**September 2013 Rachael Ray Recipes:**

**Fabulous Five-Minute Fudge Wreath**

#### Ingredients

* 1 bag semisweet chocolate morsels (12 ounces)
* 9 ounces butterscotch morsels (3/4 of a 12 ounce bag)
* 1 can sweetened condensed milk (14 ounces)
* 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
* 1 can or package of walnut halves (8 ounces)
* 1/2 cup currants (a couple handfuls)
* 8-inch cake pan, lightly greased with softened butter
* Candied red and green cherries, for garnish (optional)

Place a heavy pot on the stove and pre-heat it over low heat. Add chocolate and butterscotch morsels and milk and stir until morsels are melted and milk is combined. Save the empty condensed milk can. Stir in the vanilla and remove the fudge from heat. Add the nuts and currants and stir in immediately.

Cover the empty condensed milk can with plastic wrap and center it in the greased cake pan. Spoon fudge into pan around can, making sure to center the can if it drifts.

The fudge will set up almost immediately. Garnish can only be added in the first minute or two that the fudge is in the pan, so work quickly. Decorate your wreath with "holly" made from cut candied red and green cherries. A wreath left plain can be garnished with a pretty fabric bow when serving.

Chill covered in the refrigerator. Slice the fudge very thin when ready to serve – a little goes a long way!

Makes 2 pounds.

**Italian Chicken Chili with Pancetta Croutons**

#### Ingredients

* 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil (EVOO), divided
* 3 pounds ground chicken
* Salt and freshly ground black pepper
* 2 onions, chopped
* 2 carrots, peeled and grated
* 1 bay leaf
* 1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
* 4 jarred roasted red peppers, drained
* 4-5 sprigs thyme
* 2 tablespoons chili powder (a couple palmfuls)
* 2 teaspoons sweet smoked paprika (2/3 palmful)
* 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice (eyeball it)
* 1 quart chicken broth
* 1/3 pound pancetta, sliced 1/8 inch thick and finely chopped
* 3 tablespoons butter, cut into pieces
* 1 loaf crusty bread (about 1 pound), cut into 1-inch squares
* 6 large cloves garlic, crushed
* 1 cup freshly grated Pecorino Romano cheese
* 3 tablespoons fresh rosemary, finely chopped

#### Preparation

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Place a large, heavy pot over high heat with 1/4 cup EVOO, 4 turns of the pan. Add the chicken, season with salt and freshly ground black pepper and cook until lightly browned, about 5 minutes.

Add the onions, carrots and bay leaf to the pot and cook until browned, about 8 minutes more. Stir in the balsamic vinegar, scraping up the brown bits on the bottom of the pot with a wooden spoon. Remove pot from heat.

In a food processor, puree the roasted peppers then stir the puree into the pot. Add the thyme sprigs, chili powder, paprika and allspice, and season with salt and pepper. Add the chicken broth, place the pot back over medium-high heat and bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes, skimming the fat from the surface, if desired.

While the chili is simmering, place a small skillet over medium-high heat. Add remaining 1/4 cup EVOO and the pancetta, and cook until browned, 3-5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer pancetta to a paper towel-lined plate. Add butter to the skillet and turn off the heat.

Place bread and garlic in a large bowl. Pour melted butter evenly over the bread. Sprinkle the reserved pancetta, cheese, rosemary and lots of pepper over the bread and toss to coat. Place the cubes on a baking sheet and bake for 15 minutes, until golden, tossing occasionally. Remove from oven and let cool.

Discard bay leaf and thyme from the chili before serving. Ladle chili into mugs, if desired, with pancetta croutons on top.

Serves 6

**Instant Pesto Torta with Bread and Vegetables**

#### Ingredients

* Vegetable spray
* 4 pieces sun-dried tomatoes
* 4 leaves fresh basil
* 3 tubs soft garlic and herb cheese (6 ounces each) (such as Alouette brand)
* 1/4 cup sun-dried tomato tapenade
* 1/4 cup prepared basil pesto
* 1 baguette or whole grain baguette, pre-sliced at the bread counter
* Handful baby carrots
* Handful grape tomatoes

#### Preparation

Line a small shallow dish or bowl with plastic wrap or waxed paper. Coat wrap with vegetable spray. Arrange a pattern in bottom of the dish using the sun-dried tomatoes and basil. Add 1 1/2 tubs of garlic and herb cheese (about half a pound) to the dish and smooth over, then layer in the sun-dried tomato spread and the pesto. Spread the remaining cheese on top of the pesto. Place a serving plate over the bowl and invert the bowl. Hold on to the edges of the waxed paper or wrap to release the cheese. Remove the waxed paper or plastic wrap. Arrange the sliced baguette along 1 side of the torta.

Arrange carrots and tomatoes along the opposite side of the torta.

Serves 6 – 8.

**Sloppy Dawgs**

#### Ingredients

* 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)
* 1 pound beef, pork, turkey or tofu hot dogs, chopped or thinly sliced
* 1 medium onion, finely chopped
* 1 small red bell pepper, finely chopped
* 2 tablespoons tomato paste
* 3 tablespoons brown sugar
* 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar (eyeball it)
* 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce (eyeball it)
* 1 can tomato sauce (8 ounces)
* Salt and pepper
* 4 crusty split-top hot dog rolls, toasted and lightly buttered
* Suggested garnishes: chopped tomatoes, chopped pickles and yellow mustard

#### Preparation

Place a large skillet over medium-high heat with one turn of the pan of EVOO, about 1 tablespoon. Add the hot dogs to the pan and cook until golden brown, 4-5 minutes.

Add the onion and bell pepper to the pan and continue cooking until the veggies are tender, 3-4 minutes. Add the tomato paste to the pan and cook until darkened and aromatic, about 1 minute.

In a medium size bowl, stir together the brown sugar, red wine vinegar, Worcestershire sauce and tomato sauce. Add the mixture to the pan, then season with salt and pepper and simmer until thickened and saucy, about 5 minutes more.

Pile the sloppy meat onto the toasted, buttered buns. Top with tomatoes, pickles and mustard.

Serves 4.

**Ratatouille Stoup**

#### Ingredients

* 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)
* 1 medium onion, chopped
* 1 green bell pepper, seeded and diced
* 1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
* 3 cloves garlic, chopped
* 1 medium eggplant, peeled and diced
* 2 small zucchini, diced
* Salt and pepper
* 1 teaspoon dried thyme
* 1 can diced tomatoes (28 ounces)
* 6 cups chicken stock
* 1/2 pound small cut whole grain pasta
* A handful of flat leaf parsley, finely chopped
* A few leaves fresh basil, torn or shredded

#### Preparation

Heat a deep pot over medium-high heat with three turns of the pan of EVOO, about three tablespoons. Add the onion, peppers, garlic, eggplant and zucchini. Season the vegetables with salt, pepper and thyme. Cook until softened, about 7-8 minutes.

Add the tomatoes and chicken stock; bring the soup to a boil, then turn it down to a simmer. Stir in the pasta and cook to al dente, with a bite to it. Stir in parsley and basil, adjust salt and pepper and serve.

Makes 6 healthy, hearty servings.

**Bean Soup with Ham**

2 pound bag dried navy beans

2 T. butter

16 oz. can Italian diced tomato

 2 smoked ham hocks

 1 pound diced ham

 1 pound carrots, peeled

1 large onion, large diced

4 sprig fresh thyme

2 ½ quart chicken stock

¼ cup heavy cream, more if desired

¼ cup chopped Italian parsley

1. Cover dried beans with water and a sprinkle of salt and soak overnight.
2. In a large soup pot, cook carrots and onion in butter until slightly softened, about 5 minutes.
3. Add smoked hocks, tomato, thyme, chicken stock and beans.
4. Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, for up to 2 hours (or use crock pot and cooked for 6 hours on low)
5. Remove hock and thyme stems and using a stick blender, puree the soup until desired consistency. Add the diced ham and cream. Season with salt and pepper.

**Zucchini Pizza**

* 2 tablespoons [olive oil](http://www.food.com/library/olive-oil-495)
* 2 (14 ounce) packages pizza dough, from the refrigeration section of the grocery store
* Coarse salt and coarse pepper
* 2 cups [ricotta cheese](http://www.food.com/library/ricotta-cheese-291)
* 8 [garlic cloves](http://www.food.com/library/garlic-165), minced
* 4 cups [mozzarella cheese](http://www.food.com/library/mozzarella-746)
* 2 medium [zucchini](http://www.food.com/library/zucchini-316), ends trimmed and sliced 1/4 inch thick

## Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Drizzle olive oil on one large or two small cookie sheets, then roll out the dough. Poke with fork and season with salt and pepper. Place in the oven for 5 or 6 minutes. In a medium bowl, mix the ricotta with the garlic. Cover crust in mixture and top with mozzarella cheese. Return to the oven for 12 to 13 minutes. Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Heat the zucchini in the skillet on both sides until crisp tender. Scatter on top of pizza and cook an additional 2 to 3 minutes. Serve large squares of the pizza hot from the oven.

**Mini Muffin Spinach and Artichoke Bites**

#### Ingredients

* 1 box frozen spinach (10 ounces), thawed
* 4 ounces cream cheese
* 2 cans artichokes (14 ounces each), drained and chopped
* 1 1/2 cups biscuit mix
* 1 cup milk
* Nonstick cooking spray
* 1 cup grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese

#### Preparation

Pre-heat the oven to 350ºF.

Put the cream cheese into the freezer for about 5 minutes to chill before chopping into a small dice.

Wring out the thawed spinach in a dishtowel to remove the excess liquid. Place the spinach into a large mixing bowl along with the artichokes, Parmigiano Reggiano, biscuit mix and milk. Combine all the ingredients; then fold in the chopped chilled cream cheese.

Spray a mini muffin tin with nonstick cooking spray, then divide the spinach-artichoke mixture equally in the muffin cups. Bake for 12-15 minutes, until puffed and golden in color. Makes 24 mini muffins.

**Grilled Petite Filet Sliders**

#### Ingredients

* 2 petite beef shoulder filets (about 1 1/2 pounds each)
* 12 slices thick or butcher-cut bacon
* Extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)
* Kosher salt and coarse black pepper
* 1 cup sour cream
* 3 tablespoons prepared horseradish
* 3-4 tablespoons chives, minced
* Juice of 1/2 lemon
* 12-16 small French or brioche rolls, split and lightly toasted
* 2 bunches watercress, trimmed, washed and dried

#### Preparation

Bring the beef to room temperature before you begin to cook. Pre-heat the oven to 375°F. Pre-heat a cast iron skillet over medium-high heat.

Arrange the bacon on a broiler pan and bake until crisp, 15-18 minutes.

Meanwhile, coat the beef with EVOO; season liberally with salt and pepper. In the heated skillet, brown the filets over medium-high heat, 5-6 minutes, then finish in the oven for another 5-6 minutes for medium to medium-rare. Remove and let rest for 5-10 minutes.

Combine the sour cream with the horseradish, chives and lemon juice; season, to taste.

Slice the meat very thinly against the grain. Serve on the rolls topped with the bacon, watercress leaves and horseradish cream. Makes 12 – 16 sliders.

One-Bowl Blueberry-Ricotta Breakfast Cake

* Nonstick cooking spray
* ¾ c whole-milk ricotta cheese (room temperature)
* 2 large eggs
* 1 ½ c unbleached flour
* 1 c sugar
* ½ c cornmeal
* 2 teaspoons baking powder
* ¼ teaspoon baking soda
* ¼ teaspoon salt
* 2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
* ½ c (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted and cooled
* 1 c fresh blueberries, picked over
* Confectioners’ sugar, for dusting

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Coat an 8 inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray. Whisk together the ricotta and eggs in a glass measuring cup. Whisk together the flour, sugar, cornmeal, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a large bowl. Add the ricotta mixture and the lemon zest to the bowl with the flour mixture. Stir with a spatula until moistened (it will be lumpy). Stir in the butter until it is incorporated. Stir in the blueberries. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the top with a spatula. Bake until the top is golden and a toothpick inserted into center comes out clean, for 25 to 30 minutes. Let the cake cool in the pan for 5 minutes, invert it onto a wire rack, and then turn it right side up to cool slightly. Dust the top of the cake with confectioners’ sugar. Cut into 9 squares and serve warm, or let cool completely before cutting into squares and serving. Makes 9 servings.