

stir in salt, and pour through a strainer into a bowl. Place in refrigerator to chill to 35°–40°, about 6 hours or up to overnight. (You may speed up this process by stirring the custard over a bowl of ice.)

- Pour mixture into your ice-cream maker, leaving $\frac{3}{4}$ inch at the top to allow for expansion, and prepare according to freezer instructions. Add walnuts during final 5 minutes of chilling. *Yield: about 5 cups*

MAPLE NUT BARS

TOTAL TIME: 1 HOUR 15 MINUTES; HANDS-ON TIME: 25 MINUTES

These sweets have a maple shortbread crust and a topping not unlike pecan pie. For best results, have all ingredients at room temperature. Granulated maple sugar is sold in specialty stores.

- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups plus 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour, divided**
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup plus $\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated maple sugar, divided**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter, at room temperature, plus extra for pan**
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup maple syrup (preferably Grade B)**
- 1 large egg, beaten, at room temperature**
- 2 tablespoons melted butter**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup heavy cream**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon table salt**
- 1 cup chopped almonds, pecans, or walnuts**

- Preheat oven to 350°. Make the crust: Whisk together $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup maple sugar; then cut in softened butter. Using a standing mixer, or a fork if you're working by hand, blend until mixture resembles coarse meal, dry and crumbly. Press mixture into the bottom of a greased 8- or 9-inch square pan. Bake 15 minutes.
- To make the topping, combine $\frac{3}{4}$ cup maple syrup, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup maple sugar, beaten egg, melted butter, cream, vanilla, 1 tablespoon flour, and salt. Beat well; then stir in nuts. Pour batter carefully over half-baked crust.
- Return crust and topping to the oven. Bake until set, about 35 minutes. Cut into small bars and remove from pan to cool. *Yield: 16 bars*

SUGAR-ON-SNOW PARTY PANCAKES

TOTAL TIME: 35 MINUTES; HANDS-ON TIME: 35 MINUTES

Not only are these fluffy pancakes delicious, they're also made with protein-rich ricotta cheese, which will give you a welcome energy boost on a chilly early spring morning.

- $\frac{1}{2}$ pound (1 cup) ricotta cheese**
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour**
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons baking powder**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon table salt**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup light cream or half-and-half, divided**
- 3 tablespoons maple syrup, plus extra for serving**
- 3 large eggs**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla extract**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon almond extract (optional)**
- Butter**

- Using an electric hand mixer or a whisk, combine ricotta, flour, baking powder, salt, and half the cream. (Batter will be stiff and lumpy; don't worry.)
- In a separate bowl, beat together remaining cream, syrup, eggs, and vanilla, plus almond extract (if you like).
- Stir into ricotta mixture and whisk a couple of minutes. Lumps will lessen but not disappear; let rest 10 minutes to smooth out the batter.
- Ladle onto on a hot, well-greased griddle. Flip when cakes bubble all over the top. Serve with butter and more maple syrup. *Yield: about 16 pancakes*

Asparagus Season

The Connecticut River Valley of western Massachusetts was once home to one of the country's premier asparagus-growing regions. A virulent soil-borne fungus knocked out much of the harvest in the mid-1970s and forced many farmers to give up asparagus, but today, with new, resistant varieties, the valley still produces exceptional "grass," as do other areas of New England. Try it steamed, roasted, or puréed—just be sure to seize the season.

LIME ROCK INN ASPARAGUS CRÊPES BENEDICT

TOTAL TIME: 1 HOUR 10 MINUTES; HANDS-ON TIME: 1 HOUR 10 MINUTES

You may make these crêpes ahead of time if you like. Store between sheets of wax paper in a zip-top bag; they'll keep in the refrigerator up to a week.

- 2 cups milk, divided**
- 15 large eggs, divided**
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, plus extra for pan**
- 1 cup flour**
- 30 asparagus spears**
- 1 teaspoon kosher or sea salt**
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**
- 2 tablespoons butter**
- 15 slices Canadian bacon, cut in half**
- Hollandaise Sauce (see accompanying recipe)**

- In the bowl of a standing mixer, combine 1 1/2 cups milk, 3 eggs, and oil on low speed. Sift flour slowly into mixture until batter is complete. Let sit 20 minutes.
- Bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat. Add asparagus and cook until just tender and still bright green, 3–6 minutes. Drain in a colander; then plunge into ice water to stop the cooking. Set aside.
- Set a 10- to 12-inch nonstick skillet or crêpe pan over medium heat and brush lightly with oil. Ladle about 1/4 cup batter into center. Swirl skillet to coat the bottom evenly with batter. Return to heat and cook 1 minute. Flip crêpe over and cook an additional 30 seconds. Remove crêpe from pan and repeat, brushing with oil as needed, until you've used all the batter. Set aside.
- Scramble eggs: Crack remaining dozen eggs into a medium-size bowl. Add remaining 1/2 cup milk, salt, and pepper; whisk until smooth. Set a large skillet over medium-high heat; add butter. When sizzling, add eggs all at once; begin dragging a spatula steadily across the pan to pull the cooked eggs to edges. Swirl the pan occasionally to spread any uncooked eggs in a thin layer. When eggs are mostly cooked but still very glossy, remove from heat.
- On a large platter, lay blanched asparagus spears down in an overlapping pattern and set aside. Lay one crêpe on a work surface. Place two half-slices of Canadian bacon on the crêpe. Spoon scrambled eggs over Canadian bacon. Fold over and roll into a log shape. Place on top of asparagus. Repeat with remaining crêpes, bacon, and eggs. Drizzle with Hollandaise Sauce.

Yield: about 15 crêpes

HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

- 2 cups plus 1 tablespoon water, divided**
- 3 egg yolks**
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice**
- 1 stick (1/4 pound) unsalted butter, divided**
- 1/4 teaspoon Tabasco sauce**

- Bring 2 cups water to a simmer in a saucepan. In a small bowl that fits on top of the pan, whisk together egg yolks, lemon juice, and 1 tablespoon water.
- Cut butter into three equal pieces and whisk one piece into egg mixture. Once melted and incorporated, whisk in second piece. Once melted and incorporated, whisk in third piece.
- Remove from heat and stir in Tabasco. Set aside for serving, stirring occasionally to keep sauce smooth.

ASPARAGUS FRITTATA

TOTAL TIME: 1 HOUR; HANDS-ON TIME: 40 MINUTES

- 9 spears pencil-thin asparagus**
- 3 tablespoons olive oil**
- 1 large red onion, cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices**
- Pinch sugar**
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher or sea salt, plus extra for water**
- 3/4 cup Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, coarsely grated**
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**
- 6 large eggs, lightly beaten**

- Wash and trim asparagus. Cut into 3/4-inch lengths. Cook in boiling, salted water until tender, 3–4 minutes. Drain asparagus and submerge in ice water to stop cooking. Set aside.
- In a medium-size oven-safe skillet, heat olive oil over moderate heat. Add onion, sugar, and salt; reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, stirring occasionally, until onion is golden brown and very tender, about 30 minutes. Remove onion from the pan with tongs, leaving as much oil in the pan as possible. Let onion sit 10 minutes, until no longer hot.
- In a large bowl, whisk eggs until smooth. Add cheese, pepper, asparagus, and onion. Set the skillet over medium heat. Add egg mixture, stirring briefly to distribute fillings.
- Reduce heat to low and let mixture cook slowly; you should see just a few lazy bubbles popping up around the edges. Cook undisturbed until edges are set but middle is still very liquid, about 8 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat your broiler on high.
- Transfer skillet to oven, positioning it 3–4 inches from the broiler. Cook until top of frittata is golden brown, edges are puffed, and center is just set (it will jiggle slightly but pop right back after you poke it), about 2 minutes. Don't overcook it! Loosen with a spatula, if needed. Remove to a warmed platter and serve immediately. *Yield: 4 servings*

LIME ROCK INN
ASPARAGUS CRÊPES BENEDICT

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