

## Finding Culinary “Comfort” In The Holidays

by Susan Westmoreland

(NAPSA)—What we refer to as “comfort food” today was once known simply as “American Food.” There was a time, long before adventurous chefs introduced us to such finds as Chilean sea bass, lemongrass and chipotle peppers, that a great dinner meant sitting down to a meal of meat loaf, fried chicken, or macaroni and cheese. These dishes have become more and more rarified, but the rapidly changing times in which we live have inspired a new craving for the foods of our collective, simpler past.

As the holidays approach, I see an opportunity to make comfort food the centerpiece of a soul-nourishing open-house celebration. Opening your doors to friends and family for a Saturday or Sunday afternoon is the ideal way to give the gift of hospitality—in turn, your home will be filled with company and good cheer.

To prepare for such a celebration, I’d refer to *The All New Good Housekeeping Cookbook*, which makes it easy with triple-tested versions of traditional recipes that bring back memories of happy holidays past. Set out a buffet featuring a little something for everyone: Cobb Salad, Winter Vegetable Chili or Curly Mac ‘n’ Cheese, for starters. If you begin early enough for brunch-seekers, include Overnight Baked French Toast, a Potato and Ham Frittata, Popovers and/or Apple Gingerbread Muffins. Round out the menu with a fish dish (Salmon Cakes, perhaps) and a selection of decadent desserts such as Angel Food Cake or Deluxe Cheesecake.

Whatever the occasion, it’s also crucial to have a selection of suitably festive drinks on hand. Some of our favorites are Spiced Hot Tea, Hearty Hot Cocoa, Hot Mulled Wine, Holiday Champagne Punch and Holiday Eggnog. Of course, one of the most traditional of all holiday drinks is Warm



Spiced Cider, and we are pleased to share our version here.

Happy holidays!

### Warm Spiced Cider

(adapted from *The All New Good Housekeeping Cookbook*)

- 1 large orange**
- 12 whole cloves**
- 1 lemon**
- 6 cinnamon sticks (3" each)**
- 1 gallon apple cider**

**1. Cut two ½-inch-thick slices from middle of orange. Insert 6 cloves into skin of each orange slice, spacing cloves evenly. Cut remaining orange into thin slices for garnish. With vegetable peeler, remove 1" wide continuous strip of peel. (Refrigerate lemon for another use.)**

**2. In nonreactive 5-quart saucepot, combine clove-studded orange slices with cloves, lemon peel, cinnamon sticks, and apple cider; heat to boiling over high heat. Reduce heat; cover and simmer 15 minutes.**

**3. Pour hot cider into 5-quart heatproof punch bowl. Float remaining orange slices in cider.**

**Makes about 16 cups, or 20 servings.**

*Susan Westmoreland is the Food Director of Good Housekeeping magazine and the editor of The All New Good Housekeeping Cookbook, which is available at bookstores nationwide.*