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## A quick and delicious holiday dessert



Holiday hosts with a lot on their plates might not have the time to prepare homemade baked goods for their guests. Thankfully, the following recipe for "Chocolate-Strawberry Pie" from Addie Gundry's "No-Bake Desserts" (St. Martin's Press) can be prepared in just 15 minutes, all without turning on the oven.

The holiday season is synonymous with many things, including delicious foods. While Thanksgiving turkeys or Christmas geese will be found on many a table this holiday season, baked goods and desserts are what many people look forward to this time of year.

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### Chocolate-Strawberry Pie

*Yields 1 pie*

- 1 pt fresh strawberries, washed, trimmed and halved
- 1 store-bought (or homemade) chocolate cookie pie crust
- 2/3 C sugar
- 1/4 C cornstarch
- 2 TBS unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/4 tsp minced crystallized ginger
- 1/8 tsp ground nutmeg
- Pinch of kosher or sea salt
- 6 large egg yolks
- 2 1/2 C half-and-half
- 6 oz bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, chopped
- 1/2 TBS rum extract
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Additional strawberries for garnish (optional)

1. Place the strawberry halves in a single layer in the bottom of the pie crust.
2. In a medium saucepan, whisk together the sugar, cornstarch, cocoa powder, ginger, nutmeg, and salt over medium heat.
3. Whisk in the egg yolks to create a thick paste. Gradually whisk in the half-and-half until the mixture thickens, about 5 minutes. Bring to a boil and cook for 1

- minute. Remove from the heat.
4. Add the chocolate and whisk until combined. Add the rum and vanilla extracts. Cool the mixture for 4 minutes.
5. Pour the filling over the strawberries and up to the top of the crust. Chill the pie for 2 hours or until set.
6. Garnish with additional strawberries, if desired.

## 6 great gifts for home cooks

Many people enjoy preparing homecooked meals for their loved ones. Whether it's a large family gathering during the holiday season or a weeknight meal for their immediate families, men, women and even children who like to cook enjoy the satisfied looks on their loved ones' faces after sharing a delicious meal.

Come the holiday season, gift givers can put the same satisfied look on the faces of the home cooks in their lives by offering a variety of gifts that can make mealtime easier and/or more enjoyable.

1. Electric corkscrew: Nothing complements a good meal quite like an appropriately paired bottle of wine. Cooks who are too busy in the kitchen to utilize traditional corkscrews, which can be time-consuming and messy, might enjoy an electric corkscrew. Such corkscrews quickly remove corks from wine bottles, requiring little effort on the part of already busy cooks.

2. Cookbook: People who understand the joy of cooking often love to experiment in the kitchen. Cookbooks can be an ideal gift for such cooks. Choose a book that provides recipes from their favorite styles of cuisine, such as Italian or Indian food. Or find a book that offers an array of recipes that allows them to explore various types of cuisine.

3. Cookware: Even the best cookware can only take so much usage, and chances

are home cooks' pantries can afford an upgrade or two. Gift givers should keep in mind that many home cooks have strong preferences regarding their cookware, so it might be wise to give a gift card or ask a loved one which type of cookware he or she prefers. Of course, a covert inspection of a loved one's pantry might provide the insight gift givers need as well.

4. Rolling pin: For the person who loves to bake, a rolling pin might make a better gift than noncooks may appreciate. Rolling pins are necessary to prepare many baked goods, and a customizable rolling pin can flatten dough to the exact millimeter, helping bake-happy home cooks prepare the perfect plate of cookies.

5. Cooking class: Cooking classes can make the ideal gift for novice home cooks who are just beginning to

explore their love of cooking. But advanced classes can help more seasoned cooks perfect their craft as they learn to prepare more complex dishes.

6. Wine aerator: Much like electric corkscrews can make opening bottles of wine much easier, wine aerators can help aerate red wine more quickly than decanters, which can take up to two hours to fully aerate wine. Aerators oxidate red wine, softening its flavors and bringing out the aromas that can make a great bottle of wine that much more enjoyable.

Home cooks often enjoy preparing fresh meals for their loved ones. The holiday season presents a perfect opportunity to find gifts that make cooking that much more enjoyable for loved ones who can't wait to whip up the next homecooked meal for family and friends.

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## How to manage cooking for a crowd



Hosting family and friends for special occasions requires a lot of hosts, who must prepare their homes for guests or find establishments capable of catering to large parties. For hosts inviting people into their homes, the task of preparing homemade meals adds to their list of responsibilities.

Cooking for a crowd can be rewarding. Hosts can see the fruits of their labors on the faces of their satisfied guests, and few things make guests feel more welcome than a homecooked meal. Managing such a large undertaking can be difficult, but there are ways to simplify cooking for a crowd.

• Do the math beforehand. Hosts who are preparing a favorite recipe but on a much grander scale than they're accustomed to should take some time in advance of the big day to determine the equivalent amounts of each ingredient they will need. Write the recipe down and mark it as "serves 25" or however

many guests you're inviting, storing it away so you won't have to break out the calculator the next time you host. Once you have figured out the equivalent volumes, check the cupboard to ensure you have enough of each ingredient to prepare the meal.

• Serve something familiar. One of the joys of cooking is experimenting with new cuisine. However, when cooking for a crowd, hosts might want to stick to a dish they have prepared in the past. That familiarity can make cooks feel more comfortable and relaxed when the cooking commences. In addition, cooks may rest easier knowing they're about to serve a dish they have perfected as opposed to something they have never before tried.

• Start prep work early. Begin prep work as early as possible. Depending on the dish being prepared, it might be hard to get too much done more than a day in advance of the festivities. But even removing small tasks from the

docket can save cooks time come the big day. If possible, pour out ingredients in the adjusted increments in advance of the big day. Though it seems like a simple task, stopping to pour out each individual ingredient come the big day can take a substantial amount of time.

• Share the responsibilities. Hosts can make their tasks more manageable by sharing the responsibilities of hosting. For example, hosts who are handling the cooking should not also feel responsible to clean their homes. Enlist a spouse, child or even a loved one attending the festivities to handle the chores you don't have time for. By sharing the responsibilities, hosts will ensure no one person is overwhelmed and party prep will go that much faster.

Cooking for a crowd can be exhausting. But hosts can employ several strategies to simplify the process of preparing a large meal for many people.

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