

NEUHSA HERBAL TEA RECIPES—December 6, 2011

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SAVORIES

Spinach Cakes

These can be made by the millions and frozen for later use. Just bake as many as you need at a time and enjoy. You can also double or triple this recipe.

2 packages frozen chopped spinach	1 chopped onion
4 eggs, slightly beaten	2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme
3 cups herbed stuffing or bread crumbs	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup melted butter
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup parmesan cheese	Salt and pepper to taste
2-3 cloves garlic, finely minced	

Cook spinach as directed; drain & squeeze dry. Mix all ingredients together until well blended. If mixture is too wet, add more bread crumbs/stuffing until mixture holds together when pressed into meatball form. Chill mixture for 2 hours until it is cool. Roll mixture into 1" balls. Freeze on a cookie sheet. When frozen, pack into freezer bags and store until needed. Thaw before baking. Bake at 400° for 20 to 30 minutes.

Cucumber Sandwiches

No tea party is complete without cucumber sandwiches!

8 ounces softened cream cheese	Dense white sandwich bread
2 Tablespoons chopped fresh herbs	Thinly sliced English cucumber, unpeeled
1 red pepper, seeded & julienned	Several sprigs of whole herbs or watercress

Beat cream cheese until soft and spreadable, then stir in the chopped herbs. Cut the crusts off of the bread slices and spread the cream cheese blend evenly over the bread slices. Place a cucumber slice in the north and south corners. Put a few slices of red pepper over each cucumber slice and top with a sprig of whole herbs. Roll the bread, east corner to west corner and seal with the cream cheese. Cover the sandwich rolls with a damp cloth. To serve, cut sandwiches in half and stand them upright.

Turkey Walnut Finger Sandwiches on Walnut Wheat

1 loaf whole wheat walnut bread, unsliced	$\frac{1}{2}$ pound prepared turkey breast, thinly sliced
8 ounces cream cheese at room temperature	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped fresh chives

Mix the cream cheese and chives together and set aside. Cut the bread, lengthwise, into six thick slices. Spread the cheese mixture on one side of two pieces of bread. Cover one slice with the turkey, then place the remaining bread slice, cheese side down, over the turkey. Slice the sandwiches into "fingers", about 1' wide. Repeat with remaining ingredients.

Herbed Antipasto Skewers

Feel free to substitute ingredients that you place on the skewer with the tortellini. In season, we often add basil leaves, and sometimes a piece of salami or cheddar. Here's the recipe for what we served at the tea.

2 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice	6" wooden skewers
3 Tablespoons olive oil	1 package cherry tomatoes, washed
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard	1 8 ounce package tortellini, cooked al dente
1 Tablespoon chopped fresh marjoram	Salt & Pepper to taste
8 ounces mozzarella cheese, cubed	

Mix the lemon juice, mustard and salt and pepper together. Slowly add the olive oil and whisk until well incorporated. Add the marjoram. Pour this marinade over the cooked tortellini and mix well. Let it sit for at least an hour to let flavors blend. To prepare for serving, alternate tortellini, cubed cheese and cherry tomatoes onto each skewer. These may be made several hours ahead and held in the refrigerator. Remove about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour before serving.

Cheddar-Dill Scones

4 cups, plus 1 Tablespoon all-purpose flour	1 cup heavy cream
2 Tablespoons baking powder	$\frac{1}{2}$ pound extra-sharp cheddar cheese, diced
2 teaspoons salt	1 cup minced fresh dill
$\frac{3}{4}$ pound cold, unsalted butter	1 egg, beaten with 1 Tablespoon of milk
4 large eggs, lightly beaten	

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Combine 4 cups of flour, baking powder and salt in the bowl of a mixer. Add butter and mix on low speed until butter in pea-sized pieces. Mix eggs and cream and add to the flour. Combine ingredients until just blended. Toss the cheese, dill and remaining 1 Tablespoon of flour together. Add to the dough and mix to incorporate.

Empty the bowl onto a well-floured surface and knead for a minute until cheese and dill are well incorporated. Roll dough $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick. Cut into 4 inch squares and then in half diagonally to make triangles. Brush tops with egg wash. Bake at 400 degrees for 20-25 minutes.

Ham & Apple Tartines

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound rosemary ham, thinly sliced	1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary
$\frac{1}{2}$ pound smoked gouda cheese, thinly sliced	3 Tablespoons unsalted butter
1 large tart apple, thinly sliced	3 Tablespoons maple syrup
1 baguette, sliced into $\frac{1}{2}$ inch slices	zest of one orange
1 Tablespoon coarse sea salt	

Preheat the oven to 375°. Melt the butter and add the maple syrup. Brush one side of piece of bread with the maple-butter mixture and place slices on a baking sheet. Put the pan in the oven and let slices toast for about five minutes; remove pan from oven. Put a small piece of ham and some cheese on each piece of toast and top with an apple. Dab a bit more of the maple butter mixture on top and return pan to the oven for 3-4 minutes, or until cheese melts. Top with freshly grated orange zest and a sprinkle of sea salt. Serve while warm.

SWEETS

Rose Geranium Petits Fours

3 cups all-purpose flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ cups unsalted butter, salted
1 Tablespoon baking powder	6 egg whites
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon rosewater
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar	1 cup milk

8 large fresh rose geranium leaves

Heat oven to 350°. Butter and flour a 13x9 inch baking pan. Line the bottom of the baking pan with the rose geranium leaves.

Combine the flour, baking powder and salt in a bowl and set aside. Beat the sugar and butter in a large bowl at medium speed, scraping bowl occasionally, until creamy. Add 1 egg white at a time, beating well after each addition. Add rosewater, reduce speed to low and mix well. Add the flour mixture alternately with the milk, beating well after each addition.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Bake for 30-35 minutes or until toothpick inserted comes out clean. Cook on a wire rack for about 10 minutes. Remove the cake from the pan and place it upside down on a cooling rack. Carefully remove the geranium leaves. Return the cake to right side up and allow to cool completely. Trim the edges from the cake and cut it into 48 one and one-half inch square pieces.

Icing Ingredients

3 cups sugar	1 cup powdered sugar, sifted
$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cream of tartar	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon rosewater
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups water	3 drops food coloring, if desired

Combine sugar, cream of tartar and water in a 3 quart saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally until mixture come to a full boil (about 12 minutes). Cover the pan and boil for 3 minutes. Uncover and continue cooking until candy thermometer reaches (228°F to 234°F) or when a small amount of icing mixture dropped into ice water forms a 2-inch soft thread. Remove the pan from the heat cool to 110°F, or until the bottom of the pan is slightly warm to the touch. Do not stir. Add the powdered sugar, the rosewater and food coloring if desired. Place a wire cooking rack over waxed paper. Put 1 piece of cake on a fork and drizzle icing over the top and sides of the cake, making sure each side is covered. Place onto a wire rack and let stand until icing is set. If icing becomes too thick, reheat it over low heat until it has thinned and is easy to drizzle. Garnish each petit four with candy flours, or a drizzle of a contrasting color icing.

Chocolate-Mint Pots de Creme

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 2 Tablespoons sugar	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla extract
3 Tablespoons cornstarch	6 ounces (1 cup) chopped semisweet chocolate
4 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons unsweetened cocoa powder	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pure mint extract
Salt as needed	4 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons unsalted butter, cubed
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups heavy cream	10 chocolate wafer cookies, crushed
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups whole milk	8 Mint sprigs

Combine the sugar, cornstarch, cocoa and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt in a medium saucepan. Combine the milk, cream, and vanilla in a separate bowl. Pour 1 cup of the liquid mixture into the sugar and whisk

until the cornstarch has dissolved. Add the remaining cream mixture and whisk until smooth. Bring to a boil, whisking constantly, and cook until thick, about 5 minutes. Reduce heat to low and add chocolate. Whisk until chocolate has melted, then remove from heat. Add the mint extract and butter and stir until the butter melts. Quickly divide the pudding into 8 four ounce cups, leaving about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of space in each cup. Refrigerate until set. Just prior to serving, top each pudding with about 1 Tablespoon of crushed chocolate cookies and garnish with a mint sprig.

Dates with Sweet Cheese

4 ounces cream cheese, softened	1 teaspoon finely chopped pistachios
4 ounces mascarpone cheese, softened	1 Tablespoon finely chopped fresh mint
1 Tablespoon honey	18 Medjool dates, pits removed

Mix the cream cheese, mascarpone and honey until all are well combined. Add the mint and stir until it is evenly distributed. Slice each date on one side and remove the pit. Carefully place about 1 teaspoon of cheese mixture into each date. (If you have a pastry bag, you can pipe the filling in very easily). Dip the top of each filled date into the pistachios. Refrigerate until filling firms up.

Lemon Tarts with Lemon Thyme

2 packages of prepared filo tart shells	zest of one lemon
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar	4 whole eggs
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter	4 egg yolks
1 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice	2 springs lemon thyme

To make the lemon curd filling, place a heavy bottomed saucepan over low heat. Add the sugar, butter, zest, lemon thyme and lemon juice to the pan and cook slowly until sugar has melted. Beat the eggs and the additional yolks together. Temper the eggs by adding the hot mixture to the eggs, one tablespoon at a time, constantly stirring to prevent the eggs from cooking. Once the bowl holding the eggs is warm to the touch, add the egg mixture to the saucepan, stir well and simmer until lemon curd has thickened. Remove the pan from the heat and strain the lemon curd through a sieve. Place the sauce in the refrigerator until it has cooled. Fill each tart shell with a teaspoon of lemon curd and garnish with lemon thyme.

Lavender Shortbread

2 sticks unsalted butter	2 cups flour
4 teaspoons dried lavender buds	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar

Remove butter from the refrigerator and let it sit at room temperature for 10-20 minutes. Grind the lavender with the sugar in a blender or food processor. Put the butter and sugar in the bowl of an electric mixture and beat on medium speed until the mixture is smooth. Add the flour and mix on low speed until it comes together. Put the dough on a lightly floured surface. Roll out until it is about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick. Cut the dough into squares, or use a cookie cutter for different shapes. Transfer the cookies to a baking pan lined with parchment paper. Refrigerate the cookies for about 30 minutes before baking. Preheat the oven to 300°. Bake cookies until they are lightly colored, but not brown (about 25 minutes). Cool cookies on the pan.

Our final "sweet" offering at the tea was peppermint roses which came from our favorite candy store: Richardson's Candy Kitchen, in Deerfield, MA. Visit them at www.richardsonscandy.com.