

# Homemade food gifts are a heartfelt way of treating those on your Christmas gift list

Gifts from the heart are among the most coveted and appreciated come the holiday season. Hobbyists from all walks of life can turn their passions into handmade gifts, but few gifts may be as welcomed as those that can be eaten.

Cooking and baking ramps up during the holiday season. People can turn extra time in the kitchen into opportunities to create festive treats that are ideal for gifting. But which items are the best of the best? Even though tastes are singular, these items will appeal to most foodies and others on your gift list.

★ Jams and preserves: Fruit jams and preserves are versatile foods. They are as at home on toast and biscuits as they are as fillings in cookies and tarts. Jams and preserves can be made with relatively few ingredients and work well with seasonal fruits.

★ Cinnamon rolls: Warm, sticky and full of aromatic spice, cinnamon rolls are the perfect comfort foods. These rolls do not typically have a long shelf life, so be sure to present them promptly before they get stale.

★ Pancakes (or cookies) in a jar: If you have a fantastic recipe that you can't resist sharing, try turning it into a gift. Measure and package the ingredients into mason jars, tie with ribbons and include directions for preparation and cooking.

★ Mini bundt cakes: Fruit cakes may be a holiday standard, but bundt cakes make for great and traditional offerings as well. Miniature bundts filled with chocolate chips, dried fruits or even those soaked in a favorite boozy-butter glaze can be moist and delicious.

★ Chocolate barks or fudges: Seasonal flavors can come to life in chocolate treats. White chocolate filled with peppermint pieces or dark chocolate and cherry chunks are tasty pairings. Break apart portions of the bark or cut the fudge with cookie cutters and gift inside cello bags tied with ribbons or in cardboard candy boxes.


★ Cocktail syrups: Create spicy or sweet syrups that are tailor-made for enhancing cocktails. Anyone on your gift list can then become a master mixologist.

★ Shortbread cookie ornaments: Circular shortbread cookies can be decorated

Merry Christmas

When life slows down, the beauty of what matters most comes into focus.

With heartfelt gratitude for the support this community has shown us this year, we wish everyone a blessed and healthy holiday filled with love and friendship.



**OLD SOUTH MONUMENTS**

~ Andy Pulliam ~

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Main Street - Leakesville  
2509 Highway 15 North - Beaumont

## TOFFEE CHEESECAKE BARS

Makes 2 1/2 dozen

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1/3 cup baking cocoa
- 1/2 cup cold butter
- 1 8-ounce package reduced-fat cream cheese
- 1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 1/4 cups milk chocolate English toffee bits, divided

**DIRECTIONS:**

In a small bowl, combine the flour, confectioners' sugar, cocoa and baking soda. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Press in the bottom of an ungreased 13-inch x 9-inch baking dish. Bake at 350 F for 12 to 15 minutes or until set.

In a large bowl, beat cream cheese until fluffy. Add the milk, eggs and vanilla; beat until smooth. Stir in 3/4 cup toffee bits. Pour over crust. Bake 18 to 22 minutes longer

or until center is almost set. Cool for 15 minutes on a wire rack. Sprinkle with remaining toffee bits; cool completely. Cover and refrigerate for 8 hours overnight.



## REINDEER PECAN BROWNIES

Makes 20 brownies

**INGREDIENTS:**

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 stick (1/2 cup) unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tablespoon pecan or canola oil
- 1 cup, plus 2 tablespoons, granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon espresso powder (optional)
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 20 raw pecan halves, cut in half
- 40 candy eyeballs
- 20 red chocolate candies
- 1/4 cup chocolate chips

**DIRECTIONS:**

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray mini muffin tin with nonstick cooking spray. In large bowl, whisk melted butter, oil and sugar until well combined. Add eggs and vanilla extract; beat until mixture is thick and pale in color, about 1 minute. Sift in flour and cocoa powder. Add espresso powder, if desired, and salt. Using rubber spatula, fold dry ingredients into butter mixture until just combined. Batter should be thick. Using 1-tablespoon cookie scoop, transfer batter to prepared mini muffin tin.

Bake 13-15 minutes until toothpick inserted in center comes out mostly clean, with some lingering crumbs. Add chocolate chips to heat-proof bowl; microwave until smooth and melted. Pour melted chocolate into sandwich bag and cut off small portion of one corner to use as tip. Use melted chocolate to "glue" on pecan antlers, candy eyeballs and red candy noses to brownies. Allow chocolate to set before transferring brownies to airtight container. Note: Brownies will stay fresh for up to three days.

## GINGERBREAD PECANS

Yields 2 Cups / 6 Servings

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 large egg white, beaten
- 2 cups raw pecan halves
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons light brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons gingerbread spice blend
- 1 pinch salt

**DIRECTIONS:**

Preheat oven to 300 F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper; set aside. In large bowl, use fork to whisk beaten egg until frothy. Add pecans and stir until coated. Sprinkle pecans with granulated sugar, brown sugar, gingerbread spice and salt. Stir to coat evenly. Spread pecans in even layer on prepared baking sheet. Bake pecans 40 minutes, stirring halfway through. Allow pecans to cool completely. Note: Pecans can be stored in airtight container for up to four days.



Wishing You a Season of

# Wander


May every moment of your holiday be magical and bright. We hope the season finds you surrounded by loved ones, laughter and all the makings of new memories you will cherish for a lifetime.

We are grateful to share another year with all of you. Thank you, neighbors.

## Merry Christmas!

# TOWN OF MCLAIN

Steve McCluskey - Mayor  
ALDERMEN  
Frances Byrd, Ken Cumbie, Jan Guest, David Hartfield and Len Moody



A **CHRISTMAS GIFT** Idea that will fit in everyone's stocking

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