

# Doughnuts to delight holiday guests

Holiday hosts often know which foods to prepare for holiday dinners with their families. But what about breakfast? Hosts who want to treat their overnight guests to some decadent delights can try their hand at the following recipe for “Cider-Apple Doughnuts” courtesy of Linda Collister’s “Quick Breads” (Ryland, Peters & Small).

- Cider-Apple Doughnuts**  
*Makes 12*
- 2 medium-tart eating apples
  - 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
  - 3 1/3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
  - 1/4 teaspoon sea salt
  - 1 tablespoon baking powder
  - 1 cup sugar
  - 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, chilled and cut into cubes

- 1 cup smooth mashed potatoes (1 large cooked potato or 2 small), at room temperature
  - 2 extra-large eggs, beaten
  - 1/2 to 3/4 cup milk (not fat-free)
- To finish:**
- Salt flower or canola oil for deep-frying
  - 2 tablespoons sugar
  - 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Peel, core and chop the apples into small pieces, about the size of your little fingernail. Sprinkle with the cinnamon and toss until thoroughly mixed. Set aside until needed.
- Sift the flour, salt, baking powder, and sugar into a large bowl. Add the butter and rub it in with the tips of your fingers until the mixture looks like fine crumbs. Work in the mashed potatoes, then stir in the apple mixture with a round-bladed knife.

Add the eggs and enough milk to make a soft but not sticky scone-like dough.

Turn out the dough onto a lightly floured work surface and pat it out to about 3/4-inch thick. Cut into rounds with the doughnut cutter, or use the large pastry cutter and then stamp out the center rounds with the smaller cutter. Gather up the trimmings and pat them out to make more doughnuts.

Heat the oil in a deep-fat fryer or large deep saucepan to 350 F or until a cube of bread turns golden in 40 seconds. Fry the doughnuts in batches for 5 to 6 minutes, turning them frequently, until a good golden brown. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Toss in the sugar mixed with the cinnamon and let cool before eating. Best eaten the same day. These doughnuts are not suitable for freezing.

## Creative ways to reuse Christmas cards

Roughly 1.6 billion Christmas cards, including boxed cards, are purchased in a given year. That’s quite a lot of cards to address and mail, and many festive greetings for recipients to read and display.

With so much money and effort put into sharing Christmas greetings, some people may wonder how they can prolong

the merriment offered by these cards. Here are some creative ways to put Christmas cards to new use once this holiday season has come and gone.

- Make your own gift tags. Christmas card stock is the perfect medium to turn into gift tags for presents. Cut the cards into squares or rectangles or use a

stencil to create whatever shape you desire. Then use a hole punch to create a space for ribbon or another tie. Use the tag to dress up gifts with something more unique than self-stick tags.

- Get magnetized. All it takes is a scissor, some glue and sheets of magnet for a decorative and fun craft project.

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## Tips

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meal, hosts must also ready their homes so they can create a welcoming environment for their guests. Once you have chosen the menu, look for items that can be prepared in advance of the big day. Desserts can often be made several days in advance, as can

certain side dishes. Do as much prep work for the main course the night before the meal as possible.

- Double check your pantry. Even if you’re making a meal you have made a dozen times in the past, peruse your pantry to make sure you have every ingredient you’re going to need. If you’re used to making the meal for four people but will now be making the meal for 12 of them, make sure you have enough of each ingredient to make the meal in bulk. To make things easier, update your recipe to reflect the additional guests before going to the grocery store. Doing so guarantees you won’t run out of ingredients once you start preparing the meal.
- Ask guests to bring nonessential items. Guests will likely offer to bring something to the holiday dinner, and

there’s nothing wrong with accepting help. But don’t ask guests to bring items that are essential to the meal, as that can delay the meal if guests get stuck in traffic or show up late. Instead, ask guests to bring a bottle of wine, a small dessert or even some snacks guests can eat while waiting for the main course.

- Ask about food allergies. While hosts don’t need to cater to every food allergy under the sun, ask each guest if there is any particular food or ingredient they absolutely must avoid. If enough guests admit they must avoid a particular dish, you then know not to prepare it. In addition, have plenty of vegetables on hand for guests who are vegan or vegetarian.

Holiday hosting is fun, and first-time hosts can make it even more fun by employing a few veteran tricks of the trade.

## Catering

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at the ready in case the first one is booked solid.

**Packages**

Some caterers will only provide the food. Others are full-service providers and will bring much of what’s needed to entertain. This can include cutlery, plates, chafing dishes, napkins, linens, condiments, and more. Understand fully what each potential catering package includes. It may be worth spending a little more for a package that’s all-inclusive rather than saving money on a package that requires you to do a lot of work.

**Something special**

Holiday hosts can personalize catered affairs by including one signature dish or drink. If drinks don’t seem like a good fit, consider creating a dipping sauce, glaze or another homemade item. This puts a personal touch on the meal with minimal effort.

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# Simple ways to dress up your home for the holidays

The holiday season is rife with traditions that focus on fun and family. One such testament to the festive spirit of the holiday season is the many homes and businesses decorated with the lights and colors that have become synonymous with the season.

Decorating for the holiday season can be time-consuming. While decking the halls may not consume as much time as holiday shopping and wrapping presents, according to data from a 2013 American Time Use Survey, interior and exterior decorating for the holidays may consume anywhere from 2.5

to 3 hours per session.

Holiday decorating includes things as simple as setting up a menorah or as complex as stringing lights on the exterior of a home. Though elaborate displays can take hours to erect, time-crunched holiday celebrants can still create festive, welcoming displays.

- Hang holiday wreaths. Holiday enthusiasts without much time to decorate can invest in a couple of holiday wreaths, which can be dressed up as much or as little as celebrants prefer. If you do not have the time to string lights on the house, wrap

them around wreaths hung in windows or hang the wreaths on a home’s main entrance. Celebrants who want to go a less traditional route can hang wreaths made of holly, citrus fruits, ribbons, or any other greenery instead of the more customary evergreen wreaths.

- Decorate with ornaments. Ornaments are not exclusive to Christmas trees. Fill a vase or bowl with metallic ornaments and place it in a prominent location, such as a busy hallway or the foyer of your home. Hang ornaments on clear filament from the mantle or within the main window of the house, where they can reflect tree lights and add sparkle.
- Bring in more greenery. Drape evergreen boughs on staircase handrailings or on the mantle, or use greenery to frame doorways. The scent will be inviting and things instantly will look more festive.
- Use throws and decorative pillows. Change the look of a room with holiday-colored decor if you do not want to clutter the space with knickknacks. A red and green blanket draped over the sofa can give off a comforting holiday vibe.
- Focus on the front door and entryway. Celebrants who do not have the time to decorate their entire homes can create a warm, inviting space by decorating their front doors and entryways. Place greenery, bows, tinsel, lights, and winter-inspired accessories by the front door so friends and family visiting for the season catch the holiday spirit the moment they walk through the door.
- Place LED candles in windows. Rather than contending with twinkle lights and electric cords, homeowners can employ battery-operated faux candles to create a homey appeal in windows and hallways throughout their homes.

Simplify holiday decorating with some easy tips to make houses cozy and festive.

## How to manage holiday shopping trips with tots in tow

Holiday shopping has changed considerably since the dawn of the Information Age. Whereas holiday shopping once required shoppers to spend hours perusing stores at the local mall, nowadays many shoppers get the bulk of their shopping done online.

Shopping online may be convenient, but more traditional holiday shopping still affords shoppers the chance to find great deals, especially at the last minute. Parents may prefer to leave the kids at home when holiday shopping, but sometimes they don’t have a choice. Fortunately, there are ways to manage holiday shopping trips with kids in tow.

- Encourage kids to create shopping lists. Keeping kids engaged on holiday shopping trips can be difficult, especially when shopping at stores that tend to draw crowds and long lines. But parents can engage youngsters by encouraging them to create their own holiday shopping lists for family members and then helping them find those gifts at the mall or wherever they plan to do their holiday shopping. Let kids bring their lists along and check off gifts as they purchase them.
- Let kids do their own shopping. In addition to creating lists, let kids do their own shopping, including paying for gifts they purchase for loved ones. Kids might be more interested when holiday shopping if they’re allowed to peruse stores for potential gifts and then purchase gifts with their own money.
- Break up shopping excursions with a meal. Kids enjoy din-

ing out, even if their preferences lean more toward chicken fingers than steak au poivre. By breaking up shopping excursions with meals out on the town, parents can give kids something to look forward to at the onset of the shopping day. Such a break also gives everyone, moms and dads included, a chance to get off their feet and catch their breath. When the meal is over, promise kids a trip to get some ice cream or hot chocolate at the end of the day so they once again have something to look forward to.

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## Reindeer

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- Both male and female reindeer and caribou grow antlers. However, female reindeer antlers grow larger than those of female caribou.
- Reindeer calves are born at the end of April and caribou calves at the end of May.
- Both animals have hooves that can be used as snowshoes for walking on the snow and for digging.
- Only in North America are wild Rangifer referred to as caribou.
- Reindeer have been herded for years throughout Alaska and some parts of Canada for their meat. However, caribou are largely wild animals that roam freely. As a result, caribou are hunted in the wild.

Reindeer may get all the glory come the holiday season, but caribou are equally impressive animals. These large mammals provide food and other materials for survival to those who live in cold climates across the world.

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