



**Jennifer
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Photography



Christmas 2011 Newsletter

Merry Christmas from our home to yours!

It was a great year at Jennifer Jacula Photography and Cottage Boudoir. From unforgettable weddings in Alberta and Saskatchewan, to the completion of the restoration of our 1928 farmhouse that serves as the studio, to - surprise! - finding out we're expecting our second child in March 2012, this year was one for the record books.

And now, at the conclusion of an amazing year, it's my very favorite season - Christmas!

Whether you're traditional or modern, religious or agnostic, there's something about Christmas that you just can't resist.

I love everything about Christmas - choosing and making gifts for friends and family, baking, cooking, planning, wrapping, shipping - it's the only holiday I really get into!

I hope you are looking forward to a great Christmas. In this newsletter, I'm including some of my favourite recipes and holiday tips for you to enjoy and share with friends and family during this magical season.

Jacula



Eggnog Sugar Cookies

A delicious variation on traditional sugar cookies!

Makes two dozen 2" - 3" cookies.

- 1/4 cup butter, softened
- 1 tbsp canola oil
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 2/3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp salt

1. In a large bowl, measure and beat the butter, oil and sugar with an electric mixer until well blended.
2. Add egg and vanilla and beat for another minute.
3. In a small bowl, measure together the dry ingredients. Add to the sugar mixture and stir by hand, using a spatula, until you have a soft dough.
4. Chill dough for one hour.
5. When you're ready to bake, preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
6. Roll dough out to 1/8" - 1/4" thick.
7. Cut out cookies in desired shapes.
8. Transfer cookies to greased cookie sheet, placing one inch apart.
9. Bake for 10-12 minutes, until pale golden around the edges. Transfer to wire rack to cool.

My New Favorite Thing

Loose tea! My best friend, Kendra, introduced me to the amazingness that is loose tea - she gave me a loose-tea-for-newbies kit for my birthday this fall, including a couple of tins of her favorite loose tea, a tea strainer, and a mug. I am now an addict! Tea is so much more delicious when there's no paper tea bag involved! To try loose tea for yourself, find a Siplicious tea rep, etsy.com or try a local specialty store. If you have any foodies on your Christmas gift list, a loose tea starter kit could be a great gift idea!

Best Shortbread Ever

I get requests every year from friends and family to make these cookies. They are just that good!

Makes 4 1/2 dozen cookies.

2 cups unsalted butter, softened
1 cup sugar
1 tsp vanilla extract
3 cups all purpose flour
1 cup cornstarch or rice flour
1 tsp salt

Using an electric mixer, beat butter until very creamy. Gradually beat in sugar and vanilla, beating until very light and fluffy.

In a separate bowl, combine dry ingredients. In four additions, using a wooden spoon, stir into butter mixture, stirring well between each addition.

Transfer batter to floured surface and knead gently for three minutes until shortbread holds together well.

Divide into three balls, wrap each ball in plastic wrap, flatten into discs and refrigerate for one hour.

Remove plastic wrap from one piece of shortbread. Flour work surface well and knead dough lightly for 30 seconds. Re-flour surface and top of dough. Roll out dough to 1/4" thick, constantly rotating to make sure it's not sticking to the surface and lightly dusting the top with flour.

Cut out rounds, using a fluted or round cookie cutter. Transfer to parchment-lined cookie sheets. Chill for 30 minutes or up to 8 hours.

Repeat with remaining chilled dough. Re-roll scraps only once.

When ready to bake, preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Prick each cookie twice with tines of fork. Bake in centre of oven for about 15 minutes or until dough is firm and underside is lightly golden. Cool on pan on rack. Transfer to racks to cool completely.



Caitie, Christmas 2011

2012 Dates to Remember

March 1 - May 15 - No photo sessions - I'm on maternity leave!

March 17 - Weddings on the Border bridal show, Alberta Building, Lloydminster Exhibition Grounds. www.weddingsontheborder.com for more information.

March 24 - Due date for baby!

May 16 - October 1 - Photo sessions available at studio/our farm location ONLY.

Caitie's Baker's Clay

For Caitie's first Christmas ever, we preserved her tiny baby footprints and handprints by pressing them into baker's clay to be used as ornaments on our tree. You can use this recipe to shape and bake your own Christmas ornaments!

Mix together:

4 cups flour
1 cup salt
1 1/4 to 1 1/2 cups water

Knead until smooth. Add food coloring if desired. Roll out and use cookie cutters, or free-form your desired shapes. If they are to be used as ornaments, make a hole near the top of each ornament using a drinking straw. Prick shapes with a fork.

Bake at 300 degrees until set and golden (1/2 hour to 1 hour). For long-term use, seal ornaments with shellac.

Easy Homemade Christmas Gift Ideas

1.) If you're a canner, like me, homemade canned goods make excellent hostess gifts! Undo the screw ring, cover lid with pretty holiday fabric, reattach the ring, and make a pretty label saying what's inside. Instant holiday homemade goodness!

2.) Simple, sewn goods can be fast and easy presents. This year, I'm making Christmas potholders for everyone (surprise!) because I got a windfall of red-and-green plaid fabric from a friend. To make potholders, simply trace a potholder you already have onto new fabric, using two pieces of fabric per potholder. Between the pieces of fabric, add one or two layers of polyester batting. Machine-quilt the fabric and batting together and finish edges with co-ordinating or contrasting binding or bias tape - store bought, or homemade, if you have extra fabric and time.

3.) Baked goods! There's no such thing as too many goodies at Christmas. Make up pretty tins full of a variety of cookies, candies and sweets to give to your friends, employers, the bus driver, your child's teacher ... anyone, really!

4.) Layered gifts in a jar. I haven't made these, but I received some last year and they were terrific gift ideas! Simply do a Google search for "gifts in a jar," "cookies in a jar" or "soup in a jar" for tons of great recipes. Here's one of my favorites - I think it would make a super-cute gift, packaged with some gourmet crackers!

Chicken Noodle Soup in a Jar

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup of red lentils
- 2 tbsp. dried onion flakes
- 1 ½ tablespoons chicken bouillon granules
- ½ tsp. dried dill weed or dill seed
- 1/8 tsp each celery seed and garlic powder
- approximately 1 cup medium egg noodles
- 1 bay leaf

Write these instructions on your gift tag:

Bring 8 cups of water to boil in large saucepan. Stir in jar of soup mix. Cover, reduce heat and simmer for 25 minutes. Discard bay leaf and stir in 1 ½ cups of frozen corn or mixed vegetables and 2 cups of cooked, diced chicken or turkey. Simmer for five minutes until vegetables are tender and chicken is heated through.

Directions:

In a two-cup jar, layer from bottom in the order listed above, then seal the jar.

For our Furry, Four-Legged Friends

Homemade Dog Cookies

- 1 cup rolled oats
 - 1/3 cup margarine
 - 1 cup boiling water
 - 3/4 cup cornmeal
 - 2 teaspoons white sugar
 - 2 teaspoons beef bouillon granules
 - 1/2 cup milk
 - 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
 - 1 egg, beaten
 - 3 cups whole wheat flour
- Directions

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C). In a large bowl, combine rolled oats, margarine, and boiling water. Let stand 10 minutes. Grease cookie sheets.

Thoroughly stir in cornmeal, sugar, bouillon, milk, Cheddar cheese, and egg. Mix in flour, 1 cup at a time, until a stiff dough has formed.

Knead dough on a lightly floured surface, mixing in additional flour as necessary until dough is smooth and no longer sticky. Roll or pat out dough to 1/2" thickness. Cut with cookie cutter (I prefer bone shaped), and place 1 inch apart onto the prepared cookie sheets.

Bake 35 to 45 minutes in the preheated oven, until golden brown. Cool before serving. Store in a loosely covered container.



Basic gingerbread cookies

My variation is spicier than what you may be used to. Perfect with a cup of tea!

6 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
1 cup dark-brown sugar, packed
4 teaspoons ground ginger
4 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cloves
1 teaspoon finely ground black pepper
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
2 large eggs
1 cup unsulfured molasses
Currants
Royal Icing

Makes about twenty-four 6-inch gingerbread people

Directions

1. In a large bowl, sift together flour, baking soda, and baking powder. Set aside.
2. In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Mix in spices and salt, then eggs and molasses. Add flour mixture; combine on low speed. Divide dough in thirds, and wrap in plastic. Chill for at least 1 hour.
3. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Line baking sheets with Silpats (a French nonstick baking mat). Set aside. On a lightly floured work surface, roll dough 1/8-inch thick. Cut into gingerbread people shapes. Transfer to prepared baking sheets.
4. Cut out desired decorations and place on cookies. Press currants into dough to create eyes and buttons. To create hair, roll a piece of dough into a ball and pass through a clean garlic press. Attach hair to heads. Bake until crisp, but not darkened for about 20 minutes. Let cookies cool on wire racks.
5. Decorate with royal icing.

Chocolate Crinkle cookies

1/4 c butter, softened
2 T canola oil
1/3 c dark molasses
1 C packed brown sugar
1 large egg
2 t vanilla
1 1/2 c flour
1/2 c cocoa
1 t baking soda
1 t cinnamon
1/4 t salt

Preheat oven to 350 F.

In a large bowl, measure butter, oil, molasses and brown sugar. Add egg and vanilla. Stir until well blended and smooth.

In another bowl, mix together dry ingredients. Add dry ingredients to the molasses mixture and stir until you have soft dough.

Put about 1/2 c sugar in a shallow dish. Roll the dough into balls about the size of a walnut and then roll the balls in the sugar to coat them well.

Place the cookies about 5 cm apart on a greased cookie sheet.

Bake for 12-14 minutes, until just set around the edges. Makes about two dozen cookies.



Wishing you the *love* of family
and the *laughter* of friends
this holiday season and *always*.