

THE MENU

Everyone knows a hobbit loves to eat (six meals a day!), so any successful Hobbit Day celebration needs plenty of snacks to munch on. From Second Breakfast to Elevensies, here are a few ideas and recipes to get you started, but have some fun and create your own.

Ask everyone to bring a treat and share the recipes. You'll find out that the only thing better than reading *The Hobbit*, is eating like one.

FAVORITE HOBBIT FOODS:

Cake
Bread
Potatoes
Bacon
Sausage
Mushrooms
Cheese
Pickles
Eggs

FAVORITE HOBBIT DRINKS:

Coffee
Tea
Red wine
Beer

RECIPES:

Potato Cheddar Pancakes with Perfect Fried Eggs,
from *The Farm* by Ian Knauer

Skillet-Baked Eggs with Blistered Cherry Tomatoes,
from *Fresh and Fast Vegetarian* by Marie Simmons

Jam "Sandwiches," from *Essential Pepin* by Jacques Pépin

Dill Pickle Spears, from *The Farm* by Ian Knauer

Cheese and Mushroom Melts, from *Fresh and Fast Vegetarian* by Marie Simmons

Potato and Parmesan Gratin, from *Gourmet Today*
edited by Ruth Reichl

Chicken Potpie with Green Apples and Cheddar
Biscuits, from *Perfect One-Dish Dinners* by Pam Anderson

Mincemeat Pie, from *The Farm* by Ian Knauer

Meme's Apple Tart, from *Essential Pepin* by Jacques Pépin



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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT

POTATO-CHEDDAR PANCAKES WITH PERFECT FRIED EGGS

Serves 4

A perfect fried egg has crisp edges around the white and a runny yolk. The trick is to start with a very hot pan to get the crisp whites and then reduce the heat and cover the skillet to cook the rest of the white through. Covering the skillet traps the heat inside and gently cooks the top of the egg, while keeping the bottom crisp. The beauty of this technique is that there's no need to flip the egg, so you don't risk breaking the yolk. The potato pancakes are a treat whether or not they're topped with eggs. A little cornstarch added to the mix makes them über-crunchy on the outside, and the chunks of cheddar inside are meltingly gooey.

5 large eggs

2 (8-ounce) russet potatoes

1 medium onion

4 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, cut into small cubes

1 tablespoon cornstarch

Kosher salt and black pepper

4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Beat 1 of the eggs in a medium bowl. Peel the potatoes, then grate them into the bowl using the large holes of a box grater. Grate the onion into the bowl. Toss the potato mixture with the cheese, cornstarch, 1 teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper.

Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a large cast-iron or heavy nonstick skillet over medium heat until it shimmers. Divide the potato mixture into 4 mounds in the skillet, then flatten each mound into a patty. Cover the skillet and cook until the bottoms of the pancakes are golden and the edges are crisp. Flip the pancakes over and continue to cook, covered, until they are golden and crisp, about 10 minutes total. Transfer the pancakes to plates and wipe out the skillet.

Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons oil in the skillet over medium-high heat until very hot. Crack the remaining 4 eggs into the skillet and cook until the edges are crispy, about 3 minutes. Reduce the heat to very low, cover the skillet, and continue to cook until the whites are set but the yolks are still runny, about 2 minutes.

Top each potato pancake with a fried egg. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve immediately.

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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT

SKILLET-BAKED EGGS WITH BLISTERED CHERRY TOMATOES

Serves 2 to 4

Quick and easy, eggs nestled in a skillet of tomatoes that have been seared in a hot pan until their skins blister make an appealing main dish for lunch or supper. If you like, serve one egg for each person on a bed of steaming hot quinoa or bulgur, mashed potatoes, a thick slice of toasted whole-grain Italian bread, or a mound of polenta. You can use almost any cheese on top, such as dry Jack, Comté, cheddar, Parmigiano-Reggiano, Italian fontina, Manchego, or aged Gruyère.

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 pints cherry or grape tomatoes, stems removed
- ½ cup thin-sliced onion
- 1 garlic clove, grated
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh basil, cilantro, or dill
- ½ teaspoon coarse salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 4 large eggs
- ¾ cup shredded cheese (see headnote)

Heat a large skillet until it is hot enough to sizzle and evaporate a drop of water. Add the oil and tilt the pan to coat. Add the tomatoes and cook over high heat, stirring, until blistered and softened, about 5 minutes. Add the onion and cook over medium heat, stirring, until the tomatoes are juicy, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic, basil, salt, and a generous grinding of black pepper.

Break an egg into a small cup. Make an indentation in the sizzling tomatoes with a spoon and slip the egg into the indentation. Repeat with the remaining 3 eggs. Sprinkle the cheese on top. Cover and cook over medium-low heat until the eggs are set, about 5 minutes. Use a spatula or wide spoon to scoop out servings of eggs and tomatoes.

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JAM “SANDWICHES”

Serves 4

Jam sandwiches are fun to make for a party. Thin slices of firm-textured pound cake are spread with different-flavored jams and served in traditional sandwich fashion, or open-faced, with the colorful jam spread on the surface of each slice. To add diversity to your dessert tray, select several jam flavors and cut the sandwiches into unusual shapes. I begin with a piece of pound cake 6 inches long by 5 inches wide. Serve the sandwiches on their own or with sherbet or ice cream.

6 ounces pound cake

1½ tablespoons raspberry jam

1½ tablespoons apricot jam

1½ tablespoons blackberry jam

Trim away the outside of the pound cake and cut the cake into 6 slices, each ¼ inch thick.

Spread the raspberry jam on 1 slice, the apricot jam on another slice, and the blackberry jam on a third slice. Top with the remaining pound cake slices, to create 3 sandwiches. Cut each into different shapes: one into 4 squares, one into 4 triangles, and one into 4 rectangles.

Arrange on a plate and serve.

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DILL PICKLE SPEARS

Makes 8 pints

Once you realize how easy it is to make your own pickles, you'll probably never go back to buying them. There is something very satisfying about cracking open a jar of homemade dill spears. Canning or pickling salt dissolves more easily in room-temperature water than kosher salt and is available at many grocery stores.

- 1¼ cups canning or pickling salt
- 2 gallons room-temperature water, plus 2 quarts for the brine
- 8 pounds Kirby cucumbers (about 5 inches long)
- 1½ quarts apple cider vinegar or distilled white vinegar
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons pickling spices
- 8 teaspoons mustard seeds
- 8 large fresh dill sprigs

Stir ¾ cup of the salt into the 2 gallons water until dissolved. Place the cucumbers in a large glass bowl, then pour the salt water over them. Let them stand at room temperature for 12 hours or overnight. Drain the cucumbers, discarding the liquid. Trim the ends from the cucumbers and discard, then slice the cucumbers lengthwise into spears.

Combine the vinegar, sugar, pickling spices, the remaining 2 quarts water, and the remaining ½ cup salt in a large heavy pot, then bring the pickling brine to a simmer.

Place 1 teaspoon mustard seeds and 1 dill sprig in each of 8 sterilized pint canning jars. Fill the canning jars with the cucumber spears, then pour the pickling brine over them, leaving ¼ inch of space at the tops. Cap the jars and process in boiling water for 10 minutes. Let the jars cool at room temperature until they seal. Let the pickles age for at least 1 week before opening. They will keep for at least a year in a cool, dry, dark place.

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CHEESE AND MUSHROOM MELTS

Serves 4

Keep mushrooms on hand for this gooey, rich, and satisfying open-faced melt. Use a crusty round or other wide loaf that will make substantial-sized slices about 3 inches wide and 6 inches long. If a wide loaf isn't available, cut a long loaf into large diagonal slices.

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more to brush bread

8 ounces large white or cremini mushrooms, thickly sliced ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch)

2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley, including tender stems

1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme leaves

1 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary

1 garlic clove, grated

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon coarse salt

Freshly ground black pepper

4 large, thick ($\frac{1}{2}$ -inch) slices whole wheat bread (see headnote)

4 ounces mozzarella, Comté, Manchego, Italian fontina, Gruyère, Parmigiano-Reggiano or other good melting cheese

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat until it is hot enough to sizzle a slice of mushroom. Add the mushrooms and cook, stirring, adjusting the heat as needed to maintain a steady sizzle, until the mushrooms are golden and tender, about 5 minutes. Add the parsley, thyme, rosemary, garlic, salt, and a generous grinding of pepper and cook, stirring, over low heat, for 2 minutes.

Adjust the oven rack so that the top of the bread will be about 3 inches from the broiler. Preheat the broiler. Arrange the bread on a baking sheet, brush lightly on both sides with oil, and broil on one side until lightly browned, about 2 minutes. Turn the bread over and broil for 2 minutes more. Remove the pan from the oven; leave the broiler on. Spoon the mushrooms on top of the bread in a flat layer, dividing evenly.

Use a cheese plane or a vegetable peeler to cut enough cheese into curls or thin slices to cover the mushrooms on each slice of bread. Return the pan to the broiler and broil until the cheese melts, about 2 minutes. Serve hot.

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POTATO AND PARMESAN GRATIN

Serves 8

This sumptuous dish just may be the ideal marriage of potatoes and cheese. The recipe comes from Oriana Neri of Bologna, a cook who opens her kitchen to guests as a part of Home Food, a program that invites members to dine in private homes all across Italy.

4 pounds medium boiling potatoes

1½ teaspoons fine sea salt or table salt

1 cup heavy cream

1 cup whole milk

3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

7 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano, finely grated (about 2½ cups)

Put a rack in middle of oven and preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Peel potatoes. Cut into ¼-inch-thick slices with mandolin or other adjustable-blade vegetable slicer or a sharp knife, spreading slices out on a large kitchen towel. Sprinkle with sea salt.

Stir together cream and milk. Dot bottom of a 13-by-9-inch baking dish with 1½ tablespoons butter and pour in ½ cup cream mixture. Divide potatoes into 5 piles (don't rinse or dry them). Layer potatoes in baking dish, one pile per layer, drizzling ⅓ cup cream mixture and sprinkling one quarter of cheese over each layer. Drizzle remaining cream mixture over final layer of potatoes and dot with remaining 1½ tablespoons butter.

Bake, uncovered, until potatoes are very tender and top is browned, about 2 hours. Let stand at room temperature for 10 minutes before serving.

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CHICKEN POTPIE WITH GREEN APPLES AND CHEDDAR BISCUITS

Serves 8

This recipe makes one big potpie, but to save time or simplify, make two potpies using 9-inch pie plates or 8-inch square baking pans and top with refrigerated store-bought piecrust from a 15-ounce box, following baking instructions below. Or freeze the second pie for another occasion, and bake it (still frozen) at 400 degrees until golden and bubbly, about 1 hour.

CHICKEN

2 cups chicken broth

1 can (12 ounces) evaporated milk

¾ stick (6 tablespoons) butter, divided

2 large leeks, dark green leaves trimmed away, washed thoroughly to remove grit, light green and white parts chopped

2 large Granny Smith apples, quartered, cored, and thinly sliced crosswise

1 large rotisserie chicken, shredded (5–6 cups)

½ cup plus 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons dried rubbed sage

¼ cup cream sherry

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

½ cup chopped fresh parsley

BISCUITS

2 cups bleached all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

¼ teaspoon baking soda

¾ teaspoon salt

¾ cup grated sharp cheddar cheese

1 stick (8 tablespoons) unsalted butter, frozen solid

1 cup cold buttermilk, plus a few more teaspoons if necessary

CHICKEN: Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Microwave chicken broth and evaporated milk in a microwave-safe bowl until steamy, 3 to 4 minutes.

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Heat 2 tablespoons butter in a large (11- to 12-inch) deep skillet over medium-high heat. Add leeks and apples and cook, stirring, until just tender, 7 to 8 minutes. Transfer leeks and apples, along with chicken, to a large bowl; set aside.

Heat remaining ½ stick (4 tablespoons) butter over medium heat in the empty skillet. When foaming subsides, whisk in flour and sage and cook until golden, about 1 minute. Whisk in hot-milk mixture and simmer, stirring, until sauce fully thickens, about 1 minute. Turn off heat, stir in sherry, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Stir sauce, along with parsley, into chicken mixture. Taste and adjust seasonings. Pour mixture into a 13-by-9-inch baking dish or divide between two 8-inch square baking pans or two 9-inch pie plates.

BISCUITS: Mix flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and cheddar with a fork in a medium bowl. Using a box grater, coarsely grate frozen butter into dry ingredients; mix quickly with fingertips to evenly blend. Mix buttermilk into dry ingredients with a fork until dough just comes together. Pinch dough with fingers into small rough rounds and place over filling. Bake until pastry is golden brown and filling is bubbly, 30 to 35 minutes. Serve.

"Chicken Potpie with Green Apples and Cheddar Biscuits" from *Perfect One-Dish Dinners: All You Need for Easy Get-Togethers*. Copyright © 2010 by Pam Anderson. Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. All rights reserved.



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MINCEMEAT PIE

Makes one 9-inch pie (makes enough filling for four 9-inch pies)

This pie has been served at our Thanksgiving and Christmas tables for generations. Although it used to be common to put ground beef in your dessert, mincemeat has fallen out of fashion in this country, which is too bad, because it's delicious. This recipe makes enough filling for four 9-inch pies, and it freezes particularly well. After you've made 1 pie, divide the remaining filling into 3 quarts. Freeze each quart of filling separately and thaw and reheat when you're ready to use it.

FOR THE PASTRY DOUGH

1¼ cups all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon light brown sugar

½ teaspoon kosher salt

1 stick unsalted butter, cut into cubes

2–3 tablespoons cold water

FOR THE MINCEMEAT

3 pounds ground beef (or beef and pork mixed)

8 ounces ground suet

2 pounds raisins

2 pounds dried currants

2 tablespoons finely grated orange zest

1 tablespoon finely grated lemon zest

8 apples (2½ quarts), chopped

1 cup dark brown sugar

1 cup sugar

2 teaspoons kosher salt

4 teaspoons ground cinnamon

2 teaspoons freshly grated nutmeg

2 teaspoons ground allspice

2 teaspoons ground ginger

1 teaspoon ground cloves

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2 cups apple cider
1 cup orange juice
1 cup pineapple juice
1 cup dry white wine
½ cup apple cider vinegar or distilled white vinegar
½ cup honey
½ cup molasses
½ stick unsalted butter
Dark rum for serving
Vanilla ice cream for serving

MAKE THE PASTRY DOUGH: Work together the flour, brown sugar, salt, and butter with your hands until mostly combined, with some small lumps of butter remaining. Stir in 2 tablespoons of the water with a fork. Press a small handful of dough together; if it looks powdery and does not come together, stir in the remaining 1 tablespoon water. Transfer the dough to a sheet of plastic wrap. Using the edge of the plastic, fold the dough over onto itself, pressing until it comes together. Form the dough into a disk, wrap completely in the plastic, and chill for 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 400°F, with a rack in the middle.

Roll out the pastry dough on a well-floured surface with a floured rolling pin into an 11-inch round. Place the dough in a 9-inch pie tin and crimp the edges. Place a sheet of parchment paper or foil over the dough, then fill with pie weights or dried beans. Bake the crust until it is set, about 25 minutes. Remove the parchment paper and the pie weights, then continue to bake the crust until it is golden, 10 to 15 minutes more. Let the pie shell cool to room temperature before filling.

MEANWHILE, MAKE THE MINCEMEAT: Brown the meat and suet, stirring occasionally, in a large heavy skillet (preferably cast-iron) over medium-high heat, about 10 minutes. Transfer the meat with a slotted spoon to a large heavy pot.

Add the remaining mincemeat ingredients to the pot with the beef and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook until the liquid has reduced and the filling is thickened, about 1¼ hours. Let the filling cool to warm, then spoon one quarter of the filling into the pie shell. (The remaining filling can be frozen in gallon airlock bags for up to 6 months; see headnote.)

Serve the pie with dark rum poured over it and vanilla ice cream.

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MÉMÉ'S APPLE TART

Serves 6

The dough for this tart, unlike any other, achieves its tender, crumbly, airy texture from a combination of vegetable shortening or lard, baking powder, and warm milk. Since the dough is too soft to roll, it is pressed into the pan by hand.

DOUGH

- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 6 tablespoons vegetable shortening or lard, at room temperature
- ¼ cup milk, heated to lukewarm

FILLING

- 2 pounds Golden Delicious or McIntosh apples (6 medium)
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees, with a rack in the center.

FOR THE DOUGH: Combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt in a bowl. Add the shortening or lard and mix with a spoon or your hands until the mixture feels and looks sandy. Add the warm milk and stir rapidly for a few seconds, until the dough is well mixed.

Using a sheet of plastic wrap to help you, fit the dough into a 9-inch quiche pan or tart pan with a removable bottom. With your fingers, press the dough evenly into the bottom and up the sides of the pan. Set aside.

FOR THE FILLING: Peel the apples, quarter them, and remove the cores. Arrange the apple quarters, cut side up, in circles on top of the dough and sprinkle the sugar evenly over them. Cut the butter into small pieces and dot the apples with the butter.

Place the tart pan on a cookie sheet and bake for 1 hour, or until the apples are browned and crusty.

Let cool to lukewarm, then cut into wedges and serve.

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