

This week our focus is on apples. We have recipes for every course.

Let us know if there is something you would like us to put in our column, or if you have a recipe to share, please submit to ads@thedrummer.com.

Homemade Apple Cider

Level: Easy

Total: 6 hr 15 min

Active: 15 min

Yield: 12 c.

6 lg. tart apples, such as Granny Smith (about 2 lbs.)

6 lg. sweet apples, such as Gala (about 2 lbs.)

12 whole cloves

6 cinnamon sticks

1/2 to 1 c. packed light brown sugar

Special equipment: a 7-quart slow cooker; a potato masher

Thoroughly wash and dry the apples. Cut each apple into 8 wedges (skins, seeds and stems included) and transfer to a 7-quart slow cooker. Add the cloves, cinnamon sticks and 12 cups water. Cook on high, covered, for 4 hours.

Remove the lid and carefully crush the apples with a potato masher. Cover again and cook on high for another 2 hours.

Set a large, fine-mesh strainer over a large stockpot. In batches, ladle the apple mixture into the strainer and use the back of the ladle to press down on the apple pulp to extract the liquid. Discard the pulp. Stir in 1/2 cup of the brown sugar until completely dissolved. Taste and add additional sugar if needed.

Serve the apple cider hot or allow it to cool fully, then serve it chilled over ice.

Shredded Beet and Apple Salad

Total: 20 min

Active: 20 min

Yield: 6 servings

1 T. finely chopped shallots

1 T. white wine vinegar

2 tsp. whole grain mustard

1 tsp. honey

Kosher salt & freshly ground black pepper

3 T. walnut oil

2 Granny Smith apples

1 beet, trimmed & peeled

2 T. chopped fresh chives

2 T. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

2 T. chopped candied walnuts

Special equipment: Mandoline or julienne blade attachment for a food processor

Whisk the shallots, vinegar, mustard, honey, 1 teaspoon salt and a few grinds of pepper in a large bowl until well combined. Slowly drizzle in the walnut oil, whisking constantly to make a smooth, slightly thick dressing.

With a mandoline or the julienne blade of a food processor, shred the apples and beet into long thin matchsticks.

Spread the beets out on a serving platter and top with the apples. Drizzle the vinaigrette over top and sprinkle with the chives, parsley, walnuts, salt and pepper. Toss together right before serving.

Apple-Cheddar Soup with Bacon

Level: Easy

Total: 40 min

Active: 25 min

Yield: 4 servings

3 slices bacon

1 sm. onion, chopped

2 med. apples, peeled & chopped

1 med. potato, peeled & chopped

3 c. low-sodium chicken broth

1-1/2 c. unsweetened apple juice

Kosher salt & freshly ground pepper

2 c. shredded extra-sharp cheddar cheese (about 8 oz.)

2 slices rye bread, toasted

2 tsp. Dijon mustard

Chopped fresh chives, for topping

Cook the bacon in a large pot over medium heat until crisp, 4 to 5 minutes per side. Transfer to paper towels to drain; let cool slightly, then roughly chop. Pour out all but 2 tablespoons of the drippings from the pot.

Increase the heat under the pot to medium high. Add the onion, apples and potato and cook, stirring frequently, until the apples are soft, about 8 minutes. Add the chicken broth, apple juice, 3/4 teaspoon salt, and pepper to taste. Bring to a simmer and cook until the potato is soft, 10 to 12 minutes. Stir in all but 2 tablespoons of the cheddar until melted. Working in batches, transfer the soup to a blender and puree. Return to the pot and season with salt and pepper.

Meanwhile, preheat the broiler. Spread the bread with the mustard and sprinkle with the reserved 2 tablespoons cheese. Broil until the cheese melts, about 30 seconds, then cut into 1-inch squares. Ladle the soup into bowls and top with the bacon, chives, cheese croutons and more pepper.

Cook's Note: If the bacon doesn't render enough fat, use a little neutral oil or butter to make up the difference.

Ham, Apple and Cheese Quesadilla

Level: Easy
Total: 30 min
Prep: 10 min
Cook: 20 min
Yield: 4 servings

8 (6") whole wheat tortillas
Cooking spray or olive oil, for oiling tortillas
1 T. spicy brown or Dijon mustard
1 c. shredded low-sodium Swiss (4 oz.)
4 oz. very thinly sliced low-sodium lean Black Forest or Virginia ham
1/2 sm. red onion, extra thinly sliced
Freshly ground black pepper
1-1/2 T. no-sugar-added apple butter, plus more for topping, optional
2 sm. apples, cut into thin sticks (red & green)
Lemon juice & ground cinnamon for tossing

Preheat the oven to 200 degrees F.

Spray 4 of the tortillas with cooking spray (or brush with olive oil). Lay the oiled tortillas on a large cutting board oiled side down. Brush with the mustard and sprinkle with about half of the cheese. Top each evenly with a thin layer of ham, onions, and some pepper, and then finish with the remaining cheese.

Brush the apple butter evenly on the remaining tortillas. Place one apple-butter tortilla on top of a ham-and-cheese tortilla (filling sides in), and firmly press the tortillas together to make a quesadilla.

Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Lay a quesadilla oiled side down in the pan and cook until golden brown and the cheese starts to melt, about 2 minutes. Spray the top of the quesadilla with cooking spray, turn and cook until the other side browns and the cheese is melted, 2 to 3 minutes more. Transfer to a baking sheet and keep warm in the oven. Repeat with the remaining quesadillas.

Cut the quesadillas into 4 wedges and arrange on plates. Toss the apples with lemon and juice and cinnamon to taste. Serve with the apple slices.

Braised Chicken Thighs and Apples

Level: Easy
Total: 1 hr
Active: 35 min
Yield: 4

8 bone-in chicken thighs (2 to 2-1/2 lbs.)
Kosher salt & freshly ground black pepper
2 T. vegetable oil
2 tsp. fresh thyme leaves
1 bunch leeks (white & green parts), halved lengthwise & sliced
1/4 c. dry white wine
1 c. low-sodium chicken broth
1/2 c. apple cider
2 T. unsalted butter, at room temp.
2 T. all-purpose flour
2 apples, such as Golden Delicious, chopped

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Sprinkle the chicken generously with salt and pepper. Heat the oil in a large, deep ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Place the chicken in the skillet skin-side down and cook, flipping once, until golden on both sides. Transfer to a plate.

Reduce the heat to medium, add the thyme and leeks to the skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 4 minutes. Pour in the wine and use a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned bits from the bottom. Cook until the skillet is nearly dry. Stir in the broth, apple cider and a pinch each of salt and pepper and bring to a boil.

Use a fork to mash the butter and flour together in a small bowl until smooth. Whisk the butter-flour mixture into the skillet until dissolved. Stir in the apples and remove from the heat. Nestle the chicken skin-side up in the skillet along with any collected juices from the plate. Bake until the chicken is cooked through, about 25 minutes.

Pork Chops with Baked Apples

Level: Easy
Total: 30 min
Prep: 5 min
Cook: 25 min

Yield: 4 servings

2 med. parsnips, peeled & cut into 1/2" pcs.
1 med. turnip, peeled & cut into 1/2" pcs.
1 red onion, cut into 1/2" pcs.
2 T. extra-virgin olive oil
1 T. chopped fresh rosemary
Kosher salt & freshly ground pepper
2 sm. cooking apples (such as Gala), halved & seeded
1/4 c. apricot preserves
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp. chopped fresh sage
4 bone-in pork loin chops (1/2" thick; about 1-1/2 lbs. total)
1 T. unsalted butter

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F. Toss the parsnips, turnip and onion with the olive oil, rosemary, 1/2 teaspoon salt and a few grinds of pepper on a rimmed baking sheet. Arrange the apples on top, cut side up; brush with 2 tablespoons apricot preserves and season with pepper. Roast until the vegetables and apples soften, 20 minutes. Switch the oven to broil; broil until the vegetables are golden brown, 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, mix the remaining 2 tablespoons preserves, 1/2 cup water, the Worcestershire sauce and sage in a large bowl; season with pepper. Pierce the pork all over with a fork; add to the bowl. Marinate 10 minutes.

Remove the pork chops from the marinade (reserve the marinade); arrange on a wire rack set on a baking sheet and season with salt and pepper. Broil until cooked through, 4 to 5 minutes.

Transfer the marinade to a saucepan and boil over medium-high heat until thickened, 3 minutes. Whisk in the butter. Drizzle over the pork; serve with the vegetables and apples.

Apple Crisp Bites

Prep Time: 25 min.

Cook Time: 15 min.

Total Time: 40 min

Yield: 24 servings

Submitted by Karie Bruder – Drummer Test Kitchen

Equipment:

Mini Muffin Tin

Oatmeal Cookie crust:

1 c. all-purpose flour
1 c. rolled oats
3/4 c. brown sugar
12 T. butter softened

Homemade Apple Filling Option:

2 T. butter
3-4 med. apples peeled, cored & diced into 1/4" cubes
1/3 c. brown sugar
3 T. water
1 tsp. cinnamon
1/8 tsp. nutmeg
1 T. + 1 tsp. cornstarch
2 T. water

Canned apple filling option:

1 can apple pie filling

Caramel topping optional

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease 24-cup mini-muffin tin.

In a medium size pan, melt butter, add apples, spices, brown sugar and 3 tablespoons water. Cook over medium-high heat, for 4-6 minutes or until apples very slightly softened.

In a small dish combine cornstarch and 2 tablespoons water. Add to pan while stirring and continue to cook until apples are tender, and filling is thickened, about 4-5 minutes. Cool.

Combine flour, oats and brown sugar in a large bowl. Cut the butter into the flour mixture with a pastry cutter until the mixture looks like coarse crumbs.

Place a heaping tablespoon of the crust mixture into a mini muffin cup. Press along the bottom and sides to make a "cup". There will be crust mixture left over.

Place about 1 tablespoon of apple filling in the crust. Sprinkle about 1 teaspoon of the remaining crust mixture on the filling.

Bake in the preheated oven until golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes. Cool in the pan for 10 minutes. Use a knife to loosen from pan and they should pop right out.

Drizzle with caramel topping if desired

Whole-Grain Caramel Apple Oven Pancake

Level: Easy

Total: 1 hr 5 min
Prep: 10 min
Cook: 55 min
Yield: 4 servings

3/4 c. whole milk
3 lg. eggs
3/4 c. whole-wheat pastry flour
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
Kosher salt
1/4 tsp. grated lemon zest
3 T. unsalted butter
3 med. sweet, crisp apples, such as Honeycrisp (about 1 lb.), peeled, cored, quartered & cut into 1/2" chunks
3 T. granulated sugar
Confectioners' sugar, for dusting, opt.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Blend the milk and eggs in a blender until thoroughly mixed. Add the flour, vanilla, cinnamon, 1/2 teaspoon salt and lemon zest and blend again until combined, scraping down the sides if necessary, about 15 seconds. Cover the blender jar and refrigerate while cooking the apples.

Melt the butter in a 10-inch nonstick oven-safe skillet over medium heat. Add the apples and sprinkle them with the granulated sugar. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook the apples, stirring occasionally, until golden brown and softened, 20 to 25 minutes. Arrange the apples evenly in the skillet. Remix the batter to reincorporate the ingredients, then pour it over the apples.

Bake the pancake until it is browned and set in the center and the sides have risen about 1-1/2 inches, 25 to 30 minutes. Serve directly from the skillet or use a large spatula to transfer the pancake to a plate. Dust with confectioners' sugar.

Quote of the Week:

"In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks."

~ John Muir