

Private Chef, Catering & Cooking Classes

I'd be delighted to help you with any and all of your celebrations.

Join Me Around the Table for an Eat Well-Do Good Dinner! Support the fight against Alzheimer's Disease & Enjoy delicious food & fun!

Treat Yourself to an Around the Table Chef's Apron

Cook like a chef or just look like one!

You can find lots more information on the web at [www.susannye.com](http://www.susannye.com) and [www.susannye.wordpress.com](http://www.susannye.wordpress.com)

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**Christmas is a wonderful time of year.** Sure there is more than a little chaos, madness even, but that's part of the fun. I love all the different traditions, big and small, old and new. Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without our favorite carols, tried and true family rituals and favorite decorations. Not to mention some of those once-a-year sweet treats.

**One way or another, pretty much everyone ends up in the kitchen during December.** For some, the cooking is nonstop. With cookies by the gross and special holiday cakes and pies, their kitchens are a warm and cozy haven of sugar and spice. Others make one and only one special recipe. Maybe it's great, great, great Grandpa's punch, Aunt Millie's stollen or Mémé's Bûche de Noël. It doesn't matter that tastes have changed. So what if you prefer a martini over punch or have sworn off desserts. You continue to make that one special treat year after year. Passed down from generation to generation, it's tradition!

**But what about those people who never bake. People like my mother.** Mum was the master of the thirty minute meal. Our birthday cakes came from mixes and cookies were sliced off a roll. Except at Christmas. That's when she pulled out her box of carefully collected but rarely used recipe cards and baked one of Aunt Anna's Pecan Pies. It's also when she dedicated an afternoon to making and decorating cookies, first with my sister, Brenda and me and later with my brother.

**We didn't spend days on end in the kitchen or bake hundreds of cookies. A few warm, wonderful hours were more than enough.** We stuck to the basics, a simple batch of sugar cookies. With the little portable radio playing Christmas carols in the background, we mixed and rolled, cut out and baked a couple dozen cookies. When we were little we sprinkled them with red or green sugar and slide them into the oven. Once we reached eight or ten, Mum threw caution to the wind and let us decorate them with brightly colored royal icing. I can't imagine that Brenda and I didn't squabble a bit but I don't remember that part. Without a doubt, we nibbled a cookie or two or three as we worked.

By the time I reached middle school, I was baking one or two special Christmas treats on my own. For several years I baked and decorated a Bûche de Noël for Christmas Eve. When I grew tired of Bûche (it's very sweet), I switched to cookies, chocolate truffles, caramels and pound after pound of English toffee. Some I pack up to give as gifts and others are reserved for family feasts, pot lucks and tea or coffee breaks with friends. But my efforts are paltry compared to my sister. Brenda takes holiday baking to a whole new level.



**For years Brenda has made dozens of elaborate cookies.** Even better, when her children were little, she helped them built beautiful gingerbread houses. It began with the chance find of a gingerbread house mold at a garage sale and the tradition continued on for more than a decade. It could be the season but there is something magical about a gingerbread house. It doesn't matter if they were created by a fabulous and famous chef or built by a young, would-be artist. They are all wonderful.

Whether you build an entire village in gingerbread, recreate Nana's special trifle or bake just one batch of cookies, have fun and bon appétit!



*Susan*

## Snowy Pecan Balls

*I began making these when I was in high school and they are still my favorite Christmas cookies. No matter how busy I am, I always make sure I find the time to bake a batch (or two) of these buttery cookies. Enjoy!*

Makes about 4 dozen cookies

4 ounces pecans  
 2 cups all-purpose flour  
 1/4 teaspoon baking powder  
 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon  
 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg  
 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature  
 About 2 cups confectioners' sugar  
 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Line cookies sheets with parchment paper or silicon mats.

Put the nuts in the bowl of a food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Add the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and nutmeg and pulse to combine.

Using an electric mixer, cream the butter and 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar at low speed until it is smooth. Beat in the vanilla. With the mixer on low speed gradually add the flour-nut mixture and mix until the dough comes together. Cover the bowl and chill until the dough is firm, about 30 minutes.

Using a small cookie scoop or 2 teaspoons, make dollops of batter. Use your hands to roll the dollops into balls. Place the balls onto the prepared cookie sheets and bake at 325 degrees until pale golden brown, about 20 minutes.

Put the remaining confectioners' sugar in a shallow bowl. Let the cookies cool for a minute or two and then roll the still warm cookies in the confectioners' sugar. Cool on wire racks and store in tightly covered tins.

