ZESTY GINGER CASHEWS

1 tbsp (15 mL) sugar
1 tbsp (15 mL) hot water
1 tbsp (15 mL) grated fresh ginger
2 tsp (10 mL) soy sauce
1 tsp (5 mL) grated lime peel
1 tsp (5 mL) red pepper flakes
1/2 tsp (2 mL) garlic powder
2 cups (500 mL) salted roasted cashews
1 tbsp (15 mL) golden granulated sugar crystals

Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper or nonstick foil. Combine first 7 ingredients (sugar through garlic powder) in a bowl, stirring to dissolve sugar. Add cashews and stir to coat with sugar mixture. Add sugar crystals and stir gently to coat cashews. Spread cashew mixture in a single layer in prepared pan. Bake at 325ºF (160ºC), stirring twice, for 20 minutes or until cashews are richly glazed; cool. Store in an airtight container in a cool dry place for up to 1 week or freeze for up to 1 month. Makes 2 cups (500 mL).

Cook’s Note: There are several brands of golden granulated sugar crystals available in grocery stores. Some brands are Rogers Plantation Raw, Kraft Sugar in the Raw Natural Cane Turbinado Sugar and Taikoo Golden Granulated Sugar.

POPPIN’ JALAPENO DIP

A real crowd-pleaser! Tastes like jalapeno poppers in a dip.

16 oz (500 g) cream cheese, softened
1 cup (250 mL) mayonnaise
1/4 tsp (1 mL) garlic powder
1/4 cup (50 mL) freshly grated Parmesan cheese
1 can (114 mL) diced green chilies, drained
1/4 cup (50 mL) chopped drained pickled jalapeno peppers
Ground ancho chile pepper or paprika

Using medium speed of an electric mixer, beat together cream cheese, mayonnaise and garlic powder until blended. Stir in green chilies and jalapeno peppers. Spoon mixture into a microwave-safe 9 inch (23 cm) deep-dish pie plate. Top with Parmesan cheese. Sprinkle with ancho chile pepper. May be prepared to this point and refrigerated for up to 24 hours. Remove from refrigerator and let stand for 20 - 30 minutes. Microwave, uncovered, on high (100% power) for 3 - 4 minutes or until heated through. Serve with tortilla chips. Serves 8 - 10.

MEATBALLS WITH PEPPER JELLY SAUCE

2 lb (1 kg) lean ground beef
1/3 cup (75 mL) soft fresh bread crumbs
1/3 cup (75 mL) finely chopped onion
2 cloves garlic, crushed
3/4 tsp (3 mL) salt
1/2 tsp (2 mL) ground coriander
1/8 tsp (0.5 mL) hot pepper sauce
1 egg, lightly beaten
Pepper Jelly Sauce, recipe follows

Line a large rimmed baking sheet with foil. Combine all ingredients except Pepper Jelly Sauce until well blended. Shape mixture into 1 inch (2.5 cm) balls. Place meatballs on a rack in prepared pan. Bake at 375ºF (190ºC) for 35 - 40 minutes or until completely cooked. Cooked meatballs may be frozen for up to 1 month. Combine hot meatballs with Pepper Jelly Sauce. Makes about 80.

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PEPPER JELLY SAUCE

1 cup (250 mL) red pepper jelly  
2 tbsp (25 mL) cornstarch  
1 tsp (5 mL) salt  
1/2 tsp (2 mL) ground ginger  
1/2 tsp (2 mL) garlic powder  
1/8 tsp (0.5 mL) hot pepper sauce  
2/3 cup (150 mL) cranberry cocktail

Combine all ingredients except cranberry cocktail in a medium saucepan. Gradually stir in cranberry cocktail. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Cook, stirring constantly, until thickened, about 1 - 2 minutes. Do not freeze.

LAYERED SHRIMP AND SALSA DIP

8 oz (250 g) cream cheese, softened  
1/8 tsp (0.5 mL) garlic powder  
1/8 tsp (0.5 mL) hot pepper sauce  
1 cup (250 mL) medium salsa  
2 tbsp (25 mL) chopped fresh cilantro  
1 1/2 cups (375 mL) coarsely chopped cooked shrimp  
2 tbsp (25 mL) thinly sliced green onion

Using medium speed of an electric mixer, beat together cream cheese, garlic powder and hot pepper sauce until blended. Spread cream cheese mixture over bottom of a shallow 6 inch (15 cm) serving dish. Combine salsa and cilantro. Spoon over cream cheese mixture. Sprinkle shrimp over salsa mixture. Top with green onion. Serve with crackers or tortilla chips. Serves 6 - 8.

RANCHERO WINGS

1/4 cup (50 mL) apple cider vinegar  
2 tbsp (25 mL) oil  
1 tbsp (15 mL) hot pepper sauce  
1 envelope (3/4 oz/21 g) creamy ranch salad dressing mix  
1/2 tsp (2 mL) paprika  
3 lb (1.5 kg) chicken wing drumettes

To prepare marinade, combine all ingredients except chicken in a heavy zip-lock plastic bag. Add chicken and squeeze bag to coat chicken with marinade. Seal bag and place on a plate. Refrigerate, turning bag occasionally, for at least 8 hours or up to 24 hours. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with nonstick foil. Remove chicken from marinade; discard marinade. Place chicken in a single layer in prepared pan. Bake, uncovered, at 375ºF (190ºC), stirring occasionally, for 1 - 1 1/4 hours or until wings are golden brown. May be frozen for up to 1 month. Makes about 40.

CHOCOLATE POPCORN AND NUT CRUNCH

25 cups (6.25 L) popped popcorn  
1 1/2 cups (375 mL) natural whole almonds, toasted  
1 1/2 cups (375 mL) pecan halves, toasted  
1 cup (250 mL) sugar  
1 cup (250 mL) white corn syrup  
1/2 cup (125 mL) butter  
1/4 cup (50 mL) unsweetened cocoa powder  
1 tsp (5 mL) salt

Line a large roasting pan with nonstick foil. Place popcorn, almonds and pecans in prepared pan. Combine sugar, corn syrup, butter, cocoa and salt in a medium heavy saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Cook, stirring frequently, until butter is melted and mixture is smooth. Pour over popcorn mixture and stir to combine. Bake at 200ºF (100ºC), stirring every 15 minutes, for 1 hour or until popcorn mixture is glazed and crisp. Cool in pan on a rack. Store in an airtight container in a cool dry place for up to 1 week or freeze for up to 6 weeks. Makes about 30 cups (7.5 L).

Cook’s Note: 1 1/4 cups (300 mL) unpopped popcorn = 25 cups (6.25 L) popped popcorn

Safety Matters

Use the 2 Hour Rule both at home and while shopping. This rule states that all perishable foods must be refrigerated or frozen within 2 hours of purchase or preparation. Any perishable foods that have been left at room temperature for longer than these times should be discarded.

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