

Cool mystery themed
desserts from Country
Living Magazine



Follow the Footprints

Serve up **Follow-the-Clues Malted Sheet Cake** (p. 108), which features sifted cocoa powder tracks applied via a template, and see if partygoers can resist eating the evidence.

*Footprint template can be found on countryliving.com/templates.

Magnifying Glass Cookies

MAKES about 24 cookies
WORKING TIME 1 hour
TOTAL TIME 3 hours

- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled, plus more for working**
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt**
- 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature**
- 3/4 cup sugar**
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract**
- 1/2 teaspoon pure almond extract**
- 1 large egg, beaten**
- 1 cup finely crushed pineapple Lifesavers candy**
- 1/2 cup finely crushed green apple Lifesavers candy**

1. Whisk together flour and salt in a bowl. Beat butter, sugar, and extracts on medium-high speed with an electric mixer until light and fluffy, 1 to 2 minutes. Beat in egg until blended. Reduce mixer speed to low, and gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating just until flour is incorporated.

2. Divide dough in half, and flatten into 2 disks. Wrap in plastic wrap, and chill at least 2 hours or up to 3 days.

3. Preheat oven to 325°F. Line three baking sheets with parchment paper. Working with one disk at a time, on a lightly floured work surface, roll dough to 1/4-inch thickness. Use a 5 3/4-inch-long magnifying glass-shaped cookie cutter

to cut as many cookies as possible; place on prepared baking sheets. Use a 2-inch round cutter to remove center from each cookie; reroll scraps, and repeat process. Freeze 10 minutes. Stir together candies in a bowl.

4. Bake until golden brown around edges, 10 to 12 minutes. Cool 3 minutes. Sprinkle crushed candies in center of each cookie, dividing evenly. Bake until candies melt, 2 to 3 minutes; swirl with a toothpick to mix colors. Cool completely on baking sheets on a wire rack.

Death in the Afternoon Cocktail

MAKES 1 serving
WORKING TIME 5 minutes
TOTAL TIME 5 minutes

- 1/4 to 1/2 ounce absinthe**
- 4 ounces chilled Champagne or other sparkling wine**

1. Pour absinthe into a Champagne flute, and top with Champagne.

Follow-the-Clues Malted Sheet Cake

MAKES 12 to 16 servings
WORKING TIME 30 minutes
TOTAL TIME 2 hours, 30 minutes

Baking spray

- 4 1/2 cups cake flour, spooned and leveled**
- 2/3 cup malted milk powder**
- 1 tablespoon baking powder**
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt**
- 2 1/4 cups sugar**
- 1 1/2 cups (3 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature**
- 5 large eggs, at room temperature**

- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract**
- 1 1/2 cups buttermilk**
- Cream Cheese Buttercream**
- Footprint template, cocoa powder, and Candy Pearls, for decoration**

1. Preheat oven to 325°F. Spray a 9- by 13-inch baking pan. Whisk together flour, malted milk powder, baking powder, and salt in a bowl.

2. Beat sugar and butter on medium speed with an electric mixer until light and fluffy, 4 to 6 minutes. Add eggs, one at a time, beating until blended after each addition. Beat in vanilla. Reduce mixer speed to low, and beat in flour mixture and buttermilk, alternately, beginning and ending with flour mixture, just until flour is incorporated.

3. Transfer batter to prepared pan. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, 55 minutes to 1 hour. Cool in pan on a wire rack 15 minutes, then invert onto a rack to cool completely.

4. Place cake on a platter, and frost with Cream Cheese Buttercream; refrigerate 15 minutes. Place template on cake, and dust with cocoa powder. Place Candy Pearls around cake base.

Cream Cheese Buttercream

MAKES 3 cups
WORKING TIME 10 minutes
TOTAL TIME 10 minutes

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature**



1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, at room temperature

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

4 cups confectioners' sugar

2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

1. Beat butter, cream cheese, and salt on medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy, 2 to 3 minutes. Beat in confectioners' sugar, a spoonful at a time, until smooth. Beat in vanilla.

Nancy's Brown Butter-Hazelnut Blondies

MAKES 16 servings
WORKING TIME 25 minutes
TOTAL TIME 2 hours

3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, plus more for pan

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled

1/4 teaspoons kosher salt

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 1/2 cups packed dark brown sugar

1 1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

2 large eggs

1 1/2 cups coarsely chopped toasted hazelnuts

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Line bottom and sides of a 9- by 9-inch baking pan with aluminum foil, leaving a 2-inch overhang on 2 sides; butter foil. Whisk together flour, salt, and baking powder in a bowl.
2. Cook butter in a small saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring often, until fragrant and deep golden brown, 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer to a bowl, and let cool 10 minutes. Whisk in sugar and vanilla. Whisk in

eggs, one at a time, whisking until blended after each addition. Whisk in flour mixture. Fold in toasted hazelnuts. Transfer mixture to prepared pan.

3. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out with a few moist crumbs clinging, 24 to 26 minutes. Cool completely in pan on a wire rack. Use foil to lift blondies from pan. Remove foil, and cut blondies into 16 squares.

Something-to-Hide Devil's Food Cupcakes

MAKES 12 cupcakes
WORKING TIME 1 hour
TOTAL TIME 2 hours

1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder

6 tablespoons strong coffee

1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

1/4 teaspoon baking soda

1 cup sugar

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature

2 large eggs, at room temperature

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1/2 cup sour cream, at room temperature

1 cup blue and yellow chocolate candies (such as M&M's and Sixlets), plus more for decorating

Cream Cheese Buttercream (page 108)

Yellow food coloring

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 12-cup standard muffin tin with paper liners. Stir together cocoa and coffee until smooth; let cool. Whisk together flour, salt, baking powder, and baking soda in a bowl.

2. Beat sugar and butter on medium speed with an electric mixer until light and fluffy, 2 to 4 minutes. Add eggs, one at a time, beating until blended after each addition. Beat in vanilla. Reduce mixer speed to low, and beat in flour mixture and sour cream, alternately, beginning and ending with flour mixture, just until flour is incorporated. Beat in cocoa mixture.

3. Spoon batter into prepared tin, dividing evenly. Bake until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, 24 to 26 minutes. Cool completely in tin on a wire rack.

4. Use a tablespoon measure to scoop out a hole in the top of each cupcake. Fill with candies, dividing evenly.

5. Tint Cream Cheese Buttercream to desired shade with food coloring, and frost cupcakes. Decorate with additional candies.