

Christmas Tips to Tempt

Every family has their Christmas favourites, recipes that are sure to delight, drinks that add that special sparkle or silly games that the whole family can enjoy. Here are a few ideas, gathered from our readers, which you might like to try for yourselves.

Cranberry and Orange Relish

Makes 1½lbs/680g approximately.

6 ozs/170g Fresh Cranberries

2 Coxs apples - peeled and cored

1 Orange

½ Lemon

8 ozs/225g Castor Sugar

Put cranberries and apples through a fine mincer. Remove pips from halved unpeeled orange and lemon, then mince.

Mix together all ingredients. Place in jars and cover. Store in 'fridge for up to two weeks.

Mince Pies with Almond Shortbread Topping

Pastry

8 oz/225g plain flour

¼ tsp mixed spice

3oz/85g ground almonds

3oz/85g castor sugar

6oz/170g unsalted butter

2 egg yolks

Mix all dry ingredients in food processor, then add yolks to form stiff paste. Turn out and knead into a ball and wrap in clingfilm, refrigerate for at least an hour.

Topping

6oz/170g unsalted butter, softened

2oz/55g castor sugar

6oz/170g plain flour

4oz/113g ground almonds

Cream butter and sugar, easier if butter is warmed slightly (not melted), work in the remaining ingredients and knead until soft.

Roll out pastry and make mince pies as usual, instead of a pastry topping, pipe rosettes of the almond mixture on top or a small ball roughly forked into a rosette.



Bake at 180°C/Gas Mark 4 for 15 - 20 minutes. Allow to cool slightly in tin before removing onto a wire rack. Makes about 24 to 30 pies.

Chase the Ace

This is the simplest card game that can be enjoyed by all the family, from tinies to the more adult members, the more the merrier.

To play you just need a pack of cards and three coins (2p are good) per player. With everyone sitting round a table (it is easier that way but not essential) each player is dealt one card, face down. Players check their cards without letting anyone else see; anyone holding a King turns it face up.

Great Fun

If you have a low card you pass it to the player on your left who must accept your swap, but if they should have a King it acts as a 'stop' and you are stuck with your card. It is easy to pick out the aces as they travel round the table at speed. If the card is finally swapped with the Dealer, he has the choice to keep it or take the top card from the deck (no need to swap if you know you now have a higher card than the one that was swapped.) The player with the lowest card puts a coin in the kitty and, of course, Aces are low. Once you have lost your three lives you are out. Once you are down to the last two players the winner takes the kitty. Give it a try it really is great fun!

Happy Christmas and New Year to all our readers.