Christmas traditions get a little sweeter

Christmas is all about traditions, and I love how every family develops their own quirky traditions for the holidays.

Every household is probably a little bit different, whether you watch “A Christmas Story” five million times in a row, sit around the fireplace reading about the birth of Jesus or spend time in the kitchen, baking cookies to put out for Santa.

You might open presents on Christmas Eve like my family, but I can bet that your dad doesn’t serenade you with “Frosty the Snowman!” (The only song he happens to remember how to play on the accordion!)

The much-anticipated Christmas morning doesn’t escape tradition either. Maybe the smells of homemade cinnamon rolls remind you of waking up on Christmas morning, eager to open presents, or maybe your family always cooks up something to take to Grandma’s for Christmas brunch.

Monkey bread is a perfect tradition to adopt for Christmas, so I dug out this easy recipe from my mom’s recipe box. The ooey gooey cinnamon/sugar bread comes in bite-sized pieces you can

pick at until you can't stuff in one more piece! It's making my tummy grumble just thinking about it!

If you're looking for something a little less sweet, be sure to try this egg strata recipe. It's one of my favorites when it comes to breakfast casseroles, and it will feed a lot if you've got a household of company. (And you can throw it together the day before!)

The recipe actually comes from Holyoke's centennial 1988 recipe book, submitted by Lois Schlachter. She said it was always used for the senior class breakfast, so it must be really good! The recipe calls for ham, but you can use any kind of breakfast meat that you like.

Merry Christmas and happy cooking!

Easy Monkey Bread

1 1/4 cup sugar

1 3/4 teaspoon cinnamon

3 cans refrigerated biscuits

1/2 cup butter or margarine, melted

Butter and flour bundt pan. Mix sugar and cinnamon together. Cut biscuits in quarters. Roll in sugar and cinnamon mixture. Drop in pan. Mix remaining sugar and cinnamon mixture with melted butter and pour over biscuits. Bake 30 minutes at 350 degrees. Cool in pan about 10 minutes and turn out onto a plate.

Egg Strata

15 slices bread, trim crusts and cube

3 cups bite-size ham

8-oz. grated cheddar cheese

8-oz. grated Swiss cheese

6 beaten eggs

3 cups milk

1/2 teaspoon mustard

1/2 teaspoon salt

3 cups corn flakes, crushed

Arrange half of bread in buttered 9x13-inch pan. Layer half the ham and cheeses. Repeat layers. Combine milk, eggs and seasoning; pour over all. Top with crushed corn flakes. Seal with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. The next morning, remove plastic wrap and bake in a 350-degree oven for 50-60 minutes. Let stand 15-20 minutes before serving.

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