

8 Easy Make-Ahead Holiday Breakfasts

By Brette Sember | December 16, 2015 | 9:00am

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When you think of the perfect holiday morning, you probably think of family or friends gathered together, mugs of warm beverages, enticing smells, candles, fronds of evergreen, and a winter scene out the window. You do not envision standing over a stove, sweating and cooking like a frenzied short order cook. It's possible to have a beautiful holiday breakfast without spending the entire morning in the kitchen. Use these ideas for make-ahead breakfasts and you can sit back and enjoy the company.

Scones

There's something about scones that makes them more elegant and upscale than other breakfast breads. Bake a batch of scones up to a week in advance and freeze, then defrost and reheat in the morning. You can also make and shape scone dough the evening before and bake it fresh the following morning. Your basic scone recipe can easily be tweaked to be festive with the addition of cinnamon and nutmeg, white chocolate chunks, dried cranberries, or pecans. Serve some whipped cream and strawberry jam on the side and you've got a luscious spread.

Cinnamon Rolls

Nothing says extravagance like cinnamon rolls, but you're not about to get up before dawn to

work with yeast. Prepare the dough the two days before and let it rise in the fridge. Then all you have to do is roll and slice the rolls before a final overnight rise in the fridge. Pop them in the oven when you wake up in the morning. Make the icing the day before, too, and pull it out to come to temperature when you put the rolls in the oven. Pour it over the hot rolls for a gooey and sticky treat.

Breakfast Casseroles

Baking a breakfast casserole the day before and refrigerating it means all you have to do in the morning is heat it up to have a complete breakfast. There are tons of options. You could start with a layer of hash browns, English muffins, or Texas toast. Add veggies like spinach and tomato, chilies and cooked diced butternut squash, or mushrooms and peppers. Ham, Canadian bacon, or crumbled sausage with cheese of your choice (Swiss, cheddar, or Monterey Jack) will blend well with the scrambled egg and milk mixture you pour over it all. A bowl of berries is the perfect accompaniment.

Overnight French Toast

This dish is so incredibly easy but oh so good. Spray a glass baking dish and mix up eggs with cream or eggnog and add flavors like vanilla, peppermint, or orange extract along with cinnamon or nutmeg. Pour half in the pan. Place thick slices of brioche (or get creative and use banana bread) on top and pour the rest of the egg mixture over it. Sprinkle with some nuts if you like. Refrigerate overnight then pop it in the oven when you get up in the morning. Serve with powdered sugar and warm maple syrup.

Creative Quick Breads

Quick breads can be made a day ahead and then warmed, sliced, and sprinkled with powdered sugar. Try poppy seed bread, bread with pomegranate seeds and walnuts, pumpkin bread with mini chocolate chips, or a gingerbread loaf with pieces of candied ginger. Make several types in mini loaf pans so you can present a pretty plate with variety. Hot chocolate is the perfect drink to go with it.

Quiche

Buy a pre-made crust, bake up your quiche the day before, then cool and refrigerate. There are all sorts of options for flavors: bacon and spinach, broccoli and cheddar, mushroom and kale, pepperoni and chard, ham and asparagus. Warm the quiche before serving. It goes well with smoothies, which you can make and freeze ahead and then just whir again in the blender.

Donut Muffins

Baked donut muffins are a special treat, particularly if you bite into them and find a center filled with jelly or cream. They're easy to make ahead. For jelly-filled, just fill each muffin cup three-quarters full and make a well. Fill with a dab of jelly, then cover with more batter and bake. For a pudding or cream filling, bake first, then make a hole through the top and scoop some muffin out. Pipe the filling in the hole, covering the top with a chocolate glaze. The muffins can be made a day in advance and stored in a plastic food storage container. Refrigerate any with cream or pudding. You've got to have coffee with donuts—try offering eggnog lattes.

Monkey Bread

A sweet breakfast is a snap if you make monkey bread with canned biscuit dough. Make each biscuit into a ball and dip in melted butter and cinnamon and sugar. Nestle them into a Bundt pan, pour the rest of the butter, cinnamon and sugar on top and decorate with candied cherries. Bake and store at room temperature until breakfast time when you can warm it up. A plate of assorted melon goes well with this.

Brette Sember is the author of The Original Muffin Tin Cookbook and Cookie: A Love Story. Her website is www.BretteSember.com.

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