

BACK-TO-SCHOOL NOSTALGIC TREATS



A Mini Collection by
the **BAKING**
 **CHOCOLATESS**

There's something so comforting about back-to-school season — the sharpened pencils, the cooler mornings, the lunchbox surprises, the little rituals that make everything feel fresh again. Even if you're not packing lunches anymore, this time of year still carries that soft, cozy nostalgia of childhood snacks and after-school treats.

This mini eBook is my love letter to those memories — the Little Debbie classics, the Hostess favorites, the soft bakery cookies, the gooey bars tucked into lunchboxes, the treats we traded at the cafeteria table. I've reimagined them in true Baking ChocolaTess style: **nostalgic-modern, bakery-soft, and just a little bit extra.**

Inside, you'll find five nostalgic treats with a fun glow-up twist. They're simple, playful, freezer-friendly, and perfect for lunchboxes, after-school snacks, or late-night cravings.

Whether you're baking for kids, baking for yourself, or baking just because it feels good... I hope these treats bring a little sweetness to your season.

xO,

Kim

A little sweetness for your day. 

HOW TO USE THIS MINI-BOOK

This little collection is designed to be fun, cozy, and easy to use — like flipping through a stack of handwritten recipe cards with a nostalgic twist. Here's how to get the most out of it:

- **Mashup Moment** — A tiny callout showing the nostalgic combo behind each recipe.
 - **Snack Swaps** — Easy swaps to make treats nut-free, extra chocolatey, freezer-friendly, or more colorful.
 - **Ingredient Notes** — Everyday ingredients with simple notes when something specific matters.
 - **Freezer Tips** — Most treats freeze beautifully; each recipe includes quick storage notes.
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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before you jump into the recipes, here are a few quick tips to make everything smooth, easy, and extra delicious:

- Stir natural peanut butter well **so the oils are fully combined before using.**
- Dice apples small ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch) **so they soften evenly in bar recipes.**
- Chill bars before slicing **for the cleanest cuts and neat layers.**
- Use parchment paper **in pans for easy lifting and tidy edges.**
- Don't overmix cookie dough — **it keeps cookies soft, thick, and bakery-style.**
- Let chocolate toppings set fully **before adding swirls or assembling sandwiches.**

MASHUP MOMENT

Mashup Moment is your quick peek at the nostalgic combo behind each recipe — the two treats, flavors, or childhood snacks that inspired the mashup. It's a fun way to see the “why” behind each creation and what classic flavors you'll taste in every bite.

SNACK SWAPS

Snack Swaps gives you quick, easy ways to customize each treat — whether you need it nut-free, extra chocolatey, freezer-friendly, or a little more colorful. Each recipe includes simple swap ideas so you can adjust the flavors, textures, or ingredients to fit your mood, your pantry, or your kiddo's lunchbox needs.

INGREDIENT NOTES

Ingredient Notes gives you quick tips on the key ingredients used throughout these recipes — what brands work best, what swaps are reliable, and how to get the best flavor and texture every time. Think of it as your cozy cheat sheet for confident, low-stress baking.

Chocolate:

Use your favorite chocolate chips, chunks, or chopped bars. Semi-sweet works in every recipe, but dark chocolate adds a richer, bakery-style vibe.

Nut Butters:

Creamy peanut butter works best for smooth textures. Natural peanut butter is fine — just stir well so the oils are fully combined.

Sweeteners:

Most recipes use agave or honey for smooth, no-grit sweetness. Maple syrup works too, but will add a stronger flavor.

Mix-Ins:

Mini chocolate chips, crushed cookies, sprinkles, and chopped nuts all add fun texture without changing the base recipe.

FREEZER TIPS

Freezer Tips gives you quick guidance on how to freeze, thaw, and store your treats so they stay fresh, chewy, and delicious. Most of these recipes freeze beautifully, making them perfect for meal prep, lunchboxes, or late-night cravings.

Freezing:

Cut bars or bites into portions, then freeze in a single layer before transferring to a freezer-safe container or bag. This keeps them from sticking together.

Thawing:

Let treats sit at room temperature for 5–10 minutes for the perfect soft-chewy texture. For firmer bites, enjoy straight from the freezer.

Storage Time:

Most recipes keep well for up to 2 months in the freezer without losing flavor or texture.

Pro Tip:

If you love extra-cold, candy-bar-style treats, store them in the freezer instead of the fridge — they stay snappy, rich, and ultra satisfying.



STORAGE NOTES

Storage Notes gives you simple guidance on how to keep your treats fresh, soft, and ready whenever you need a quick snack. Most recipes store beautifully, making them perfect for busy weeks, lunchboxes, or grab-and-go moments.

Room Temperature:

Most bars and bites keep well for 2–3 days in an airtight container. Keep them out of direct sunlight for the best texture.

Refrigerator:

Store in a sealed container for up to 1 week. Chilling helps the flavors deepen and keeps everything firm and chewy.

On-the-Go:

Pack treats in small airtight containers or snack bags. If it's warm outside, add an ice pack to keep chocolate from melting.

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RECIPE 1 — Fudge Round Brownie Bars

Soft, chewy, chocolate-on-chocolate brownie bars inspired by nostalgic Little Debbie Fudge Rounds — but thicker, fudgier, and extra cozy.



INGREDIENTS

Brownie Layer

- 1/2 cup melted butter
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup cocoa powder
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder

Fudge Frosting

- 1/4 cup butter, softened
- 1/4 cup cocoa powder
- 1 1/4 cups powdered sugar
- 2–3 tablespoons milk
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Chocolate Drizzle

- 1/2 cup dark chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon coconut oil or butter

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line an 8x8 pan with parchment paper.
2. **For the bars :** In a bowl, whisk melted butter and sugar. Add eggs and vanilla.
3. Stir in cocoa powder, flour, salt, and baking powder until smooth.
4. Spread batter into the pan and bake 18–22 minutes, or until set around the edges.
5. Let cool completely.
6. **For the frosting:** Beat butter, cocoa, powdered sugar, milk, and vanilla until smooth and fudgy.
7. Spread over cooled brownies.
8. **For the chocolate drizzle:** Melt 1/2 cup chocolate chips with 1 teaspoon coconut oil in 30-second bursts until smooth, then drizzle over the top.
9. Refrigerate 20 to 30 minutes to set, then lift out and slice into bars. slicing.

NOTES

- Bars slice cleanest when chilled.
- Add a chocolate drizzle for extra nostalgia.
- Dutch cocoa gives a deeper chocolate flavor.

SNACK SWAPS

- Swap chocolate chips for mini M&Ms for a classic lunchbox vibe.
- Add a swirl of peanut butter to the batter for a fudgy PB twist.
- Use half chocolate chips, half chopped Oreos for extra crunch.

STORAGE

- Fridge: 5–7 days
- Freezer: Up to 2 months

RECIPE 2 — Apple Pie Lunchbox Bars with Vanilla Glaze

Soft, chewy apple-pie-spiced blondie bars made with fresh diced apples and finished with a simple vanilla glaze. Cozy, kid-friendly, and perfect for lunchboxes.



INGREDIENTS

Apple Pie Bars

- 1/2 cup melted butter
- 3/4 cup light brown sugar
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 to 1 1/2 cups finely diced fresh apples (1/4-inch dice)

Vanilla Glaze

- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon milk
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line an 8x8 pan with parchment paper.
2. **For the bars:** In a bowl, whisk melted butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar.
3. Add egg and vanilla and mix until smooth.
4. Stir in flour, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt until combined.
5. Fold in diced apples.
6. Spread batter into the pan and smooth the top.
7. Bake 22–28 minutes, or until edges are set and the center looks slightly soft.
8. Cool completely.
9. **For the glaze:** Whisk powdered sugar, milk, and vanilla until smooth.
10. Drizzle over cooled bars. Let set before slicing.

NOTES

- Dice apples small (1/4 inch) so they soften evenly.
- Bars will be soft and chewy, not cakey.
- Add a pinch of allspice for extra apple pie flavor.
- If apples release moisture, blot lightly before folding in.

SNACK SWAPS

- Swap apples for pears for a softer, sweeter flavor.
- Add a handful of raisins or dried cranberries for a fruit-chew moment.
- Sprinkle cinnamon sugar on top before baking for a bakery finish.

STORAGE

- Room temp: 1–2 days
- Fridge: 5 days
- Freezer: Up to 2 months

RECIPE 3 — Hostess Cupcake Cookie Sandwiches

Soft, fudgy chocolate cookies filled with fluffy marshmallow-vanilla creme and finished with the classic Hostess swirl. A playful, nostalgic twist on the iconic cupcake — but in cozy cookie sandwich form.



INGREDIENTS

Chocolate Cookies

- 1/2 cup cool softened butter
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 large egg, cold or slightly cool
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup plus 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Marshmallow Filling & Chocolate Topping

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar, powdered
- 1 cup marshmallow fluff
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of fine sea salt
- 1 cup dark chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon oil, coconut

Vanilla Swirl (optional but iconic)

- 1/4 cup powdered sugar
- 1–2 teaspoons milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. **For the cookies:** Cream butter, granulated sugar, and brown sugar only until combined. Do not whip the mixture fluffy.
3. Mix in egg and vanilla extract until smooth.
4. Add all-purpose flour, cocoa powder, cornstarch, baking soda, and salt. Mix only until a soft, thick chocolate dough forms.
5. Scoop the dough into 12 portions of 2 tablespoons each (medium cookie scoop), place them on the lined cookie sheet, and chill the portions for 15 -30 minutes.
6. Bake the chilled cookie portions for 11 to 14 minutes, until the edges are set and the centers still look a little underdone. Cool the 12 cookies completely.
7. **For the filling:** Beat butter, powdered sugar, marshmallow fluff, vanilla extract, and a pinch of salt until fluffy. Pipe with a piping bag or spread the marshmallow frosting over 6 cooled cookies, then chill them while you make the chocolate topping.
8. **For the chocolate topping:** Melt dark chocolate chips with coconut oil in 30-second microwave bursts, stirring after each burst until smooth. Spoon the chocolate over the remaining 6 cooled cookies and spread it into an even layer.
9. Chill the 6 chocolate-topped cookies for 5 to 10 minutes, until the tops are set enough to pipe on.
10. **For the squiggle:** Whisk together the powdered sugar, milk, and vanilla extract until super thick and pipeable. Pipe a classic squiggle across each chilled chocolate top, then chill the 6 cookies for 5 to 10 minutes.
11. Press each chocolate-topped cookie onto one filled cookie. Chill the 6 Hostess Cupcake Cookie Sandwiches for about 20 minutes before serving for the best neat, creamy bite.

NOTES

- Undercook cookies slightly for the softest texture.
- Chill filling 10 minutes if it feels too soft to pipe.
- Sandwiches taste even better after chilling 20 minutes.

SNACK SWAPS

- Use chocolate filling instead of vanilla for a double-chocolate version.
- Add mini chocolate chips to the cookie dough for extra texture.

STORAGE

- Fridge: 4–5 days
- Freezer: Up to 2 months (best without swirl; add after thawing)

RECIPE 4 — Classic Oatmeal Creme Pie Bars

Soft, chewy oatmeal cookie bars layered with fluffy marshmallow-vanilla creme. All the nostalgic Little Debbie vibes — but thicker, softer, and homemade-cozy.



INGREDIENTS

Oatmeal Cookie Bars

- 1 cup butter, melted and cooled
- 1 ½ cups light brown sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2 cups old fashioned oats or quick oats (choose old-fashioned if you want chewy and quick oats if you want more cake-like.)

Marshmallow Creme Filling

- 1/2 cup softened butter
- 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar
- 1 cup marshmallow fluff
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line an 8x8 or 9x9 pan with parchment paper. If wanting to do thin bars, you can opt for a 9x13 pan.
2. **For the bars:** In a large bowl, whisk melted butter and brown sugar until glossy. Whisk in eggs and vanilla.
3. Add flour, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Mix until combined. Fold in oats until combined.
4. Spread dough evenly into the pan.
5. The bars bake up about 1.5 inches thick in an **8×8 pan for 26–32 minutes, 1–1.25 inches thick in a 9×9 pan for 22–27 minutes, and 0.75–1 inch thick in a 9×13 pan for 18–23 minutes.**
6. Cool completely.
7. **For the frosting:** beat butter, powdered sugar, marshmallow fluff, vanilla, and salt until fluffy.
8. Spread filling over the cooled cookie layer.
9. Chill 20–30 minutes before slicing for clean cuts.

NOTES

- Quick oats give you that soft, tender snack-cake texture, while old-fashioned oats stay chewier and dense-like.
- Add 1–2 tablespoons milk to the filling if you want it fluffier.
- Bars slice best when chilled.
- Add a sprinkle of cinnamon sugar on top for extra nostalgia.

SNACK SWAPS

- Add mini chocolate chips to the dough for a Choco-Pie twist.
- Swap marshmallow filling for vanilla buttercream for a firmer layer.
- Add a pinch of pumpkin spice for a fall-cozy version.

STORAGE

- Fridge: 5–6 days
- Freezer: Up to 2 months

RECIPE 5 — Lofthouse Cookie Bars

Soft, thick, bakery-style sugar cookie bars topped with fluffy pink frosting and sprinkles. All the classic Lofthouse cookie nostalgia — but easier, cuter, and made in one pan.



INGREDIENTS

Cookie Bars

- 3/4 cup softened butter
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg + 1 egg yolk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup sour cream
- 2 cups + 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 3/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon fine salt

Pink Frosting

- 1/2 cup softened butter
- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 2–3 tablespoons milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt
- 1–2 drops pink food coloring
- Sprinkles for topping

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and line an 8×8 pan with parchment.
2. **For the bars:** Cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
3. Mix in the egg, egg yolk, and vanilla until smooth.
4. Stir in the sour cream until glossy.
5. Add the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt and mix into a thick dough.
6. Press the dough evenly into the pan.
7. Bake 22–27 minutes, until the edges are lightly golden and the center is set.
8. Cool the bars completely.
9. **For the frosting:** Beat the butter, powdered sugar, milk, vanilla, and salt until fluffy, then add pink food coloring.
10. Spread the frosting over the cooled bars, add sprinkles, and chill 10–15 minutes before slicing.

NOTES

- Sour cream is key for the soft, classic Lofthouse texture.
- Add almond extract (1/4 teaspoon) for a bakery-style flavor boost.
- Bars stay soft even after chilling.
- Use gel food coloring for the best pink tone.

SNACK SWAPS

- Swap pink frosting for chocolate frosting for a bakery-style twist.
- Add sprinkles into the dough for a funfetti version.
- Use almond extract instead of vanilla for a classic Lofthouse flavor.

STORAGE

- Fridge: 4–5 days
- Freezer: Up to 2 months

✨ **Thank you so much** for being here and for baking along with me. Creating these cozy, nostalgic treats is one of my favorite ways to share a little joy — and knowing they're landing in your kitchen, your lunchboxes, and your sweet moments means everything.

I hope these recipes bring you comfort, spark a little creativity, and remind you that simple treats can still feel special. If you make anything from this mini eBook, I'd love to see it — tag me so I can cheer you on.

Happy baking, friend.

xo,

Kim

The logo for 'the BAKING CHOCOLATESS' features the word 'the' in a black script font, 'BAKING' in a bold red sans-serif font, and 'CHOCOLATESS' in a bold black sans-serif font. A small red crown icon is positioned to the left of the word 'CHOCOLATESS'.



About The Author

When she's not baking, Kim's usually sipping green tea, testing new chocolate, or sharing sweet treats with the people she loves. She's always dreaming up her next soft, gooey, chocolate-forward creation — the kind that feels nostalgic, cozy, and just a little bit extra. 💕

To explore more of Kim's nostalgic, cozy-luxe creations, visit her **Digital Library** at The Baking ChocolaTess. You can also dive into her **Baking 101 Tips** for foundational techniques, or browse her **Baking Video Collection** for step-by-step visual guides.

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