



AUSTIN CAKE BALL



STICKY TOFFEE PUDDING COMPANY



LILY'S COOKIES



# BLISSFUL BITES

It's that magical time of year when tree trimming, winter fashion and decor, and traditional home cooking take center stage. Of course this cool and refreshing season isn't complete without a few holiday parties to keep things festive. If you're hosting a special seasonal event of your own, but don't want to the pressure of baking a delectable dessert from scratch, we've got a few ideas on some bite-sized treats that are sure to please both you and your guests. After all, nothing says "Happy Holidays" like a little something sweet.

## BITE-SIZE CAKES FROM AUSTIN CAKE BALL

If you like cake, but you don't want to serve it by the slice, Austin Cake Ball may just be your answer. This Austin-based boutique cake company makes it easy to enjoy a decadent piece of cake in one delectable bite. Although not an original concept—versions of cake balls can be found throughout the state—Austin Cake Ball was founded by married duo Stacey Bridges and Benjamin May, two creative and entrepreneuring minds that have used their artistic talents to design pocket-sized portions of cake dipped in an icing coating as the ideal bite-size dessert treat. Offered in a variety of regular flavors including red velvet, Italian cream, German chocolate, and carrot, to name a few, you can also enjoy seasonal flavors of these tasty pop-in-your-mouth morsels such as pumpkin spice, white chocolate peppermint and gingerbread. And though these little cakes are indeed delicious, they're also beautifully presented. Bridges, a self-proclaimed artist, hand decorates each cake ball to order covering a range of themes from holiday figures and football helmets to woodland creatures.

Serving Austin Cake Balls to guests means two things: 1) you get a no muss, no fuss dessert that makes a beautiful display. 2) They're small enough that you can try a few different flavors and not endure the guilt of eating too much cake. Cake Balls are made fresh to order and can be shipped just about anywhere in the United States in a sleek copper tin. (Those in the Austin area are encouraged to bring their tin back into the retail location to receive a discount on a Cake Ball refill.)



## DECORATIVE COOKIES FROM LILY'S COOKIES

www.lilyscookies.com

Nothing says the holidays like cookies. Especially when a cookie has been custom-designed for your event. There are a lot of cookie shops out there that will put out a cookie-cutter shape for you and add a little decorative icing, but Lily's Cookies in San Antonio is special. Created by Christine McCrae-Kelly, Lily's takes the art of cookie making to a different level. The shop itself is its own little cookie bar with jars upon jars of fresh baked cookies in flavors that range from classic chocolate chip to fragrant lavender shortbread and Mexican wedding. You can simply walk in and grab an assortment by the dozen.



"Right now my favorites are the Texas Honey made from a local honey farm, and the Ranger cookies which have oatmeal, pecans, coconut and cornflakes," says McCrae-Kelly who confesses her favorite flavors change with each passing season. "I sort of went through a process of trial and error to find the right recipes. I know if I can't stop eating them, we're on the right track."

Although McCrae-Kelly's daughter carries the namesake for this popular confectionary spot, the name actually bears a sentimental connection to the lilies-of-the-valley that grew in her grandmother's backyard in Indiana. This sweet sentimental streak translates to the meticulous effort she puts into the sugar cookies she decorates for the shop and for special orders. Not only are the cookies moist and flavorful, but the icing won't chip a tooth when you bite into it, as is the case with some commercial decorated cookies.



From snowflakes, wreaths and snowmen, to cowboy Santas, cowboy boots with Christmas-colored cacti, and Alamo-shaped cookies decked out for the holidays, McCrae-Kelly and her team of cookie makers can match just about any design you'd like for the winter season. She even does specialized monogram or company-logos for those that want to really make a mark with their signature event.

## ENGLISH PUDDING FROM THE STICKY TOFFEE PUDDING COMPANY

www.stickytoffeepuddingcompany.com



Add a little tradition from "across the pond" to your celebration with individual puddings from the Sticky Toffee Pudding Company. With a recipe directly from the Lake District of England, these rich and delicious desserts have been a British favorite for some time. Owner, Tracy Claros

has made quite an impression by bringing the old world tradition of her home region to Austin and the rest of the country. Having been featured in the New York Times, O Magazine, and US Weekly, these scrumptious little sweets have won a number of national awards including Gold in the 2010 Fancy Food Show in New York.



"I was ecstatic to receive this award," says Claros. "There's a bit of a battle in marking this type of dessert because a lot of people don't know what sticky toffee pudding is, so I have to put a lot of effort into demos and tastings. But once you taste it, it blows your mind."

When it comes to Sticky Toffee Pudding, think less J-E-L-L-O pudding snacks and more along the lines of a moist, dense cake soaked in rich toffee and served warm. And if you'd like to expand to offering a few different flavors, Claros has also developed Lemon English Pudding, Sticky Ginger Pudding, Warm Chocolate and Almond Pudding, a Molten Chocolate Baby Cake, and for the holidays, a traditional British Plum pudding.

Compliments of The Sticky Toffee Pudding Company, you can create your own delicious dessert at home.

## STEAMED GINGER PUDDING

- 1 cup flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- 1/4 cup stem ginger, chopped
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 stick soft butter
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 cup milk



Mix together the dry ingredients and butter by hand or in a mixer. Add the egg, milk and stem ginger, and mix well. Place mixture in a 2 pint pudding basin. Cover with cloth or foil and tie tightly with string. Stand in a pan with water half-way up the sides of the basin. Cover with a tight-fitting lid. Bring to a boil and simmer for 2 hours. Top up the pan with boiling water as necessary. Serve with some golden syrup and hot custard sauce.

## CRÈME ANGLAIS (HOT CUSTARD SAUCE)

- 1 1/2 cups of Half and Half
- 3 egg yolks
- 3 teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- Seeds from a vanilla bean or 1 tablespoon vanilla extract

Split vanilla bean in half and scrape out seeds. Slowly heat cream and vanilla in a saucepan. Whisk together egg yolks, sugar and cornstarch. Slowly whisk cream into yolks and return to pan. Heat gently, whisking, and simmer until thickened.

Serve warm on Sticky Toffee or Sticky Ginger Pudding. This is also lovely on pies and cobbler. ❖