



Christmas CHEER & HAPPY Holidays

Crafts: A-Touch-Of-Retro-Table, Kids Festive Mini Donut Tower & Creative Christmas Wrapping

Cocktail: COOK'S Christmas Punch
Festive Filo and camembert parcel
Smoked Salmon Verrine
Festive Fillet with pesto and sweetened sun dried tomatoes
Honey Roasted Sweet Potato & Red Onion Salad
Crispy Greens with an Asian Dressing
Festive Chocolate Fondue (craft up your skewers)
Chocolate Celebration Torte



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Dear COOK fanatic & friend

2010 has been a rollercoaster year of emotion for so many of us....yet the one constant has been your boundless enthusiasm for shared Cook evenings of great food, creative crafts, guaranteed fun and friendship.

FUN, LAUGHTER, FRIENDS, CHEER and HAPPINESS were the emotions and words that inspired this course, and I hope it's these feel-good sensations that fill you tonight as much as the food, and leave you inspired and ready to welcome in the Festive Season with a smile.

We've all worked and stressed hard enough in 2010... so with this in mind I've put together a 'Cheat's Christmas Course' that enables you to dazzle your guests with fabulous crafts, picture-perfect food presentation and entirely new ways of combining traditional Festive fare with light, summery entertaining.

At this time of thanksgiving....I'd like to thank the entire Cook Clan for your continued loyalty and support.

I consider myself extremely blessed to have been able to make my passion my career and it's people like YOU that have made this possible.

Shared evenings of laughter and camaraderie have made such a difference to the lives of so many of my students, and it goes without saying that it's made all the difference in the world to my life too.

Right now, you are most likely sitting next to a close friend or relative (or me), so please raise your glass and toast to family, friendship, support and our circle of COOKS.

CHING CHING

Now don't just sit there...drink something!

COOK'S Christmas Punch

For each person add a tot of Spiced Gold rum to a glass, jug or bowl then top with ginger beer and soda and add a dash of Spiced Winter Berry Cordial (available from the organic market in Bryanston). Garnish with fresh mint leaves and lemon.

Festive Filo and camembert parcel (serves 3-4 on its own or 6-8 with salmon)

1 disc of ripe Camembert
1 small packet of Woolworths dried fruit strips (find them at the till point)
1 tablespoon Woolworth's onion marmalade
¼ cup sherry
Melted butter
1 sheet of phyllo

1. Soak the fruit in the sherry overnight and then combine with marmalade.
2. Slice the Camembert in half and fill with fruit mixture

3. Tear a sheet of phyllo in half, brush the one piece with butter then place the other sheet of phyllo on top (in a cross formation) and brush with butter.
4. Place the Camembert disc on top of the phyllo and bring the phyllo together to close over the cheese and scrunch the top (like a little money bag). Brush the bag with melted butter.
5. A ribbon can be placed around the cheese at this stage, although it bakes perfectly without a ribbon
6. Bake for 15 minutes at 180 °C
7. Serve immediately with Wheatsworth biscuits. Use digestives if serving as a dessert.

COOK'S Notes:

Melissa's makes a sultana jam, perfectly festive to fill the cheese.

The cheese can also be baked without the phyllo and in this case reduce baking time to 5-10 minute or serve unbaked as follows:

- Snip thinly sliced pancetta finely with a scissors (do not use bacon bits) and pan-fry till crispy. Top the Camembert with cranberry sauce.
- Twist ribbons of Parma ham on top and garnish with a fresh fig
- Top with chopped apricots, dates and almonds mixed together with onion marmalade and a little honey

Smoked Salmon Verrine (serves 8 on its own or 12 if served with the cheese)

Use a giant martini glass

200g smoked salmon or trout

2 avocados, chopped

¼ cup chopped chives

1 small cucumber (or ½ large one) seeded and chopped

1 large lemon

Caperberries to garnish

Shredded lettuce for bottom if making in advance (catches all the liquid)

1 tub soft cream cheese* (from Polaris or use Lancewood)

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Rye bread or Woolies brown seeded rolls to serve

1. Season the cream cheese with a little salt and black pepper
2. Combine avocado and cucumber, squeeze over lemon juice and toss with chives
3. Place the avocado salsa in the bottom of the glass, add cream cheese and then fold pieces of salmon on top. Top with caperberries.

Festive Fillet (serves 8 on its own or 14-16 if serving with a gammon or turkey)

1 large fillet approximately 1.6kg

1 cup soy sauce

60ml olive oil

1. Marinade the fillet in the soya sauce for 2 days, turning at least once
2. To cook the fillet, drain the marinade and sear in a hot pan for about 5 minutes a side.
3. Place fillet on a non stick mat and Cook at 200 °C for about 30 minutes depending on the thickness of the fillet
4. Allow to rest for 20-30 minutes before slicing and placing on a platter and topping with tomatoes and pesto.

COOK'S notes: Searing is messy and though you can pop the fillet straight into the oven (cook for 35-40minutes) searing first is perfectly suited to the lack of sauce here as you will have a crispy tasty skin and a soft rare to medium middle. If you don't want to sear, try the slow cooked fillet recipe on the blog.

Sweetened Sun Dried Tomatoes

2 packets marinated sun dried tomatoes

2 tablespoons Melissa's ginger jam (or use tomato chilli jam with fresh ginger)

1. Drain excess the oil and vinegar from the tomatoes and combine with the jam

COOK'S Notes: If you cannot find Melissa's products use Woolworth's tomato and chilli jam.

Make your own marinated tomatoes by bringing dried tomatoes (that's 2 cups or 2 packets from the veggie shop) and some water to the boil until soft (drain if there is excess water). Mix through a little olive oil and a splash of balsamic vinegar or red wine vinegar.

Pesto (enough for 2 ½ fillets-about 2 cups)

2 Woolies punnets (30g ea) or veggie shop packets (25g ea) of basil

1 Woolies punnet (30g) or veggie shop Italian parsley

1 teaspoon garlic or 2 garlic cloves crushed

½ cup Parmesan

½ cup flaked almonds

1 cup extra virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper (do not over salt as the feta is salty)

½ packet Kalamata olives (don't buy those revolting black pitted)

1 cup Danish feta crumbled

1. Heat a non -stick pan, add the nuts and toss till slightly browned. Allow to cool
2. Drain the olives, tear them in half and remove the stone
3. Place the cooled nuts in a processor, add the herbs, garlic, Parmesan, nuts and ¾ of the oil and blitz. Add remaining oil if the pesto is too thick
4. Add the olives and blitz for a few seconds so they remain chunky. Season to taste
5. Add the feta and stir lightly to combine .

COOK'S Notes: a squeeze of lemon can be added to the pesto. You can cheat and purchase 2 tubs of the Greek- style pesto from Woolies.

Honey Roasted Sweet Potato & Red Onion Salad (12)

Baby spinach leaves/rocket/baby leaves for base

1 kg whole sweet potato, scrubbed well and sliced
2 red onions, quartered into thin wedges
1/3 cup olive oil (or use some of the dressing oil)
1/3 cup honey
1/4 cup water
1 knob of ginger grated or sliced

Dressing

1 cup Romesco's Sicilian dressing (from the gourmet Market @ lifestyle)

1. Place the sweet potato and onion wedges on a non stick mat on a baking tray
2. Combine the oil, honey, water and ginger and toss through the vegetables
3. Bake at 200 °C for 40-50 minutes, tossing once or twice, or till cooked through
4. Place the vegetables on a bed of rocket and drizzle over the dressing

COOK'S Notes: Add sliced red pepper to the vegetables if you are not making the green salad. Caramelised nuts can be added as a topping, as well as dried mango strips. The Romesco's dressing is a delicious combination of oil, balsamic vinegar and Harissa paste.

Crispy Greens With Asian Dressing (12)

1 punnet asparagus (200g)
1 packet mange tout (200g)
1 punnet/package of French beans, top and tailed (350g)
1 large or 2 medium red peppers, sliced
1 bunch spring onions sliced
6 tablespoons soy sauce
4 tablespoons medium sherry
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 teaspoon sesame seeds
1 teaspoon sesame oil

1. Bring a large pot of water to the boil and add 1 tsp salt and 1 tsp bicarb. When the water is boiling rapidly plunge the beans in and boil for 6 minutes or until just cooked. Remove the beans from water and place under the tap for a few second to cool down.
2. Add the asparagus and repeat, also for 6 minutes
3. Add the mange tout for 1 minute, then refresh
4. Heat some olive oil in a pan and fry the peppers and onion and the sesame seeds
5. Turn off the heat, add the soy sauce and sherry and then the oil
6. Toss the peppers and onion through the beans and place on a platter

Festive Chocolate Fondue

Festive skewers (as demonstrated and see crafts)
2 large punnets fresh strawberries (use 2 halves on 1 skewer)

Sauce

Place 250g 50% chocolate buttons in a bowl. In a pot heat 1 cup of cream and 2 TBS castor sugar. Pour the cream over the chocolate and stir and serve in little festive pails.

Chocolate Sauce Flavourings & Variations

- Heat some grated orange zest and orange liqueur such as Cointreau with your cream
- Add peppermint extract or essence to taste
- Add a cinnamon quill, ginger or coarsely ground coffee beans to the cream when heating.
- Replace chocolate with Toblerone and add some honey to the sauce
- Replace dark chocolate with white vanilla bean chocolate

Chocolate Celebration Torte (12)

Base

200g digestive biscuits +75g melted butter

Filling

300g crème fraîche

2 TBS castor sugar

50g butter

350g 50% chocolate nibs (baking bitz)

2-3 TBS milk

To garnish: gold stars (COOK or Baking Bitz) and gold cupcake glitter

1. Process the biscuits and add the melted butter.
2. Press into a 20cm springform cake pan and chill
3. Heat the crème fraîche in a pan with the sugar. Add the butter. When hot, not boiling, remove from heat and add chocolate. Stir till smooth and then add the milk.
4. Pour the chocolate onto the base and chill for 2 hours.
5. Slice with a sharp knife and place the wedges on a platter. Dust with gold glitter and place a gold star on the end

CRAFTS |

All templates can be found on www.cookstudio.co.za under Christmas

- Main tree: 3 sets of sticks/branches from Flower Spot (2x R29 and 1xR39), painted white, tree ornaments Maileg from In Good Co
- Smaller tree: African wire tree painted white. Red and white string: Mr String from In Good Co, download the large bunting template, cut and attach to the string
- Dotted plates, heart napkin holders, heart table runner, ribbon all In Good Co
- Glass place mats COOK, plain cardstock, Mickey's scrap den.
- Gift boxes: Fold out red boxes from In Good Co, Mr String and small bunting (download)
- Consol glass cocktail bottles with red and white straws (In Good Co). Download the Cheers template, cut out by hand or use a round scrappers punch and use double sided tape to attach the envelope template.
Thread
- Skewers –purchase skewers from Wespac. Paint some red (leaving a small gap for the strawberries) and attach white or silver stars and paint the remaining white and attach red Christmas shapes. Or use the red and white striped twistees from In Good Co.

- Purchase the retro chocolates from Woolies and the old fashioned cream soda bottles from Delft, Super Spa or Petit Fours in Randridge mall.
- Purchase little white pails from Flowerspot. Cover with Ribbon or decorate and fill with chocolate sauce
- Candy trees: Red buckets In Good Co-fill with polystyrene and top with green moss (R49 a bag at Lifestyle) insert round candy (In Good Co)
- White dove garland on chalkboard In Good Co

Mini Kids Donut Tower

4 packets of Woolworth's mini donuts
 Chocolate to melt
 Icing sugar and silver cupcake glitter to dust
 Woolies star chocolates

Melt chocolate and dip the bottom of each donut into the chocolate and stick a few donuts onto a platter in a circle formation (with a hollow gap in the middle). Build the mini donuts up into a tower. Dust with icing sugar, place a large glittery star in the top donut. . Place a large star on top and dot the cake with Woolies star chocolates (remove the wrapping)

You can also dip strawberries into the chocolate and alternate mini donuts and strawberries on the festive skewers!

SHOPPING LIST

Organic market: Spiced winter berry cordial

Bottle store: Rum and Sherry

Supermarket: Ginger beer, Soda, biscuits, olive oil, digestives, butter

Woolies: Camembert, phyllo, fruit strips, onion marmalade, smoked salmon/trout, avocados, caperberries, sun dried tomatoes, crème fraîche, mini donuts, star chocolates, string beans, heat and eat bread and strawberries

Asian store: Soy sauce, sesame seeds, sesame oil,

Super Spa/Thrupps/deli: Melissa's ginger jam

Veg store: chives, basil, parsley, mint, cucumber, lemon, rocket leaves, sweet potato, red onion, red pepper, asparagus, mange tout, spring onions

Delft Butchery: Fillet

Polaris Cheese factory shop: parmesan, feta, honey, cream and soft cream cheese

Nut shop: almonds

Baking Bitz: Chocolate, gold glitter

The Carrera shopping centre (Republic road near Brightwater commons) is a one stop shop for the vegetable shop , nut shop, cheese shop, Asian store and Baking Bitz. All vegetables can be purchased at Woolies. Make sure your fillet is good quality hormone and anti-biotic free , from a reputable supplier like Delft or Woolies.