

# Homemade Irish Cream- a DIY gift people REALLY want!



This homemade Irish cream is the closest many of us will ever come to bringing about world peace. Trust me, you thought the Irish cream was good before, but you had no idea. Make up a big vat of this stuff, put it in pretty bottles and give it out as gifts, bring it to parties, or just put some in a flask for yourself to get you through, whatever, and you will have created more love and happiness than you ever thought possible. I've been making this for years, and everyone who tastes it goes nuts. I even did shots of it with my grandma once!

This would be amazing in coffee, although none has ever made

it to the next morning when I've made it so I've never actually tried it. We usually just put it in little glasses and drink it straight, and before we know it, it's gone. It keeps for a long time in the fridge due to the whiskey content, so don't worry about it going bad on you... not that you're likely to have it long. I also never used to add the almond extract because I didn't want to buy it, so if you don't have any and don't want to buy it, this will taste fine without it.

This is super easy to make, and aside from the whiskey, cheap. I bought a great big bottle of Jamison at Costco that will last for many years and batches. The ingredients cost me about \$10 to make a liter. Compared to pre-bottled Bailey's at \$20 a bottle (for only 3/4 of a liter), it's definitely a steal. Add another dollar or so for a mason jar and some pretty ribbon, and you've got a perfect \$10-ish DIY Christmas gift that (most) people would love to receive!

#### Homemade Irish Cream

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 3/4 cup Irish whiskey
- 1 t instant coffee granules
- 2 T chocolate syrup
- 1 t vanilla extract
- 1/2 t almond extract

Place all ingredients in blender and blend on high for 30 seconds or until ingredients are well combined. Store in airtight container in refrigerator. Shake well before serving.

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# Not Your Mom's Steak-Flavored Make-Ahead Meatloaf



Confession: I don't like meatloaf. Old-fashioned meatloaf always seemed to be kind of dry and flavorless, and sometimes it's topped with ketchup... yuck. But, I came up with this steak-flavored meatloaf when I was a poor college student because I needed a cheap way to enjoy my beloved A.1. steak sauce. I couldn't afford actual steaks, and putting it on hamburger patties didn't do it for me. So, I tried making meat loaf with it, and it was love.

Then the paleo craze started, and I began to see recipes for paleo meat loaf that replaced the bread with veggies. I decided to try it, and... wow. All meat loaf should be paleo!

It was incredibly light, juicy and flavorful and absolutely delicious!! I haven't made meatloaf any other way since then.

My recipe allows you to use your favorite steak sauce and seasoning. For the steak sauce, I use A1, which I have loved since I was a teeny tiny kid. My favorite seasoning is [Dove Chocolate Discoveries Sweet N Spicy Cocoa Rub](#). Dove Chocolate Discoveries products are only available through their "chocolatiers," kind of like Tupperware or Mary Kay, but their products will have you drooling! I throw the cocoa rub in to just about anything with ground beef. I like to add it to chili, veggie dip, Chex mix and bloody Marys ☐ I realize, though, that most people are not going to be purchasing this particular seasoning, so please use whatever you like to use on your steaks. I know McCormick makes several good steak seasonings that are available anywhere.

This is best as a make-ahead recipe. Meat loaf takes about an hour in the oven and it does take a little time to prep before you bake. I like to make the loaf up on Sunday and then stick it in the fridge or freezer to bake later in the week. If you opt to freeze it, just move it to the fridge the night before you want to have it.

To chop the veggies, if you have a food processor, use it!! This recipe will take you 5 minutes if you do it that way. If not, don't worry, it will only take a few extra minutes.

Because you are adding so many veggies, this makes a huge loaf- you have to use an 8x8 pan instead of a loaf pan. It will be about half veggies. It will be very, very juicy and may fall apart. Totally ok with me- it tastes sooo good.

#### Not Your Mom's Steak-Flavored Make-Ahead Meatloaf

- 1 lb lean ground beef
- 1/2 cup carrots, finely chopped
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 cup baby bella mushrooms, finely chopped

- 2 eggs
- 1/2 T minced garlic
- 1/4 cup Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 cup steak sauce, divided
- 1/2 T steak seasoning
- salt and pepper to taste

Spray 8×8 casserole dish with cooking spray. In large bowl, mix ground beef, carrots, onion, mushrooms, eggs, garlic, Worcestershire sauce, 1/4 cup steak sauce, steak seasoning, and salt and pepper until well combined. Spread evenly in casserole dish. Drizzle with remaining 1/4 cup steak sauce. Cover with airtight lid and refrigerate or freeze until ready to bake.

When ready to bake, preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake thawed meatloaf for 60-75 minutes or until internal temperature is 160 degrees and loaf is cooked through.

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## **Slutty Brownies**



So, I said I'd share the occasional dessert, and trust me, these are your new favorite brownies. "Brownies" is hardly a fair description for these- the bottom layer is chocolate chip cookie, the middle layer is double stuffed Oreo, and only the top is actually brownie. Bring these to any potluck, bake sale, or to work just because and they WILL be gone.

I first saw these on [thelondoner.me](http://thelondoner.me). The London-based blogger had named them "slutty" because, in her words, "they're oh so easy, and more than a little bit filthy." I suppose if you're going to be bringing these to church or your kid's school bake sale, you may want to re-name them. Maybe just Oreo chocolate chip cookie brownies? Definitely doesn't have the same appeal.

The other issue with the recipe from The Londoner was that she used British baking mixes, which must be smaller than ours (go figure) because when she made her brownies in an 8x8 pan, they came out ok. Mine were like, five inches thick and raw! At the time, hers was the only recipe for Slutty brownies on the

internet, so I had to figure out the American version for myself. I also got a laugh because she calls for "2 packs of Oreos- double stuffed if you can find them". And pictured are two little sleeves of Oreos. Haha... no wonder we are so much fatter than everyone else. One American pack of Oreos is more than enough to fill a 9x13 pan, not the 8x8 pan she used, and you can find double stuffed and about 18 other varieties of Oreos anywhere here!

If you aren't a big fan of Oreos, of course you could stick all sorts of things in the middle of these brownies instead.. Reese's peanut butter cups, Snickers, caramels, etc. I'm a huge fan of Oreos, though, so I doubt I'll ever try this recipe with anything else!

One more thing- I only bake with real butter. Resist the temptation to use margarine, or shortening, or vegetable oil, even if the mix calls for it. Whatever brownie mix you use will probably call for vegetable oil. Replace this with melted butter! Seriously! It works just fine and tastes soooo much better. If you're going to go to the trouble of baking, don't ruin it with flavorless oil.

## Slutty Brownies

- 1 box brownie mix (Duncan Hines is my favorite)
- 1 bag chocolate chip cookie mix
- butter to prepare cookie and brownie mixes
- eggs to prepare cookie and brownie mixes
- 1 package Double-Stuf Oreos

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 9x13 pan with cooking spray. In a large mixing bowl, prepare cookie dough according to cookie mix directions and set aside. In a separate large mixing bowl, prepare brownie batter according to brownie mix directions and set aside. Spread cookie dough evenly in bottom of 9x13 pan. Lay the Oreos on top of the cookie dough

layer in the pan, packing them as close together as you can. Pour the brownie batter evenly over the top of the Oreos so that the Oreos and cookie dough is completely covered. Bake at 350 for 35-40 minutes or until fork inserted into center of brownies comes out clean. Allow brownies to cool completely and cut into 24 pieces.

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## **10-Minute Blackened Cajun Tilapia**



Who here ate too much Halloween candy this year? I sure did!



We had a lot of trick or treaters, but they barely made a dent in our Costco-sized bag of mixed Fun-sized candy bars. I also decided to throw some Kashi trail mix bars we weren't eating in to the basket for the kids to take if they were actually interested in eating healthy on Halloween, and just about every kid took one! Weird kids these days, I tell ya!

After ~~gorging ourselves~~ enjoying a little more of the leftover candy than we should have this past week, we were ready for this light, healthy fish!

This recipe originally came from [gimmesomeoven.com](http://gimmesomeoven.com). My version uses Old Bay seasoning, which is a type of cajun seasoning, and is basically the greatest seasoning ever! If you don't want to buy Old Bay brand, any cajun seasoning will work, but Old Bay is the best, in my opinion. Seriously... use it in just about anything and people will go nuts and say it's the best they've ever tasted. I've used it in Chex Mix, chili, black bean soup, veggie dip, shrimp scampi, Alfredo sauce, bloody Marys, on popcorn... I could go on all day. It is a bit too spicy to use by itself, so I "watered" it down a bit with oregano, garlic and thyme. The results were fabulous... we wolfed our fish right down!

You are going to use a LOT of seasoning for this recipe. The tilapia fillets will be coated, but the flavor won't be too strong once cooked because the seasonings will be blackened. I used about a tablespoon of seasoning per fillet.

I served this with a side of oven sweet potato fries. The recipe for those is on my old recipe blog [here](#). This link gives you a recipe for Old Bay mayo dipping sauce too ☐ I also made a side of steamed mixed green beans and carrots with butter, salt and pepper. You don't need anything too elaborate to pair with this fish, as it is quite flavorful. A side of dirty rice and collard greens might have been nice too though!

If you have one, use a cast iron skillet. If you don't that's ok, just get your skillet and oil as hot as you can before you add the fish.

To make this recipe paleo, swap the olive oil for coconut oil.

### 10-Minute Blackened Cajun Tilapia

- 4 Tilapia Fillets
- 1/4 cup Old Bay or other cajun seasoning
- 1 T garlic powder
- 1 T dried oregano leaf
- 1 T dried thyme
- 1/2 t salt
- 1/4 cup olive oil, divided

In small bowl, combine Old Bay seasoning, garlic, oregano, thyme, and salt. Spread seasoning in bottom of pie dish or other shallow dish. Brush tilapia fillets with olive oil. Dredge both sides of each tilapia fillet in seasoning. Heat oil in large frying pan over high heat. When pan is hot, cook tilapia fillets over high heat 3 minutes on each side until fish is opaque and flaky. Remove from pan and server immediately after cooking.

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## Slow Cooker Korean Barbecue Tacos



This is quite possibly the easiest dinner recipe I will ever feature, because a meal cannot possibly be less work to make than this. I spent like 3 minutes total preparing these tacos. No joke!

For those readers who are lucky enough to have been to the amazing [Tacopocalypse](#)— an Asian fusion Mexican restaurant in Des Moines, the idea of Korean barbecue tacos is not foreign to you. I had never tasted Korean barbecue (also known as bulgogi) before eating there, but it was love at first bite.

For those of you who haven't tried it, the sauce reminds me of the sauce on Chinese sesame chicken, but the meat is not deep-fat fried so I don't feel like I'm going to have a heart attack after I eat it. Unfortunately, Tacopocalypse is two hours away from Iowa City, where we live, and also not the healthiest place to eat, so I knew I needed to find a more healthful way to get my Korean barbecue taco fix at home.

I found this delicious-looking recipe at [itsalwaysautumn.com](#).

My version of the recipe is similar, but with some time-saving alterations. I used the same Campbell's Sweet Korean

BBQ Slow Cooker sauce that she did, but I have also used Target's Archer Farms brand sauce in the past and liked it just as well. Also note that you can use pork or beef roast, or even chicken if you want. I actually used beef stew meat and it tasted amazing. There's really no wrong way to do this!

I topped my tacos with fresh fruit salsa and broccoli slaw. The original recipe has you prepare your own fresh fruit salsa from pineapple. That seemed too time-consuming and some people don't like pineapple. I agree that fresh fruit salsa would taste better than a jarred salsa. Luckily, Costco actually sells a fresh mango salsa, so this is what I used.

If you'd rather make your own, use the original recipe in the link above. I also use Green Giant's broccoli slaw rather than the shredded cabbage the original recipe calls for because I find shredded cabbage can get a little soggy in these tacos, and because I've always heard that darker colored produce is more nutritious than lighter colors- broccoli is darker green than cabbage, so broccoli wins!

For side dishes to go with this, I made a bag of Asian coleslaw and brown rice with soy sauce and Sriracha. Simple chips and salsa would also taste great too.

### Korean Barbecue Tacos

- 2 lb pork roast, beef roast, stew meat or chicken
- 13-16 oz Korean BBQ sauce (1 packet or jar)
- 6 inch corn tortillas
- broccoli slaw
- Fruit salsa- fresh if you can find it

Place meat and sauce in slow cooker and cook on low for 8-10 hours or until meat is cooked through and can be easily shredded. Shred meat in crock pot and mix with sauce. To assemble tacos, spoon meat and sauce into tortillas, and top with broccoli slaw and fruit salsa.