

food
network

magazine

COOK LIKE A STAR!



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APPETIZERS



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PASTA



Melissa's
CHRISTMAS
TEA PARTY



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FUN!
Christmas
Cookies

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Tea Time

Melissa d'Arabian invites us over for a Christmas tradition: her annual mother-daughter tea party.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES BAIGRIE



It's a blustery December morning in Seattle, and Melissa d'Arabian's four girls are bouncing off the walls, buzzing on a sugar high that can only be attained when there's a chocolate fountain in the house. The fountain is always a favorite part of their annual mother-daughter holiday tea party, a tradition Melissa's mom started more than 30 years ago. It's not a formal party, but there are rules: No boys allowed—with the exception of Melissa's husband, Philippe, who keeps the buffet stocked. "I used to play tennis during the tea," he says. "But I kept having to play a bigger role. One year I was the valet!" The doorbell rings, and as guests stream in, Melissa offers everyone tea, seeming totally relaxed. The *Ten Dollar Dinners* host has figured out the secret to entertaining, and it's not a flawless pie crust. "What's important is to make people feel welcome," she says. "My mom taught me that it's better to greet people than to be in the kitchen finishing the perfect dish."

Above: Melissa with her daughters, clockwise from top left: Valentine, 6, Charlotte, 5, Margaux, 4, and Océane, 4.



"This torte is inspired by my mother-in-law. I like having her presence here in the food."

POTATO-BACON TORTE

ACTIVE: 50 min | TOTAL: 2 hr 25 min | SERVES: 6 to 8

FOR THE CRUST

- 2 sticks cold unsalted butter, cubed
- 2¾ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 1 teaspoon fine salt

- 1 cup heavy cream
 - 3 sprigs thyme, plus leaves for topping (optional)
 - 3 medium baking potatoes, peeled
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

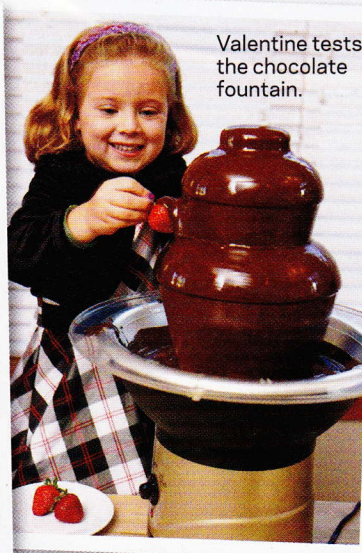
FOR THE FILLING

- 4 strips bacon

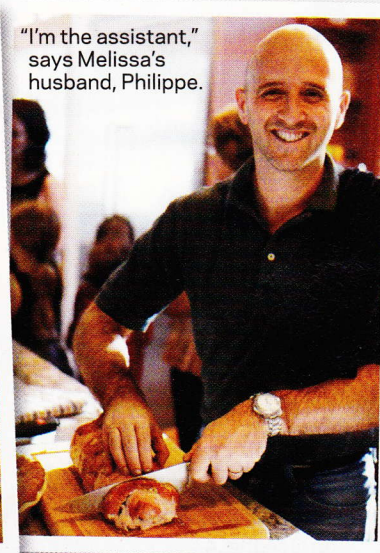
- ¾ cup grated gruyère cheese
- 1 large egg yolk

- 1.** Make the crust: Pulse the butter, flour and fine salt in a food processor until the mixture looks like wet sand. Add 8 to 10 tablespoons ice water, 1 tablespoon at a time, pulsing after each addition, until the dough just begins to clump together. Divide the dough between 2 resealable plastic bags and pat into disks. Refrigerate at least 30 minutes.
- 2.** Roll out 1 disk of dough into a 10-inch round on a floured surface. Fit the dough into a 9-inch pie plate and refrigerate.
- 3.** Make the filling: Preheat the oven to 375°. Cook the bacon in a skillet over medium heat until crisp; drain on paper towels. Let cool, then crumble.
- 4.** Bring the cream and thyme sprigs to a bare simmer in a saucepan over low heat. Remove from the heat; let steep 5 minutes. Remove the thyme.
- 5.** Slice the potatoes in half lengthwise, then thinly slice crosswise. Remove the pie plate from the refrigerator. Add a layer of potato slices over the dough in a circular pattern, overlapping; season with kosher salt and pepper and sprinkle with about one-quarter of the bacon. Continue layering until the pan is nearly full. Top evenly with the gruyère. Gently pour the cream over the torte, allowing it to seep down between the potato slices.
- 6.** Roll out the remaining disk of dough into a 10-inch round on a floured surface. Lay the dough over the filling; press the edges of the 2 crusts together and crimp them closed. Beat the egg yolk with a splash of water and brush on the top crust. With a sharp knife, cut a few slits in the center of the crust to let steam escape. Put the torte on a baking sheet and bake until the crust is browned and the potatoes are cooked through, 50 minutes to 1 hour. (Cover the edges with foil if they brown too quickly.) Let rest at least 15 minutes before cutting into wedges. Top with thyme leaves.

"I want to give my daughters a sense of tradition."



Valentine tests the chocolate fountain.



"I'm the assistant," says Melissa's husband, Philippe.

WHITE CHOCOLATE- MASCARPONE BUTTER

MAKES: about 1 cup

- ¼ cup white chocolate chips
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- ¼ cup mascarpone cheese

Put the white chocolate chips and vegetable oil in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring, until melted; let cool. Add the butter and mascarpone to the white chocolate mixture and beat with a mixer until combined. Chill before serving.

SWEET CREAM

MAKES: about 1 cup

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1 tablespoon packed light brown sugar

Beat the cream cheese, sour cream and brown sugar in a bowl with a mixer until smooth. Chill before serving.

Melissa keeps everything simple: These spreads can be made ahead.



BUTTERMILK SCONES

ACTIVE: 20 min | TOTAL: 35 min | MAKES: 12 scones

- 2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 6 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 2 tablespoons dry buttermilk powder (available in the baking aisle)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh rosemary (optional)
- ½ cup mini chocolate chips (optional)
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons coarse brown sugar

- 1.** Preheat the oven to 425°. Line a baking sheet with parchment. Whisk the flour, granulated sugar, baking powder, baking soda, dry buttermilk and salt in a medium bowl. Add the rosemary and/or chocolate chips. In a small bowl, whisk the melted butter, vanilla and 1 cup cream. Stir the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients until just combined. Turn the dough out onto a floured surface and knead until smooth, about 1 minute.
- 2.** Divide the dough into 2 balls; roll out each ball into a ½-to-¾-inch-thick disk. Brush the tops of the disks with the remaining 2 tablespoons cream, then sprinkle with the coarse sugar. Cut each disk into 6 wedges. Transfer to the prepared baking sheet and bake until golden brown, 12 to 16 minutes. Transfer to a rack to cool.