**Caramel Apples Cheesecake Bars**

Yield: 24 bars

**Ingredients**

**Crust:**

2 cups all-purpose flour

½ cup packed light brown sugar

¼ tsp salt

2 sticks unsalted butter

**Cheesecake:**

2 packages cream cheese, room temperature

½ cup granulated sugar

2 large eggs

2 tsp vanilla

**Apples:**

4 large Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, and diced

2 Tbsp granulated sugar

½ tsp cinnamon

¼ tsp nutmeg

**Streusel:**

1 cup packed light brown sugar

1 cup all-purpose flour

½ cup quick oats

½ tsp cinnamon

1 stick unsalted butter, cut into small chunks

**Caramel:**

4 tablespoons butter

1 cup packed light brown sugar

½ cups half-and-half or cream

1 tablespoon vanilla

Pinch of sea salt

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Lightly spray a 9x13 baking dish with cooking spray.

2. Make the crust: In a medium bowl, combine flour, brown sugar, and salt. Cut butter into small chunks. Using a pastry blender or two butter knives, cut in the butter until crumbly. Press firmly and evenly into the baking dish. Bake 15 minutes, until lightly browned.

3. Combine apples, 2 tablespoons sugar, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a bowl and toss to evenly coat the apples. Set aside.

4. Combine streusel topping ingredients (brown sugar, flour, oats, cinnamon, and butter) and stir until crumbly.

5. Beat cream cheese and ½ cup sugar on medium speed until combined and smooth. Add eggs one at a time and beat to incorporate. Beat in vanilla.

6. Pour cream cheese mixture over the crust. Spread apples on top of the cream cheese. Sprinkle streusel evenly on top of the apples.

7. Bake for 30-35 minutes, until cheesecake is set. Cool completely and then refrigerate until ready to serve. Best served chilled.

8. For the caramel, combine ingredients in a small saucepan and bring to a simmer. Simmer for ten minutes, whisking frequently, until thickened. Keep refrigerated, but warm slightly before drizzling onto the bars. You can, of course, also use your favorite store-bought caramel.

**Fudgy Cola Cake**

2 cups flour

1 ½ cups sugar

¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder

1 t. baking soda

1 cup butter

1 cup cola-flavored carbonated beverage

½ cup buttermilk

2 large eggs, beaten

1 t. vanilla

Fudgy Cola Icing (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350. Spray a 13x9 inch baking sheet with nonstick baking spray with flour.
2. In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, cocoa and baking soda; set aside.
3. In a large saucepan, melt butter over low heat. Remove from heat, and whisk in cola, buttermilk, and eggs. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until mixture comes to a boil. Pour over flour mixture; stir well. Stir in vanilla.
4. Pour batter into prepared baking pan. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Pour Fudgy Cola Icing over warm cake.

**Fudgy Cola Icing**  
Makes about 2 cups

1/2 cup butter, melted  
3 T. cola-flavored carbonated beverage  
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
1 (16-ounce) box confectioners’ sugar

In a large bowl, combine melted butter, cola and cocoa powder. Gradually beat in confectioners’ sugar with a mixer until smooth.

**Mama’s Pound Cake**

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

1/2 teaspoon fine salt

5 eggs

3 cups plus more for pan all purpose flour

3 cups sugar

1/2 cup vegetable shortening

1/2 lb (2 sticks) plus more for pan butter

1 cup milk

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 350 °F.

With a mixer, cream butter and shortening together. To the bowl, add sugar a little at a time. Then, add eggs, 1 at a time, beating after each addition. In another bowl, stir dry ingredients together then add to mixer alternately with milk, starting with the flour and ending with the flour. Mix in vanilla. Pour into a greased and floured tube pan and bake for 1 to 1 1/2 hours, until a toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean.

**Pecan Chicken Salad with Grapes**

1 cup mayonnaise

1⁄2 cup [sour cream](https://www.geniuskitchen.com/about/sour-cream-147)

3 cups chopped cooked chicken

1 cup [seedless grapes](https://www.geniuskitchen.com/about/grape-244), halved

3⁄4cup toasted chopped [pecans](https://www.geniuskitchen.com/about/pecan-276)

salt and pepper

1 cup mayonnaise

In a medium bowl, combine mayonnaise and sour cream. Stir in chicken, grapes and pecans. Add salt and pepper to taste.

**Grape Salad**

½ cup sugar

8 oz cream cheese, room temperature

8 oz sour cream

4 lb red and green seedless grapes, halved

8 oz sharp cheddar cheese, grated

2 cups chopped pecans

¼ cup brown sugar

In a large mixing bowl, cream together sugar, cream cheese and sour cream. Mixture will still have some small lumps. Stir in grapes and cheddar cheese. Refrigerate overnight. Just before serving add pecans and brown sugar.

**Pumpkin Gooey Butter Cakes**

**Cake:**

1 (18 1/4-ounce) package yellow cake mix (Note: I added 3 oz cake mix from another box as current mix was 15 1/4-ounce)

1 egg

8 tablespoons butter, melted

**Filling:**

1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened

1 (15-ounce) can pumpkin

3 eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla

8 tablespoons butter, melted

1 (16-ounce) box powdered sugar (Note: I used ½ cup less)

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Combine the cake mix, egg, and butter and mix well with an electric mixer. Pat the mixture into the bottom of a lightly greased 13 by 9-inch baking pan.

To make the filling: In a large bowl, beat the cream cheese and pumpkin until smooth. Add the eggs, vanilla, and butter, and beat together. Next, add the powdered sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and mix well. Spread pumpkin mixture over cake batter and bake for 40 to 50 minutes. Make sure not to overbake as the center should be a little gooey.

Serve with fresh whipped cream.

Variations: For a Pineapple Gooey Cake: Instead of the pumpkin, add a drained 20-ounce can of crushed pineapple to the cream cheese filling. Proceed as directed above. For a Banana Gooey Cake: Prepare cream cheese filling as directed, beating in 2 ripe bananas instead of the pumpkin. Proceed as directed above. For a Peanut Butter Gooey Cake: Use a chocolate cake mix. Add 1 cup creamy peanut butter to the cream cheese filling instead of the pumpkin. Proceed as directed above.

**Chicken Alfredo Pasta Bake**

1 (16-ounce) box Rigatoni pasta

2 cups small broccoli florets

2 (10-ounce) containers refrigerated Alfredo sauce

1 (15-ounce) container ricotta cheese

1 (8-ounce) container sour cream

1 cup heavy whipping cream

2 large eggs

3 cups shredded rotisserie chicken

½ cup chopped red bell pepper

1 ½ cups shredded mozzarella cheese

1. Preheat oven to 350. Spray a 3-quart baking dish with cooking spray.
2. Cook pasta according to package directions, adding broccoli during last 2 minutes of cooking. Drain well.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together Alfredo sauce, ricotta, sour cream, heavy cream, and eggs until smooth; stir in chicken, bell pepper, and pasta mixture until well combined. Pour into prepared pan, and sprinkle with mozzarella.
4. Bake until golden brown and bubbly, about 45 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

**Chicken Brunswick Stew**

1 tablespoon liquid smoke

1/2 cup Paula Deen BBQ Sauce

1 cup ketchup

1 (16 oz) can creamed corn

1 (28 oz) can sweetened with 1/3 cup sugar crushed tomatoes

1 (2 1/2 lb) fryer chicken

1 chopped onion

1 tablespoon vinegar

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

celery salt

In a large pot, place the chicken and enough water to cover chicken and bring to a boil. Cook chicken until meat falls off the bone, approximately 45 minutes. Drain the stock and reserve 2 cups of stock. Remove the skin and bones and chop meat.

In a separate pot, mix the chicken and remaining ingredients. Simmer slowly for 30 minutes, stirring often to prevent sticking. Add a little bit of the stock if the stew becomes too thick. Serve stew over steamed rice.

**Easy Shrimp Bisque**

½ lb cooked shrimp, peeled and chopped

1 can (10 ¾ ounces) condensed cream of celery soup

2 cups half-and-half

½ cup whole milk

2 T. dry sherry

2 t. tomato paste

1 t. paprika

Salt and pepper

2 T. chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

In a blender (in batches if necessary), puree all ingredients except for salt and pepper and parsley. Pour into a medium saucepan and warm gently over medium-low heat, stirring often, until the bisque is heated through. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve garnished with the parsley.

**Creole Red Beans and Rice**

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 (14-ounce) package smoked sausage, cut into ¼-inch-thick slices

1 onion, chopped

1 green bell pepper, chopped

2 tablespoons minced garlic

1 (16-ounce) can red beans, rinsed and drained

1 (15-ounce) can tomato sauce

1 cup chicken broth

⅓ cup chopped green onion

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

1 teaspoon Creole seasoning

1 teaspoon chili powder

Hot sauce

Hot cooked rice

In a 12-inch skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add sausage, onion, bell pepper, and garlic; cook, stirring frequently, until sausage is browned, about 8 minutes; drain.

Stir in beans, tomato sauce, broth, green onion, parsley, Creole seasoning, and chili powder, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 20 minutes. Stir in hot sauce to taste. Serve with rice. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

**Old-Fashioned Meat Loaf – AKA ‘Basic’ Meat Loaf**

1 pound ground beef

1 1/4 teaspoons salt

1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

1/2 cup chopped onion

1/2 cup chopped bell pepper

1 egg, lightly beaten

8 ounces canned diced tomatoes with juice

1/2 cup quick-cooking oats

Topping:

1/3 cup ketchup

2 tablespoons brown sugar

1 tablespoon prepared mustard

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Mix all meatloaf ingredients well and place in a baking dish. Shape into a loaf. Topping: Mix ingredients for topping and spread on loaf. Bake for 1 hour.

**Crispy Red-Pepper-Jelly Wings**

2 T olive oil

2 T honey

1/8 tsp Cayenne pepper

1 T baking powder

1 T Salt

1 lb Chicken wings

oil, for spraying

2 T butter, melted

1/4 cup Paula Deen red pepper jelly

1. In a large bowl, combine olive oil, honey, and cayenne pepper and set aside. In another large bowl, combine baking powder and salt. Add chicken wings and toss until well coated.
2. Place chicken wings in air fryer basket, spray with oil, set temperature to 200 degrees, and air fry for 15 minutes. After five minutes, turn wings, spray with oil, and continue cooking, shaking basket occasionally. Remove wings to reserved honey mixture and toss well to coat. Return wings to air fryer basket, set temperature to 400 degrees, and air fry for 10 minutes, shaking basket occasionally.
3. In a large bowl, combine melted butter and red pepper jelly. Toss wings in jelly mixture and serve warm.

**Chicken Divan**

2 (10-ounce) packages frozen broccoli, chopped

6 cups shredded chicken, cooked

2 (10 3/4-ounce) cans condensed cream of mushroom soup

1 cup mayonnaise

1 cup sour cream

1 cup grated sharp Cheddar

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

1 teaspoon curry powder

Salt and pepper

1/2 cup dry white wine

1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan

1/2 cup soft bread crumbs

2 tablespoons butter, melted

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Remove the outer wrappers from the boxes of broccoli. Open 1 end of each box. Microwave on full power for 2 minutes, until thawed. Drain the broccoli and put into a casserole dish. Add the shredded chicken.
3. In a medium bowl, combine the soup, mayonnaise, sour cream, Cheddar, lemon juice, curry powder, salt and pepper, to taste, and wine. Whisk together to make a sauce. Pour the sauce over the broccoli and chicken. Mix well with a spatula.
4. Place the mixture into an 11 by 7-inch casserole dish or 2 (9-inch) square disposable aluminum foil pans that have been sprayed with vegetable oil cooking spray. Pat down evenly and smooth with a spatula. Combine the Parmesan, bread crumbs and butter and sprinkle over the top.
5. Bake for about 30 to 45 minutes.
6. Cook's Note: Try topping with Cheddar or Gruyere cheese.

**Chocolate Bread Pudding**

1-pound loaf French bread, cut into cubes (about 15 cups) and left out to dry overnight

1 ½ cups semisweet chocolate chip, divided

1 cup sugar

1 cup packed light brown sugar

1/4 cup cocoa powder

3 cups milk

1/2 cup coffee-flavored liqueur

1 tablespoon vanilla

1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

6 large eggs, lightly beaten

Preheat the oven to 325. Lightly grease a 13 by 9-inch baking dish. Place the bread in the baking dish and sprinkle with 1 cup chocolate chips.

In a very large bowl, combine the sugar and light brown sugar with the cocoa powder and mix well. Stir in the milk, liqueur, vanilla, cinnamon and eggs. Pour the mixture evenly over the bread cubes; let stand, stirring occasionally, for at least 20 minutes, or until the bread has absorbed most of the milk mixture. Sprinkle the remaining ½ cup chocolate chips over the pudding. Bake for 1 hour or until a knife inserted into the center of the pudding comes out clean. Serving the pudding warm, or refrigerate it and serve chilled.