

DRAFT





## Coconut Rum Plantains – Serves 6

*This is a great tasting, inexpensive, and somewhat unusual dessert. If you've never tried plantains, you're in for a tender, creamy, slightly banana-scented treat. Starchier than bananas, plantains need to be cooked (or they'll taste bitter). In the Southern hemisphere, plantains often are served as a main dish staple rather than as a dessert. Baking the plantains—especially with brown sugar, spices, and orange juice—intensifies their sweetness. My recipe calls for rum extract, which is less expensive than rum, but if you want the real stuff, go ahead. A dusting of coconut added during the last 5 minutes of baking toasts up to a crunchy nuttiness and adds to the tropical flavor of the dessert. The baked plantains are fine “as is,” but if you want to cool them, try a little low-fat vanilla frozen yogurt or ice cream. Or, if you want to keep with a tropical theme, a little coconut ice cream would be nice.*

*3 large, blackish plantains, peeled and sliced in half, lengthwise (you may need to use a paring knife to slit and peel them—the skins are tougher than those on bananas)*

*3 tablespoons of brown sugar*

*1 teaspoon of cinnamon*

*¼ teaspoon of nutmeg*

*¼ cup of orange juice*

*1 teaspoon of rum extract*

*2 tablespoons of water*

*1 tablespoon of butter, melted*

*¼ cup of shredded coconut*



*Preheat the oven to 375 degrees and coat a casserole dish (roughly 8 x 11 inches or big enough to hold six plantain halves) with nonstick cooking spray. Place the plantains, cut side down on the pan. In a small bowl or cup, combine the brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, orange juice, rum extract, water, and butter and set the mixture aside. Bake*

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*the plantains for 15 minutes. Flip the plantains over and pour the brown sugar mixture on top of them. Bake the plantains for another 10 minutes until soft and golden.*

*Sprinkle them with the coconut and bake the plantains for another 5 minutes or until the coconut is just starting to brown. Let the plantains cool for at least 5 minutes before serving them.*





## December 11

*Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

*Luke 1: 72-79*

This is the continuing story reminding us of our Old Testament roots beginning with Abram and Sarai. And how do we prepare our own hearts, in our own times, to recognize what God has done? Today in Advent, how will we see the Advent of God's grace? How will we interpret it in our homes, our workplaces? "Through days of preparation, thy grace has made us strong."



# **DRAFT** In the Kitchen, December 11

*Simple Salad*

*Baked Chicken Quarters*

*Green Beans*

*Maple Crunch Apples*

*This really is a dinner you can prepare, put in the oven, and leave to cook while you read the newspaper (or this book) or even take your evening shower and don your bunny slippers. For a salad, simply toss some lettuce greens of your choice with some tomatoes, onions, and a bit of feta cheese. Add a tablespoon or two of lemon juice, a tablespoon of olive oil, and a grind of lemon pepper. You now have a salad. Steam the green beans—fresh or frozen—in the microwave. You can bake the chicken and maple crunch apples at the same time, or put the apples in the oven to cook while you eat your chicken. The apples need about 40 minutes to bake. Either way, the aroma of the chicken and apples will be incredible! Let the apples stand until they reach room temperature or serve them warm with low-fat frozen yogurt or ice cream to cool them. This low work, inexpensive, and delicious menu also would be wonderful for guests.*





## Baked Chicken Quarters – Serves 4+

*The aroma of the lemon, herbs, and garlic baking with chicken and vegetables will make your mouth water, otherwise this meal requires little attention on your part, leaving you free to do other things. This is an inexpensive recipe that incorporates little potatoes—whatever type you like—to make dinner extra simple. You also can add carrots to the mix to avoid making an extra vegetable, but I recommend cooking the carrots a little first in the microwave before adding them, as they tend to take longer to become tender. If you'd prefer smaller pieces of chicken, you can cut up the chicken quarters or use a combination of already cut up legs and thighs. Go for what's on sale, but don't remove the skin from the chicken until you eat it—it will keep the meat moist and tasty. The recipe calls for dried herbs. Nonetheless, if you have fresh ones on hand, please use those--just double or triple the amounts.*

*4 chicken leg quarters with skin attached (3-5 pounds)*

*Zest and juice of 1 lemon*

*1 lemon sliced and seeded*

*1 teaspoon of garlic powder*

*2 teaspoons of dried oregano leaves*

*1-2 teaspoons of dried rosemary*

*1 teaspoon of dried parsley*

*1 teaspoon of dried thyme*

*½ teaspoon of pepper*

*1 teaspoon of salt*

*½ cup of water*

*1-2 tablespoons of olive oil or olive oil mist*

*15-20 small potatoes, washed well (fingerling, red, or whatever you have)*

*1 onion sliced*

*16 ounces of carrots, cut up (or use a bag of baby carrots) (optional)*





*Coat a large casserole dish or 9 x 13-inch pan with non-stick cooking spray. Add the chicken pieces to the pan and drizzle them with lemon juice. Sprinkle on the lemon zest, the garlic powder, oregano, rosemary, parsley, thyme, pepper, and salt. Lay the slices of lemon on top of the chicken. Add the potatoes, onion, and carrots (if you want) around the chicken. Drizzle or mist the chicken well with olive oil. For more flavor, let the chicken sit with the lemon/herb marinade for half an hour (not essential, but good). Bake the chicken for about an hour until the meat is very tender, the juices run clear, the skin is crispy, and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the chicken reads 165 degrees. Let the chicken stand for 5 minutes before serving it with the vegetables.*





## Maple Crunch Apples – Serves 4

*This is a great family dessert—quick, easy, and comforting. If they are lucky and you make it for them, your guests will enjoy the dessert, too. The apples bake up soft and fragrant with just a hint of sweet maple. The topping adds a welcome sweet crunch with warm cinnamon and allspice. Serve the apples with a bit of low-fat whipped topping or ice cream. Don't forget to spoon some of the juices from the baked apples on top!*

*2 large cooking apples, peeled, cored, and cut in half, from top to bottom*

*1 tablespoon of melted butter or Smart or Earth Balance*

*1 tablespoon of maple syrup*

### *Topping*

*2 tablespoons of brown sugar*

*1 tablespoon of butter*

*½ teaspoon of cinnamon*

*¼ teaspoon of allspice*

*1 tablespoon of flour*

*1 tablespoon of oats (quick or regular)*

*2 tablespoons of pecans, chopped*



*Preheat the oven to 400 degrees and coat an 8-inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Cut, starting at one edge of an apple half, almost but not all the way down to the bottom (where you removed the core). Continue to cut the apple at 1/8 inch or so intervals. The idea is to make thin slices without cutting all the way through the apple. Fan the apple half out a bit and put it in the prepared dish. Repeat the process with the other apple halves. Drizzle each apple half with a little butter and maple syrup. Bake the apples for 30 minutes or until they're tender. Combine all the topping ingredients to form big crumbs. Sprinkle the topping crumbs on the baked apples, squishing some of*