



Mustard's Last Stand

CLEVER WAYS TO TRAVEL HOME FROM VACATION
WITH KITCHEN LEFTOVERS

I'M GETTING READY to leave a vacation condo that I've occupied for a few weeks. This involves packing up my clothes (easy), the number of paperbacks I've purchased (heavy), and the myriad bottles and jars I have in my refrigerator and cupboard (insane). As residents have departed before me, they've passed along their leftovers. I now have peanut butter, both smooth and crunchy, a few jars of jelly, and four opened jars of mustard. I've been gifted vinegar, ketchup, and wine that reminds me a lot of the vinegar.

Somehow, I can't imagine the TSA agent letting me board my flight home with those bottles, even if I insist it's a shame to waste perfectly good food. I was thinking of who would be the next recipient when it occurred to me that the mustard and peanut butter were transportable, just not in their current states. I was going to devise a very tasty way to get through security.

I'm not very proficient at cookies. I mean, I EAT them like a champ, I just don't bake them very often. Here was my chance. They'd be going in a suitcase, not a cookie exchange. The pressure to make something beautiful was off. I didn't have Hershey's Kisses to top my peanut butter cookies, but I sure had jelly. Mine would be peanut butter thumbprint cookies.

Now the mustard: I've smeared mustard on the bottom of savory tart crusts to keep the crusts from getting soggy. But I couldn't pack a tart. I've added Dijon mustard to salad dressing, but that wasn't going to clear the liquid restriction rules for baggage. I had my ah-ha moment in the middle of the night. (There's something to be said for insomnia.) I was asked to bring mac and cheese to a party when I returned home. Mac and cheese...delicious. Mac and cheese with toasted breadcrumbs on top? Ethereal. How about Dijon mixed in with the breadcrumbs? I've made those crumbs to top a pork roast and they were wonderful. Why wouldn't they pair perfectly with a creamy casserole? I was about to find out. That took care of the Dijon.

Now for the spicy/grainy mustard: I had a package of puff pastry in the freezer. I can't remember why I bought it. I've made cheese twists in the past for dinner parties. Why not cheese and mustard twists? A 2:00 a.m. revelation. After all that heavy thinking, I slept straight through until sunrise. Coffee to welcome the day, and I was ready to embark on this mustard mania.

Later that day I was happy to discover that the cookies were better than I even imagined. I tried several, just to be sure. The twists were better than the original. The buttery-mustardy breadcrumbs were toasted until golden brown. They just had to be a perfect topping for my mac and cheese. Six bottles went into the recycling bin, and I had the makings of a fine feast. Mustard took the stand and passed with flying colors. U

Peanut Butter Thumbprint Cookies

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ¼ cups flour
- ½ teaspoon each: baking powder, baking soda, salt
- ½ cup smooth peanut butter
- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- 1/3 cup each brown sugar and granulated sugar, plus additional granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- ½ cup jam

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Beat the peanut butter and butter until smooth using a stand or hand mixer. Add both sugars and beat until fluffy. Add the egg and beat until well combined. Gradually add the flour mixture and mix until blended.
2. Scoop a tablespoon of the batter and roll into balls. Roll in granulated sugar until lightly coated. Place them on a parchment-lined baking sheet, spacing an inch or more apart. Bake until the cookies are puffed, about 10 minutes. Remove from oven and make indentations in the center of the cookies. Return the cookies to the oven and bake until the edges are golden, another 6 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, place the jam in a small saucepan and heat until loosened. As soon as the cookies come out of the oven, spoon a little of the jam into each indentation. Cool the cookies on a rack. Store at room temperature in an airtight container.

Mustard Breadcrumbs

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup fresh breadcrumbs
- 2 T. unsalted butter
- 2 t. Dijon mustard
- 2 t. chopped flat leaf parsley leaves



INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place the breadcrumbs in a medium bowl. Melt the butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. When it foams, stir in mustard, and chopped parsley. Remove from the heat and pour the mixture over the breadcrumbs. Stir to coat the crumbs. Turn the mixture onto a baking sheet and bake until golden brown, stirring occasionally, about 8-10 minutes.