



*...And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice cold in the snow,  
stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so?  
It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags.  
And he puzzled and puzzled 'till his puzzler was sore.  
Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before.  
What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store?  
What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more?"*

Dr. Seuss, The Grinch Who Stole Christmas





# PARTYBLUPRINTS HOLIDAY GIVING PARTY COOKIE EXCHANGE



**The inspiration** for this Partybluprints™ Holiday Giving Party is the spirit behind the beloved cookie exchange. Although this time honored activity probably started as a practical way to cut down on holiday baking (a “baking co-op” of sorts), it quickly became a favorite way to gather together during the holiday season to exchange holiday cheer, homemade cookies and treasured family recipes. We took this multipurpose activity, put our twist on it, and turned it into a full blown, easy to host party for guests of all ages.

Banish your “inner Grinch” with this party that’s sensitive to your wallet, busy schedule, and heart; and get what you yearn for every year – holiday spirit. With a small outlay of cash, a little effort and a lot of love, host this Holiday Giving Party filled with good cheer. Not only can This party can be hosted any time of day or night, and works within most time or money constraints.

Don’t let any excuses stand in your way. If you’re hard pressed to find a opening on your schedule, be creative and combine it with an existing activity (i.e., caroling, tree trimming, visiting a Senior Center, sporting event, religious event, etc.). Simply set a date for your party and go back to basics for this party – we’ve done all the planning!





## THE PARTYBLUPRINTS COOKIE EXCHANGE

incorporates special touches to include more people and more giving! Our cookie exchange works on the same basic principles as a traditional cookie exchange, sharing with a generous spirit.

Traditionally, this exchange of fresh baked cookies has been geared toward women. However, we thought this was the perfect opportunity to include everyone, so we designed a party for all: singles, couples and families. Simply count each “household” as a participant and ask each to bring a dozen cookies for every other household attending, including the host.

### *OUR SPECIAL TOUCHES:*

- **COOKIE CARE PACKAGE:** Ask guests to bring 1 extra dozen cookies to contribute to a group basket for your local Senior Center or Homeless Shelter. Nothing generates holiday spirit and joy more than people warmly reaching out to others with some TLC – you know the best way to reach a heart is through the stomach. This collective gift takes little effort, but is guaranteed to be meaningful. Don't we all search for some meaning during the holidays...
- **ALTERNATIVE GIFT IDEA:** Given the exchange of cookies alone is a holiday gift to the other guests in attendance (now you're starting to appreciate the added value of this party),



you and co-workers, friends, or family may decide to enjoy this party and give the gift of your good cheer and COOKIES in lieu of exchanging the usual obligatory gifts.

### *PLANNING TIPS:*

- **Plan in advance.** Make your guest list. Obviously, your guests should be willing to bake, because there's no store bought cookies at this party. Give guests ample notice to prepare for the party.
- **Send Invites with Details.** In your invitation ask guests to make a favorite holiday cookie and include a copy of the recipe. Ask guests to note their cookie of choice in their RSVP. First to respond gets first pick. Keep a list so you can avoid duplicates – variety is the spice of life!
- **RSVP Required.** Upon receiving all RSVPs, notify guests of number of cookies to bring. Add 2 dozen to the number of households attending (1 dozen for enjoying at the party and 1 dozen for a charitable contribution). Each household will bring home 1 dozen of each different cookie. Wow, no more holiday baking required. Remind guests to provide a copy of their recipe for each dozen (great for guests with food allergies and convenient for sharing treasured family recipes).

For example, if you invited any combination of 6 singles, couples and/or families, count each group as a household and ask each to bring 8 dozen cookies to exchange. If this sounds like a lot of cookies, remember the work is worth the reward and once you're baking and have made the mess, what's another dozen or two? No one leaves empty handed, and the giving from this party keeps giving all season (the more cookies you make, the more variety you'll enjoy later!)





*BACK TO BASICS - The Essential Elements*  
*FOR THIS*  
*HOLIDAY GIVING PARTY*



entertain



eat



exchange

- \* Our Back to Basics plan gets to the heart of the holidays.
- \* Do all 3 from your heart and pass on your essence of holiday entertaining.
- \* Your guests are sure to leave warm from head to toe.
- \* Simply read on for inspiration and help in planning, preparing and partying festively!



## Essential Element #1: ENTERTAIN



### INVITE • PREPARE • Be of Good Cheer

**INVITE YOUR GUESTS** with a heartfelt invitation to your home to spend time together in a meaningful way. Be excited to treat friends and family to this festive party, inspire giving, and spread holiday cheer. Shhh...here's an added bonus, by the time the party is over, you'll be able to check off a number of items on your Holiday To Do List. Then, you'll really feel your holiday spirit soar!

Once you've picked a date, send out invites containing detailed information (see below). Consider sending electronic invitations for a green and easy invite. Sendomatic.com electronic invitations are green, cost effective (no postage), fun, and easy to create and send. Plus, you can easily track guests' responses, send out reminders and allow all recipients to view all responses.



### IMPORTANT Invite Info:

1. **USUAL DETAILS:** Date, Time, Address, RSVP Info.
2. **BRIEF EXPLANATION OF COOKIE EXCHANGE:** Inform each guest they'll need to bring X dozen cookies accompanied by copies of the recipe. Let them know they'll not only be exchanging cookies (so they'll be taking home a variety of homemade holiday cookies), but that they'll also be contributing to a cookie donation.



3. **RSVP Info:** Deadline, email/phone number, number of people attending, and cookie choice. Prompt RSVPs are essential for this party. The sooner you know who is coming to your party, the earlier you can inform your guests on how many dozens of cookies they'll need to bake and bring.
4. **Cookie Estimate:** Provide ballpark on number of cookies they'll need to bake. Make sure to tell them "No Store Bought" cookies – only homemade, touched by their hands and hearts!

**PREPARE YOUR HOME & YOURSELF** for your party, and your warmth, time and effort truly becomes a gift to your guests. Make your party a refuge from the holiday insanity – a sanctuary of sorts. Take the time to prepare your home and table. Decorate for the holiday season well in advance of your party, and accessorize for your party as you wish!

Take pleasure and have some fun creating a visually scrumptious tablescape. Guess what the focal point of your table will be – COOKIES! All shapes, sizes, flavors and colors will adorn your table, so prepare it appropriately.

### **HOW TO CREATE A TEMPTING TABLESCAPE**

Preparation will cut down your time and effort significantly. So before you even start, gather the following materials (you should be able to collect everything you need from your home):

1. A tablecloth to cover your table,
2. Two additional tablecloths, whatever size you have is fine, they should be the same color as your base tablecloth,
3. A variety of sturdy boxes, crates, bowls with a wide base,
4. Cake stands, dishes, platters, footed bowls, decorative serving pieces.

Cover your table with a tablecloth and then begin "building" some platforms. The goal is to build stable platforms of varying heights to create visual interest and free up table space to allow you to display more cookies and even dishes, napkins and utensils!



Collect a variety of objects of differing heights that can be used to build your platforms, i.e., sturdy boxes, bowls with a wide base (turned upside down), or anything else you have, to build your platforms. Spend some time arranging and rearranging to get a “good flow”. Don’t make your platforms too high – remember plates of cookies will be placed on these platforms and guests must be able to reach them without knocking anything over. Once you are happy with your arrangement, use the remaining tablecloths to cover the platforms, making sure to smooth the fabric so it lies flat on the platforms.

Collect various cake stands, bowls, dishes and interesting serving pieces to display the cookies. Remember to provide a spot for each set of recipes by their cookie. If you have a set of holiday place card holders, create a “name tag” for each variety of cookie.



Now it’s time to give your table some personality. Start by bringing in some nature from outdoors. Berried branches, fresh evergreen, magnolia leaves, and pinecones spruce up your table and décor in a snap. Use some flowering plants you’ve purchased for the season, such as Amaryllis, Poinsettias, Cyclamen. Vintage decorations bring spirit from past generations to accompany the beloved cookie recipes shared at this table.

Your tablescape will actually evolve as your guests arrive. By the dessert time, your guests will be treated to a dazzling display. If possible arrange your table so your guests can “circle” the table – oohing and aahing over all the delectable desserts. You’ll find they’ll be proud to identify their contributions they made lovingly with their own hands. Hopefully, guests will also share stories about the history of their recipes.

**DON’T FORGET YOU:** Your festive and warm mood will set the tone for your party – so spend some time preparing yourself and your





mood before your first guest arrives. Ten minutes before your guests are due to arrive, put on some music, pour yourself a cocktail and toast yourself – once you take care of yourself, you'll be ready to give of yourself to your guests!

**Be of Good Cheer** now that you've prepared your home and yourself! Don't bring anything but good cheer and a generous spirit to your party. Warmly greet your guests at the front door with a genuine smile and festive cocktail (we love a good Prosecco, Italy's version of champagne). Not only will your guests feel special, but it is sure to start your party on the right note – bubbly always brings good cheer!

Now that you've set the tone for your party, visit with your guests before inviting them to enjoy the Eats!





## Essential Element #2: *eAT*



*Make It • Simple • With Love*

**Make It** simple and with love - the only rules with your EATS. The dessert on your menu is taken care of, compliments of your cookie exchange (remember, 1 dozen of each cookie will be displayed and enjoyed for dessert) – it doesn't get any simpler than that!

**Simple** is key with the rest of the menu as well. You need a dish that is practical for a crowd of all ages, which can be prepared ahead of time and kept warm so guests can serve themselves. Since nothing fills your heart and belly with warmth like comfort food, a hearty soup is just the thing for this party. Add freshly baked focaccia bread, crackers, breadsticks and a Toppings Bar for your soups! (If you've been on the Holiday Party Circuit, this is a refreshing change to the usual fare.) It's healthy, doesn't cost a lot to feed a group, and you can make it ahead of time in one pot so the mess is minimal.

**Love** is plentiful in this meal. It's not overwhelming or difficult to prepare so you'll have plenty of time and energy to prepare it with plenty of love. Who doesn't feel warm, cozy and loved when eating homemade soup? This simple yet satisfying savory & sweet meal is sure to make your guests feel cozy, comforted and loved!





PARTYBLUPRINTS  
HOLIDAY GIVING PARTY menu



PROSECCO

SPICED NUTS, SAVORY PEPPERONI BITES

•

CABERNET & WINTER ale

HEARTY POTATO CHOWDER WITH TOPPINGS BAR\*

FRESH BAKED SAVORY FOCACCIA BREAD\*

••

HOT TODDIES

COOKIES\*

•••

(ALTERNATIVE BEVERAGES: APPLE CIDER,  
SPARKLING WATER, HOT CHOCOLATE & COFFEE)

\*RECIPES PROVIDED



# HEARTY POTATO CHOWDER



## Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 6 cups low sodium chicken broth (a 48 oz. can)
- 9 medium size Idaho potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 2 tsp. Italian Herb Seasoning (coarse ground pepper, sea salt garlic powder, onion, red pepper, rosemary, tomato, parsley)
- Optional: 1/4 tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1 1/2 cups skim milk
- 3 cups frozen corn

## Directions:

1. Melt butter in stock pot, add onion, and sauté until translucent. Add chicken broth and potatoes (make sure broth covers potatoes). Add Italian Herb Seasoning. Bring to a boil, then simmer partially covered for 20 minutes or until potatoes are cooked through.
2. Remove 5-6 cups of cooked potato & broth. Set aside to cool. Purée mixture with milk (you should have a creamy slightly lumpy mixture). Return puréed mixture to stock pot with broth and potatoes and return to simmer. Stir in corn. Season to taste. Simmer for 20 minutes.
3. Soup can be cooled and refrigerated for 24 hrs. Reheat thoroughly & serve. When reheating, have chicken stock on hand if soup needs to be thinned.
4. Serve with toppings (shredded cheddar cheese, bacon, chives, coarse ground salt & pepper, sour cream).

 Makes 11 cups





# SAVORY FOCACCIA BREAD



## Ingredients:

- 1 lb. pizza dough
- Olive oil
- Herbes de Provence
- Coarse grain kosher salt or sea salt
- Garlic powder

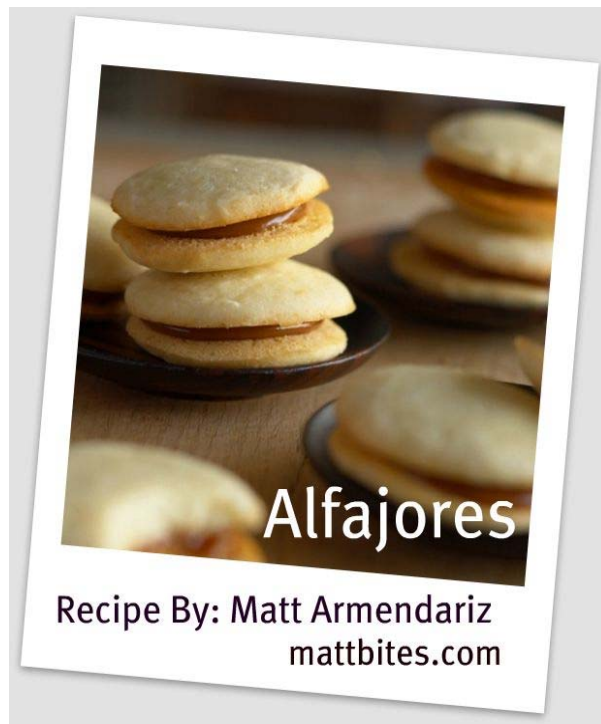
## Directions:

1. Allow each pound of pizza dough to warm to room temperature in an oiled bowl.
2. Turn out dough onto oiled 13" x 9" jelly roll pan and work dough with your fingertips, spreading dough to the edges of the pan. Cover with damp dish towel. Set aside for 20 minutes.
3. Preheat oven to 450°.
4. Remove towel and dimple dough with fingertips. Brush generously with olive oil. It's fine if the dimples hold some olive oil. Sprinkle with garlic powder, coarse salt and Herbes de Provence. Bake for 15-18 minutes or until bread is lightly browned.
5. Allow to cool slightly, cut into small squares and serve.

 Makes a 13" x 9" TRAY

**COOKIES** are the ultimate comfort food. Treat your guests to some family favorites or try some of our favorites! Topping our list are Alfajores. These scrumptious “sandwich” cookies are popular in Spain and most Latin American countries. Decadent dulce de leche or sweet jam is sandwiched between thin soft, moist cookies and sprinkled with powdered sugar.

We’re sharing with you a special Alfajores recipe handcrafted by Matt Armendariz, [www.mattbites.com](http://www.mattbites.com). Our paths first crossed virtually and then we had the pleasure of meeting Matt at the Martha Stewart Show. Matt made his Alfajores for Martha, and she raved! His generous heart and giving spirit are evident in all he touches. His Alfajores are no exception.



To view the recipe, beautiful photography and other bites by Matt Armendariz, go to [Mattbites.com](http://Mattbites.com)

Our second pick is a sentimental selection from our own families. A crowd favorite for the past 20 years, our Chocolate Crinkle Cookies never meet up with a kid or adult who didn’t fall in love at first sight & bite.

# CHOCOLATE CRINKLE COOKIES

(Adapted from Betty Crocker's Chocolate Crinkles Recipe)



## Ingredients:

- 4 cups granulated sugar
- 1 cup vegetable or canola oil
- 1 box (8 oz.) unsweetened baking chocolate (melted & cooled)
- 4 teaspoons vanilla
- 8 eggs
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 4 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2+ cups confectioners' sugar

## Directions:

1. Melt and cool chocolate. Thoroughly combine granulated sugar, oil, chocolate and vanilla. Mix in eggs, 1 at a time. In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt. Mix in flour mixture, 2 cups at a time. Cover and refrigerate for least 3 hours.
2. Heat oven to 350°. Empty confectioners' sugar into a pie dish. Working quickly, roll teaspoons of dough into balls and drop into sugar, do 6-8 in a row. (Make sure dough does not get too warm – it becomes very difficult to work with.) Roll balls to completely cover in confectioners' sugar. Place balls about 2 inches apart on a greased cookie sheet.
3. Bake 10 -12 minutes. Don't overbake, they are best when slightly fudgy. If you overbake them, they become cake like and later crunchy. Store in airtight container, or if not eating within a day, freeze.



YIELDS APPROXIMATELY 12 DOZEN.



## Essential Element #3: Exchange



*COOKIES • RECIPES • GIVING SPIRIT*

**Exchange** more than cookies at this party. With a few special touches, nurture your guests' holiday spirit. By the time you've exchanged cookies, recipes, and good cheer, a giving spirit will be alive and well in every guest, old and young.

**a Giving Spirit** can be inspired with a small amount of TLC. Special touches convey to your guests that you took extra time and effort to make them feel special. They also create a fun and festive spirit, and in this case foster Holiday Cheer!

### *Special Touches:*

- **Make a Cookie Care Package** with one dozen of each guests' cookies. Use a pretty tray or basket and wrap it up with a bow. During the holidays, there are so many people in need of holiday cheer. Give to a family in need, an elderly neighbor, a local Homeless Shelter or Senior Center.
- **Ignite Holiday Spirit Through the Children.** Offer an activity for the kids and watch how fast their joy spreads. Here are a few suggestions: (1) Create a kids' craft table to make ornaments and/or cards. Cover a table with butcher's paper, put out crayons, markers, glue and other craft items like pompoms and glitter. Ask them to make a card and some ornaments to accompany The Cookie Care Package, (2) Let the kids decorate gingerbread or sugar cookies, (3) Give them the lyrics to a holiday song or two, send them off to practice, and ask them to "present" their song(s) at the party.





- **HOLIDAY MUSIC.** No party should be without a great music mix! Some of our favorites across the genres include: Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" (who can resist), Christmas with the Rat Pack, A Very Special Christmas, Elf Soundtrack, Josh Groban's "Noel", and Enya's "And Winter Came".
- **CAROLING.** Print lyrics and hand out some jingle bells for ringing!
- **PHOTOS.** After the party is over, relive it by sharing an online party album .
- **TREE TRIMMING.** Have all the decorations organized and ready to go. Purchase a large plain Christmas ball and have your guests sign it. Every year when you hang it, it's sure to bring you renewed holiday cheer.

## COOKIES & RECIPES

**BEWARE:** Don't get so carried away with Holiday Cheer that you lose sight of your final act of "giving". Before your first guest leaves, organize the "Cookie Exchange". Provide each "household" with a basket and instructions to fill their basket with one dozen of each variety of cookie and a copy of each recipe. Tie each basket with a bow and attach a personalized label.



A Giving Spirit flourishes as everyone leaves this holiday party with an armful of homemade cookies, holiday cheer and a full heart (and belly). You've given your guests a special gift they'll cherish. Here's to inspiring a giving spirit this Holiday Season!



Cheers & Happy Holidays,

*The Partybluprints Girls*