

Cherries: Ruby-Red Fruit Adds Zest To Bread Creations

(NAPS)—For many people, life is just a bowl of cherries—especially during February, National Cherry Month. Bakers are using this luscious red fruit to celebrate a variety of special days, including George Washington's birthday (February 22) and Paczki Day or Fat Tuesday (February 27).

According to the Cherry Marketing Institute, cherries won the hearts of Americans when European settlers brought cherry pits, which they planted as soon as they arrived in the New World. Wide-scale production began in the mid-1800s, when the first cherry orchards were planted in Michigan and Oregon.

Today, the U.S. grows about 600 million pounds of cherries each year. About half are tart cherries and half are sweet. In addition, cherries are credited with many important preventive and healing qualities, including those of antioxidants, anti-inflammatories and anti-carcinogens.

One way people can pay tribute to the 269th anniversary of the birth of our nation's first president is with the whimsical creation known as George Washington Birthday Bread. Strips of dough, laced with vanilla and sandwiched around a layer of cherry preserves, are twisted and placed on a baking sheet to form the branches of a tree. After the egg-washed tree is baked to a golden brown, it is adorned with painted leaves of almond sugar glaze and sliced almonds. Red and green glacé cherries designate the tree as the one of legend.

George Washington Birthday Bread is great for an office party or social, and is also a terrific discussion piece in the classroom or at home with kids. While children's busy hands admire or craft this unusual bread creation, adults can deliver an ethics or history lesson.

The following recipe offers the time-saving benefit of using Fleischmann's RapidRise yeast, and is certified delicious by the Fleischmann's Yeast test kitchens.

Through its Helping Bakers Bake initiative, the company offers expert resources to consumers, including baking tips and recipes for beginners and experienced bakers. To learn more, call



George Washington Birthday Bread, a whimsical tribute to the President who "could not tell a lie."

1-800-777-4959 or, better yet, go to www.breadworld.com.

George Washington Birthday Bread Makes 1 tree

- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 envelope FLEISCHMANN'S RapidRise Yeast
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup water
- ¼ cup milk
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 1 large egg
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup cherry preserves
- Egg Glaze (recipe follows)
- Almond Glaze (recipe follows)
- ¼ cup sliced almonds
- Red and/or green glacé cherries, quartered

In a large bowl, combine ¾ cup flour, sugar, undissolved yeast and salt. Heat water, milk and butter until very warm (120° to 130°F). Gradually add to dry ingredients. Beat 2 minutes at medium speed of electric mixer, scraping bowl occasionally. Add egg, vanilla and 1 cup flour. Beat 2 minutes at high speed. Stir in enough remaining flour to make a

soft dough. Knead on lightly floured surface until smooth and elastic, about 8 to 10 minutes. Cover; let rest 10 minutes.

Cut ¼ portion from dough; shape into a trunk of a tree. Place on bottom center of a large baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Roll remaining dough to 12x12-inch square. Spread cherry preserves evenly over dough to within 1/2 inch of edges. Fold dough in half; do not seal ends. Cut into 12 (1-inch) strips; twist each strip 3 to 4 times. Attach folded ends of strips to top of trunk, forming a semi-circle. Split unsealed ends of each twist with a knife. Cover; let rise in warm, draft-free place until doubled in size, about 45 minutes. Brush with Egg Glaze.

Bake at 350°F for 20 minutes or until done. Remove from sheet; cool on wire rack. Drizzle with Almond Glaze; decorate with red and/or green glacé cherries and sliced almonds.

Egg Glaze: In a small bowl, combine 1 egg white and 1 tablespoon water. Stir to blend well.

Almond Glaze: Combine ½ cup powdered sugar, sifted, and 2 to 3 teaspoons milk. Add ½ teaspoon almond extract. Stir until smooth.