

Rise and Shine!

Written by Debbi Covington
Tuesday, 17 March 2009 07:42

There's something extra-comforting about a hearty breakfast! If you're reluctant to invite family and friends to a fancy sit-down meal, why not offer to host a casual breakfast or brunch?



Impressive fare doesn't have to take a lot of time to prepare. Ingredients like eggs and cheese lend luxurious texture and rich flavor to many breakfast dishes. Carolina Gentleman's Breakfast Casserole is good and hearty ---- men love it! Use mild pork sausage for a tamer-flavored casserole; try hot pork sausage to pump up the flavor. I spotted beautiful fresh asparagus at the grocery store recently. The time is right to make Crab and Asparagus Souffles! Asparagus is a member of the lily family. The optimum season for fresh asparagus is February through June, although hothouse asparagus is available year round in most regions. Asparagus is grown in sandy soil so thorough washing is necessary to ensure that the tips aren't gritty. If the stems are tough, remove the outer layer with a vegetable peeler. You can use any kind of rustic bakery bread to make Carmel-Pecan French Toast. French toast is very forgiving, it won't even matter if the bread is a little stale. Grits, small broken grains of corn, were first prepared by Native Americans. They're a Carolina dining tradition, have been a part of southern cooking for centuries. This simple staple is daily comfort food on breakfast tables across the south. Grits Magnolia offers a creamy and rich twist to the traditional recipe. Serve your breakfast with delicious Maple Coffee. Maple syrup sweetens this rich coffee that resembles café au lait. When buying pure maple syrup, be sure to read the labels since many contain large amounts of cane and little maple syrup. Finer grades of maple syrup are light in color and contain more flavor than the darker grades.

Carolina Gentleman's Breakfast Casserole

- 4 English muffins, halved
- 1 pound sausage, cooked and drained
- 3 eggs
- 1 (10 3/4-ounce) can cream of mushroom soup
- 1-1/2 cups milk
- 1-1/4 cups (5 ounces) shredded Swiss cheese, divided

Line a 9x13-inch baking dish with halved English muffins. Add sausage. Mix eggs, soup, and milk together with 1 cup of the cheese and pour over sausage. Sprinkle with remaining 1/4 cup of cheese. Cover and bake in a preheated 350 degree oven for 20 minutes or until warmed through. Serves 8.

Crab and Asparagus Souffles

- 4 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 6 large eggs
- 1/3 cup whole milk
- Salt
- Pepper
- 1 tablespoon dried chives
- 1 tablespoon dried minced onion
- 1 (6-ounce) can crab meat, drained

Rise and Shine!

Written by Debbi Covington
Tuesday, 17 March 2009 07:42

1/2 cup shredded Swiss cheese
10 fresh asparagus spears, cut into 1-inch pieces
Nutmeg

Lightly grease 5 (6-ounce) ramekins. In a medium bowl, combine cream cheese, eggs, milk, salt, and pepper until smooth. Stir in chives, onion, crab meat, cheese, and asparagus. Season with a dash of nutmeg. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Pour mixture into prepared ramekins. Place ramekins in a baking pan, and add boiling water to fill pan halfway up sides of ramekins. Cover loosely with foil, and bake until eggs are just set, 25 to 30 minutes. Serves 5.

Caramel-Pecan French Toast

1 cup light brown sugar, firmly packed
1/2 cup butter
2 tablespoons light corn syrup
6 (1/2-inch) thick slices French bread
6 eggs, beaten
1-1/2 cups milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup chopped pecans

Combine brown sugar, butter, and corn syrup in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat until thickened, stirring constantly. Pour syrup mixture into a lightly greased 9x13-inch baking dish. Place slices of bread on top of syrup mixture. Combine eggs, milk, and vanilla. Pour egg mixture evenly over bread slices. Cover and chill overnight. Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees for 30 to 35 minutes or until lightly browned. Sprinkle with pecans and bake an additional 10 minutes until nuts are toasted and toast is golden. Serves 6.

Grits Magnolia

3 cups heavy cream
1 stick butter
3 cups water
1 cup quick-cooking grits
Salt
White pepper

Heat cream and water to boil. Add butter, salt and pepper. Slowly add grits and reduce heat. Cook 20 minutes, being careful not to scorch mixture. Serves 6.

Maple Coffee

3 cups half-and-half
3/4 cup maple syrup
4 cups freshly brewed coffee
Sweetened whipped cream

Rise and Shine!

Written by Debbi Covington

Tuesday, 17 March 2009 07:42

Combine half-and-half and syrup in saucepan over medium heat; stirring constantly, until thoroughly heated (do not boil). Stir in coffee; serve with sweetened whipped cream. Serves 8.

The writer owns Catering by Debbi Covington and is the author of the cookbook, Dining Under the Carolina Moon. Debbi's website address is www.cateringbydebbicovington.com. She may be reached at 525-0350 or by email at covingtoncats@embarqmail.com.