

# bon appétit

DECEMBER 2008

DEVIL'S FOOD  
CAKE WITH  
PEPPERMINT  
FROSTING

p. 125





# family style

BY MARIA HELM  
SINSKEY

christmas  
breakfast  
for you and  
your kids—  
plus leftovers



recipes  
on p. 72

**THE MENU/ CHRISTMAS BREAKFAST FOR 4**  
Peppermint hot chocolate  
Sausage, roasted red pepper, and  
spinach torta rustica  
Oven-roasted hash brown cakes

**THE PAYOFF/** A quick but festive breakfast that still leaves plenty of time to open presents. The quiche-like *torta rustica* uses baguette slices as a

crust. The crispy hash browns are roasted, not fried. And the hot chocolate heats up fast—even though it's not made from a mix.

**THE LEFTOVERS/** Torta Rustica with Mixed Green Salad: Eggs are just as great for dinner. Round out the meal with a simple, lemony salad. ▶▶



**KIDS CAN COOK**

Set your mini sous-chefs to work buttering the baking dish for the *torta*, grating the

cheese, peeling the potatoes, forming the hash brown cakes, and garnishing the mugs of hot chocolate.



**peppermint hot chocolate**

4 SERVINGS/

- 1 cup chilled heavy whipping cream, divided
- 1 teaspoon plus 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 cups whole milk
- 4 ounces bittersweet (preferably 60% cocoa) chocolate, coarsely chopped
- ¼ teaspoon peppermint extract
- 4 small candy canes (for garnish)

Beat ½ cup cream and 1 teaspoon sugar in bowl until soft peaks form. Cover; chill.

Whisk ½ cup cream, 2 tablespoons sugar, and milk in medium saucepan over medium-high heat; bring to boil. Remove from heat. Add chocolate; whisk until smooth. Whisk in extract. Divide chocolate among mugs. Top with cream and garnish with candy canes.

**sausage, roasted red pepper, and spinach torta rustica**

6 TO 8 SERVINGS OR 4 SERVINGS PLUS LEFTOVERS/ This simple dish has a quiche-like filling and baguette slices for a crust.

- 16 ¼-inch-thick baguette slices, cut on slight diagonal
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 12 ounces fresh baby spinach leaves
- 1 pound sweet Italian sausage, casing removed
- 1½ cups grated Fontina cheese, divided
- ¾ cup diced drained roasted red peppers (from 12-ounce jar)
- 6 large eggs
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 teaspoon coarse kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

• There'll be plenty of *torta rustica* for another meal. Just add a salad and you have an almost-instant dinner. In a large bowl, combine 4 cups FRISÉE, 4 cups COARSELY CHOPPED ESCAROLE, and 2 heads of COARSELY CHOPPED BELGIAN ENDIVE. For the dressing, whisk together ¼ cup EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL and 2 tablespoons LEMON JUICE. Season with SALT and PEPPER. Toss greens with dressing; serve alongside leftover *torta rustica*.

**second helpings/**

TORTA RUSTICA WITH MIXED GREEN SALAD

Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter 8x8x2-inch baking dish. Place 8 baguette slices in bottom of dish; press 2 baguette slices onto each side.

Melt 1 tablespoon butter in large pot over medium-high heat. Add spinach; toss until just wilted, about 3 minutes. Transfer spinach to strainer; cool. Squeeze spinach dry. Transfer to medium bowl.

Heat same pot over medium-high heat. Add sausage. Sauté until cooked through, breaking up, about 7 minutes. Mix into spinach; mix in 1 cup cheese and peppers. Spread atop baguette slices in bottom of dish.

Whisk eggs in medium bowl to blend. Whisk in last 4 ingredients. Pour over spinach mixture and stir lightly with fork to distribute evenly. Sprinkle remaining ½ cup cheese over.

Bake torta until puffed and golden and center is set, about 55 minutes. Remove from oven and let rest 15 minutes before serving.

**oven-roasted hash brown cakes**

MAKES 4/ This recipe doubles easily: Shape the extra hash browns into smaller cakes. Bake as directed, checking for doneness a bit sooner than indicated, and cool on the sheet. Cover and refrigerate. Rewarm in the oven, then top with crème fraîche and smoked salmon or caviar for appetizers in the evening.

- 1½ cups paper-thin onion slices
- 1 pound Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled, coarsely grated on large holes of box grater or in processor (about 2½ cups)
- 1 teaspoon salt, divided
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

Preheat oven to 425°F. Butter large rimmed nonstick baking sheet. Place onion in large bowl. Toss potatoes with ½ teaspoon salt in medium bowl. Let stand 5 minutes. Using hands, squeeze out excess liquid from potatoes. Add potatoes, ½ teaspoon salt, and melted butter to onion. Toss to coat.

Divide mixture into 4 mounds on prepared baking sheet, spacing apart. Roast 15 minutes, then turn mounds over with spatula, pressing down to flatten to 4-inch-diameter rounds (cakes will still be soft). Reduce oven temperature to 350°F; bake until cakes are golden and crisp around edges, about 45 minutes longer. / ■

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