

**2.** In a large bowl, cream together granulated sugar and  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup butter. Add eggs, buttermilk, and 1 teaspoon vanilla and beat until well blended.

**3.** In a small bowl, whisk  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cocoa in 1 cup boiling water. Add to sugar mixture and beat to blend. In a medium bowl, combine flour, salt, baking soda, and cinnamon. Add to sugar-cocoa mixture and beat on low speed to combine thoroughly.

**4.** Pour batter into prepared baking pan. Bake 25 to 30 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

**5.** In a 2-quart pan over high heat, whisk together remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cocoa and the milk and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and add remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup butter, cut into small pieces, and stir until melted. Whisk in powdered sugar and remaining 1 teaspoon vanilla. Mix until smooth. Stir in pecans (if using). Pour mixture over the still-warm cake. Serve warm or at room temperature.

**Per serving:** 457 cal., 35% (162 cal.) from fat; 4.6 g protein; 18 g fat (10 g sat.); 73 g carbo (1.6 g fiber); 482 mg sodium; 78 mg chol.

## Blue Cheese Cocktail Crackers

BETTY CORNELISON, PORTLAND

These savory little bites are great to serve with drinks. They're also a tasty snack for game day.

**PREP AND COOK TIME:** About 35 minutes

**MAKES:** About 4 dozen crackers

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup cream cheese, at room temperature

1 cup butter, at room temperature

$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon cayenne pepper

$1\frac{1}{2}$  cups crumbled blue cheese

2 cups all-purpose flour

2 cups crisp rice cereal, such as Rice Krispies

2 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled (optional)

**1.** Preheat oven to 350°. With a mixer on medium speed, cream together cream cheese and butter until light and fluffy. Add cayenne, blue cheese, flour, rice cereal, and bacon (if using)

and beat on medium-low speed until well blended. The dough will be stiff.

**2.** Roll 1-tablespoon portions into balls and place slightly apart on baking sheets. Flatten each ball with a fork.

**3.** Bake until crackers are golden brown, 12 to 15 minutes.

**Per serving:** 80 cal., 66% (53 cal.) from fat; 1.7 g protein; 5.9 g fat (3.7 g sat.); 5 g carbo (0.2 g fiber); 116 mg sodium; 16 mg chol.

## Lemon-Artichoke Chicken

CHARLOTTE CORKERY, AUBURN, CA

This dish is elegant enough for company but simple enough for week-night meals. (Valentine's Day, anyone?)

**PREP AND COOK TIME:** About 1 hour

**MAKES:** 4 servings

4 boned, skinned chicken breast halves (about 8 oz. each), rinsed, dried, and pounded to an even thickness of  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch

$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon each salt and pepper

2 tablespoons butter

1 can (14 oz.) quartered artichoke hearts, drained

2 tablespoons dry sherry

2 tablespoons grated lemon peel

2 teaspoons lemon juice

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup whipping cream

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup grated parmesan cheese

**1.** Preheat oven to 350°. Sprinkle chicken on both sides with salt and pepper. In a 10-inch frying pan over medium-high heat, melt the butter. Add chicken in batches and cook, turning once, until browned on both sides, about 4 minutes per side. Transfer chicken to a 9- by 13-inch baking dish and add artichoke hearts.

**2.** Add sherry, lemon peel, and lemon juice to remaining butter in frying pan; stir over medium heat until well blended and hot, 2 to 3 minutes. Add cream and stir. Remove from heat and pour sauce over chicken. Sprinkle with cheese.

**3.** Bake until sauce is bubbling and golden brown on top, 20 to 25 minutes.

**Per serving:** 437 cal., 39% (171 cal.) from fat; 57 g protein; 19 g fat (11 g sat.); 6.6 g carbo (1.1 g fiber); 600 mg sodium; 184 mg chol. ●