approached the vegetable anew. They're now a staple at every holiday meal and even on some weeknights when I need a (mostly) healthy comfort food. I've made them so often that I now measure ingredients in "that looks like enough" terms, so here are my best guesses.

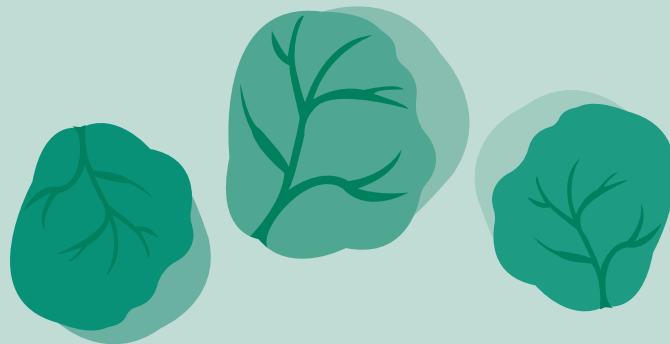
INGREDIENTS:

About a pound of Brussels sprouts, rinsed and halved
 Probably about 3-4 tablespoons olive oil (for me, it's "a healthy drizzle")
 About ½ teaspoon of salt
 About 1 teaspoon pepper
 1-2 teaspoons of garlic powder (I like mine on the garlicky side)
 About ¼ cup bread crumbs
 ¼ cup parmesan cheese to mix in
 ¼ cup parmesan cheese to top

DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat your oven to 400 degrees.
- Trim the stem from your sprouts, halve them and give them a good rinse. Take the time to dry them on a towel, because the drier the sprout, the crispier the end result.
- Put the dried sprouts in a bowl with all the ingredients except the reserved cheese and mix well. I've used clean hands to toss them when making them for myself and tongs when making them for others.
- Spread them on a baking sheet and top with the remaining cheese. You may not need this much cheese, but don't you?
 Bake at 400 degrees for 20 minutes, flip the sprouts and bake for an additional 20 minutes. They should be easily stabbed with a fork with a nice golden color.
 Serve and start healing from the Brussels sprouts stigma!

Nat Kaemmerer covers community news for the Longboat Observer.



SAUSAGE DIP

This is always a crowd favorite so I always double — or triple — it. It isn't the prettiest appetizer, but it's delish!

INGREDIENTS:

1 package Jimmy Dean sausage (I use HOT)
1 can Ro-Tel diced tomatoes with chilis (I use HOT)
2 packages cream cheese

DIRECTIONS:

■ Brown the sausage, strain and put it back in the pot. Add Ro-Tel and cream cheese and cook until melted and mixed. Serve warm with tortilla chips.

Jill Raleigh is director of advertising for The Observer.



SINFUL POTATOES

So bad yet so good.

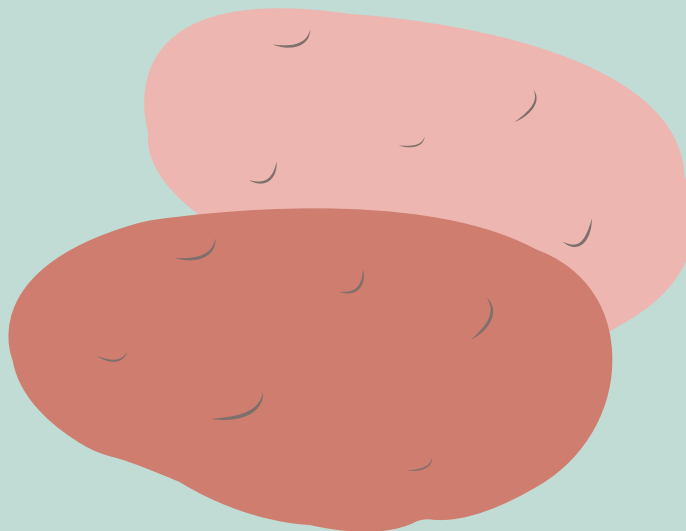
INGREDIENTS:

2 pounds Southern style hashbrowns, thawed
8 ounces sour cream
8 ounces onion dip
1 can cream of chicken soup
10 ounces cheddar cheese (Grated)
½ cup butter (melted)
2 cups Corn Flakes (crushed)
Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS:

- Mix all except butter and Corn Flakes in a large bowl.
- Pour into a 13" x 9" pan that has been sprayed with Pam.
- Mix butter and Corn Flakes in a bowl.
- Press onto top of potato mixture.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 1 to 1 ½ hours, until top is browned.

Beth Jacobson is a multimedia advertising representative with The Observer.



SPINACH SALAD

This is my mom's spinach salad recipe. It has been a favorite of everyone who has tried it for as long as I can remember.

INGREDIENTS:

Dressing

½ cup mayonnaise

1 cup sour cream

1 Tablespoon vinegar

1 Tablespoon sugar

1 Tablespoon minced onion

¾ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon garlic salt

Other:

Sesame seeds (to taste)

Grated parmesan cheese (to taste)

Large bag of spinach, mix with however much iceberg you'd like to add

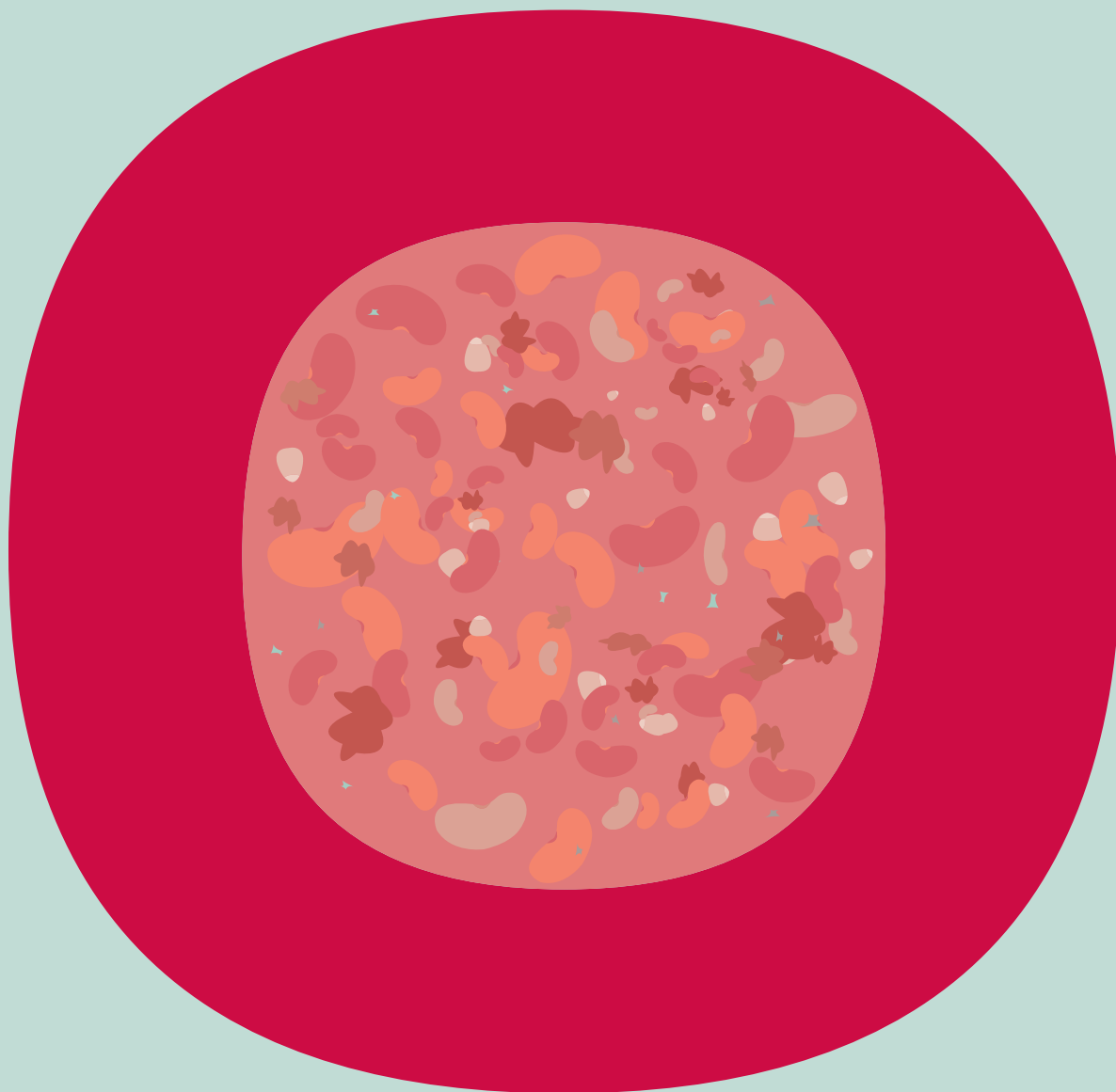
Love, love and love!

DIRECTIONS:

- Combine all dressing ingredients together until thoroughly mixed.
- Toss over salad mixture. Top with toasted sesame seeds and as much grated parmesan cheese as you like.

Caleb Stanton is director of Creative Services at The Observer.





 **ENTREES** 

CHILI CASEOSO

This is not a chili — it's more like a quiche. It's amazing as an out-of-the-box side dish or makes an amazing breakfast addition as well. Green chiles are my favorite, so I love this!

INGREDIENTS:

3 4 ½ ounce cans mild green chiles, seeded and chopped
1 pound Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
1 pound cheddar cheese, shredded
4 eggs
1 5 1/8 ounce can evaporated milk

DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a greased 9 x 13-inch pan, place a layer of chiles, a layer of cheeses, repeating another layer of each.
- Beat 4 eggs and add evaporated milk. Pour over top of cheese layers.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Chill. Cut into squares. Yields 24 to 30 pieces.
- Warm to serve.

Kat Hughes is chief operating officer and executive editor of The Observer.



CHILI POR CAMILLO

This is not that spicy of a chili you may add hot sauce or seasonings to desired spice tolerance.

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound cubed beef steak
1 pound ground beef
12 ounces Budweiser beer (or the beer of your choice)
1 tablespoon olive oil
½ pound red chili beans, dry
½ pound kidney beans, dry
28 ounce can whole tomatoes, with juice
2 medium onions
1 green pepper
1 rib celery
1 jalapeño pepper
1 clove garlic
3 tablespoon chili powder
1 ½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon pepper
1 teaspoon cumin
1 tablespoon cayenne pepper hot sauce
½ cup corn starch
¼ cup brown sugar
3 cups water

DIRECTIONS:

- Take tomatoes out of can and put juice into the crock pot. Slice the tomatoes and put them in. Add beer, olive oil and beans.
- Dice onions, green pepper, celery, jalapeno pepper and add them. Add all other seasonings and ingredients.
- Break up the ground beef and add. Cut up the steak into bite-size pieces and add.
- Add water last as you may want to add more or less based on desired thickness. Put on low or high and it is finished when the beans are soft.

Jason Camillo is a web developer at The Observer.



JAY'S ITALIAN MEATLOAF

Cook Time: 1 hour, 15 minutes

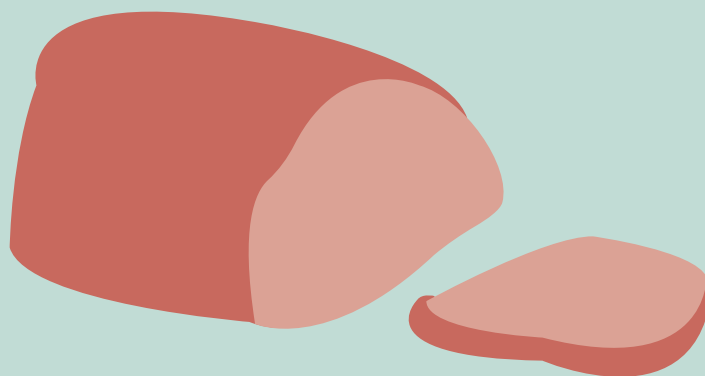
INGREDIENTS:

2 pounds ground beef (70/30 is OK for this recipe)
2 pounds mild Italian sausage (remove casings)
1 large onion, diced
1 cup Italian bread crumbs
1 cup grated parmesan cheese
1 ½ cups milk
2 eggs
3 tablespoons crushed garlic
2 tablespoons oregano, basil and parsley
1 tablespoon Worchester sauce
1 tablespoon Slap Ya Mamma seasoning
Pepper, salt to taste

DIRECTIONS:

- Combine all ingredients in a bowl and mix with your hands until mixed.
- Spray the bottom of a baking dish with cooking oil. Mold the meatloaf into the pan. Bake at 350 degrees for about an hour. Most recipes call for 160 degrees internal temperature, but I would pull it out at 150 degrees and let it sit for 10 minutes. Or cook for an hour and pull out and cut a little slice (I know, God forbid some of the juices run out, but the worst thing you can do to a meatloaf is overcook it and you are left with the dry, crummy meatloaf that has turned people off for a century). If not cooked to your taste, throw it back in for another 10 minutes.
- Please note: no sauce is needed to top this meatloaf, it is great without it. Serve mashed potatoes and corn on the side and that completes a nice comfort food dinner.

Jay Heater is the managing editor of the East County Observer.



MAKE-AHEAD BREAKFAST CASSEROLE

This is a great one to make during the holidays when you have company. You can make it the night before and then pop it in the oven the next morning. Plus, it's a Cooking Light recipe, so it has some healthier ingredients to give you a break from the heaviness of the holidays.

INGREDIENTS:

8 ounces ciabatta bread, cut into 1-inch cubes
Cooking spray
1 pound turkey breakfast sausage (can use pork if you like)
½ cup chopped green onions
1 ¼ cups fat-free milk
1 cup (4 ounces) reduced-fat shredded sharp cheddar cheese
2 large eggs
1 8-ounce carton egg substitute
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
- Arrange bread cubes in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake at 400 degrees for 8 minutes, or until toasted.
- Heat a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Coat pan with cooking spray. Brown the turkey sausage, drain and set aside.
- Beat the eggs. In a large bowl, mix sausage, toasted bread cubes, milk, beaten eggs, egg substitute, cheeses and onions until combined.
- Spray 13 x 9-inch pan with cooking spray. Pour mixture into the pan and bake at 400 degrees for 45 minutes. To make ahead, you can also cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate, then bake the next morning. Add about 15 minutes to baking time because pan will be cold going into the oven. It's done when the break looks toasty on top and the eggs are cooked.

Kat Hughes is chief operating officer and executive editor of The Observer.



MEXICAN CHILI

This is a quick and easy recipe that anyone (kids!) can help with because it's a lot of can opening and dumping and the end result is a pretty generic crowd pleaser. We often make this when family is traveling to town as a pre-made, easy to pull out, welcome-to-our-house meal. Lots of love and home cooking without a lot of last-minute hustle.

INGREDIENTS:

1 can of dark red kidney beans, slightly drained
1 can of light red kidney beans, slightly drained
2 cans black beans, slightly drained
1 can diced tomatoes (or Ro-Tel if you like it spicy)
1 can of sweet corn (or frozen corn)
1 large chopped onion
1 large chopped bell pepper (any color you like)
Taco seasoning to taste
Optional meat: 1 pound ground turkey or hamburger, browned... if using meat, I prefer to brown the meat with taco seasoning.

DIRECTIONS:

- Saute onion and pepper in oil in large pot.
- Add all ingredients and simmer. Add extra tomatoes or V8 if it needs extra liquid.
- Simmer until flavors meld together, and serve with chips, shredded lettuce, shredded cheese and sour cream.

Laura Strickland is chief financial officer at The Observer.



SLOW-COOKED GOAT CHEESE SWEET POTATOES

Sounds weird ... but they are pretty delish!

INGREDIENTS:

6 large sweet potatoes
½ cup chicken stock
Orange zest
¼ cup orange juice
Salt and pepper
1 teaspoon coriander
1 teaspoon cumin
1 teaspoon ginger
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon paprika
½ cup maple syrup
Crumbled goat cheese (about 4 ounces)
Crushed pecan pralines

DIRECTIONS:

- Peel and slice sweet potatoes, place in slow cooker.
- Combine all ingredients in a small bowl from chicken stock to maple syrup. Pour over sweet potatoes in slow cooker.
- Set slow cooker to medium heat for 5 hours. Rotate sweet potatoes half way through cooking.
- After 5 hours, potatoes should be tender. Keep on warm until ready to serve spooning mixture over potatoes occasionally.
- Before serving, crumble the goat cheese over potatoes and set slow cooker to high for about 10 minutes to warm the cheese through. Sprinkle with crushed pecan pralines.

Beth Jacobson is a multimedia advertising representative with The Observer.



TORTELLINI SOUP

This is one of those recipes that you can modify, and it always comes out delicious.

I have replaced the sausage for shredded chicken. I have used kale instead of spinach or I have put it all in together for an even harder rendition.

Make sure you serve it with plenty of fresh grated parmesan cheese, hardy bread and of course a nice glass of red wine.

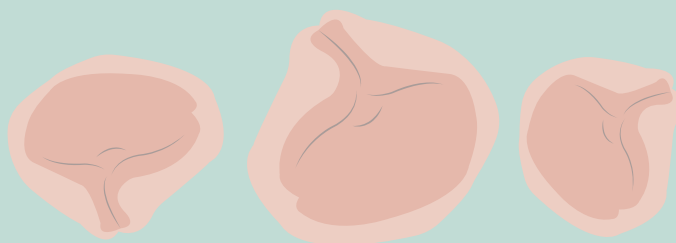
INGREDIENTS:

1 medium sweet onion
2 gloves of garlic – diced
2 tablespoons olive oil
8 bacon strips cooked extra crispy
Crumble 4 of them
Dice remaining 4 and set aside for topping
1 pound loose sausage (I use turkey sausage)
6 cups chicken stock
10 ounces tomato sauce
2 tablespoons pesto
1 bag frozen tortellini
1 bag of pre-washed baby spinach

DIRECTIONS:

- In a heavy soup pot, sauté olive oil and onion until the onion is soft but not browning. Add the loose sausage and cook through then add the crumbled bacon and garlic and sauté until garlic is slightly brown.
- Add the chicken stock and bring to a boil.
- Add the tortellini and cook according to package direction (usually just until they are floating)
- Add the tomato sauce and pesto (you can substitute this with one jar of good quality tomato/basil pasta sauce)
Add the bag of spinach, cover, and cook until just the spinach is wilted (usually a minute or two)
- Ladle into bowls and top with extra bacon and grated parmesan cheese.

Kathleen O'Hara is regional digital director of sales at The Observer.



TURKEY LOAF

This recipe is super simple and is truly a loaf. It is sliceable like a loaf of bread — young kids can eat it with their hands and dip it in ketchup.

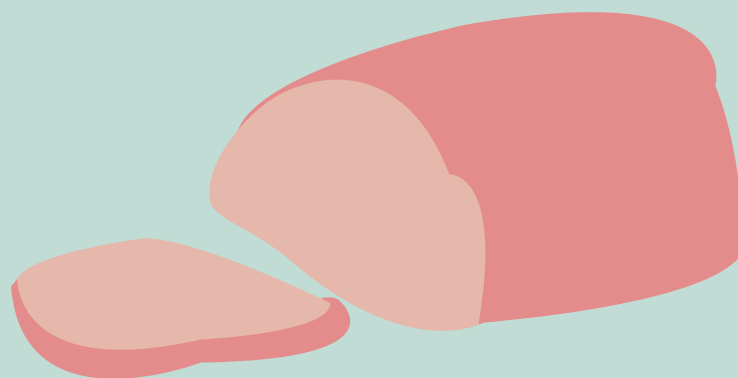
INGREDIENTS:

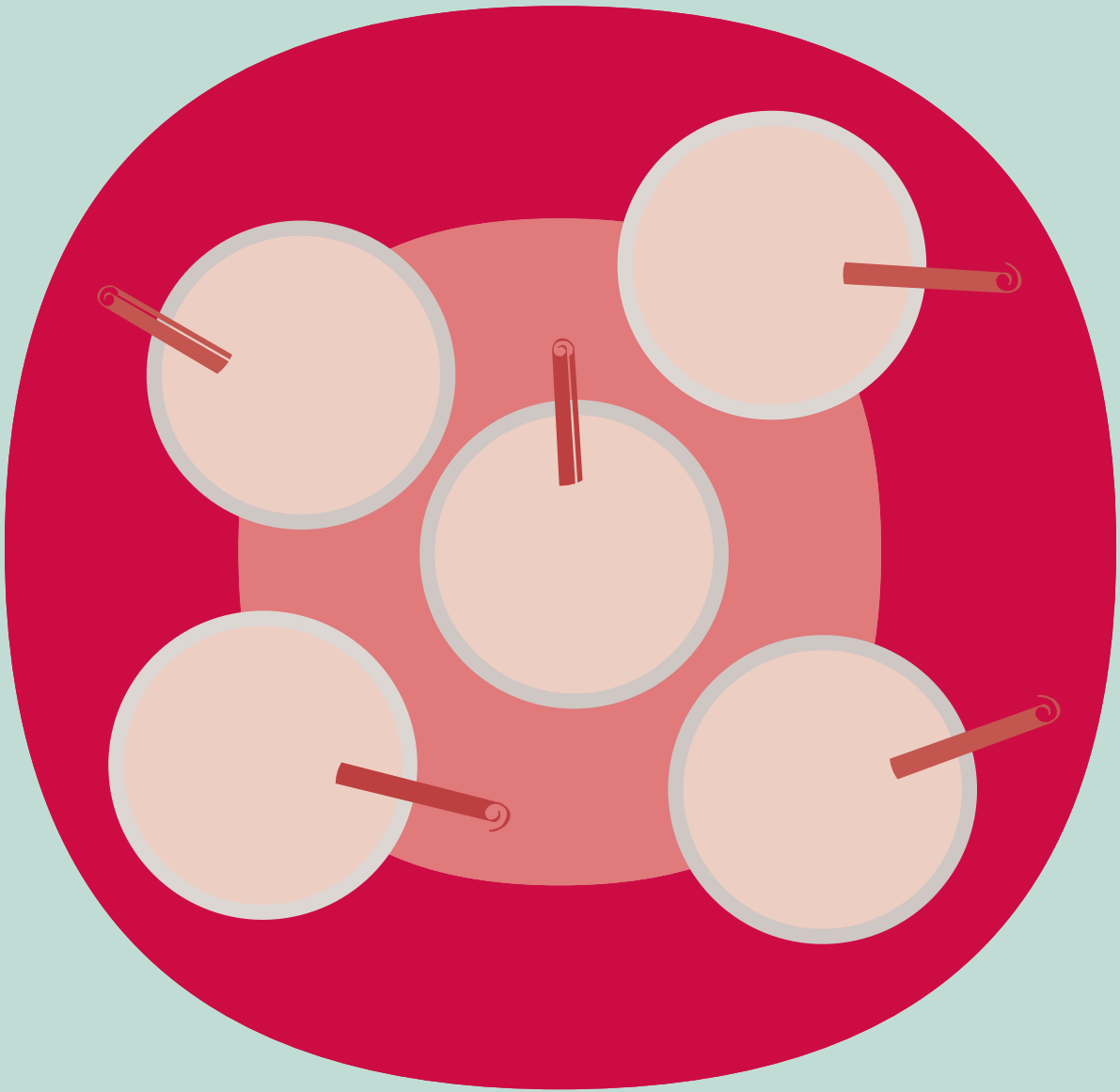
- 1 pound ground turkey
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 celery stalks, finely chopped
- 1 large egg
- 1 package stove top stuffing (turkey or chicken flavor)

DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- In large bowl, combine all ingredients (including the seasoning packet that comes with the stuffing) and mix with hands. Put in loaf pan and bake at 350 degrees for one hour. It's done when edges pull away from pan sides and are browned.

Laura Strickland is chief financial officer at The Observer.





 **DRINKS** 

COQUITO

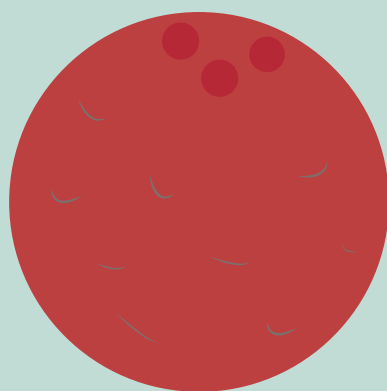
INGREDIENTS:

3-4 cups of white rum (depending on how strong you want it!)
2 cans of Coco Lopez coconut cream (15 ounces each)
2 cans of Carnation's evaporated milk 12-13 oz.
1 can of sweetened condensed milk
6 egg yolks
1 teaspoon of vanilla extract
Pinch of salt
Pinch of cinnamon

DIRECTIONS:

- Mix egg yolks and evaporated milk in a blender.
- Add all remaining ingredients and rum to taste.
- Serve cold.

Liz Ramos covers education and community for the East County Observer.



HOLIDAY CIDER

INGREDIENTS:

6 ounces apple cider
4.5 ounces vodka
1.5 ounces Cointreau or triple sec
1.5 ounces lemon juice
3 teaspoon simple syrup
3 pinches of ground cinnamon
Apple slices for garnish

DIRECTIONS:

- Combine all ingredients.
- Either shake over ice and strain, or chill and serve over ice. Garnish with apple slices.

Melissa Leduc is the editorial designer of the East County and Sarasota Observers.



HOLIDAY EGG NOG

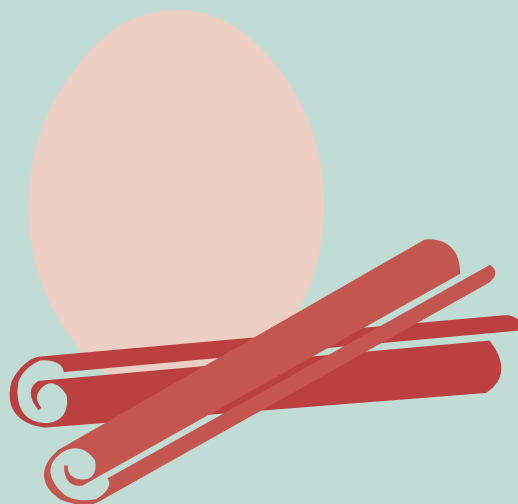
INGREDIENTS:

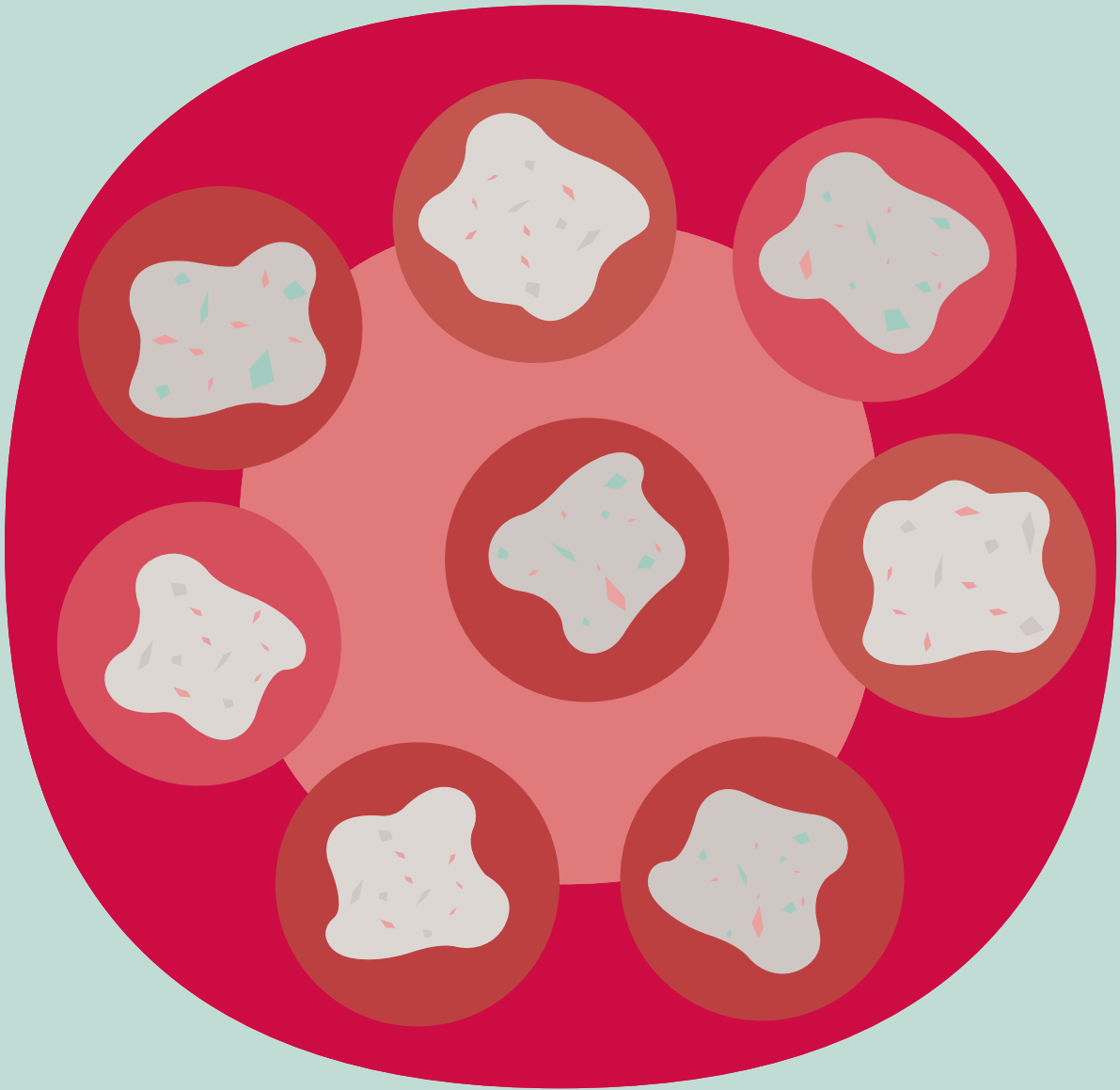
6 ounces eggnog
6 ounces Bailey's
3 ounces vanilla vodka
Cinnamon stick garnish

DIRECTIONS:

- Combine all ingredients.
- Either shake over ice and strain, or chill and serve over ice. Garnish with cinnamon stick.

Melissa Leduc is the editorial designer of the East County and Sarasota Observers.





 **DESSERTS** 

ALMOND BARK DROP COOKIE CLUSTERS

Cook time: 15 minutes

No bake necessary!

INGREDIENTS:

2 packages of white almond bark

1 cup of peanut butter

2 cups of dry roasted peanuts

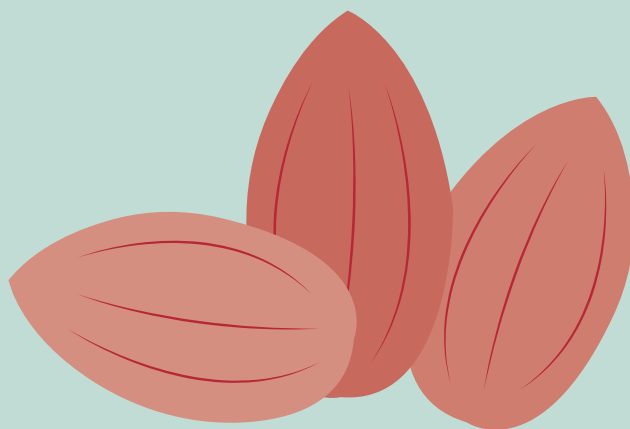
2 cups of rice krispies

4 cups of mini marshmallows

DIRECTIONS:

- Melt the almond bark in the microwave for 2 minutes. Stir and microwave for 2 more minutes or until melted.
- Stir in peanut butter.
- Add peanuts, mini marshmallows, then rice krispies (hint: try not to crush the krispies!).
- Scoop a tablespoon size of cookie mix onto wax paper and allow them to harden for a few hours.

Samantha Dischinger is marketing coordinator at The Observer.



BREAD PUDDING ('BUDÍN DE PAN')

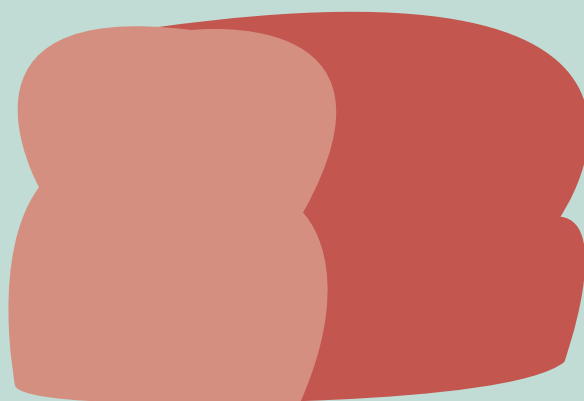
INGREDIENTS:

- ¾ pound plain bread crumbs (about 1 ½ cups)
- 4 cups of milk
- 4 to 5 eggs
- 1 ½ cups of sugar
- 1 teaspoon of cinnamon
- 4 Tablespoons of melted butter
- ¼ teaspoon of salt
- ¼ cup of raisins
- 3 Tablespoons of flour (to powder the raisins)

DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Add milk to the bread crumbs and make sure all the bread is soaked with milk. You can use the blender if needed.
- Add the butter to the mix and mix well. Add the rest of the ingredients except the raisins and flour. Pour the mixture into a greased baking pan.
- Powder the raisins and spread them in the mixture. Put the baking pan in the oven and bake at 350 degrees for 50 to 60 minutes until the inserted knife comes out clean.

Liz Ramos covers education and community for the East County Observer.



ERIC'S CHOCOLATE CRINKLE HOLIDAY COOKIES

Cook time: 12 minutes, 4 hours to chill dough

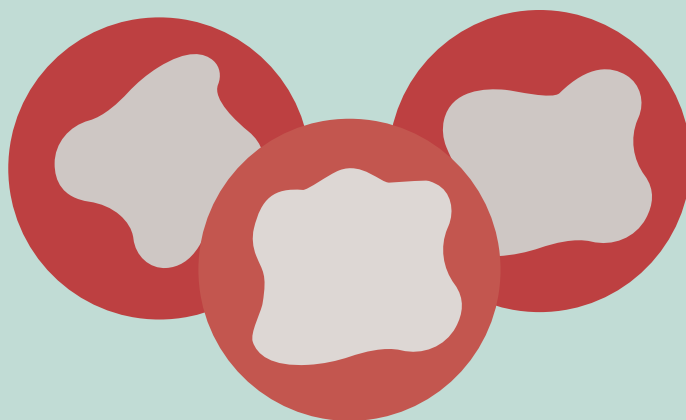
INGREDIENTS:

1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
2 cups sugar (or Stevia equivalent)
2 cups flour
1/2 cup vegetable oil
4 eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup confectioner's sugar

DIRECTIONS:

- Mix cocoa, sugar and oil in a medium bowl. Beat in the eggs in one at a time, then the vanilla. Separately, combine flour, baking powder and salt. Blend together with the cocoa mixture, cover and chill (you and the dough) for at least 4 hours.
- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line cookie sheets (I use a ceramic sheet) with parchment paper. Roll dough into 1-inch balls, then roll each in confectioner's sugar before placing on prepared cookie sheet (you will get messy if you don't have a suitable spoon or scoop).
- Bake at 350 degrees for 10-12 minutes. Let stand 2 minutes on cookie sheet before allowing to cool on a wire rack.

Eric Garwood is managing editor of the Longboat and Sarasota Observers.



ITALIAN RICOTTA CHEESECAKE

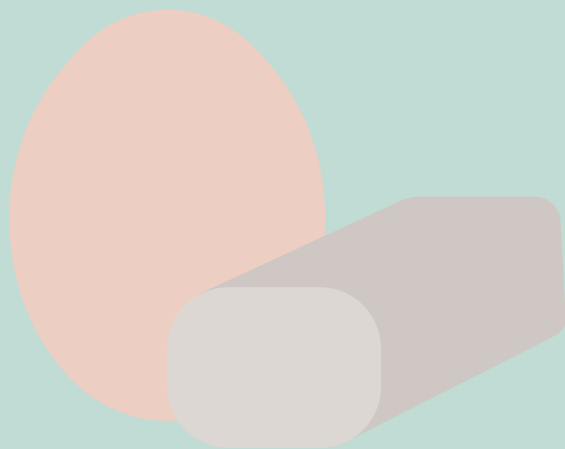
INGREDIENTS:

2 each 8-ounce cream cheese (softened)
1 stick of butter (softened)
1 ½ cup of sugar
4 eggs
3 tablespoons flour
3 Tablespoon cornstarch
30 ounces of ricotta cheese
1 teaspoon of vanilla
1 pint of sour cream

DIRECTIONS:

- Butter and flour a 10-inch or 12inch spring pan. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- Add all ingredients one at a time, mixing completely before moving on to the next ingredient.
- Pour mixture into the pan, set in the center of the oven and bake at 350 degrees for 75-90 minutes. Check after an hour — if the top is too brown, loosely put tin foil over the top. Use a butter knife to check doneness — if it comes out clean, it's done!
- Cool and refrigerate. I top with a can of cherries or blueberries and Reddi-wip.

Lori Ruth is associate publisher of the East County Observer.



ORANGE OATMEAL COOKIES

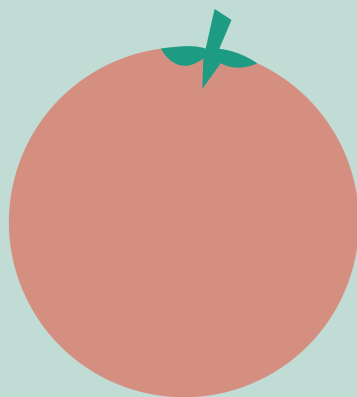
INGREDIENTS:

1 cup unsifted all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup shortening
1 cup light brown sugar, firmly packed
1 egg
1 Tablespoon grated orange peel
2 Tablespoons orange juice
1 cup raw, quick-cooking oats
½ cup seedless raisins
½ cup coarsely chopped walnuts

DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease cookie sheets, sift flour with baking soda and salt.
- In a large bowl, beat at medium speed shortening, brown sugar and egg until fluffy.
- At low speed, beat in orange peel and orange juice, then beat in flour until combined. Stir in oats, raisins and nuts.
- Drop by tablespoons, 2 inches apart onto greased cookie sheets. Bake 15-18 minutes or until golden brown. Remove to wire rack to cool.

Lori Downey is a sales coordinator/accounts manager for The Observer.



OREO COOKIE BALLS (JOSÉ'S EXTRA EDITION)

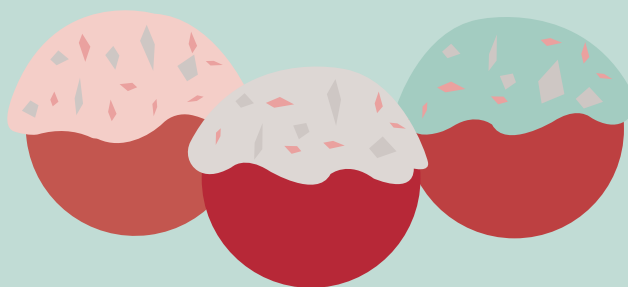
INGREDIENTS:

8 ounces cream cheese, softened
36 Oreos (any flavor), finely crushed
16 ounces melting chocolate, melted
Any optional toppings, mix-ins (crushed candy canes, fresh fruit, jelly, etc.)

DIRECTIONS:

- Crush the Oreo cookies using a food processor. If you are without one, like me, put your Oreos in a plastic baggie and use a rolling pin, can, or other cylindrical object to crush them into fine pieces. It's a great stress reliever!
- Pour the cookie bits into your room-temperature cream cheese. Mix until evenly combined. Feel free to add any additional mix-ins at this time.
- Roll the mixture into small (or large, I won't tell!) balls. Place onto a wax/parchment-paper-lined cookie tray. Freeze for 20 minutes.
- Melt the chocolate according to instructions on packaging. Feel free to use whatever chocolate or other meltable substance pairs best with your chosen Oreo flavor. Butterscotch is a fun twist!
- Dip the cookie balls into the chocolate to your liking. Most people like to cover them completely. I prefer to only half coat them because I'm not that big of a chocolate person and it's less of a mess.
- Top with any topping of your choice. Simply adding a pinch of crushed Oreos on top takes the presentation to the next level.
- Chill for an hour. Serve and enjoy.

José Valle is editorial designer of the Arts + Entertainment section and the Longboat and Sarasota Observers.



WHAT'S IN THESE COOKIES? WHAT'S NOT?

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup butter, softened (2 sticks)
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 cup oatmeal
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup coconut
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- 1 cup chopped nuts (if you like)
- 1 cup chopped dried fruit, like raisins, dried cranberries or apricots (if you like)

DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- Mix together the butter and both sugars in a big bowl. Add the eggs and vanilla and mix until smooth. Do the same with the peanut butter.
- Now add the oatmeal, flour, coconut until all blended. Add the chocolate chips. If you're adding nuts and or dried fruit, do it now and let them mix until uniform.
- Spoon mixture on a standard-sized cookie sheet, probably four rows of three. Bake at 350 degrees for 12 minutes if you like them softer, 15 if you like them crispier. For softer cookies, remove immediately to a wire cooling rack; for crispier cookies, let them remain on the hot cookie sheet for a minute or two after loosening with a spatula. Will make about 40 cookies.

Eric Garwood is managing editor of the Longboat and Sarasota Observers.

