

Midwest Living[®]

BEST OF THE MIDWEST[®] Recipe contest winners



BMC² brings
together bacon
and coffee cake
(recipe, page 5).



About our contest Selected from hundreds of recipe entries, these 11 finalists competed for the grand prize of \$10,000 in our live cook-off held at Branson's Silver Dollar City theme park in Missouri.

Caramel & Chocolate Kettle Corn Crispie Bars with Sea Salt

Indiana Judy Reynolds of Bloomington **PREP:** 30 minutes **CHILL:** 45 minutes

- | | |
|---|---|
| 8 cups popped kettle corn | 3 tablespoons granulated sugar |
| 1 8-ounce package chocolate-covered toffee pieces | 1 teaspoon vanilla |
| 1 cup pecans, toasted and finely chopped | 1 12-ounce package semisweet chocolate pieces or one 11.5-ounce package milk chocolate pieces, melted |
| 2/3 cup light-color corn syrup | 1/4 cup caramel ice cream topping (optional) |
| 2/3 cup sweetened condensed milk | 2 to 3 teaspoons coarse sea salt |
| 1/2 cup packed brown sugar | |
| 5 tablespoons butter | |

- Line a 13x9x2-inch baking pan with foil, extending the foil over the edges of pan; set pan aside. In a very large bowl, toss together the kettle corn, toffee pieces and chopped pecans; set aside.
- For caramel sauce: In a small saucepan, combine the corn syrup, condensed milk, brown sugar, butter and granulated sugar. Bring mixture to boiling over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Reduce heat and boil gently, uncovered, for 6 to 8 minutes or until caramel sauce is a light golden brown, stirring frequently. Remove from heat; stir in vanilla. Pour caramel sauce over kettle corn mixture, stirring with a wooden spoon until coated. Transfer mixture to prepared pan, pressing firmly with the back of the wooden spoon or a large piece of waxed paper.
- Spread melted chocolate over kettle corn mixture. If you like, drizzle with caramel topping. Sprinkle with sea salt. Chill for 45 to 60 minutes or until chocolate is set. Use foil to lift kettle corn mixture from pan. Use a sharp knife to cut into bars, wiping blade with wet paper towels. **Makes 20 to 24 bars.**

***Note:** To melt chocolate, place chocolate pieces in a large microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on 50% power (medium) for 2 to 3 minutes or just until the chocolate is melted, stirring twice.

Nutrition facts per bar: 297 cal, 17 g fat, 15 mg chol, 258 mg sodium, 37 g carbo, 2 g fiber, 2 g pro.

For more bar cookie ideas, visit midwestliving.com/barcookies.

Beef Short Ribs with Cranberry Port Gravy

Iowa Diane Sparrow of Osage

PREP: 25 minutes **SLOW COOK:** 8 to 10 hours (low) or 4 to 5 hours (high)

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 pounds bone-in beef short ribs (use boneless if bone-in is not available)
- 2 tablespoons crushed green peppercorns
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 large red onion, sliced
- 1 14-ounce can whole cranberry sauce
- 1 14-ounce can beef broth
- 3 tablespoons snipped fresh rosemary
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/4 cup cold water
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1/4 cup port
- 3 cups cooked wild rice

- In a large nonstick skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Sprinkle ribs with peppercorns and salt. Cook, in batches, in hot oil about 5 minutes or until brown on all sides. Place ribs in a 6-quart slow cooker. Place onion slices on top of ribs. In a medium bowl, combine cranberry sauce, beef broth, rosemary and lemon juice. Pour over the ribs. Cover and cook on low-heat setting for 8 to 10 hours or on high-heat setting for 4 to 5 hours. Transfer ribs to a warm dish; cover to keep warm.
 - For gravy: Strain cooking liquid and skim off fat. Place the liquid in a medium saucepan; bring to boiling. Combine cold water and cornstarch. Stir into boiling liquid; reduce heat. Cook and stir 2 minutes or until mixture is slightly thickened. Add port; cook and stir for 1 minute more. Remove from heat.
 - Place wild rice on a serving platter. Top with ribs and some of the gravy. Garnish with fresh rosemary. Pass remaining gravy. **Makes 6 to 8 servings.**
- Nutrition facts per serving (8):** 760 cal, 55 g fat, 114 mg chol, 670 mg sodium, 38 g carbo, 2 g fiber, 27 g pro.

People's Choice award





Grilled Sirloin Kabobs with Top City Sauce

Kansas Joann Gough-Stallbaumer of Topeka

PREP: 30 minutes GRILL: 8 minutes

- 2 pounds beef top sirloin steak
- 1 tablespoon dried minced onion
- 2 teaspoons dried chives
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- Top City Dipping Sauce (recipe follows)**
- Snipped fresh chives (optional)

1. Trim fat from meat. Cut meat into 1-inch pieces. In a small bowl, combine onion, dried chives, salt, parsley, paprika and pepper. Toss meat with seasoning mixture to coat. Thread meat on eight 12-inch metal skewers, leaving $\frac{1}{4}$ inch between pieces.

2. Grill kabobs on the rack of a covered gas grill or uncovered charcoal grill directly over medium heat for 8 to 10 minutes or until the meat reaches desired doneness, turning once halfway through grilling.

3. Serve the sirloin kabobs with the Zesty Top City Dipping Sauce. If you like, garnish kabobs with fresh chives. **Makes 4 servings.**

Top City Dipping Sauce: In a small bowl, stir together $\frac{1}{3}$ cup mayonnaise, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped oil-packed dried tomatoes, 3 tablespoons sour cream, 2 tablespoons prepared horseradish, 1 teaspoon dried parsley and 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce. Cover and chill the sauce mixture until serving time.

Nutrition facts per serving: 629 cal, 46 g fat, 118 mg chol, 764 mg sodium, 4 g carbo, 1 g fiber, 47 g pro.

For more grilling recipes, visit midwestliving.com/grilling.

BLT Chicken Sliders

Wisconsin Barbara Estabrook of Rhinelander

PREP: 45 minutes GRILL: 12 minutes

- 12 slices applewood smoked bacon
 - 2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cracked black pepper
 - 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds uncooked ground skinless chicken thighs
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped shallot
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup snipped fresh basil
 - 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons salt
 - 1 teaspoon snipped fresh thyme
 - 2 cloves garlic, minced
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon dried sage, crushed
 - 1 cup shredded sharp white cheddar cheese (4 ounces)
 - 12 small butterhead (Boston or Bibb) lettuce leaves
 - 12 small bakery slider rolls or mini buns, split and toasted
 - 12 slices roma tomatoes
- Cranberry Ketchup (recipe follows)**

1. In a very large skillet, cook bacon over medium heat until crisp. Stir together maple syrup and the cracked pepper. Drizzle over bacon slices in skillet. Cover skillet and cook for 1 to 2 minutes more. Remove bacon from skillet. Cut bacon slices in half crosswise and wrap bacon in foil.

2. In a large bowl, combine the ground chicken, shallot, basil, salt, thyme, garlic and sage; mix well. Shape into 12 patties.

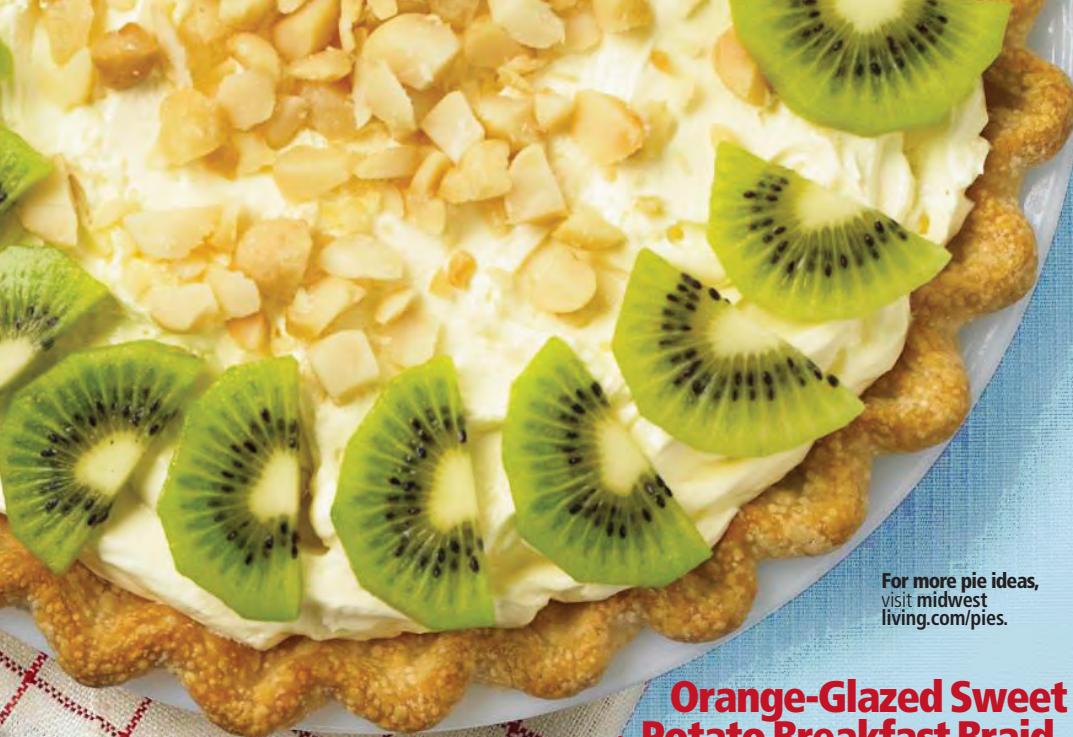
3. Place patties on greased rack of gas or charcoal grill directly over medium heat; grill for 12 to 14 minutes or until no longer pink (165°), turning once. During the last 2 minutes, add the bacon packet to the grill and top patties with cheese.

4. To assemble, place a lettuce leaf on each roll bottom. Top with a tomato slice and two pieces of bacon. Top with a burger and a spoonful of Cranberry Ketchup. Add roll tops. **Makes 12 sliders.**

Cranberry ketchup: In a small saucepan, combine $\frac{1}{2}$ cup packed brown sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup coarsely chopped fresh or frozen cranberries, 3 tablespoons spicy brown mustard, 3 tablespoons ketchup, $2\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons full-flavor molasses, $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons Worcestershire sauce, $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon chili powder and $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon smoked paprika. Bring to boiling over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Reduce heat and boil gently, uncovered, about 10 minutes or until thickened, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat; cover and set aside while preparing sliders.

Nutrition facts per slider: 327 cal, 11 g fat, 73 mg chol, 746 mg sodium, 33 g carbo, 1 g fiber, 22 g pro.





Make-ahead dessert!

Kiwi Summer Limeade Pie

Nebraska Susan Meier of Omaha

PREP: 20 minutes **CHILL:** 8 to 24 hours

6 tablespoons coarsely chopped macadamia nuts
1 9-inch baked pastry shell
1 6-ounce can frozen limeade concentrate, thawed
1 4-serving-size package vanilla instant pudding and pie filling mix
2 8-ounce packages cream cheese, softened
¾ cup powdered sugar
3 medium kiwifruit, peeled, halved lengthwise and sliced
1 6-ounce carton lime low-fat yogurt
1½ cups frozen whipped dessert topping, thawed

1. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of the macadamia nuts in the bottom of the pastry shell.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together limeade concentrate and vanilla pudding mix.
3. In a medium mixing bowl, beat cream cheese with an electric mixer for 30 seconds. Beat in powdered sugar. Add limeade mixture and beat well. Transfer $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of the mixture to another medium bowl; set aside. Spoon remaining mixture into the pastry shell. Top with two of the kiwifruit.
4. Beat yogurt into the reserved $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cream cheese mixture until combined. Fold in whipped topping. Spoon over filling in pastry shell. Cover and chill for 8 to 24 hours. Garnish with remaining kiwifruit and nuts. **Makes 8 servings.**

Nutrition facts per serving: 579 cal, 34 g fat, 66 mg chol, 502 mg sodium, 63 g carbo, 1 g fiber, 6 g pro.

For more pie ideas,
visit midwestliving.com/pies.

Orange-Glazed Sweet Potato Breakfast Braid

Minnesota Cathy Wiechert of Mound

PREP: 50 minutes **RISE:** 1 hour 40 minutes

BAKE: 25 minutes

¾ cup milk
7 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
½ cup granulated sugar
4 to 4½ cups bread flour
1 package active dry yeast
1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground ginger
¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
2 eggs, lightly beaten
½ cup cooked, mashed and cooled sweet potato
1 tablespoon finely shredded orange peel
1 teaspoon finely shredded lemon peel
1 cup golden raisins
½ cups powdered sugar
4 to 5 tablespoons orange juice

1. In a small saucepan, heat milk, 6 tablespoons of the butter and the granulated sugar in a small saucepan over medium heat until butter is almost melted and an instant-read thermometer registers 110° to 115°.

2. Meanwhile, in a large mixing bowl, combine 2 cups of the flour, the yeast, salt, cinnamon, ginger and cardamom. Add warm milk mixture, eggs, sweet potato, orange peel and lemon peel. Beating with electric mixer 4 minutes. Use a wooden spoon to stir in raisins and enough of the remaining flour to make a soft dough.

3. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface, knead in enough of the remaining flour to make a moderately stiff dough that is smooth and elastic (6 to 8 minutes). Shape into a ball. Place in a lightly greased bowl, turning once to grease dough surface. Cover and let rise in a warm place until double in size (about 1 hour).

4. Punch dough down. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Divide in half. Cover; let rest 10 minutes. Divide one half into three equal portions. Shape each into a 10- to 12-inch rope. Place ropes, side by side, on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Braid ropes together, starting from the center. Pinch ends to seal. Repeat with remaining dough. Brush loaves with some of the remaining 1 tablespoon butter. Cover and let rise in a warm place until nearly double in size (40 to 60 minutes).

5. Bake loaves in a 375° oven about 25 minutes or until golden brown and loaves sound hollow when lightly tapped. Brush with remaining butter; cool. In a small bowl, combine powdered sugar and enough orange juice to reach drizzling consistency. Drizzle over loaves. **Makes 2 loaves (24 servings total).**

Nutrition facts per serving: 190 cal, 4 g fat, 27 mg chol, 110 mg sodium, 34 g carbo, 1 g fiber, 4 g pro.



The BMC²

Illinois Jill Drury of Chicago **PREP:** 35 minutes **BAKE:** 20 minutes **COOL:** 10 minutes

Cinnamon Filling (recipe follows) $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla

$\frac{1}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder

Maple Cream Cheese Frosting (recipe follows)

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

Sautéed Apples (recipe follows)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter, softened

Crumbled, crisp-cooked applewood

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar

smoked bacon

1 egg

1. Line twelve 2½-inch muffin cups with paper bake cups. Stir together the Cinnamon Filling. Set both aside.

2. In a small bowl, stir together flour, baking powder and salt. In a large mixing bowl, beat butter with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Gradually add sugar, beating just until combined. Add egg and vanilla; beat just until combined. Alternately add the flour mixture and milk, beating on low speed after each addition.

3. Spoon 2 tablespoons batter into each of the paper-lined muffin cups. Spoon about 1 rounded teaspoon of the filling onto batter in each cup. Top with remaining batter.

4. Bake in a 350° oven for 20 to 25 minutes or until tops spring back when lightly touched. Cool in pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove muffins from pan.

5. Spread Maple Cream Cheese Frosting over muffins. Spoon Sautéed Apples on top of frosting and sprinkle with bacon. Serve warm. Store any leftover muffins in the refrigerator. **Makes 12 muffins.**

Cinnamon Filling: In a small bowl, combine $\frac{1}{8}$ cup packed brown sugar, $\frac{1}{8}$ cup melted butter, 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour and 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon.

Maple Cream Cheese Frosting: In a large mixing bowl, beat one 8-ounce package reduced-fat cream cheese (Neufchâtel) and 1 tablespoon pure maple syrup with an electric mixer on medium speed until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in 4 cups powdered sugar just until combined.

Sautéed Apples: Peel, core and chop 3 medium apples. In a large skillet, cook chopped apples in 2 tablespoons hot butter over medium heat about 5 minutes or until tender. Sprinkle with 2 tablespoons sugar. Cook and stir until sugar is dissolved.

Nutrition facts per muffin: 506 cal, 20 g fat, 73 mg chol, 345 mg sodium, 78 g carbo, 1 g fiber, 5 g pro.

For more muffin ideas, visit midwestliving.com/muffins.



Pumpkin Gooey Butter Cake

Missouri Emily Hobbs of Springfield

PREP: 45 minutes **BAKE:** 45 minutes **COOL:** 1 hour

Nonstick cooking spray

1 cup unsalted butter, softened

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar

1 cup all-purpose flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt

1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened

$\frac{1}{4}$ cups packed brown sugar

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup light-colored corn syrup

2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons vanilla

1 cup canned pumpkin

2 eggs

2 egg yolks

Whipped cream (optional)

1. Coat the bottom and side of a 10-inch springform pan with nonstick cooking spray.

2. For crust: In a large mixing bowl, beat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the butter and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the granulated sugar with an electric mixer on medium speed about 30 seconds or until creamy. Add flour, baking powder and salt, beating on low speed until combined and crumbly. Press mixture onto the bottom of the prepared pan. Bake in a 350° oven for 10 to 12 minutes or until set and light golden brown.

3. Meanwhile, in a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese, brown sugar and the remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter on medium speed about 2 minutes or until creamy. Beat in corn syrup, 1 teaspoon of the pumpkin pie spice and vanilla. Beat in pumpkin, eggs and egg yolks until combined.

4. Pour pumpkin mixture over partially baked crust. In a small bowl, combine remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup granulated sugar and 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice; sprinkle over filling. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes or until top is set and golden brown and cake pulls away from side of pan. Cool in pan on wire rack 1 hour. Loosen side of pan and remove. Cool cake completely. If you like, serve with whipped cream and sprinkle with additional pumpkin pie spice. **Makes 10 servings.**

Nutrition facts per serving: 479 cal, 28 g fat, 158 mg chol, 179



Strawberry-Coconut Thumbprints

South Dakota Linda Roberts of Rapid City.

PREP: 45 minutes **CHILL:** 1 hour

BAKE: 14 minutes per batch

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 3-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1¼ cups shredded coconut
- ½ cup strawberry jam

1. In large mixing bowl, beat butter and cream cheese with an electric mixer 30 seconds. Add sugar; beat until combined. Add egg yolk and vanilla; beat until combined. Beat in flour. Wrap and chill dough 1 hour or until easy to handle.
2. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Shape dough into 1-inch balls; roll in coconut. Arrange 1½ inches apart on prepared cookie sheet. Use thumb to make indentation in each.
3. Bake in 350° oven 14 minutes or until edges are golden. Cool on cookie sheets 1 minute. Use thumb to reimprint cookies. Spoon about ¼ teaspoon jam into center of each. Remove; cool on wire racks. **Makes about 48 cookies.**

Nutrition facts per cookie: 103 cal, 6 g fat, 16 mg chol, 42 mg sodium, 12 g carbo, 0 g fiber, 1 g pro.

- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon grated bittersweet chocolate
- ½ teaspoon ground allspice
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 boneless beef ribeye steaks, cut 1 inch thick (12 to 16 ounces each) and trimmed
- 8 slices aged provolone cheese (5 ounces)
- 4 hoagie buns, split
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened

1. Thread onion slices onto thin, flat metal skewers (like lollipops). Brush with olive oil.
2. Grill onion skewers, mushroom cap (gill side down) and pepper quarters on rack of covered gas grill or uncovered charcoal grill directly over medium heat for 6 to 10 minutes or just until vegetables are tender, turning once halfway through grilling. Remove from grill; let cool.
3. In a small bowl, mix chili powder, salt, garlic powder, paprika, cumin, cinnamon, bittersweet chocolate, allspice, black and cayenne peppers.
4. Make lengthwise cut into side of each steak, cutting to but not through opposite side (it will open like a book). Brush steaks with olive oil; sprinkle insides and outsides with spice mix.
5. When vegetables are cool enough to handle, remove onion from skewers. Cut onion slices in half. Cut mushroom and pepper into thin strips.
6. With the first steak "open," place two slices of cheese on bottom half, staggering to cover surface. Layer with half of the vegetables and two more slices of cheese. Close top half of steak over cheese and veggies. Tie at 2-inch intervals with clean kitchen string. Repeat with remaining steak, cheese and veggies.
7. Grill steaks 14 to 16 minutes or until desired doneness, turning once halfway through grilling. Remove from grill. Cover; let stand 10 minutes.
8. Brush cut sides of buns with butter. Place buns, cut sides down, on grill. Grill 1 to 2 minutes or until lightly toasted. Remove and discard strings from steaks. Slice stuffed steaks across grain into ½-inch slices. Divide slices evenly among buns. **Makes 4 sandwiches.**

Nutrition facts per sandwich: 1,030 cal, 65 g fat, 165 mg chol, 1,733 mg sodium, 60 g carbo, 5 g fiber, 52 g pro.



Cider-Brined Coho Salmon with Dijon Cream

Michigan Sally Sibthorpe of Shelby Township.

PREP: 25 minutes **BRINE:** 4 hours **BROIL:** 5 minutes

- 1 1-pound fresh salmon fillet
- 1 cup cold water
- 1 cup apple cider
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- ¼ cup snipped fresh tarragon
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 large shallot, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- ½ cup dry white wine
- ½ cup whipping cream
- 2 teaspoons Dijon-style mustard
- ½ teaspoon salt

1. Rinse salmon; pat dry with paper towels. Place salmon in a large resealable plastic bag set in shallow dish. For brine: In a medium bowl, combine water, cider and kosher salt until salt dissolves. Stir in tarragon and pepper. Pour over salmon; seal bag. Brine in refrigerator 4 hours, turning bag occasionally.

2. Preheat broiler. Line baking sheet with foil; lightly coat foil with nonstick cooking spray. Drain salmon, discarding brine. Pat salmon dry with paper towels. Place salmon, skin side down, on prepared baking sheet. Brush with olive oil. Broil 5 to 6 inches from heat 5 to 7 minutes or until fish flakes with a fork. Remove from broiler; cover with foil to keep warm.

3. For sauce: In a small saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Add shallot; cook and stir 4 to 5 minutes or until tender. Stir in flour. Cook and stir 1 minute. Add wine, cream, mustard and ½ teaspoon salt, whisking until smooth. Cook and stir until thickened and bubbly; cook and stir 1 minute more. Remove from heat. Serve with sauce. **Makes 4 servings.**

Nutrition facts per serving: 379 cal, 26 g fat, 107 mg chol, 619 mg sodium, 4 g carbo, 0 g fiber, 25 g pro. ■



Stuffed Cheesesteaks

Ohio Karen Gibson of Cincinnati. **PREP:** 40 minutes **GRILL:** 21 minutes **STAND:** 10 minutes

- 1 onion, cut into ¼-inch slices
- Olive oil
- 1 fresh portobello mushroom cap (4 ounces)
- 1 red or green sweet pepper or poblano chile pepper, stemmed, seeded and quartered
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika