

Sons and daughters are home for school vacations, summer has begun, and we are all looking forward to this season of outdoor play, sailing away to favorite harbors, spending relaxing days basking in the warm sun and welcoming friends and family who take the time to visit from afar. It is a wonderful time of year.

There is much cooking to be done for all the guests and trips, but I like lighter, easier fare and always making sure there are plenty of snacks and sweets around. I love a good homemade cookie or brownie and every cook has his or her favorite family cookie recipe that you'd never find in all that packaged stuff on the grocery store shelves (especially every Mom's chocolate chip!). Cookies, brownies and bars are easy and can be made ahead of time and either frozen or stored in air-tight containers; always ready to grab and go or for the sudden sweet-tooth, which for me comes about an hour after dinner. Here are a few recipes that are a nice change from store-bought, plus a quick fruit snack for those watching their diets.

Blondies

1 stick of unsalted butter
 2 cups of all-purpose flour
 1/2 tsp. each of baking soda and salt
 1-1/2 cups light brown sugar
 2 large eggs
 2 tsp. vanilla
 (3)1-3/4 oz. chocolate covered toffee bars, chopped



by Cathy Smith

Preheat the oven to 350°. Line an 8" square pan with foil. Whisk together the flour, salt and baking powder and set aside.

Cream the butter and sugar with an electric mixer until light and fluffy. Add the eggs and vanilla and beat until combined. Beat in the flour mixture, being careful to not over mix. Fold in the chopped toffee bars.

Pour into the prepared pan and bake for about 18-22 minutes until golden brown on top, checking the doneness with a toothpick. Cool on wire rack for about 10 minutes, then turn out of pan and cool completely. Cut into squares and store. Makes 12 brownies

Oatmeal Shortbread

1/2 cup + 2 Tb. rolled oats (not quick-cooking)
 3/4 cup of all-purpose flour

1/3 cup of confectioner's sugar
 1/2 tsp. salt
 1 stick of cold unsalted butter, cut into pieces

Preheat oven to 325°. Spread oats on a cookie sheet and toast 4-6 minutes until lightly browned. Let cool completely.

Combine the flour, sugar, salt and 1/2 cup of oats in a food processor and process for about a minute until finely ground. Add the butter and pulse until the mixture resembles coarse meal. Press the batter firmly into an 8" square pan – it will be thin, so don't panic thinking you don't have enough. Sprinkle the remaining 2 tablespoons of oats on top and press gently.

Bake 30-35 minutes until firm and lightly browned. When done, use a knife to score the shortbread into 16 squares and then divide those into triangles. Cool pan completely on a wire rack. Loosen the shortbread out of the pan and break it along your scored lines. Store in an air-tight container. This will make 32 pieces.

Quick and Easy Strawberries with Sweetened Cream

2 pints fresh strawberries
 1 cup sour-cream
 2 Tb. of brown sugar

Wash the strawberries well and then pat dry. Mix the sour cream and brown sugar and serve in a small bowl. Dip your strawberries and enjoy!

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