

Independence Day Picnic

Written by Debbi Covington

Wednesday, 24 June 2009 05:18

I'm so grateful to live in the United States and am even more thankful that I live in the south! On Saturday, July 4, our nation will once again celebrate Independence Day, our national holiday.



Independence day is commonly associated with fireworks, parades, political speeches and ceremonies, barbecues and picnics. During the American Revolution, the legal separation of the American colonies from Great Britain occurred on July 2, 1776, when the Second Continental Congress voted to approve a resolution of independence. After voting for independence, Congress turned its attention to the Declaration of Independence, a statement explaining the decision. Congress debated and revised the Declaration, finally approving it on July 4. From the outset, Americans celebrated independence on July 4, the date shown on the much-publicized Declaration of Independence, rather than on July 2, the date the resolution of independence was actually approved. One of the most enduring myths about Independence Day is that Congress signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The myth had become so firmly established that decades after the event and nearing the end of their lives, even the elderly Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, two founding fathers of the United States and the only two men who signed the Declaration of Independence to become president, had come to believe that they and the other delegates had signed the Declaration on the fourth. Most delegates actually signed the Declaration on August 2, 1776. Both Adams and Jefferson died on the same day, July 4, 1826, which was the United States' 50th anniversary. In 1776 John Adams wrote a letter to his wife Abigail saying that Independence Day should be "celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more." God bless the United States of America!

Summer Salad

1/2 cup cider vinegar
3 tablespoons sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
4 medium sized tomatoes, seeded and diced
2 large cucumbers, peeled and diced
1 small green pepper, chopped
1 small sweet red pepper, chopped
1 small jalapeno pepper, diced

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Mix vinegar, sugar, salt, and pepper in a small bowl. Place tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers in a salad bowl. Toss with the vinaigrette. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve. Serves 6 to 8.

Cornbread Salad

1 (16-ounce) package cornbread mix
1 (1-ounce) package ranch dressing mix
1-1/2 cups sour cream
3/4 cup mayonnaise
3/4 cup salad dressing
2 (15-ounce) cans pinto beans, rinsed and drained
3 tomatoes, chopped
1 cup chopped green pepper
1 cup chopped green onion
2 (11-ounce) cans whole kernel corn, drained
10 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Cheddar cheese

Prepare cornbread according to package directions. Cool, crumble, and set aside. Whisk the dressing mix with the sour cream, mayonnaise, and salad dressing. Crumble half of the cornbread in the bottom of a large serving dish. Top with half the beans. Layer with half of the tomatoes, green pepper, green onions, corn, bacon, and salad dressing mixture. Repeat the layers. Top with Cheddar cheese. Cover and chill at least 2 hours before serving. Serves 12.

Barbecue Burger Casserole

2 pounds ground sirloin
1 medium sweet onion, chopped
3/4 cup barbecue sauce
3/4 cup ketchup
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
1 (8-ounce) container sour cream
3/4 cup chopped green onions
1 (8-ounce) package wide egg noodles, cooked and drained
2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Colby-Jack cheese, divided
Chopped dill pickle

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Cook ground sirloin and onion in a large skillet over medium heat, stirring until beef crumbles and is no longer pink. Drain and return to skillet. Add barbecue sauce and next 4 ingredients to beef mixture. Simmer until mixture is warmed through, stirring often. Combine cream cheese and sour cream, stirring until smooth. Stir in green onions and hot cooked noodles. Layer half of noodle mixture in a greased 2-quart baking dish. Top with half of beef mixture. Sprinkle with 1 cup cheese. Top with remaining noodle mixture and remaining beef mixture. (If desired, cover and chill overnight. Let stand at room temperature 30 minutes before baking.) Cover and bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until thoroughly heated. Uncover and sprinkle with remaining 1 cup cheese. Bake 5 more minutes. Garnish with chopped dill pickle. Serves 8.

Carolina Seafood Casserole

3 hard-boiled eggs, diced
1 cup diced celery
1/3 cup chopped green pepper
1/2 cup chopped sweet onion
1 (2-ounce) jar pimentos, drained
1 pound shrimp, cooked, peeled, and deveined
1 cup (8 ounces) fresh crabmeat
1/2 cup mayonnaise
1/2 cup salad dressing
1 (4-ounce) can sliced black olives, drained
3 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
Salt
Freshly ground pepper
Thyme
1/2 cup dry bread crumbs
1/4 cup (3 ounces) shredded Swiss cheese
8 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled

Combine eggs, celery, pepper, onion, pimento, shrimp, crabmeat, mayonnaise, salad dressing, black olives, and Worcestershire sauce. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and thyme. Spread in a greased 2-quart baking dish, sprinkle with bread crumbs. Top with cheese and bacon pieces. Cover and bake in a preheated 350 degree oven for about 40 minutes. Serves 8.

Lemon Cheesecake Bars

1 (18.25-ounce) box lemon cake mix
1 cup chopped pecans
1 egg

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1 stick butter
1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese
2 eggs
1 (16-ounce) box powdered sugar
1/2 teaspoon lemon extract

Combine cake mix, pecans, butter, and 1 egg in a medium mixing bowl. Press mixture lightly in a greased 13x9x2-inch baking dish. In a medium mixing bowl, cream together cream cheese, 2 eggs, powdered sugar, and lemon extract. Pour over cake mix mixture. Bake in preheated 350 degree oven for 40 to 45 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove from oven and cool. Refrigerate until set. Cut into small squares. Serves 12 to 15.

Cherry Yum Yum

6 tablespoons butter, melted
1-1/2 cups graham cracker crumbs
3/4 cup sugar
1 (8-ounce) container frozen whipped topping
1 (21-ounce) can cherry pie filling
1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese

Mix melted butter with graham cracker crumbs. Cover bottom of 13x9-inch dish with mixture. Mix whipped topping with cream cheese and sugar. Spread mixture over crumbs. Spoon can of cherry pie filling over cream cheese layer. Chill before serving. Serves 12.

Peach Crunch

2 cups sliced fresh peaches
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 cup self-rising flour
1 cup sugar
1 egg
6 tablespoons butter, melted

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Place the sliced peaches in a lightly greased 9x13-inch baking dish. Sprinkle the lemon juice over the peaches and toss gently to coat. Combine flour, sugar,

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and egg in a small bowl. Mixture will be dry and lumpy. Spread mixture over peaches. Pour melted butter over flour mixture. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes. Serve warm. Serves 6.

Lemon-Almond Iced Tea

3 quarts boiling water

8 tea bags

3/4 cup sugar

1 (12-ounce) can frozen lemonade concentrate, thawed

1 tablespoon vanilla extract

1 tablespoon almond extract

Bring water to a boil. Remove from heat and add tea bags. Steep for 15 minutes. Remove tea bags. Add sugar and stir until dissolved. Add lemonade, vanilla , and almond extract. Chill. Serve over ice. Serves 12.

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 debbic@cateringbydebbicovington.com.