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*A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul.*

## December 2024

### MANAGING CHRISTMAS DAY MEALS:

**Cheese – Cream Whip for Toast, Muffins,  
and Bagels**

**Eggs Arnold**

**Italian-Style *Fontina* and *Romano* Cheese Strata**

**Honey – Almond Cream Whip**

**Orange Curd**

**Alsatian Parsley and Cheese Salad Sandwiches**

**Mediterranean Artichoke – Avocado – Tomato Salad**

**Pumpkin Cake(s) with Almond Flour**

**Vanilla Holiday Nog**

What we refer to as “the holidays” can mean different things to each of us but no matter what you celebrate it seems that these special times involve gatherings, large or small, around the table. The importance of these days produces joy and stress. One day, at the minimum, during that holiday period is always overwhelming. Let me share a few memories and a few ideas that may make those days less stressful and more joyful.

Before Christmas breakfast, we opened our stockings and, in the toe each year, even during World War II, we found a perfect orange. Saving them for the evening was so hard to do. To this day, there are perfect navel oranges lined up on the refrigerator shelf. If there is one left, then Orange Curd, below, will be on the menu during the week. Finding welcome memories in the chaos that is a family holiday perhaps is what keeps us repeating the same exhausting, chaotic schedule year after year.

Managing meals for a holiday, and I have chosen to use Christmas an example because it was an exhausting challenge for years and years in my own life, is much like trying to feed out-of-town-guests. (see “Overnight Guests or a Special Weekend Breakfast,” *August 2020*) My memories of Christmas holidays are often confined to food; it seemed like all I was doing was cooking or eating or planning for the next meal. Even for just the two of us, I still sense a rhythm of meal after meal after meal.

Christmas brunch is a special meal for us but getting that special meal on the table is fraught with stumbling blocks and distractions. As a result, we create a menu that can be prepared a day or two ahead, a menu that can turn scrambled eggs or individual omelets or Eggs Arnold (*see below*), my take on Eggs Benedict, into that special meal. Those egg dishes must be accompanied by all sorts of things we would not have on just any old day. There is, of course, German Stollen which has risen overnight and was baking as we opened our gifts filling the air with its wonderful aroma and Milanese *Panatone*, baked during the week before Christmas. (*See recipe archives – October 2023*). A vegetable salad is more often than not part of our brunch menus like the Artichoke–Avocado–Tomato Salad below and, of course, there are desserts, usually rich, usually creamy. A tray of cookies always sits on our brunch table and maybe a fruit compote or my Blueberry Crumble (*see recipe archives – June 2022*).

Once you have all that cleaned up and the dishwasher is running, it is time to start on the big meal of the day. If you have incorporated some of the suggestions I have shared over the years, including those in the “Do Ahead Holiday Ideas”

(see recipe archives – November 2023) and “Your Schedule – How Advanced Prep and *Mise en Place* Can Help” (May 2020), you’ve got a head start.

Orange Curd, below, and the Steamed Rich Vanilla Custard (see recipe archives – December 2018) are usually served for dessert with our big midday meal. They are favorite recipes from our trips to England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Two creamy “puds” that satisfy, two creamy “puds” that can be made the day before. Gussied up with fruit garnishes, they are traditional and wonderfully satisfying.

Granted, you have enough to consider but one more idea surely won’t hurt. If you have prepared a big mid-day meal during the holidays, a beverage/dessert nog, like the Vanilla Holiday Nog, below, with a cheese and fruit selection and a plate of cookies or a pie or Pumpkin Cake(s) with Almond Flour (see below) works beautifully for a light supper or tea. A glass of milk and cookies . . . that’s universal comfort.

## **CHEESE – CREAM WHIP for TOAST, MUFFINS, AND BAGELS**

TPT - 27 minutes

*Now that Italian cream cheese, mascarpone, is readily available we do not have to rely on American-style cream cheese, which generally contains stabilizers such as carob bean gum and carrageenan. Mascarpone, on the other hand, is naturally coagulated using citric acid, acetic acid, lemon juice, or vinegar. It is the cheese required to make an authentic tiramisu but it has other uses not the least of which is as a spread for toast or bagels, or even a warm croissant. It is just the perfect indulgence on Christmas morning. I have found that homemade cream cheese actually tastes more like mascarpone but I suspect that sometimes you just don’t have time to make your own cream cheese.*



**1/4 cup heavy whipping cream**  
**2 teaspoons confectioners’ sugar**

**1 1/2 ounces mascarpone cheese**  
**1 teaspoon light cream or half and half**  
**1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**

Using the electric mixer fitted with *chilled* beaters or by hand using a *chilled* wire whisk, beat heavy cream in a *chilled* bowl until soft peaks form. While continuing to beat, add confectioners' sugar. Beat until stiff peaks form. Set aside briefly.

Put *mascarpone* cheese into a second mixer bowl fitted with the paddle. *Whip for a full 5 minutes or so*, or until cheese is light and fluffy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as required. Add light cream or half and half and vanilla extract. Continue whipping until again smooth. Scrape down the sides as needed. Add whipped cheese to whipped cream. Using the beaters or whisk attachment, *machine-fold gently* but *thoroughly*. Turn into four small dessert dishes or ramekins. Refrigerate until required.

Yields 1 1/2 cups

Note: This recipe is easily doubled, when required.



1/12 SERVING (about 2 tablespoonfuls) –  
PROTEIN = 0.4 g.; FAT = 3.0 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 0.8 g.;  
CALORIES = 28; CALORIES FROM FAT = 96%

## EGGS “ARNOLD”

TPT - 18 minutes

*Eggs “Benedict” is a favorite brunch entrée but the Canadian bacon of the original is, of course, problematic to those of us who don’t eat meat. Instead of just slipping in a bit of soy bacon, we enjoy this meatless version; it’s a very special occasion egg dish. It takes a bit of practice to orchestrate all three elements of this recipe in order to plate them simultaneously but you’ll soon “learn the dance.” The “tongue-in-cheek” moniker we have given this dish will not be lost on most of you.*



**2 eggs**

**2 English muffins—split for toasting**

### **BLENDER HOLLANDAISE SAUCE:**

**1/4 cup fat-free pasteurized eggs (the equivalent of 1 egg)—brought to room temperature**

**1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice  
—strained and brought to room temperature**

**A dash or two ground red pepper (cayenne)**

**1/4 cup hot melted butter**

**1 1/2 teaspoons boiling water**

Set up egg poacher.

Poach eggs.

*While poaching eggs, toast muffins. Place one half on each of two heated dinner plates.*

*At the same time, put pasteurized eggs, strained lemon juice, and ground red pepper (cayenne) into the container of the electric blender or into the work bowl of the food processor, fitted with steel knife. Cover, turn machine on, and then turn it off immediately.*

Remove cover insert, turn machine on, and *very slowly* add hot melted butter in a thin, steady stream.

*Very slowly* add boiling water in the same manner. Turn off machine. Pour into heated sauceboat.

Place a poached egg on one toasted muffin on each plate. Ladle Hollandaise sauce over each egg. Set the second muffin to the side.

*Serve at once.* Pass the sauceboat with the remainder of the Hollandaise sauce. Refrigerate any leftover sauce.

Yields 2 servings

Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/2 SERVING – PROTEIN = 14.7 g.; FAT = 29.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 30.3 g.;  
CALORIES = 442; CALORIES FROM FAT = 60%

## ITALIAN-STYLE *FONTINA* AND *ROMANO* CHEESE *STRATA*

TPT - 8 hours and 44 minutes;  
8 hours or overnight = refrigeration period

*If you were introduced to the classic Cheddar cheese strata at a mid-western brunch buffet, as were we, you probably have blithely enjoyed it while always wondering why the dish was called a “strata” . . . yes, it is composed of layers, strata, but . . . Here we may have found a candidate for the inspiration that may have landed the “American strata” in Juniata L. Shepperd’s 1902 “The Handbook of Household Sciences,” the earliest known mention of a dish like this. Or is this just a wonderful old idea?*

*We find this to be a good choice for our Christmas brunch because it can be prepped the day in advance. No matter when we get up or how chaotic Christmas morning is, this takes just thirty minutes to bake.*

**3/4 cup fat-free pasteurized eggs (the equivalent of 3 eggs)**  
**3/4 cup two-percent milk**  
**1 1/2 tablespoons grated *pecorino Romano* cheese**  
**1 1/2 teaspoons *Dijon*-style mustard with wine**  
**Freshly ground mixed peppercorns—red, white, and black—to taste**

**8-12 slices French *baguette*\***  
**1 tablespoon butter**

**3/4 cup shredded Italian *fontina* cheese**

**1/4 cup shredded Italian *fontina* cheese**



Prepare a **9 x 5 x 3-inch loaf pan or small oblong quiche dish** (as below) by coating with non-stick lecithin olive oil spray coating.

In a mixing bowl, combine pasteurized eggs, milk, grated cheese, mustard, and ground mixed peppercorns. Using a wire whisk, combine well. Set aside briefly.

Butter one side of half of the French bread slices. Place *butter-side-down* in prepared loaf pan. Scatter the 3/4-cupful of *fontina* cheese evenly over the bread slices. Place the remaining four slices of bread on top of the cheese, positioning the slices directly over the base slices.

Sprinkle the remaining 1/4 cupful shredded *fontina* evenly over the bread slices.

Pour the custard mixture slowly and evenly over the assembled *strata*. Cover the loaf pan with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 8 hours, or overnight to allow for maximum absorption.

When ready to bake, remove plastic wrap. Bring *strata* to room temperature.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Bake *strata* for 30-35 minutes. Using a spatula, remove each stack of two slices as a single sandwich serving. Serve onto a heated dinner plates. Leftovers can be reheated in a *LOW* oven.



Yields 4 servings

Notes: \*Twelve small *baguette* slices work beautifully in the 9 x 5 x 3-inch loaf pan. If, however, you use a different French or Italian loaf, adjust the number and size of your bread slices to fit the baking pan as needed and to the number of sandwiches you will need.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 16.2 g.; FAT = 13.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 36.0 g.;  
CALORIES = 339; CALORIES FROM FAT = 36%

## HONEY – ALMOND CREAM WHIP

TPT - 14 minutes

*Creamy spreading honey gives this quick and an unique taste you will never forget; a taste for which you may well find yourself longing. It is a perfect indulgent moment for the holidays.*

**1/2 cup light dairy sour cream**

**1 1/2 tablespoons natural uncooked and unfiltered spreading honey\***

**1/4 teaspoon pure almond extract**

**2 1/2 tablespoons almond meal or finely ground almonds**

**6 tablespoons heavy whipping cream**

Drain whey from the sour cream.\*\* Turn it into a mixing bowl. Add spreading honey and almond extract. Using a wire whisk, combine until smooth.

Add almond meal and stir to distribute evenly. Set aside briefly.

Using the electric mixer fitted with *chilled* beaters or by hand using a *chilled* wire whisk, beat heavy cream in a *clean, chilled* bowl until stiff peaks form.

Add sour cream–almond mixture and *whisk-fold* the whipped cream into the sour cream.

Divide among **four demitasse cups, custard cups, sherbet glasses, or ramekins**. Refrigerate until ready to serve, *but serve within an hour* to insure volume and texture.



Yields 4 individual servings

Notes: \*Natural uncooked and unfiltered honey is a creamy spread often referred to as “Dutch spreading honey” or, in some parts of the United States, as simply honey spread. It is available in country stores, farmers' markets, food specialty stores, and natural food stores. Commercially-available cooked and filtered honey can be substituted for the honey spread but the flavor will be compromised a bit.

\*\*The resulting whey that separates from the curd should not be discarded down the drain since it can adversely affect septic tanks and pipe seals. It is a nutritious by-product of cheese, yogurt, and sour cream making that is loaded with protein, minerals, and enzymes. I use it instead of water in my bread recipes and add it to the cooking water for rice, pasta, and potatoes. When I soak oatmeal overnight, I soak it in whey. Add it to soups, stews, and smoothies, and if you still have some left over, refrigerate or freeze it. It is inadvisable to pour whey down the drain but do pour any excess on your compost pile or feed your acid-loving crops. Chickens and pigs are said to love it.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 4.2 g.; FAT = 14.9 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 11.0 g.;  
CALORIES = 190; CALORIES FROM FAT = 76%

## ORANGE CURD

TPT - 1 hour and 30 minutes;  
1 hour = chilling period

*Oh, how I loved the lemon curd we ate throughout the British Isles. I loved it so much that I evolved an orange curd to fall in love with too. Both our lemon and orange curds taste fantastic and are extremely useful as fillings for cakes and tarts, and the use of pasteurized eggs makes these curds much, much lower in fat than the lemon curd we ate in Britain.*

**1 organic orange—well-rinsed**

**1/2 cup fat-free pasteurized eggs\* (the equivalent of 2 eggs)**

**2 tablespoons butter**

**3 tablespoons sugar**

**2 tablespoons frozen orange juice concentrate  
—defrosted**

Grate orange zest from orange into the top half of a double boiler.

Pour pasteurized eggs into the top half of the double boiler set over hot, but *not boiling*, water. Stir in butter, sugar, and *defrosted* orange juice concentrate. Cook, stirring constantly with a wire whisk, until thickened. Remove from heat.

Spoon into two or three *demitasse* cups. When cool, cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate until *thoroughly* chilled—about 1 hour.

Serve with *demitasse* spoons. Accompany with oatmeal cookies, shortbread petticoats, or rolled sugar cookies.

Yields 2 or 3 individual servings

Notes: \*Because raw eggs present the danger of *Salmonella* poisoning, commercially-available pasteurized eggs are recommended for use in preparing this dish.

This recipe may be doubled, when required.

If desired, this may be served as an ORANGE CURD SAUCE with such desserts as gingerbread. Additionally, you might like to try this between cake layers as an ORANGE CURD CAKE FILLING or in baked tart shells for ORANGE CURD TARTS.



1/3 SERVING – PROTEIN = 4.4 g.; FAT = 7.8 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 20.9 g.;  
CALORIES = 171; CALORIES FROM FAT = 41%

## ALSATIAN PARSLEY AND CHEESE SALAD SANDWICHES

### *Salade de Persil et au Gruyère*

TPT - 14 minutes

*“Jambon Persille” is a Burgundian ham and cheese salad, which is a popular luncheon offering on French bistro menus. This similar, but meatless, salad from the northeastern French province of Alsace is appearing more and more frequently as an appetizer salad. We think that the mixture makes a perfect spread for slices of a good, crusty baguette or as filling for a pita loaf. Fresh parsley and tomatoes from the garden make this irresistible lunch or a light supper on a bright spring day or on a hot summer’s afternoon, or, in this case on a Christmas morning; a couple of cornichons on the side will still make it very French.*

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar,  
or a herb vinegar of choice\*  
1 1/2 teaspoons *Dijon* mustard with wine  
1/2 teaspoon honey

2 tablespoons *extra virgin* olive oil  
1 tablespoon water

3/4 cup coarsely grated *Gruyère* cheese  
6 tablespoons *finely* chopped fresh parsley  
1 shallot—*very finely* chopped

4 large slices of a large, round French bread loaf  
4 tomato slices  
8 tiny *mesclún* leaves, preferable red—well-washed  
and well-dried  
8 *cornichons*



In a large mixing bowl, combine vinegar, *Dijon* mustard, and honey. Using a wire whisk, combine thoroughly.

Gradually, while whisking, add the olive oil and the water. Beat well to form an emulsion.

Add grated cheese, *finely* chopped parsley, and *very finely* chopped shallots. Using a wooden spoon, stir to combine.\*\*

When ready to assemble, divide the filling among the bread slices. Spread it evenly across the surface of each open-faced sandwich. Arrange a tomato slice on each and garnish each with two *mesclún* leaves. Place two *cornichons* next to each sandwich.

*Serve at once.*

Yields 4 servings

Notes: \*The vinegar I prefer to use is an herb vinegar make with salad burnet, shallots, and black pepper.

\*\*The filling may be prepared ahead of time and refrigerated for a couple of hours until needed.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 10.4 g.; FAT = 12.9 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 47.4 g.;  
CALORIES = 262; CALORIES FROM FAT = 44%



## MEDITERRANEAN ARTICHOKE – AVOCADO – TOMATO SALAD

TPT - 2 hours and 8 minutes;  
2 hours = flavor development period

*Having artichokes for Christmas breakfast is certainly a break from the tradition in my husband's family. Sicilian stuffed artichokes were always served as a separate course on Christmas Day. We have lightened up our main meal somewhat as the years have passed. The textures and flavors of this salad are so very, very satisfying. It is one of our favorite winter salads. The leftovers can be a pick-me-up snack later in the day.*

**DRESSING:**

- 1** tablespoon *extra virgin* olive oil
- 1** tablespoon red wine vinegar *or* herbed vinegar,  
of choice [*Our choice would be a garlic-basil vinegar.*]
- 1/2** teaspoon *Dijon* mustard with wine
- 1/2** teaspoon freshly grated *pecorino Romano* cheese
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

- 1/2** can (8 ounces) quartered artichoke hearts—well-rinsed  
and well-drained
- 8** grape tomatoes—well washed and halved

- 1** ripe avocado—peeled, pitted, and cut into chunks

In a cruet or small jar, combine oil, vinegar, mustard, grated cheese, and black pepper. Shake until thoroughly combined.

In a large plastic container with tightly fitting lid, combine artichoke hearts, grape tomato halves, and prepared *vinaigrette*. Secure lid and toss *gently* to coat all vegetables with dressing.

Refrigerate marinating vegetables for at least 2 hours, tossing *gently* from time to time.

When ready to serve, *drain thoroughly* through a fine sieve. Add avocado chunks. Gently stir. Turn into a serving dish. *Allow to come to room temperature before serving.* Refrigerate leftovers.



Yields 4 servings

Note: This recipe can be halved or doubled, when required

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 3.0 g.; FAT = 8.9 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 5.3 g.;  
CALORIES = 141; CALORIES FROM FAT = 57%

**PUMPKIN CAKE(S) WITH ALMOND FLOUR**

TPT - 2 hours and 9 minutes;  
30 minutes = cooling period

*This (these) enjoyable, moist cake (cakes) was a favorite holiday recipe but with the year-round availability of canned pumpkin purée, it has become a “whenever-we-feel-like-it” pumpkin favorite. A scoop of ice cream on one of these cakes is a quick and delicious dessert when the “to do” list exceeds the time as it did when we were a young family . . . as it still does today . . . Why don’t we ever seem to catch up?*

- 1** cup canned pumpkin—unseasoned and unsweetened
- 1/2** cup fat-free pasteurized eggs—the equivalent  
of 2 eggs
- 3/4** cup sugar
- 1/2** cup sunflower *or* safflower oil
- 1** teaspoon pure vanilla extract
  
- 3/4** cup plus 2 tablespoons unbleached white flour
- 2** tablespoons *finely ground* almond flour
- 1** teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2** teaspoon baking soda
- 1** teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2** teaspoon ground gingerroot

Confectioners’ sugar



Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare an **8-inch square, non-stick-coated baking pan** by coating with non-stick lecithin baking spray.

Using the electric mixer fitted with the mixing paddle, beat pumpkin purée, pasteurized eggs, sugar, oil, and vanilla extract until well-combined and smooth.

In a mixing bowl, combine wheat and almond flours, baking powder, baking soda, ground cinnamon, and ground gingerroot. Stir to combine well. Gradually beat the combined dry ingredients into the pumpkin mixture. Turn into prepared baking pan, spreading the batter evenly to the sides of the pan. Bake for 30-35 minutes, or until cake springs back when gently pressed in the center. Transfer to a wire rack and allow to cool completely before removing from pan. Cut into eight 2 x 4-inch slices.

Sift confectioners' sugar over each cake as you serve it.

Serve on the side with fruit or ice cream or serve as a base for ice cream. Vanilla, malted milk, lemon, and coffee ice creams are particularly complimentary. Store in refrigerator or freeze; *serve at room temperature*.

Yields 8 servings



Note: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/8 SERVING (exclusive of confectioners' sugar) –  
PROTEIN = 3.4 g.; FAT = 14.6 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 17.7 g.;  
CALORIES = 247; CALORIES FROM FAT = 53%

## VANILLA HOLIDAY NOG

TPT - 5 minutes

*A request for an eggnog-like beverage for the holidays that did not include either eggs or cream initiated a series of experiments that led to this recipe. Finding a vegan pudding mix in the organic/natural aisle of a local grocery was the divine finish that gave it body.*

**2 cups cold one-percent or two-percent milk**  
**6 tablespoons vegan instant vanilla pudding mix\***  
**1 teaspoon corn starch**  
**1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**

**1 cup cold one-percent or two-percent milk\***

**Freshly grated nutmeg**

**Cinnamon stick stirrers, if desired**

In the container of the electric blender, combine 2 cupfuls *cold* milk, the vanilla pudding mix, corn starch, and vanilla extract. Blend for several minutes until thoroughly combined and a voluminous foam forms. Pour into a pitcher.

Add the remaining 1 cupful *cold* milk.\*\* Stir gently.

Serve with grating of nutmeg and a cinnamon stirrer.

Yields 3 cupfuls



Notes: \*Try to find an instant pudding mix that is not only vegan, it is also free of artificial colorings and flavorings. Otherwise, use an instant pudding of your choice.

\*\*A slosh or two of rum or brandy can be added, if desired.

1/4 SERVING (about 3/4 cup) –  
PROTEIN = 6.1 g.; FAT = 3.5 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 13.8 g.;  
CALORIES = 113; CALORIES FROM FAT = 28%

*I have enjoyed our monthly visits for these many years, but this will be my last column.*

*I hope the ideas about living the vegetarian life I have shared with you will be useful  
and that you will pass them on to the next generation.*

*As the world becomes more and more crowded and resources to maintain humanity become  
more and more stressed, coping with the food supply and protein availability  
becomes the responsibility of each of us who must feed a family.*

*I sincerely thank you although we may never have met,*

*Judy*

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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