

# 2021 Christmas Blessing Giveaway

## Author Recipes

Here's your bonus gift... from 12 authors  
who are especially grateful for you



## SOUTHERN "ONE BOWL" BUTTERMILK PIE

*from Tamera Alexander*

I love a quick and delicious dessert. Pie, especially. There's something so homey and comforting about sharing warm pieces of pie over coffee with friends. This recipe has been in my family forever and, truly, I've made this Buttermilk Pie *hundreds* of times through the years. It's that good. And that easy. The custard is creamy and smooth, while the top bakes to a golden yummy crunch. It also makes a wonderful "bake and take" for those occasions when you want to express your love—but you don't have all day in the kitchen to do it! :)



### Ingredients for custard:

2 1/2 cups sugar  
4 large eggs beaten well  
5 ounces buttermilk  
2 Tablespoons and 2 teaspoons plain flour  
1 stick melted browned butter  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1 unbaked pie shell\*

*\*Ingredients for my favorite pie crust is below. But if you're in a bind for time, just grab a yummy store-bought crust and fling into the nearest pie plate and save yourself 25 minutes. The homemade custard will work its magic all the same!*

Mix all ingredients well by hand in a medium-size bowl (oh, how I love a "one bowl" pie!), then pour the mixture into an unbaked pie shell (do *not* prick the pie shell with a fork beforehand, trust me on this <w>).



Bake pie uncovered at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes until firmly set, then get ready to savor this delicious Southern delicacy. Enjoy!

### Ingredients for pie crust:

This recipe makes two large crusts

This is a wonderful crust that I've been using for years. But this pie crust does "freeze beautifully" as they say in Steel Magnolias (instructions on freezing below), so even though I may need only one pie crust at the moment, I always use this recipe and make a second, and freeze it for later. Makes that next pie (or savory custard) go twice as fast.

1 ½ cups Crisco  
 3 cups all-purpose flour  
 1 egg  
 5 tablespoons ice water  
 1 tablespoon white vinegar  
 1 teaspoon salt

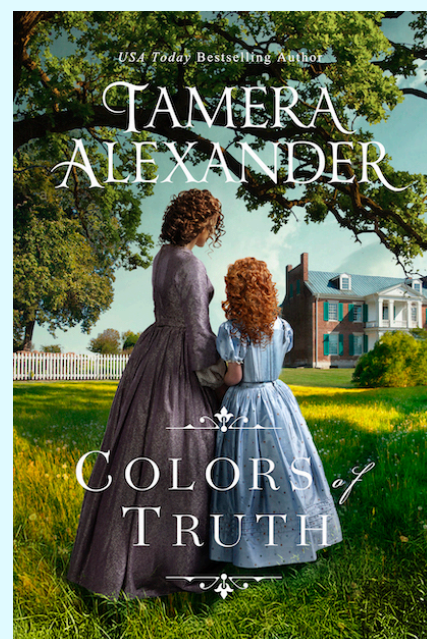
In a large bowl, using a pastry cutter (or two knives will do the job), gradually work the Crisco into the flour for 3 to 4 minutes until it resembles coarse meal. In a smaller bowl, whip the egg and then pour it into the flour/shortening mixture. Add 5 tablespoons of ice-cold water, 1 tablespoon of white vinegar and 1 teaspoon of salt. Stir gently until all ingredients are blended well.

Halve the dough. Form the 2 evenly-sized balls of dough and place each into large sealable plastic bags. Using a rolling pin, slightly flatten each to about 1/2 inch thickness to make rolling easier later. Seal the bags and place them in the freezer until you need them. (If you're using the crusts immediately, it's still a good idea to let them chill in the freezer for about 15- 20 minutes. They'll be much easier to work with.)

When you're ready to roll the dough for your crust, remove from the freezer and allow to thaw for 15 minutes (if it's frozen). On a well-floured surface, roll the dough, starting at the center and working your way out. Sprinkle flour over the top of the dough if it's too moist. If the dough starts to stick to the countertop, use a metal spatula and gently scrape it up and flip it over and continue rolling until it's about ½ inch larger in diameter than your pie plate.

Using a spatula, carefully lift the dough from the surface of the counter into the pie pan. (I sometimes fold my well-floured dough in half and then "unfold" it onto a pie plate or iron skillet. Or you can lop it over your rolling pin. That works well, too.)

Gently press the dough against the sides of the pan or skillet, getting it all tucked in. Then crimp the edges in whatever way you prefer. And now, you're ready for that yummy savory custard filling above, or maybe for a fruit pie.



**In a town battered  
 and bruised by war,  
 one woman embarks  
 upon an impossible  
 search—and one man  
 must face the past in  
 the very place that  
 almost destroyed him.**

## GLUTEN FREE PIZOOKI (CHOCOLATE CHIP SKILLET COOKIE)

*from Colleen Coble*

### Ingredients:

¼ cup coconut oil  
⅓ cup coconut sugar  
1 egg  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
¼ teaspoon baking soda  
¼ teaspoon salt  
1 cup blanched almond flour  
½ cup chocolate chips



### Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease a 6-inch cast iron skillet with coconut oil. Beat together the coconut oil and coconut sugar until smooth. Add the egg and vanilla and mix until smooth. Add the almond flour, salt, and baking soda to the wet ingredients. Mix well, then fold in the chocolate chips.

Press the dough into the prepared pan and bake for 15-18 minutes or just beginning to turn golden brown around the edges. Remove from oven and serve warm. You can add a scoop of vanilla ice cream if you like.



**A wealthy heiress.  
A suspicious death.  
A fight for the truth.**

## AUNT PHOEBE'S PEANUT BRITTLE

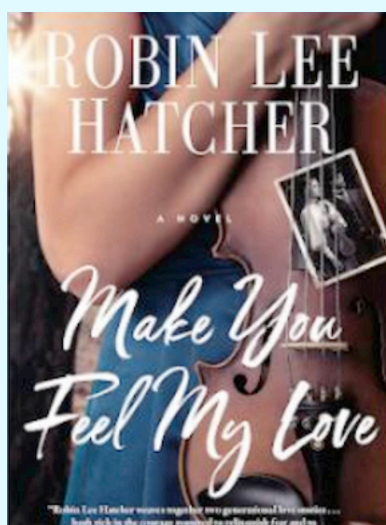
*from Robin Lee Hatcher*

My Aunt Phoebe made this wonderful peanut brittle every Christmas. From the time I was a little girl until I was a mom and then a grandma, I looked forward to opening the package that held this yummy confection. Enjoy!

### Ingredients:

1 cup sugar  
 1/2 cup white Karo syrup  
 1/4 cup hot water  
 1 cup raw Spanish peanuts  
 1 Tbsp butter  
 1 1/4 tsp soda

Mix together sugar, Karo, and water. Boil until forms hard ball. Remove from heat and stir in peanuts and butter. Return to heat and stir constantly until golden brown. Do not burn! Remove from heat and stir in soda. Stir thoroughly and very fast. Pour onto a buttered cookie sheet in thin layer and let cool.



**One broken woman.  
 One lost man. And  
 the long-buried  
 secrets tying them  
 together.**

## CHRISTMAS MORNING CINNAMON ROLLS

*from Rachel Hauck*

I'm not a recipe person so...

### *Christmas Morning Cinnamon Rolls!*

Since you'd rather be with your family than in the kitchen on Christmas morning, here's a great and easy Christmas Morning Cinnamon Rolls recipe

1. Go to your local bakery and order cinnamon rolls with icing for the family. Don't forget to pick them up on Christmas Eve or you won't have them for Christmas Day.



OR

2. Purchase the handy dandy Pillsbury pop open and bake cinnamon rolls. Easy to do and you get the added scent of baking dough encrusted with cinnamon in the house. Follow the directions. Let cool before icing. Enjoy!



**With the help of a very special wedding dress, there just might be a Christmas miracle.**

## BUCKEYES

*from Denise Hunter*

If you're from Ohio, you know what buckeyes are! My family has been making these for Christmas for decades. When my boys were little, helping me roll and dip the buckeyes was a beloved part of our Christmas tradition and one I still treasure to this day.

### Ingredients:

- 1 1-pound box confectioners' sugar
- 1 stick butter, melted
- 1 18-ounce jar creamy peanut butter

### Coating

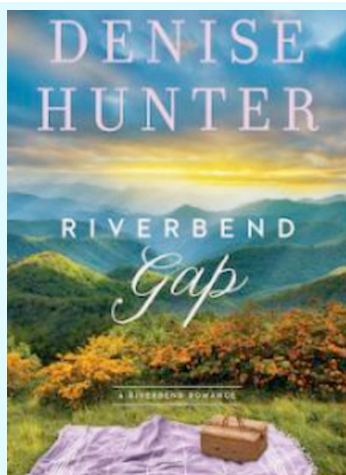
- 1 10-ounce milk chocolate bar
- 1 6-ounce package semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1/3 bar of paraffin

Combine first three ingredients (you may need to use your hands) and form into small balls—1 inch or so. Chill in refrigerator.

Melt coating ingredients in top of double broiler over hot water. (Or microwave the ingredients in 30 second increments, stirring in between.) Do not burn or get water in the chocolate mixture.

Using toothpicks, dip balls into melted chocolate mixture, leaving a little bit uncovered on top. Place on wax paper to cool. When chocolate is dry, remove toothpicks and smooth holes.

Buckeyes can be wrapped with saran wrap and frozen. These treats are always a hit at Christmas gatherings. Or arrange them in holiday tins and give them away as Christmas gifts to teachers, friends, etc.



**She came in search of the family she'd always wanted—and found the kind of love she'd never dared to imagine.**

## JULIE LESSMAN'S CHICKEN SUISSE

*from Julie Lessman*

My #1 favorite recipe for company — to die for! Serves 4.

### Ingredients:

4 whole chicken breasts (skinless & boneless)  
 a stack of approximately 5-6 slices of Swiss cheese, cut into four strips  
 6 tsp. flour  
 1 tsp. paprika  
 ½ stick butter or more  
 1 to 2 cups dry white wine (I use Chardonnay)  
 2 chicken bouillon cubes  
 toothpicks



### Directions:

- 1.) Hammer chicken breasts flat with meat mallet (I put wax paper over breast, then whack it).
- 2.) Place cheese strips inside breast and tightly close with toothpicks. (Note: If you want bigger breast portions, you can toothpick two half breasts together rather than just one breast rolled over, as I have indicated here.)
- 3.) Roll chicken in mixture of flour/paprika and brown in butter. Drain butter and add 1 cup wine and bouillon cubes. Cook over moderate heat for about ½ hour, basting chicken frequently and adding additional wine if liquid thickens and cooks away, which mine usually does. And it's nice to have extra sauce to drizzle over final product.

Cooking time: Approximately 30 to 45 minutes on the stove, medium-low



**She's sweet & cozy mysteries.  
 He's fun & cozy flings. Till a deadly secret reveals not-so-cozy things.**

## FA LALA-LA-LALA BON BON

*from Nancy Naigle*

### Ingredients:

One Box Cake Mix (Dark Chocolate/Milk Chocolate—whatever your pleasure!)

Oil and eggs *as indicated on the box mix*

1/2 cup butter

1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa

1/2 cup confectioner's sugar

1/2 cup apricot preserves (I promise you this is fab—use it!)

1 tsp vanilla

1 pkg (8oz) semi-sweet chocolate chips/squares

### Instructions:

Step One: Bake a chocolate cake following the directions on the box. Set aside and let cool.

Step Two: In a large pot, slowly melt the butter.

Step Three: Add cocoa and sugar. Stir until smooth and glossy.

Step Four: Crumble the cooled cake into the mixture.

Step Five: Add the apricot preserves, confectioner's sugar and vanilla to the pot.

Step Six: Mix until moist.

Step Seven: Roll into one inch balls or form small cubes.

Step Eight: Place in refrigerator to chill.

### DIPPING:

Melt the semi-sweet chocolate over low heat and stir until smooth.

Dip truffles into melted chocolate and place on wax paper. Let stand for an hour.

### DECORATE:

Drop sprinkles across the top of the truffles, or use white chocolate to drizzle or swirl top. ENJOY!



**Nancy Naigle's *A Heartfelt Christmas Promise* is a perfect gift to capture the spirit of the season and celebrate the holidays, small-town traditions, and the generosity of love.**

## WHITE VELVET COOKIES

*from Cara Putman*

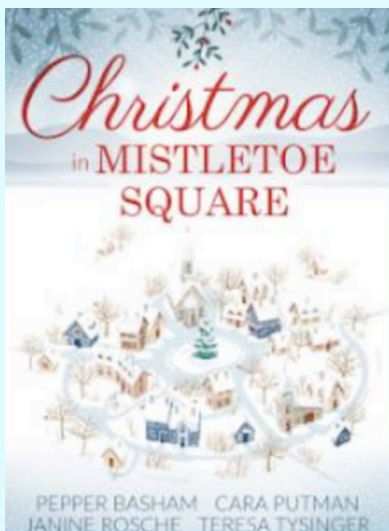
These are a favorite in our family—a sort of alternative to the traditional sugar cookie. So yummy and easy.

### Ingredients:

2 cups butter softened  
2 cups white sugar  
1 (8 oz) package of cream cheese  
2 egg yolks  
1 teaspoon peppermint flavoring (or vanilla if you're a traditionalist)  
4 1/2 cups of flour

Cream butter, sugar and cream cheese. Add egg yolks and peppermint. Mix in the flour. Let cool overnight. Roll dough to desired thickness and cut into shapes with cookie cutters.

Bake at 350 degrees for 12 minutes. But you do not want the cookies to brown on top. Actual baking time will vary based on the size of your cutouts.



**Christmas is in the air in Kedgewick Creek, North Carolina, at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Will romance find four couples in the month of December or will the pressure to keep the festivities Mistletoe Square is known for keep these couples apart?**

## JEWEL COOKIES

*from Deborah Raney*

Our sweet neighbors near the farm I grew up on had no children of their own, but Don and Jewel “adopted” all the neighborhood children, and each Christmas, we gathered in Jewel’s tiny kitchen to bake and decorate these delicious sugar cookies.

After Don and Jewel moved into town, my sister and her family moved into their country house just up the road from my parents, and Vicky continued the tradition with her kids, nieces and nephews, and other kids in the neighborhood—including serving hot chocolate from Jewel’s musical teapot.



### Ingredients:

With mixer, cream together:

1 cup shortening  
1 cup white sugar  
1 cup brown sugar  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
1 teaspoon salt  
Add 2 eggs and cream again

### Measure:

1 cup sour milk  
5 cups flour

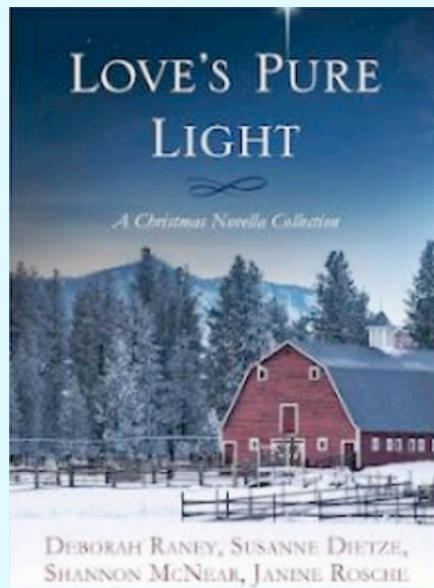


With wooden spoon stir in milk and flour alternately until dough is stiff. Chill several hours or up to one week before rolling out. When ready to bake, roll 1/4 of the dough at a time to about 1/4-inch thickness and cut into shapes with cookie cutters. Paint cookies with Edible Cookie Paint (see recipe below) and sprinkle with colored sugar *before* baking.

Bake just until cookies begin to brown lightly around the edges, about 10-12 minutes at 350 degrees. Baking time depends on thickness of cookie dough. For crisper cookies, roll thinner and bake longer, for softer cookie, roll thicker and reduce baking time.

Edible Cookie Paint: With a fork, mix 2 egg yolks and 1 teaspoon water until smooth and frothy. Divide into several small cups and add a different shade of food coloring to each until colors are dark “jewel tones.” Apply to unbaked cookie shapes with clean paintbrushes. Bake until cookies are lightly brown around the edges.

As an alternate to painting, cookies may be baked, cooled and decorated with frosting and candy sprinkles.



**Be transported to unique time periods as you follow a treasured family nativity set through four generations of the Shepherd family.**

## PECAN BUTTER CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES WITH SEA SALT

*from Katherine Reay*

Due to autoimmune issues, I eat few grains (no gluten) and dairy-free. I know that sounds “taste-free” too, but I have found some amazing recipes lately. Here is one you won’t want to miss. This wonderful creation comes from my new favorite cookbook, ***Run Fast Eat Slow***, by elite runners Shalane Flanagan and Elyse Kopecky. It’s simple and will satisfy your sweet tooth instantly with great ingredients.

### Ingredients:

#### Pecan Balls—

Take 2 cups of pecans and roast them in 350 degree oven for 8 minutes, stirring them after 4. Once they have cooled, put them in your food processor with 10 pitted dates and a 1/2 teaspoon of cinnamon. Mix into a thick butter.

#### Sauce—

Mix 2 tablespoons virgin coconut oil and 3 tablespoons of maple syrup into a small pan on the stove. Stir in 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder.

Roll the pecan butter into little balls and place onto a cookie sheet, then gently dip them into the sauce and return them to the sheet. Sprinkle a tiny bit of sea salt onto each and place the sheet in the refrigerator to set.

They are that easy. They last about a week in the fridge — mine last 2 days — or three months in the freezer. We pulled out the freezer ones after two days...and found they are amazing frozen too! Enjoy!



**An uncovered family secret sets one woman on the journey of a lifetime through the history of Britain’s WWII spy network and glamorous 1930s Paris in an effort to understand her past, save her family, and claim her future.**

## CJ'S GRAPE SALAD

*from Beth Vogt*

My family loves this decadent grape salad that can be served as a side dish, even though it tastes like dessert. And no one in my family loves it more than my youngest daughter, Christa, a.k.a. CJ.

### Ingredients:

2 lbs. green seedless grapes  
 2 lbs. red seedless grapes  
 8 ounces sour cream  
 8 ounces cream cheese, softened  
 ½ cup granulated sugar  
 1 tsp. vanilla extract, to taste

### Topping ingredients

1 cup brown sugar, packed  
 1 cup crushed pecans

### Directions:

1. Wash and stem grapes.
2. Dry them thoroughly and set aside.
3. Mix sour cream, cream cheese, white sugar, and vanilla by hand until blended. May have small lumps.
4. Stir grapes into mixture, and pour into large serving bowl. (I like to use a clear glass trifle dish.)
5. For topping: combine brown sugar and crushed pecans.
6. Sprinkle topping over grape mix to cover completely.
7. Chill for several hours or overnight.



You can always choose to use just green or red seedless grapes. And I usually add the topping right before serving.



**This Christmas, Johanna, Jillian, and Payton will realize the true magic of Christmas isn't found in gifts or decorations, but in the love of family.**

## EGGS PORTUGAL

*from Becky Wade*

This recipe has been our family's Christmas breakfast centerpiece for as long as I can remember! My mom made it every year when I was growing up and now I make it every year. These days, some of us are gluten free, so I simply substitute gluten free bread. Delicious!

### Ingredients:

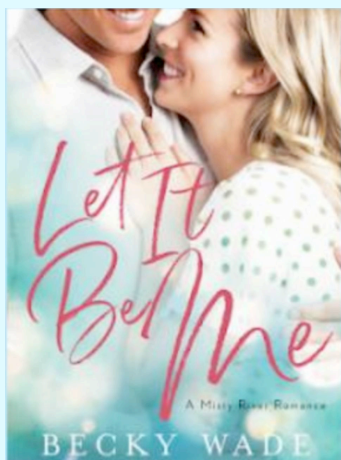
8 slices white bread, de-crusts and cubed  
 3/4 pound grated cheddar  
 1.5 pound skinless sausage, crumbled and browned  
 4 eggs  
 2.5 cup milk  
 3/4 Tablespoon Dijon mustard  
 \*1 can cream of mushroom soup (2nd step)  
 \*1/4 cup vermouth (2nd step)  
 \*5 ounces sliced mushrooms (2nd step)

### The night *before* serving:

Layer the following ingredients in greased 9x13 pan: bread, cheese, sausage. Then mix the eggs with the milk and Dijon mustard. Pour mixture over the bread/cheese/sausage in pan.

### \*The next morning (2nd step):

Mix cream of mushroom soup, and vermouth, and sliced mushrooms. Pour the soup/vermouth/mushrooms over mixture in pan. Bake uncovered at 300 for 1.5 hours or at 350 for 1 hour.



**The one woman he wants  
is the one he cannot have.**