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*Leaps of Growth in Town and Community*

GREER & TAYLORS, SOUTH CAROLINA  
GROWING COMMUNITIES WITH A SMALL TOWN FEEL

December 2024  
www.GTmagazineSC.com

## The Best Christmas Ham

A Tender Ham That's Perfect For The Holidays!

## The Beloved Christmas Cactus

A Popular Holiday Plant Cherished For It's Vibrant Blossoms.

## The Cradle

— A Christmas Story —  
What Was The Birth of Jesus Like?

## Why Are Elves Associated With Christmas?

The earliest connection between Christmas and elves appears in 1812.







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*'Twas the night before Christmas . . .*



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Get ready for one of the Upstate's most spectacular Christmas events, right in the heart of Greer City Park as we welcome Santa!

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## The Beloved Christmas Cactus

The Christmas cactus is a popular holiday plant cherished for its vibrant blooms. This cactus features flat and smooth phylloclades that resemble leaf-like structures. In their natural habitat, the cloud forests of Brazil, the Christmas cactus is an epiphytic plant that naturally grows on trees rather than in soil. It produces stunning flowers in shades of red, pink, and white, typically blooming in late fall or winter, making it a delightful addition to festive decorations. When growing Christmas cactus indoors, it prefers bright, direct sunlight. The Christmas cactus is a favorite among plant enthusiasts for its unique appearance and ability to thrive in indoor and outdoor garden with proper care.

There are three types of Holiday Cactus which are all low-maintenance plants with amazing flowers that bloom throughout the different holiday seasons. From the vibrant blooms of the Christmas cactus to the festive foliage of the Thanksgiving cactus and the delightful colors of the Easter cactus, these holiday cactus plants bring a touch of nature's beauty to our celebrations.

Holiday cacti earn their names because they tend to bloom around specific holidays. The Christmas cactus blooms first from late November to late January and twice in the spring if given the shorter day conditions. It's a popular choice for adorning your homes during Christmas time. The Thanksgiving cactus blooms from late October to November around the Thanksgiving holidays. The Easter cactus blooms around Easter.

Despite their name, holiday cacti are not actually true cacti; they belong to the group of epiphytic or lithophytic plants, which means they grow on other plants or rocks. However, they can also thrive in well-drained soil once they are established in their new environment.

Holiday Cactus can live for up to 100 years! Most of the winter plants, which we refer to as holiday cacti, are passed down as family heirlooms from one generation to the next! Therefore, it's not unusual for someone to own a Christmas cactus plant whose origin is unknown.

### Real Christmas Cactus are Rare and Hard to Find

During the Christmas season, a lot of plants that are marketed as types of Christmas cacti are actually not true Christmas cacti at all. These plants are usually hybrids of Thanksgiving cacti, which are similar but not exactly the same. The growers manipulate the blooming process to make them flower around Christmas time. By carefully controlling the duration of light and darkness, they can trigger the plants to bloom around Christmas time.

### Identifying the Holiday Cactus

- The Christmas cactus has smooth and scalloped stem segments and blooms in late fall or winter.
- The Thanksgiving cactus has more pronounced, pointed segments and blooms in late fall around Thanksgiving.
- The Easter cactus has stem segments that are more rounded in appearance and blooms in the spring around Easter.





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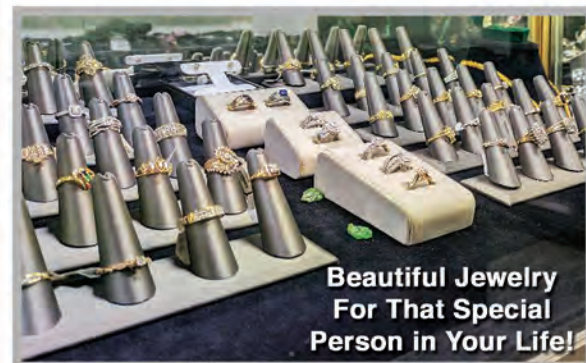
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# The Best Christmas Ham!

This truly is the Best Christmas Ham Recipe!  
A most tender ham is the result from baking in a delicious honey,  
brown sugar, butter and orange juice glaze. Perfect for the holidays!

www.aprettylifeinthesuburbs.com by Jo-Anna Rooney

**Ingredients:**

- 10 to 12 lb bone-in ham**
- 1/2 cup water or ginger ale**

**Honey Ham Glaze:**

- 1/2 cup butter**
- 1 cup brown sugar**
- 2 tablespoons honey**
- 2 tablespoons mustard**
- 1/4 cup orange juice**

**Instructions:**

Preheat your oven to 325 degrees. Place the bone-in ham in a roasting pan. Using a sharp knife, score the top of the ham diagonally, with the lines about 1 inch apart. Don't score too deep, the lines should only be a at the most about 1/4 inch deep.

Add about 1/2 cup water or ginger ale to the bottom of the pan. Ginger ale adds an extra bit of sweetness. Cover the ham with tin foil and bake for approximately 1 1/2 hours. While it's baking you can make the glaze to add later.

**MAKING THE GLAZE:**

In a saucepan over low-medium heat, melt the butter. Then stir in the brown sugar, honey, mustard, and orange juice. Cook until the sugar dissolves, stirring often. Don't let the mixture boil, you only want to gently dissolve the sugar. When the glaze is done it should be slightly thick. As it cools it will thicken more as well.

**ADDING THE GLAZE:**

After the 1 1/2 hours, take the ham out of the oven, and drizzle the glaze all over the top of the ham, and in all the crevices. Remove the tin foil, and continue baking for about 30 minutes more.

When the ham is done baking, remove it from the oven and spoon the glaze all over the ham. Then let the ham rest under tin foil for about 15 minutes before carving.





They left their home, the new cradle still swinging from the rafters. Night after night the aroma of fresh-cut wood had filled the room as Joseph had patiently fashioned the tiny cradle, using the same chisel and saw he usually put down at dusk.

Now Joseph wiped the tears from Mary's cheeks and shut the door behind them. "It'll be okay," he told her, as he cinched up their belongings on the donkey.

"Joseph, can't we wait a few days? The baby could come any time." She didn't want to leave home. Not now.

"We've waited for the baby as long as we dare." He was ready to get on the road. "We have to leave today or I'll be arrested for not appearing in Bethlehem for the census."

"At least bring the cradle, Joseph," she pleaded. "I want the baby to have something nice."

"No, it'll have to stay behind. The baby will be rocking in it soon enough."

Joseph tugged hard at the donkey's halter. No luck. "Come on, animal," he shouted, whacking it on the rear end to get it moving. Grudgingly the donkey responded. With one hand Joseph led the donkey, with the other he steadied Mary on the steep incline, slowly enough to accommodate her ungainly progress down the winding road which led from Nazareth's height. In the house above, the cradle hung still.

Five days and ninety bone-weary miles later, Joseph searched the small stable where they were staying on the outskirts of crowded Bethlehem. Mary's time would be soon now. He was careful to keep his lamp from igniting the old straw. He finally settled on an ancient stone manger for the baby's bed, cut from the wall of the limestone cave which housed the animals. He reached in to scoop the last gritty bits of straw from the manger's dank bottom. "That'll have to do," he muttered. He filled the trough with an armful of fresh fodder, which he covered with a folded blanket to keep the animals away.

It was well past midnight by the time Mary finished washing and wrapping her new baby. Now she lifted him gently into his new bed. Joseph put his arm around her shoulders as they gazed at the sleeping infant.

Mary touched the tiny fingers. "That cradle you spent so much time on would be real nice right now, Joseph." She looked up at the cave's low ceiling. "You could hang it somewhere. No baby I know has a cradle like that. It's fit for a king."

Joseph grinned. "Not every boy has a carpenter for a dad," he said. But he wondered. Why couldn't little Jesus be home in that cradle? Why does this special child the angel told Mary and him about have to be born in this smelly stable? A hill-country carpenter's home is bad enough. Why here? Why Bethlehem?

The answer wasn't long in coming. An older boy poked his head in the door, startling the couple from their quiet moment. "Is there a baby in here?" he mumbled apologetically. Then he saw the tiny child. Mary picked her baby up to shield the infant from his eyes. The face disappeared.

Mary's eyes mirrored Joseph's concern. He strode to the cave's opening. He could hear a distant call, "Over here, Jake found him!" In the darkness, Joseph could make out a handful of forms coming toward him. He gripped his stout wooden staff and stood resolutely at the door.

As they approached the stable he could see they were shepherds. Joseph's grip on the staff tightened. The oldest one spoke hesitantly. "Can we come in? We have ... ah ... come to see the Christ-child."

Joseph glanced at Mary. He could feel a tingle move down his spine. This was more than an accident. The whole fantastic course of events was far more than an accident. He nodded and stepped back into the stable. "Yes, come in. You are welcome."

The shepherds shuffled into the cramped cave. The youngest pushed in alongside the donkey to get a better view. They knelt. "God be praised!" The old shepherd spoke with deepest reverence.

"It's just like the angel told us," another whispered in awe. "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which

shall be to all people," the angel said."

"Imagine! An angel . . . talking to us!" the old man interjected with rising excitement. "None of the uppity-ups in this town would lower themselves to talk to us shepherds," he added. "But an angel did . . . And the child is right here in a stable so we can come and see him." Rivulets of tears were inching down the shepherd's weathered face.

Joseph stared at the old man. "How did you find us?" he finally asked.

The boy who had first peeked in answered. "The angel said, 'Unto you is born . . .'"

"Yes, to us!" The beaming old man couldn't contain himself.

The boy spoke deliberately, as if to remember the exact words: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior . . ."

"That's here—Bethlehem—David's birthplace," the littlest boy interrupted. "King David was a shepherd, too, you know."

The older boy continued. " . . . a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

"The Christ, the Messiah. He's the one!" The old man pointed to the baby.

"The angel was very specific," the young man went on. "And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." He grinned. "How could we miss? We just ran into town and checked every stable until we found you . . . found him." The boy paused. "How many newborns in Bethlehem do you know with a cattle manger for a cradle?"

Joseph chuckled. So that was it. The heavenly Father Himself had provided a bed for His child. A special cradle. A sign to these crude shepherds that God cared for them too.

Joseph squeezed Mary's hand very tightly.

# The Cradle

## A Christmas Story

Written By Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

[www.christmasstories.org](http://www.christmasstories.org)

Design and Layout by GT Magazine

## What was the birth of Jesus like?

Top left: Stone Manger in Israel, [www.redeemerofisrael.org](http://www.redeemerofisrael.org) • Top right: Stone Manger in Bethlehem photo by Alex Pagliaro, Brushy Creek Baptist Church  
Bottom left: Church of Nativity entrance in Bethlehem by Leon Mauldin • Bottom right: Star Marking the Place of Jesus' Birth in Bethlehem by Leon Mauldin



Ask almost anyone about the setting of the birth of Christ, and you will likely be told about a stable, a wooden manger filled with hay, animals surrounding the baby Jesus, and snow falling outside as the shepherds enter the stable to worship the king of Kings. The problem is that this depiction, though we've heard it many times, is likely far from what actually took place on this night of nights.

To better understand the more probable setting of the Nativity, it's first helpful to understand a little about the natural landscape of Israel, and in particular Bethlehem. The land of Israel is covered with stones, hills and caves. In fact there is so much stone that most ancient homes would have been built almost exclusively of stonework, only using lumber for building aspects like the roof, ceilings, and doors. Trees were a limited, valuable resource, so they choose to build from the more abundant supply of stones. Caves were also commonly used, and it is probable that the "stable" which is not even mentioned in scripture, was located in one of the caves surrounding the hills of Bethlehem. These caves were a perfect place to keep animals, as it was cool during the hot days, and warmer during the cooler nights. It also was a naturally built fortification, so little work would be required to build it, except for adding a fence and gate at the entrance.

Also, that wooden manger filled with hay, well, it actually would be made of stone as well. Many ancient stone mangers have been found in Israel of different sizes, shorter ones for animals like sheep and goats, and taller mangers for animals like horses and donkeys. The mangers were generally block-like in shape, and were only about six to eight inches deep. In addition, mangers were not used for hay, but instead for watering animals, as cutting and storing grass for feed was not necessary because of the warmer climate. Because Israel really only has a rainy season and a dry season, with little to no snow, grass is available all throughout the year.



So why do we so often see a wooden stable and a manger filled with hay? Well, because most early Christian artists who depicted the Nativity, lived in Europe, where trees were readily accessible, winters were cold so that you had to store hay, and mangers were made of wood, and used to feed the animals.

About all the animals – especially the sheep, donkey and the ox that are in virtually every Nativity scene, the birth accounts of Jesus never mentions other animals being present, it only mentions that there was a manger, implying that there would be animals. So where do the animals come from? The sheep are there, most likely because of the shepherds. The ox and donkey however, come from, interestingly enough, a prophecy of Isaiah. The verse states: "The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand" (Isaiah 1:3). In other words, an ox and a donkey can recognize who feeds and waters them, but Israel could not recognize God's hand in their lives. Because this verse refers to a manger, or a crib as translated in the King James Bible, later Christians decided to incorporate an ox and a donkey into the story.

Understanding the setting of the birth of Jesus, not only gives us a more realistic picture of this significant event, but also it seems to foreshadow the mission and death of Christ. At his birth, Jesus was likely born in a stone cave because there was no room in the inn, wrapped in linen swaddling bands, and laid in a stone manger. At his death, Jesus was buried in a borrowed stone tomb, wrapped in white linen, and laid on a slab of limestone. In addition, how appropriate that the great Messiah, the one who provides eternal living water (see John 4:14), was laid as an infant in a watering trough. It seems that even from the very beginning, the events of the life of Christ, were meant to point to and foreshadow the most important part of His life, that of His atonement, death and resurrection.





Why Are  
*Elves*  
Associated With  
*Christmas?*



Most children know that Santa’s elves are responsible for making toys and keeping track of Santa’s list of good boys and girls. Some children are even visited by a curious little elf who observes their behavior all Christmas season.

**The Evolution of Santa Claus**

The history of Santa Claus begins with a real person. St. Nicholas was a bishop who lived hundreds of years ago in what is now Turkey. Stories of St. Nick’s kindness and generosity are common throughout Europe. Saint Nicholas’s feast day was December 6, and a custom developed of presenting children with gifts on that date. St. Nick’s modern version, Santa Claus, became an American invention that developed later.

Early European immigrants, such as Dutch and Scandinavian settlers brought their traditions with them when they founded the American colony of New Amsterdam, which was taken over by the English in 1667 and renamed New York. In 1821, a New York City newspaper published a poem by Clement Clarke Moore entitled “A Visit From St. Nicholas.” His story, which drew on European traditions to envision St. Nicholas’ visit on the night before Christmas, captivated the public imagination. Writers and artists built up the Santa legend. They added a red suit, a bottomless bag of gifts, a fondness for cookies and milk, and a North Pole toyshop populated by elves. Santa was also given a sleigh that was magically drawn by reindeer in which to travel around on Christmas Eve, coming down chimneys to leave presents for children.

From New York, Santa Claus spread out across America, making the crossing to Britain in the 1880s. There he merged with an older English character, Father Christmas, who had been around since the 17th century to represent the spirit of the festival. The American Santa that emerged over the English-speaking world in the late 19th century, became a permanent fixture.

**What Are Elves?**

Many ancient European folk stories focus on magical beings who sometimes interact with the human world. Unlike the engaging little Christmas elf, however, these supernatural creatures weren’t always kind. Elves were somewhat fickle guardians of a household, protecting the family, farm, livestock and crops. However, if they thought they were being mistreated or ignored, they might act out by souring milk, breaking dishes or even poisoning crops.

Ancient Norse mythology tells of ‘hidden folk’ while Scottish lore speaks of tiny beings known as brownies. In most legends, these magical beings might by turns be helpful or pesky. Even in William Shakespeare’s time, elvish figures like Puck in “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” were envisioned as tricksters.

**So when and how did elves become part of our Christmas traditions?**

Possibly the earliest connection between Christmas and elves appears in “The Elves and the Shoemaker,” by the Brothers Grimm. The 1812 fairy tale tells of a poor shoemaker, visited nightly by elves who help complete his orders before Christmas.

“The Christmas Elves,” a story published in “Harper’s Bazaar” in 1871, tells of magical elves who visit good children during the holiday season. Another popular 19th century publication, Godey’s Ladies Book, featured artwork depicting Santa and his elves. Several decades later, artist Norman Rockwell also included elves in some of his famous paintings of Santa.

In the 20th century, Santa took on his familiar red and white costume and acquired his elves. As the manufacture and sale of Christmas presents developed into a huge commercial industry, Santa was upgraded to running a factory to produce them. The obvious employees were superhuman beings subservient to him - elves, drafted in from a much older mythology, fitted the bill. Marketing and television expanded Santa lore, featuring elves as main characters. From Rudolph’s friend Hermey, to Buddy the Elf, to head elf Bernard in “The Santa Clause,” Santa Claus and elves have become permanently intertwined.

**Elf on the Shelf**

Elves are now a hallmark of Christmas folklore, appearing in festive films, books, and decorations throughout the festive season. Many families welcome an ‘elf on the shelf’ into their home each year to encourage children to be well-behaved in the lead-up to Christmas.



Source(s): [www.christmascentral.com](http://www.christmascentral.com) • [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk), Professor Hutton • [www.elfontheshelf.com](http://www.elfontheshelf.com)  
Layout design and editing: GT Magazine



# The Christmas Orange

In the early 1800's, a young boy about 14 years old named Lucas lived in an orphanage in England along with several other children. An orphanage was a dreaded place to live. Orphan meant unwanted and unloved. The orphanage was run by a master and his wife, both from meager backgrounds themselves. They were short on love but high on discipline; no child's play, no compassion, no understanding.

Every day of the year was spent working. The children worked in gardens, cleaned, sewed, and cooked sometimes for wealthy children. They were up at dawn and worked until dark and usually received only one meal a day. However, they were very grateful because they were taught to be hard workers. Lucas had absolutely nothing to call his own. None of the children did. Christmas was the one day of the year when the children did not work and received a gift. A gift each child could call their own.

This special gift was an orange. Lucas had been in the orphanage long enough to look forward with delight and anticipation of this special day of Christmas and to the orange he would receive. In Old England, and to Lucas and his orphan companions, an orange was a rare and special gift. It had an unusual aroma of something they smelled only at Christmas. The children cherished the orange so much that they kept it for several days, weeks, and even months protecting it, smelling it, holding it and loving it.

Usually they tried to preserve it for so long that it often rotted before they ever peeled it to enjoy the sweet juice. Many thoughts were expressed this year as Christmas time approached. The children would say, "I will keep mine the longest." They always talked about how big their last orange was and how long they had kept it.

Lucas usually slept with his orange next to his pillow. He would put it right by his nose and smell its goodness, holding it tenderly and carefully as not to bruise it. He would dream of children all over the world smelling the sweet aroma of oranges. It gave him security and a sense of well being, hope and dreams of a future filled with good food and a life different from this meager existence.

This tender story reveals the innocent hearts of little children and their desire to create the true meaning of Christmas.

The origin of this story is unknown and although, there have been several interpretations throughout the years, the message still rings true.



This year Lucas was overjoyed by the Christmas season. He was becoming a man. He knew he was becoming stronger and soon he would be old enough to leave the orphanage. He was excited by this anticipation and excited about Christmas. He would save his orange until his birthday in July. If he preserved it very carefully, kept it cool and did not drop it, he might be able to eat it on his birthday.

Christmas day finally came. The children were so excited as they entered the big dining hall. Lucas could smell the unusual aroma of meat. In his excitement and because of his oversized feet, he tripped, causing a disturbance. Immediately the master roared, "Lucas, leave the hall and there will be no orange for you this year." Luca's heart broke and he began to cry. He turned and walked quickly back to the cold room and his corner so the other children would not see the terrible anguish he was feeling.

Then he heard the door open and each of the children entered. Little Elizabeth with her hair falling over her shoulders, a smile on her face, and tears in her eyes held out a rag to Lucas. "Here Lucas," she said, "this is for you." Lucas was touched by her youth and innocence as he reached for the bulge that filled her tiny hand.

As he carefully unwrapped the folded edges of the rag he saw several orange wedges that had been peeled and placed into the center of the rag. Lucas realized what they had done. Each child had sacrificed some of their own orange to share with him. Lucas never forgot the sharing, love and personal sacrifice his friends in the orphanage had shown him that Christmas day.

Lucas's beginning was a meager existence, however, his growth to manhood was rewarded by wealth and success. In memory of that day every year he would send oranges all over the world to children everywhere. His desire was that no child would ever spend Christmas without a special Christmas fruit!

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**CRAZY QUESADILLA**

We are a fast-casual restaurant serving different kinds of quesadillas, nachos, fries, and queso.

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Sunday 11 am - 7:30 pm**

## Christmas Quesadillas

Festive quesadilla gingerbread men with a fun twist!

### Ingredients:

- 2 Large Plain Flour Tortillas**
- A gingerbread man cookie cutter**
- 1 cup Cheddar Cheese, grated**
- 1-2 Bell Peppers**
- 1 Jalpeno, sliced**
- 2 tbsp Sour Cream**
- 1 4-pack of Guacamole Mini Cups**

### Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper; set aside. Using your gingerbread man cookie cutter, cut six gingerbread men out of your flour tortillas. Place cut tortillas on lined sheet; sprinkle each with some cheese. Lay cut tortillas on top. Bake until cheese is melted, 6 to 8 minutes. Decorate your Gingerbread Man with chopped peppers, jalapeno, or green onion. Serve with guacamole, sour cream, and salsa.







Guilt-Free

# Ginger Cookies

... that taste like they should be on the naughty list!

This healthy gluten-free alternative to the classic gingerbread cookie tastes as delicious as they should - buttery and perfectly spiced with ginger, cinnamon and nutmeg.



## Soft and Chewy Healthy Ginger Cookies

Recipe by Adriana Harlan  
www.livinghealthywithchocolate.com

### Ingredients:

- 2 2/3 cup blanched almond flour
- 1/2 cup unrefined coconut sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon fine Himalayan salt
- 6 tablespoons pastured butter, soften, or coconut oil
- 3 tablespoons raw honey, or maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 egg, room temperature

### Instructions:

In a large bowl, mix together with a spatula the almond flour, coconut sugar, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, baking soda, and salt. In a separate bowl, whisk together with a handheld mixer or whisk the butter, honey and water. Then whisk in the egg until combined. Using a spatula, mix dry and wet ingredients together. Do not over mix. Cover and freeze dough for 40 minutes to 1 hour or until it's easy to handle.

Preheat oven to 350°F, and line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Roll the chilled dough into balls (about 1 1/2 tablespoons per ball), and place each 2-inches apart on the prepared baking sheet. Flatten each cookie with the palm of your hand. Bake for about 10 minutes or until the bottom and edges start to turn brown, then set the baking sheet on a wire rack to cool.

### Notes:

- For dairy-free substitute butter with coconut oil or palm shortening.
- For an extra punch, add ground, fresh and crystallized ginger. In addition, add 1/4 teaspoon each of ground cloves and all spice.
- Make the cookie dough ahead of time and keep it frozen or refrigerated until ready to bake. Allow it to come to room temperature or bake while still chilled.
- Dip and roll the dough balls in a sweet ginger-sugar mixture coating all sides before baking to spice it up and sprinkle extra on top if desired. **Ginger-sugar mixture: mix together 1/4 cup coconut sugar, 1 teaspoon ground ginger, 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon and 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg**



Guilt-Free

# Cashew Cookies

... one of Santa's favorites before the sleigh ride!

These delicious Dulce de Leche Cashew Cookies are quick and easy to make in just about 30 minutes. They're the perfect crunchy thumbprint cookies filled with sweet homemade caramel made without refined sugar.



## Dulce de Leche Cashew Cookies

Recipe by Adriana Harlan  
www.livinghealthywithchocolate.com

### Ingredients:

- Dulce de Leche:**
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1/4 cup unrefined coconut sugar
- 1/2 cup full fat coconut milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- pinch fine himalayan salt
- Cookies:**
- 3/4 cups raw cashews
- 1/2 cup blanched almond flour
- 2 tablespoons unrefined coconut sugar
- 1 teaspoon arrowroot powder
- 1/4 teaspoon fine himalayan salt
- 1 egg
- 5 tablespoon unsalted butter, soften (or Ghee)
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

### Instructions:

#### Dulce de Leche:

Bring the water and coconut sugar to a boil stirring the mixture constantly. Add the coconut milk, vanilla and salt and cook for about 10 minutes over medium heat, stirring constantly so that it doesn't burn. The mixture will start to thicken and turn darker in color. Allow mixture to cool, then refrigerate for 30 minutes before filling each cookie.

#### Cookies:

Preheat the oven to 350°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Using a food processor, pulse 1/2 cup cashews until you get a fine flour like consistency. Coarsely chop the remaining 1/4 cup cashews and set aside. In a large bowl, mix together the cashew flour, almond flour, coconut sugar, arrowroot powder and salt. In a separate bowl, whisk together the egg, butter and vanilla using a hand or electrical mixer. Mix wet and dry ingredients together using a rubber spatula then freeze dough for 20 minutes.

Roll chilled dough into balls using about 1 1/2 tablespoons of dough per ball. Roll each ball in the chopped cashews.

Press a thumbprint into the center of each ball. Bake cookies until the bottom and edges start to turn brown. After you remove the cookies from the oven, press the center of each cookie once again, then allow cookies to cool. Fill each cookie with dulce de leche and serve.

### Notes:

Don't be alarmed if your cookies look oily. The butter will dry out as the cookies cool. This makes the cookies moist and flavorful.





# Fruitcake Loaf

This Fruitcake Loaf Recipe is so good and perfect for the holidays!

The soft vanilla cake base is flavoured with fresh orange zest, rum (optional), and chopped glazed fruit.

www.aprettylifeinthesuburbs.com by Jo-Anna Rooney

## Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup butter**
- 1 cup granulated sugar**
- 2 large eggs**
- 2 cups all purpose flour**
- 1 tsp baking powder**
- 1/2 tsp baking soda**
- 1/4 tsp salt**
- 2 tsp vanilla extract**
- 3/4 cup buttermilk**
- 1/4 cup rum (or apple juice)**
- 1 tbsp fresh orange zest**
- 1 cup chopped candied cherries and fruit**



## Instructions:

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees F. Prepare a loaf pan by lining it with parchment paper.

Using a stand mixer cream the butter and sugar together until fluffy and smooth. Add the eggs, one at a time, and mix until creamy. Add in the orange zest. Mix well.

In a separate bowl whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt.

In measuring cup mix together the buttermilk, vanilla and rum. Add the flour mixture, alternating with the buttermilk/rum mixture, to the butter ingredients. Combine. Pour the batter into the prepared baking pan. Bake for about 1 hour and 15 minutes. The cake is done when a toothpick inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean.

Place the loaf (still in the pan) onto a wire cooling rack and let rest for 10 minutes. After 10 minutes, pinch the parchment paper and pull the loaf out of the pan, placing the loaf on the wire rack to cool for at least 30 minutes before cutting.

## A Traditional Recipe For Cheese Straws

### Ingredients:

- 1 lb. sharp cheddar cheese, shredded (about 6 cups loosely packed)**
- 1 1/4 cups of butter softened**
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cayenne pepper**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika**
- 3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour**

### Directions:

Preheat oven to 400°F. with racks in top third and lower third positions. Add shredded cheese to a bowl and let stand until room temperature, then add butter, cayenne, salt and smoked paprika.

Gradually add flour to the cheese mixture, beating on low speed until combined. Transfer to a cookie press or a large piping bag fitted with a small star tip. Pipe 3-inch-long strips onto 2 baking sheets lined with parchment paper, leaving 1/2 inch between the straws. Let chill in the refrigerator for 15 minutes. Bake 12 to 15 minutes until the edges are light brown. Let cool, approximately 30 minutes. Store in an airtight container.



## THE ULTIMATE HOLIDAY GIFT cheese board gift basket

by Jess Larson, [www.playswellwithbutter.com](http://www.playswellwithbutter.com)  
Layout design and editing by GT Magazine

A cheese board topped with a delightful assortment of cheeses and crackers is the most effortless way to entertain during the holiday season, and it's also a great idea when putting together an eye catching gift basket for someone special! It's a do-it-yourself kind of gift that you can put together in a snap!

All you need are some artisan crackers, your favorite assortment of cheeses, a bottle or two of quality wine, and pretty packaging. It is a customizable gift that will always be a hit.

From your favorite shop, grab a box of multigrain pita bite crackers with flax & chia seeds, a trio of goat cheese, a gooey-soft triple creme brie, savory italian truffle cheese and two bottles of wine.

Fill the base of a wire crate or other basket of your choice with some tissue or craft paper. Before filling the basket you'll want to take into consideration the different heights of the items you're putting in your gift basket. Taller items should be in the back so as not to overshadow the smaller items. Keep items that you want to showcase in the middle of the basket.

Place the bottles of wine in each of the back corners, nestle the variety of cheeses in front of them with labels visible, then lightly fill in empty areas with the crackers. Chocolate covered candy choices also make great fillers. And don't forget the card!

