



Kitchen Tips

Since being at home for almost two months, I seem to have been cooking more than ever. My freezer is full of casseroles, soups, and sauces. I’ve stocked up on kitchen and pantry essentials. Trying new recipes and preparing some of our old favorites has been a daily ritual.

This also means we seem to be eating more. Some of the restaurant commercials I see on television don’t seem to be helping much. Ice cream is our new best friend. I haven’t prepared a lot of sweets for fear that we would finish them off in record time.

Today I thought I would share some things that have been helpful to me in my kitchen. Maybe they can help you, too.

*When a casserole, soup or sauce that you have prepared comes out too soupy, place slices of bread on top to absorb excess moisture.

*When serving nuts or party mix, use wine glasses for containers. Some guests may not want to reach their fingers into a serving bowl. This way they can pour the goodies into their hands or plate.

*If you don’t have a chafing dish or a warming tray, use fondue pots or small slow cookers for serving warm dips at informal get-togethers.

*Gather all ingredients for a recipe before beginning. It is convenient to have everything in front of you and a good way to check to make sure you have everything you need.

*Consider using electrical appliances, such as a toaster oven, skillet, grill roaster or crockpot in addition to your oven. This is especially helpful if many of your meal or party dishes must be baked.

*To keep hot dishes warm on the serving table, fill a small cloth bag halfway with raw rice and microwave for 3 minutes. Nestle your dish into a warm “nest”.

*Use cooking spray on graters and processor blades when grating cheese. It is also handy to spray measuring cups and spoons before measuring sticky items.

*Snip the corner of a Ziploc bag for piping soft fillings and canapés. This also works well for sauces and decorating with frosting.

*Squirt lemon juice on fruits like apples and bananas to prevent them from

“browning”. You can also dip them in pineapple juice.

*Butter tends to burn more quickly than margarine. A little oil added to the butter tames the tendency to burn.

*Make appetizers small enough to be eaten in one bite, two bites at the most.

*Provide a container for used toothpicks when serving appetizers. You may want to use a pretzel stick for soft hors d’oeuvres. Your guests can enjoy eating the pretzel stick as well as the appetizer.

*Baking meatballs in the oven, rather than frying them is much easier and less messy.

*Cheese can burn easily. Melt on low heat and stir often. It helps to cut the cheese in small pieces.

*Always use gloves when handling jalapenos!! I learned this one the hard way.

*When shopping for a party, don’t forget garnishes for food and drinks.

*When chips and crackers become a little stale after being opened, pop them in the microwave for about 30 seconds to revive them.

*Add a little water to the skillet when browning ground beef. More of the grease can be poured out when draining.

*Use a potato masher instead of a fork to imprint the top of cookies. Dip masher in water and don’t mash too hard.

*Use parchment paper on cookie sheets when baking cookies. Slide baked cookie paper onto baking rack to cool, and slice raw cookie paper onto the same cookie sheet to bake. Parchment paper cuts down on sticking and clean up, too.

*Rather than using a chopper or food processor to chop pecans, place them in a Ziploc bag and crush with a rolling pin. Good idea for crushing cookies or crackers. Easy clean up.

“Desserts” spelled backwards is “stressed”. Nothing helps to ease stress better than something sweet. With this thought in mind, I decided that one little cheesecake wouldn’t hurt anyone. I have never met a cheesecake I didn’t like. If you don’t have a springform pan, you need to invest in one. They make beautiful cheesecakes and can be used for appetizers and lots of other dishes.

Hope you enjoy this week’s cheesecake recipes. Thanks for reading.

PRALINE CHEESECAKE
Crust:
1 cup graham cracker crumbs
¼ cup chopped pecans
¼ cup butter, melted
Filling:
3 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened
1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
3 large eggs
1 cup heavy whipping cream
2 tsp. vanilla extract
Topping:
½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
¼ cup butter
Preheat oven to 450 degrees. In a small bowl, combine crumbs, pecans and butter and firmly press into the bottom of an ungreased 9-inch springform pan. Set aside.

In a large bowl, beat cream cheese with mixer until smooth and creamy. Gradually add brown sugar and eggs, one at a time, until blended. Add cream and vanilla, beating until smooth. Pour into prepared pan. Bake for 10 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 250 degrees and bake for 60 – 70 minutes or until center is set.

Let cool for 10 minutes. Carefully remove sides of pan; let cool completely.

In a small saucepan, combine brown sugar and butter for topping. Cook over medium heat until thick and well blended, stirring constantly. Spread evenly over cooled cheesecake. Garnish with pecans if desired.

Refrigerate at least 2 hours before serving. Store in refrigerator.

BLUEBERRY CHEESECAKE
Crust:
1 ¾ cups vanilla-wafer cookie crumbs
1/3 cup sugar
5 Tbsp. butter, melted
Filling:
3 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened
1 cup sugar
4 large eggs
1 (16 oz.) sour cream
3 tsp. vanilla extract
1 cup fresh blueberries
Topping:
½ cup peach preserves
3 cups fresh blueberries
2 cups sliced fresh peaches

Combine crust ingredients and press in the bottom and 1 inch up in a 10 inch springform pan. Refrigerate while preparing filling. Preheat oven to 300 degrees. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese with a mixer until creamy. Gradually add sugar and eggs, one at a time, until well blended. Add sour cream and vanilla, beating at a low speed until smooth. Pour 1 cup blueberries over prepared crust. Pour cheesecake batter over blueberries. Bake for 1 ½ hours; turn oven off. Leave in oven with door closed for 4 hours. Remove cheesecake from oven and let cool completely.

Cover and refrigerate for at least 8 hours.

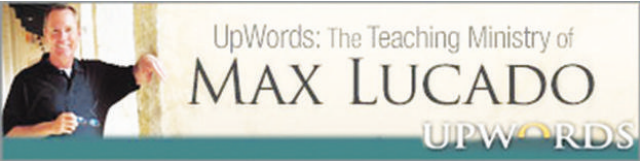
In a small saucepan, combine peach preserves and blueberries for topping over medium-high heat. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring often. Remove sides of pan before serving. Top with blueberry topping and sliced peaches.

MINIATURE CHEESECAKES
(These are quick, easy and delicious!!)
3 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened
5 eggs
1 cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla

Line muffin tins with paper liners. Mix the above ingredients with a mixer until smooth. Fill lined muffin tins 2/3 full. Bake at 300 degrees for 20 minutes.

Mix:
2 cups sour cream
½ cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla

Mix ingredients together until smooth. Pour a spoonful onto each cheesecake and bake for an additional 5 min-



Look at What You Have

Linger too long in the stench of your hurt, and you’ll smell like the toxin you despise. I spent too much of a summer sludging through sludge. Oil field work is dirty at best. But the dirtiest job of all? Shoveling silt out of empty oil tanks. The foreman saved such jobs for the summer help. Thanks boss!

My mom burned my work clothes. The stink stuck!

utes. Cool on wire rack and refrigerate. *Great topped with canned blueberry or cherry pie filling.

Lee Ann Fleming is a Holmes County native, food columnist and has garnered fame for her recipes featured in the film, **The Help. Fleming can be reached at lafkitchen@hughes.net.*

Your hurts can do the same. The better option? Look at what you have. Your hurts and pain took much, but Christ gave you more! Catalog His kindnesses. Everything from sunsets to salvation—look at what you have.

Let Jesus be the friend you need. Talk to Him. Spare no detail. Disclose your fear and describe your dread.

Will your hurt disappear? Who knows? And in a sense, does it matter?

You have a friend for life. What could be better than that?

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Patriotic gesture keeps morale high at Hammett Gravel

**By Kevin Yanik
Pit and Quarry**

Turn the news on these days, and the media coverage is bound to get you down.

Tripp Hammett figured that much out early into the coronavirus pandemic, so he turned off a number of push notifications providing negative coronavirus updates through his smartphone.

With the potential for fear and uncertainty to consume his employees at Hammett Gravel Co., Hammett sought an outlet to lift their spirits. That’s when he made a beeline for the local Walmart, purchasing a collection of American flags to fasten to his mobile equipment fleet.

The patriotic sight is

one to behold, Hammett says, boosting morale during one of the more challenging times in recent history.

“It looks really neat within the operations with American flags flying all over the equipment,” says Hammett, whose family-owned business is based in Lexington, Mississippi. “That was just a small, inspirational-type of idea.”

With the coronavirus impacting so many American businesses, Hammett feels fortunate his customers remain active to provide his company opportunities to sell construction materials. Many of his employees are thankful to have jobs, as well, considering people everywhere are struggling.

“My employees are thankful to have a job,” Hammett says. “One of the benefits of all this is people are coming to work. It is such surreal times. I know that’s a word that’s going around, but when all of this is over, there is going to be so much money pumped into the economy. It will be interesting to see how it expands.”

Through all of this, Hammett keeps returning to the concept of gratitude.

“Every producer should be grateful they can function and keep their people going,” he says. “So many people don’t have a job, and so many may not recover frankly.”



Mississippi-based Hammett Gravel Co. fastened American flags to its fleet of mobile equipment, including this Cat 966M wheel loader. Photo: Hammett Gravel