February 2012: Chocolate or Vanilla

Pots de Crème a l’Orange

Serves 12

Ingredients:

12 oz. semi-sweet chocolate chips

4 whole eggs

Dash of salt

1 tbsp. Grand Marnier, more to taste

1 cup very hot, strong coffee

Fresh whipping cream, for serving

Thinly sliced orange peel, for garnish

Place the chocolate chips into a blender. Crack the eggs, then add Grand Marnier, and salt. Blend for a few seconds, or until combined. Pour the coffee in a thin stream through the blender lid until it is all added. Blend for another few seconds, or until smooth. Pour mixture into small cups or jars, then refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or until chilled and set. Top with plenty of sweetened whipped cream, then garnish with sliced orange peel.

Weight Watchers Vanilla Blueberry Cake

Ingredients:

3 cups all-purpose flour

2 cups sugar

1 tsp. baking powder

¾ tsp. baking soda

½ tsp. salt

¼ tsp. ground nutmeg

1 cup low-fat buttermilk

½ cup olive oil

3 large eggs

1 tbsp. vanilla extract

2 cups blueberries

1 tbsp. lemon zest or 1 tsp. extract, optional

Preheat oven to 350°. In a bowl, combine flour through nutmeg, set aside. In a smaller bowl, mix buttermilk through vanilla. Slowly add buttermilk to the dry ingredients and stir just until mixed through. Fold in blueberries and pour entire batter into well-greased tube or Bundt pan. Bake for an hour and 10 minutes or until knife pulls clean in the center. Remove cake from pan, cool on a wire rack, serve, and enjoy.

Chocolate Cream Cake (Ho-Ho Cake)

Ingredients:

1 box of cake mix, cooked, cooled, using a jellyroll pan

1 ¼ cup milk

5 tbsp. flour

1 cup granulated sugar

½ cup butter

1 cup shortening

1 tsp. vanilla

Prepared chocolate frosting

Cook milk and flour over medium heat stirring constantly until thick. Cool completely. Add sugar, butter, and shortening and beat well for four minutes. Spread evenly over cool chocolate cake. Spread chocolate frosting over cream filling. Refrigerate before serving.

Cookie Dough Dips

Makes 12

Ingredients:

8 oz. package cream cheese, softened

½ cup butter, softened

1 cup powdered sugar

2 tbsp. brown sugar

1 ½ tsp. vanilla

1 cup chocolate chips

1 cup toffee bits

Cream together cream cheese and butter. Add all remaining ingredients and mix until well-combined. Serve with graham crackers or apple wedges.

Chocolate Chip Cookies Dough Brownies

Makes 32

Ingredients for brownies:

4 oz. unsweetened chocolate, finely chopped

1 cup butter, melted

2 cup light brown sugar, packed

4 large eggs

2 tsp. vanilla extract

1 cup all-purpose flour

Preheat oven to 325°. Spray a 9x13 inch pan with nonstick spray. In a medium glass bowl, melt chocolate in the microwave in short bursts of 30 seconds; stir after each burst and remove from microwave when melted and smooth. Set aside to cool slightly. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the butter and brown sugar. Add eggs and vanilla extract and whisk those in too. Mix in melted chocolate. Whisk in the flour and mix just until combined, do not over mix. Spread batter into prepared pan. Bake 25 to 35 minutes. Watch closely and remove from oven when toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Let cool completely.

Ingredients for cookie dough:

¾ cup butter, room temperature

¾ cup light brown sugar, packed

¾ cup granulated white sugar

3 tbsp. milk

1 ½ tsp. vanilla extract

1 ½ cup all-purpose flour

1 ½ cup mini chocolate chips

½ cup semi-sweet chips

1 tsp. shortening for drizzle, optional

In a medium bowl, use an electric mixer to combine butter, brown sugar, white sugar. Mix in milk and vanilla. Mix in flour just until combined. Stir in chocolate chips. Spread cookie dough over cooled brownies. Refrigerate until dough is firm. Cut into pieces. For drizzle, melt semi-sweet chips with shortening and drizzle.

Candy Bar Cake

Ingredients for cake:

12 oz. frozen pound cake

3 oz. semi-sweet chocolate, finely chopped

1 ½ sticks unsalted butter, room temperature

3 to 4 tbsp. milk

1 lb. box confectioners’ sugar

¾ cup salted roasted peanuts

2 cup dulce de leche

Ingredients for coating:

10 oz. semi-sweet chocolate, finely chopped

1 stick cold unsalted butter, cut into pieces

Trim ½ inch off the ends of the pound cake, then trim the domed top to make it flat. Stand the cake on its side and slice in half horizontally to make two equal-size rectangles. Microwave the chocolate in 30 second intervals, stirring until melted. Beat the butter, milk, and confectioners’ sugar with a mixer. Beat in melted chocolate. Add more milk if needed, to make the frosting spreadable. Lay the cake rectangles on a rack set on a rimmed baking sheet. Spread some of the frosting on one short end of each cake and press together to form a long rectangle. Spread the remaining frosting on the cake in a 1 inch thick layer, making the edges slightly higher than the center. Smooth the top and sides with an offset spatula. Freeze until firm, about 30 minutes. Mix the peanuts and dulce de leche in a bowl. Remove the cake from the freezer. Spread the peanut mixture on the frosting in a flat, even layer. Freeze until the dulce de leche is firm, about 30 minutes. Meanwhile, make the chocolate coating: microwave the chocolate and butter in 30 second intervals, stirring, until melted and smooth. Pour the chocolate on the cake and spread it evenly over the top and sides with an offset spatula. Freeze until the chocolate cools slightly, 6 to 8 minutes. Starting at a short end of the cake, dip the edge of an offset spatula into the chocolate at an angle and gently pull up, repeating along the top of the cake to create a wave pattern. Chill 10 minutes before serving.

Old-Fashioned Chocolate Cake

Ingredients for cake:

3 cup all-purpose flour

2 cup sugar

½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder

2 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. salt

2 cup hot water

¾ cup vegetable oil

2 tbsp. distilled white vinegar

1 tbsp. instant coffee granules

1 tbsp. vanilla

Preheat the oven to 350° with rack in the center. Spray two 8x2 inch round cake pans with nonstick spray. Whisk together flour, sugar, cocoa, and salt in large bowl. Combine water, oil, vinegar, coffee, and vanilla in a large measuring cup. Add to dry ingredients and whisk just until combined. A few lumps are okay. Divide batter between pans. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes. Cool on rack for 15 minutes.

Ingredients for icing:

1 stick unsalted butter

1 ½ cup sugar

1 ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa

Pinch of salt

1 ¼ cup heavy whip cream

¼ cup sour cream

1 tsp. instant coffee granules

2 tsp. vanilla

Melt butter in a large sauce pan, medium heat. Stir in sugar, cocoa, and salt. Mixture will be thick and grainy. Combine heavy cream, sour cream, and instant coffee in a large measure cup. Gradually add cream mixture to chocolate until blended and smooth. Cook until sugar has dissolved and the mixture is smooth, 6 to 8 minutes. Do not boil. Off heat, add vanilla. Cool icing at room temperature until spreadable. 2 to 3 hours.

Vanilla Fudge

Ingredients:

4 cups sugar

½ cup light corn syrup

½ cup heavy cream

1 cup milk

1 tsp. salt

1 vanilla bean

Combine the sugar, corn syrup, cream, milk, and salt in a 4 quart saucepan. Split the vanilla bean lengthwise and scrape the seeds out of the pod. Place the seeds and pod in the milk mixture. Cook over moderate heat to 236°, stirring constantly. Pour the mixture in a 9x13 inch baking pan, or other pan that will allow it to spread to create a thin layer. Remove the vanilla pod using a fork and leave undistributed to cool at room temperature for 20 minutes. Scrape the mixture into a large mixing bowl or into the bowl of a mixer fitted with a paddle attachment. Mix on medium speed. Top mixing when the fudge begins to lose its shine and thickens slightly. Butter 9x13 baking pan, pour mixture, and spread evenly with an offset palette knife. Allow the fudge to crystallize for 1 hour or longer at room temperature. Cut into the desired size pieces and serve. Store tightly at room temperature or in refrigerator.

Chocolate and Vanilla Creams

Ingredients:

2 cup heavy cream

6 tbsp. superfine sugar

1 vanilla bean

Heaping ¾ cup sour cream

2 tsp. powdered gelatin

3 tbsp. water

1 ¾ semi-sweet chocolate, broken into pieces

Chocolate shavings, for decorating

Place the cream and sugar in a saucepan and add the vanilla bean. Heat gently, stirring until the sugar has dissolved, then bring to boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and take out the vanilla bean. Stir in the sour cream. Sprinkle the gelatin over the water in a small heatproof bowl and leave until spongy, then set over a pan of hot water and stir until dissolved. Stir into the cream mixture and pour half of this mixture into another bowl. Place the semi-sweet chocolate in a heatproof bowl, set the bowl over a pan of simmering water, and heat until melted, then stir into one half of the cream mixture. Pour the chocolate mixture into 4 individual glasses and chill for 15 to 20 minutes, or until just set. While the chocolate mixture is chilling, keep the vanilla mixture at room temperature. Spoon the vanilla mixture on top of the chocolate mixture and chill until the vanilla cream is set. Before serving, decorate with the shavings.

Turtle Cookies

Makes 20

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour

1 cup firmly packed brown sugar

½ cup butter, softened

1 cup pecan halves, chopped

1 cup butter

¾ cup firmly packed brown sugar

1 cup milk chocolate morsels

Preheat oven to 350°. Combine the first three ingredients in a mixing bowl; beat at medium speed with an electric mixer until blended. Pat mixture firmly into an ungreased 13x9 inch pan. Arrange pecans over crust. Combine butter and brown sugar in a saucepan; bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Cook for 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Pour mixture over pecans. Bake for 15 to 17 minutes or until golden and bubbly. Remove from oven; sprinkle with chocolate morsels. Let stand for 2 to 3 minutes or until slightly melted. Gently swirl chocolate with a knife, leaving some morsels whole (do not spread). Let cool on a wire rack at room temperature until chocolate is set (about two hours). Cut into squares.

Chocolate Cappuccino Cake

Ingredients:

1 box Betty Crocker Chocolate fudge cake mix, water, vegetable oil, eggs on box

1 tbsp. instant espresso coffee powder, any flavor

½ tsp. cinnamon

4 oz. semi-sweet baking chocolate, chopped

1 container Betty Crocker Rich & Creamy dark chocolate frosting

2 tsp. coffee powder

Preheat oven to 350°. Make cake, bake, and cool as directed adding 2 tbsp. of coffee powder and cinnamon. Stir in chocolate just before pouring into the pan. Glaze: spoon frosting into small bowl. Microwave for 15 to 30 seconds until slightly melted. Stir in 2 tsp. coffee powder until blended. Frost cake.

Vanilla Poached Pears

Serves 4

Ingredients:

750ml bottle of white wine, Riesling or Viognier

1 cup water

5 oz. vanilla sugar, approximately ¾ cup

1 whole vanilla bean, split and scraped

4 firm Bartlett, Anjou, or Bosc pears, peeled leaving tem intact

Place the white wine, water, sugar, and vanilla bean and pulp into a 4-quart saucepan over medium-high heat and bring to a boil. Core the pears from the bottom. Decrease the heat to medium low and place the pears into the liquid, cover and cook for 30 minutes or until the pears are tender but not falling apart. Maintain a gentle simmer. Remove the pears to a serving dish, standing them upright, and place in the refrigerator. Remove the vanilla bean from the saucepan, increase the heat to high and reduce the syrup to approximately 1 cup of liquid, about 20 to 25 minutes. Do not allow the syrup to turn brown. Place the syrup in a heatproof container and place in the refrigerator until cool, about 1 hour. Remove the pears from the refrigerator, spoon the sauce over the pears and serve.

Slow-Cooker Chicken Mole

Serves 6

Ingredients:

4 lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs, about 12

Coarse salt

28 oz. whole tomatoes

1 medium yellow onion, roughly chopped

2 dried ancho chiles, stemmed

1 large chipotle chile in adobo sauce

½ cup sliced almonds, toasted

¼ cup raisins

3 oz. bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped, ½ cup

3 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled

3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

¾ tsp. ground cumin

½ tsp. ground cinnamon

Fresh cilantro leaves, for serving

Season chicken thighs with salt and place in a 5 to 6 quart slow cooker. In a blender, puree tomatoes, onion, ancho, and chipotle chiles, raisins, chocolate, garlic, oil cumin, and cinnamon until smooth. Add tomato mixture to slow cooker, cover, and cook on high until chicken is tender, 4 hours or 8 hours on low. Serve chicken and sauce topped with cilantro.

Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Muffins

Makes a dozen

Ingredients:

1 cup flour

1 1/3 cups oatmeal

1 tbsp. baking powder

½ cup sugar

1 tsp. cinnamon

1 egg, beaten

1 cup milk

1/3 cup applesauce

2/3 cup chocolate morsels

Preheat the oven to 400°. Prepare muffin cups by using cooking spray or cupcake liners. Place flour, oatmeal, baking powder, sugar and cinnamon in a large bowl and mix with a large spoon. Add egg, milk, and applesauce mix to blend well. Mix in the chocolate. Pour mixture into muffin cups and bake for 15 to 18 minutes. Remove from pans and cool.

Mudslide Truffle

Serves 12

Ingredients:

14 oz. package prepared marble loaf cake, cut into 1 ¼ inch cubes

6 tbsp. Irish cream liqueur

3.9 oz. package instant white chocolate pudding mix

3 ½ cup milk

3.9 oz. instant chocolate pudding mix

¼ cup coffee-flavored liqueur, mixed with 1 tsp. sugar

1 ½ cups thawed frozen whipped topping

1 cup thawed frozen chocolate whipping topping

Chocolate curls or grated chocolate, optional

Place 1/3 of cake cubes in 2 quart bowl or trifle dish. Drizzle with 2 tbsp. cream liqueur. Whisk white chocolate pudding mix into 2 cups milk until smooth and thickened. Pour over cake cubes. Top with half of remaining cake cubes; drizzle with 2 tbsp. remaining cream liqueur. In another bowl, whisk chocolate pudding mix and coffee liqueur into remaining 1 ½ cups milk until smooth and thickened. Pour over cake cubes in bowl; top with remaining cake and 2 tbsp. cream liqueur. Cover with plastic wrap; refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight. Transfer whipped toppings to separate pastry bags fitted with star tips; pipe over trifle. If desired, top with chocolate curls.

Salted Caramel Turtle Triangles

Makes 48 bars

Ingredients for cookie base:

1 lb. 1.5 oz. Betty Crocker double chocolate chunk cookie mix

¼ cup butter, melted

2 tbsp. water

1 egg

2/3 cup pecans, coarsely chopped

Ingredients for caramel topping:

4 tbsp. butter

14 oz. bag caramels, about 35 caramels

¼ cup heavy cream

½ tsp. vanilla

1/8 tsp. coarse kosher salt, plus additional ½ tsp. for top of bars

Heat oven to 350°. Spray 9x13 inch pan with cooking spray. In a medium bowl, stir together cookie mix, butter, water, and egg until soft dough forms. Press dough evenly into prepared pan, sprinkle with 1/3 cup pecans. Bake 11 to 15 minutes or until set in center and edges just begin to pull from sides of pan. Set aside to cool. Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan over medium-low heat, melt butter, caramels, and cream stirring frequently until mixture is smooth. Remove from heat. Stir in vanilla and 1/8 tsp. salt. Spread caramel evenly over cookie base and sprinkle with remaining pecans. Cool completely. Sprinkle top of caramel with additional salt right before serving. Store in refrigerator; bring to room temperature before serving.

Dirty Bird

Serves 2

Ingredients:

1 or 2 chipotles

3 garlic cloves, plus 2 garlic cloves, chopped

½ cup chicken stock

1 pinch dried oregano

1 pinch ground cumin

1 pinch salt

2 tbsp. butter

¼ cup onions, chopped

2 boneless chicken breasts

¼ cup Mexican chocolate\*

\*substitution for chocolate:

¼ cup chocolate chips

¾ tsp. cinnamon

1 drop almond extract

1 drop vanilla extract

In a blender or food processor, add the chipotle peppers, 3 garlic cloves, chicken stock, oregano, cumin, salt, and Mexican chocolate. Blend well. In a frying pan, add butter, remaining chopped garlic, and chopped onions, sauté for 5 minutes. Add chicken breast. Cook until almost done. Add sauce to pan. Reduce the heat and cook until sauce is thick.

Chocolate Chip Cheese Ball

Serves 10 to 12

Ingredients:

8 oz. package cream cheese, softened

½ cup butter, softened

½ cup confectioners’ sugar

2 tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder

2 tbsp. firmly packed brown sugar

½ tsp. vanilla extract

1 cup mini marshmallows

¾ cup semisweet chocolate morsels

1 cup finely chopped toasted walnuts

Chocolate and honey flavored graham crackers and fruit

In a medium bowl, combine cream cheese and butter. Beat at medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy. Add the confectioners’ sugar, cocoa, brown sugar, and vanilla. Beat until well combined. Add the marshmallows and chocolate morsels. Stir to combine well. Cover and chill for 2 hours. Form the mixture into a ball, and then roll it in walnuts. Arrange the cheese ball on a serving platter and serve with graham crackers and fruit.

Oreo Truffles

Ingredients:

2 bags chocolate, dark and milk chocolate

8 oz. cream cheese, softened

1 package Oreos

In a food processor, chop cookies until finely chopped. In a large bowl, mix together Oreo crumbs and softened cream cheese until completely brown. Roll mixture into 1 inch balls and place on cookie sheet covered with wax paper. Refrigerate for 15 minutes. Melt chocolate and dip each ball into the chocolate and place back on cookie sheet. Refrigerate until chocolate is hard. Decorate if desired.