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FOOTBALL FARE



Beverly Mills

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Desperation Dinners

Dressing up canned pears

At first glance, canned pears don't seem so exciting. After all, they're beige and virtually fat-free.

But we noticed that canned pears are a very close cousin to poached pears, except you don't have to peel or poach anything.

Suddenly the humble canned pear explodes with possibilities.

Today's recipe for Butterscotch Pear Trifle with Pecans is the perfect example.

Combined with butterscotch pudding and pecans, the canned pears become a fall flavor treat.

Layered in a glass trifle bowl for drama, this easy dessert is beautiful, too.

If you don't have a trifle bowl, they're inexpensive and available at mart-type stores and cooking shops.

In a pinch, any glass bowl with a 16-cup capacity can be used.

All of the ingredients for today's trifle can be kept on hand in the pantry and freezer, simply adding to the convenience.

We'll never underestimate canned pears again.

Butterscotch Pear Trifle with Pecans

Start to finish: 25 minutes preparation, plus 6 hours unattended chilling time.

Cook's notes: Be sure to buy instant pudding (the no-cook variety), and do not make it according to the package directions. (You'll be using less milk for this recipe.)

2 packages (3.4 ounces each) instant butterscotch pudding mix (see Cook's notes)

3 cups skim or low-fat milk
1 cup pecan pieces or chopped pecans

4 cans (15 ounces each) pear halves packed in juice or light syrup
1 frozen all-butter pound cake (10.5 ounces)

1 carton (12 ounces) reduced-fat nondairy whipped topping, such as Cool Whip

7½ tablespoons caramel ice cream sauce

Place both packages of the pudding mix and 3 cups of milk in a 2-quart mixing bowl. (Note that you're using less milk than the package indicates.)

Whisk for 1 minute until all of the powdered mix disappears. Set aside.

The pudding will be thin - it will thicken as it stands.

Pour the pecan pieces onto a microwave-safe plate and microwave, uncovered, on high until lightly toasted, about 1 minute, stopping halfway through to stir.

Set aside to cool.

Open the pears and drain them, reserving the liquid from one of the cans.

Pour the pears into a small bowl, and coarsely chop them using 2 knives. Set aside.

Please see PEARS, D2

Beverly Mills is a former food editor of the Miami Herald Food section and a mother of two; Alicia Ross, a food columnist for The Raleigh News and Observer, also has two children. Send recipe ideas to them in care of The Tribune-Democrat, 425 Locust St., P.O. Box 340, Johnstown, Pa. 15907-0340.



Pulled Pork Barbecue Sandwiches (foreground) and Goalpost Apple Slaw (at right) can score a touchdown with tailgaters. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Time to tailgate

Safety scores with tasty take-along feasts

By TOM LAVIS
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It's tailgating season.

With tightened stadium security, fans are restricted from carrying bags of foods and snacks into the stands, and that has made tailgating even more popular.

Fans like to get an early start, and tailgating is an ideal way to get energized for the game.

There is never a shortage of edibles when it comes to tailgating. It's common to cook extra food and share it with tailgate neighbors.

But proper food handling is vital for safety.

Joan Oshaben, a caterer and one of the owners of Sassy Sisters at 911 Caldwell St., Portage, said foods can be prepared ahead of time but temperatures must be maintained to ensure that harmful bacteria are destroyed.

"Holding temperatures should be between 135 degrees and 140 degrees when you're talking about beef or poultry," Oshaben said. "When preparing the items on a grill, beef should have an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees and poultry (should be cooked to) at least 180 degrees, or until juices run clear."

For those who prefer a little seafood, Oshaben said shrimp and cocktail sauce would be a great choice.

"Just be sure to keep the shrimp on ice in a cooler that maintains a temperature of less than 41 degrees," Oshaben said. "The same goes for pasta or potato salads. If after the game people want to enjoy a little more, the foods will be safe."

Grills are often taken to games to cook everything from hamburgers and hot dogs to sausages and chicken. Coolers are unpacked to reveal the makings of an elaborate picnic.

Honey-Glazed Chicken Wings are a good choice because their mild flavor is a crowd-pleaser. Tasty and tender, they are sure to be a hit at your next get-together, said Caroline Cofer, spokeswoman for the publishers of "Get-Togethers with Gooseberry Patch."

"The book, a collection of seasonal recipes to bring family and friends to the table, features mouthwatering recipes and great tips for tailgating," Cofer said. "Who could resist dishes like Pulled Pork Barbecue Sandwiches or Goalpost Apple Slaw?"

Some fans rely on the grab-and-munch method, while others prefer to set up tables loaded with goodies during pregame festivities.

Tailgating veterans often get a jump on the rest of the fans by having packed the vehicle the night before with tables, folding chairs and trash bags - as well as soap, water and towels to wash up with before cooking and eating.

Tailgate meals aren't restricted to football



The mild flavor of Honey-Glazed Chicken Wings is sure to be a hit with the crowd, said Caroline Cofer, spokeswoman for the publishers of "Get-Togethers with Gooseberry Patch." SUBMITTED PHOTO

games. Nearly every autumn weekend will find people heading out to festivals, craft shows or car shows.

With a little planning, insulated coolers can be packed with delightful foods and drinks.

Wendy Vida, a registered dietitian with Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield in Pittsburgh, said snacks don't have to be unhealthy to be tasteful and good.

She also said it's a good idea to remember that if foods such as potato salad or dips sit out from two to three hours, they should be discarded.

"It's not a good idea to salvage those leftovers, especially if it's a hot day," she said. "It's better to be safe than sorry."

Vida suggests getting some exercise before the

Tailgate tips

■ Keep extra veggie dippers in the refrigerator crisp by wrapping them in damp paper towels and stored in a plastic zipping bag.

■ Keep some disposable containers on hand in case there are leftovers.

■ Goodies such as no-bake cookies are safe to set out for the whole game.

■ Make sure meat, dips and desserts with cream cheese frostings are safely presented on the buffet in proper hot and cool containers.

Source: "Get-Togethers with Gooseberry Patch."

Please see TAILGATE, D2