

MOVIE REVIEW

'Captain America: The Winter Soldier'

By Derek Zemrak



Image provided

Captain America steps up his game!

A bit of history: Like most of the Marvel characters, Captain America did not get his start in comic books. He was born in a 1944 movie serial – short films shown in movie theaters before the feature film with a cliffhanger each week to draw more people to the theater. Fast-forward to 2014 and Captain America is still attracting moviegoers to the theatres – grossing over \$96.2 million last weekend in the United States. The film was made on an estimated \$170,000 budget!

Chris Evans returns as Steve Rogers, aka Captain America, for the third time on the big screen. This time he is struggling to adapt to modern civilization but must deal with the past, which, of course, has returned to haunt him. Oscar nominee Samuel L. Jackson ("Pulp Fiction") returns as Nick Fury, the World War II hero and present day super spy who heads up the S.H.I.E.L.D. Jackson is on top of his game and his presence on the screen is dominating. Four-time Golden Globe nominee Scarlett Johansson ("Lost in Translation") once again assumes the role of the sexy Natasha Romanoff, also known as Black Widow, and Sebastian Stan ("Black Swan") returns as Bucky Barnes, the

Winter Soldier.

A few new characters are introduced in "Captain America: The Winter Soldier." First is Sam Wilson, or Falcon, played solidly by Anthony Mackie ("The Hurt Locker," "Million Dollar Baby"). Mackie's portrayal of Falcon makes you anticipate his return in future Captain America and Avengers films. Screen legend Robert Redford is added to the cast as Alexander Price, a friend and mentor to Nick Fury – or is he? It was great to see Redford take on a supporting role; in a recent interview he stated that he accepted the role so his grandchildren could finally see him in a movie.

"Captain America: The Winter Soldier" is not just another super hero movie with special effects that will blow your mind away. It has a solid storyline that will hold anyone's interest throughout the 2 hours and 16 minutes and is rated PG-13, for violence and language.

Derek Zemrak is a film critic, film producer and founder of the California Independent Film Festival. You can follow Derek on Twitter @zemrak for the latest Hollywood news. Derek can be heard every Friday on KAHN 950AM on the Poppoff Show.

All the Best in a Cookie

By Susie Iventosch



Buttered Pecan Chocolate Chip Cookies

Photo Susie Iventosch

My cooking buddy, Jeff, sent me a recipe for buttered pecan cookies from a cookbook called Best of Country Cookies. Apparently, Taste of Home Magazine sponsored a cookie recipe contest in 1999 to find "the best" cookie and published a book featuring more than 250 of the recipes submitted.

When I finally got around to making these cookies, I thought they'd be delicious with chocolate chips ... and they were! The original

recipe called to roll the dough in the toasted buttered pecans, but I just mixed them right into the dough, which is much easier and just as tasty. I also substituted the self-rising flour with unbleached flour, plus baking powder and a little salt.

Anyone who loves buttered pecan ice cream will enjoy these cookies. In fact, they'd be delicious with a bowl of buttered pecan ice cream and a spoonful of hot chocolate sauce!

Buttered Pecan Chocolate Chip Cookies

(Makes 3 dozen ... or so)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 3/4 cups chopped pecans
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened to room temperature
- 1 cup (packed) light brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup chocolate chips (I used half dark chocolate and half semi-sweet chocolate)

DIRECTIONS

Place chopped pecans and 1 tablespoon butter in a baking dish. Bake at 325 degrees for about 5-7 minutes, or until toasted and beginning to brown, stirring frequently, so as to brown evenly. Remove from oven and cool. Increase oven temperature to 350 degrees.

In a large bowl, beat 1 cup butter with brown sugar until creamy. Beat in egg and vanilla. Stir in baking powder, salt and flour. Mix well. Add chocolate chips and buttered pecans.

Drop by rounded spoonfuls onto greased baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 10-12 minutes or until desired doneness!

Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at susiventosch@gmail.com.

This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.



You can find most of the recipes published in the Lamorinda Weekly on our website Click Food tab

Budget Basics for New College Graduates

By Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

Here's a question I'm often asked by new or soon to be college graduates: "I am looking for a job. Can you help me figure out how much income I will need to pay bills and start to reduce my student loan debt?" The answer to this question will depend on your net income after taxes, rental costs for your residence, and the cost of living in your area. In California, you can count on about 30 percent of your paycheck being withheld for federal and state income tax, social security, Medicare and California State Disability Insurance. You can get an estimate of these costs by working with the paycheck calculator (visit <http://www.adp.com/tools-and-resources/calculators-and-tools/payroll-calculators/salary-paycheck-calculator.aspx>) and experimenting with deductions for dependents, retirement contributions, health insurance premiums and more.

With regard to household rents, most sources agree that you should spend no more than one-third of your gross pay (pretax earnings) on rent <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/19/AR2006051900643.html>. This figure includes basic utilities like gas and electric. Whatever's left after this is available to pay for food, clothing, transportation, phone usage, and insurance ... and, of course, your student loans. Including loan payments the most common recommendation is to plan on spending no more than 40

percent of your pretax income on housing and loan payments (this amounts to a loan payment of \$280 a month). For a good resource on student loans and loan calculators that estimate income needed to pay off a particular loan amount visit <http://www.finaid.org/calculators/loanpayments.phtml>.

An example will help make these costs clear: If you make \$48,000 a year or \$4,000 a month before taxes, you should plan on spending up to \$1,320 on rent plus basic utilities (about 33 percent of pretax income). If you have student debt, you should plan to spend no more than \$1,600 a month (about 40 percent of your pretax income) on housing and loan payments combined. In this example, your after tax income with be about \$2,800 and after rent, utilities and student loan are paid, only about \$1,200 will be available to pay for food, clothing, transportation, phone usage, and insurance. This is a pretty tight budget.

Before shopping for a place to rent, be ready for landlords to check your credit report. If you pay them a fee to check your credit, you are entitled to a copy of the report. Remember that it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, or marital status, but under some conditions a landlord can require that you prove you make a certain amount of yearly income before renting to you. In addition, if this is your first time renting, the landlord

might ask for a cosigner on the lease. It is also common for landlords to ask for your first month's rent plus a security deposit equal to two months' rent. Gas and electric companies require a security deposit as well. Your landlord must refund your deposit when you move out, minus unpaid rent, and a basic cleaning charge. They can take money to repair any damage as well so take photos when you move in so you can prove the prior condition of the premises when you move out. Finally, figure on moving costs – out of college (or your parents' home) into your new home. Now that you have your college degree, welcome to the real world!



Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D. is an independent college advisor who draws upon 25 years of higher education experience to help guide and support the college admissions process for students and their families. Dr. LaScala is a member of NACAC, WACAC and HECA. She can be contacted at (925) 891-4491 or elizabeth@doingcollege.com. Visit www.doingcollege.com for more information about her services.

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