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'Tis the Season for Apricot Cream Scones - and Cooking Contests!

By Susie Iventosch



Apricot cream scones are delicious with apricot jam. Photo Susie Iventosch

Last year we had a couple of fun local recipe contests that really stirred up the creative juices of our community members. Inspired by the bountiful harvest we have here in Northern California, the Moraga Peach Recipe Contest and the Town of Moraga Pear and Wine Festival Pear Recipe Contest enticed cooks of all ages to enter their creations, using fresh, local produce in their recipes.

I wanted to give all of you wonderful cooks out there a chance to get prepared for this year's contests, which will include both the peach and pear contests, in addition to a second pear contest, sponsored by the California Farmers' Market Association (CFMA), as well as the inaugural Appetizing Olives Recipe Contest affiliated with the 5th Annual Olive Festival, sponsored by the Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area (FWRNA). There was also a hint of an apple recipe contest in November, but that has been put on the back

burner for now. Hopefully, next year we will see an apple recipe contest added to the growing list!

This year's Moraga Peach Recipe Contest will be held on Sunday, July 27. That is the day entrants will bring their dishes to the Moraga Farmers' Market to be tasted by a panel of local judges. The prior week, on July 20, entrants can stop by the market to pick up entry forms and purchase local peaches to be used in their recipes.

"We found it to be such a celebration of seasonal, local produce from the Moraga Certified Farmers' Market, and a special activity for children and parents to do together," remarked Erika Boehnke, promotions coordinator/market manager of the CFMA, the group organizing the Moraga Peach Recipe Contest.

Last year I had the opportunity to interview several of the winners, and it sure seemed as though everyone thoroughly enjoyed the experience. The recipes were amazing, too, like firefighter Clayton Hoover's Peach Mascarpone-Stuffed Cannoli with Rum-Infused Grilled Peaches and Caramel Sauce - every bit of it made from scratch!

On July 20, cookbooks from last year's recipe contest will be available for purchase at the Moraga Farmers' Market and will contain all of the recipes from last year's contestants.

The Town of Moraga Parks and Recreation Department will again sponsor this year's Pear Festival Recipe Contest. The contest will be held the day of the Pear and Wine Festival, Saturday, Sept. 27.

The new CFMA Pear Recipe Contest will be held on Sept. 28 and entrants will be encouraged to stop by the market the prior week to select produce for their recipes.

For olive lovers, the Appetizing Olives Recipe Contest will be held on Sunday, Oct. 12 and entries will be due a week before the festival to enable judges to select the winners and announce them at the festival.

"We will invite the winners to showcase and demonstrate their creations in the Chef's Tent at the Olive Festival," said Kathy Barrett, FWRNA board secretary.

As more information comes in about each of these contests, I will be sure to make note of it in my column, but please feel free to email me, if you have any questions about the contests in the

meantime.

To get into the mood, and since apricots are just coming into season, I decided to make fresh apricot cream scones, made with nonfat yogurt - and, yes, a little bit of cream too. Although I was attempting to make a shortbread type scone, this one actually ended up being very moist and unusual, but really delicious and excellent with apricot jam.

Apricot Scones

(Makes 12)

INGREDIENTS

2 cups unbleached flour
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 stick (1/2 cup) butter, cut into small pieces
1 cup diced fresh apricots
1/3 cup heavy cream
1/2 cup plain, nonfat yogurt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

In a mixing bowl, place flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Mix well. Cut in butter with fingertips or pastry cutter, until well integrated or about the size of petit peas. Set aside.

In a large glass measuring cup or bowl, mix apricots, cream, yogurt and vanilla. Heat in microwave for about 1 1/2 minutes, or just until warm. Gently mix into flour mixture with a fork.

Dough will be fairly soft, so spoon dough onto a greased baking sheet, or a sheet lined with parchment paper, making 12 round scones.

Bake for approximately 10-12 minutes, or until just beginning to be golden brown and set. Serve hot, or refrigerate and reheat in a warm oven when ready to serve

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