

Holiday Baking With A Regional Twist



Regional recipes, like Bananas Foster Bars (left) and Almond Butter Buckeyes (right), may soon be a favorite in your house.

(NAPSA)—Bakers everywhere are dusting off their rolling pins and gathering up their measuring cups. Every corner of the country has its own unique spin on holiday cookies and candies, with recipes that are often inspired by local ingredients or a reflection of traditions unique to the people who live there.

Wherever you may live on the map, there is a recipe—or two—to add to your holiday cookie plate, such as:

- Bananas Foster Bars, a dessert synonymous with New Orleans—the place where it was created. This recipe takes all those great flavors—the rum, the bananas and, of course, the butter—and transforms them into a bar cookie that’s sure to make any dessert plate a hit.

- Almond Butter Buckeyes, buttery and nutty chocolate confections inspired by the nuts that fall from Ohio’s famous buckeye trees. Come holiday time, they are produced—and consumed—in mass quantities in “The Buckeye State,” as well as in neighboring states throughout the Midwest.

Bananas Foster Bars

Makes 16 2-inch bars

Ingredients:

Bars:

- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- 1 cup dark brown sugar, packed
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon dark rum or 1 teaspoon rum extract
- 1 cup flour
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup bananas, diced
- ½ cup (2 ounces) pecans or walnuts, chopped

Frosting:

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter at room temperature
- 4 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 4 tablespoons light brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon rum or pure vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1-2 cups confectioners’ sugar, sifted

Directions:

Bars:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly butter and flour 9-inch-square pan*.

In large bowl, beat together butter and sugar with electric mixer until creamy. Add egg and rum; mix to combine.

In small bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon and salt; gradually add to butter mixture. Mix in bananas and pecans; stir to incorporate. Pour batter into prepared pan and spread evenly. Bake for 20

to 25 minutes or until toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Remove pan to a wire rack to cool completely.

Frosting:

In large bowl, combine butter, cream cheese, sugar and extract with an electric mixer. Beat until light and fluffy. Add cinnamon and 1 cup confectioners’ sugar; blend until smooth. (Careful; overmixing will cause separation.) Add additional confectioners’ sugar to create desired consistency.

Spread frosting immediately over cooled bars. Cover and store bars in refrigerator for up to 3 days. When ready to serve, cut bars into 2-inch squares.

*For a thicker bar, use an 8-inch-square pan.

Almond Butter Buckeyes

Makes 4 dozen candies

Ingredients:

Candies:

- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
- 1¼ cups almond butter*
- 3 tablespoons dark rum or 1½ teaspoons rum extract
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- ¾ to 4 cups confectioners’ sugar, sifted

Coating:

- 12 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped

Directions:

Candies:

In large bowl, combine butter, almond butter, rum, almond extract and confectioners’ sugar using electric mixer. Dough will be smooth and firm. Shape dough into 1-inch balls; place on parchment-lined baking sheets.

Refrigerate until firm, about 30 minutes.

Coating:

Melt chocolate in shallow, microwave-safe dish. Heat 30 seconds; stir; then continue in 10-second intervals, stirring after each cook time. Chocolate should be melted and smooth.

To dip balls, insert a toothpick about ½ inch into the ball, dip into melted chocolate, leaving a small circle of dough visible at the top, and place on parchment paper to dry until chocolate is firm. Repeat with remaining candies. Store in airtight container for up to three days.

*You may substitute peanut or cashew butter for almond butter; omit almond extract if you use a substitution.

Visit butterisbest.com for more regionally inspired recipes, from Mount Rainier Macaroons to Apple Cider Buttons. While there, sign up for the daily holiday cookie e-newsletter, “Better Baking with Butter,” available to subscribers from Nov. 27 through Dec. 24.