

ALL ABOUT APPETIZERS RECIPES

ROASTED OLIVES:

3-5 cups assorted pitted black or green olives
2-3 Fresh Rosemary springs, cut in half
Zest of 1 orange, cut into long thin strips
¼ cup Extra-Virgin Olive Oil
¼ teaspoon dried chili flakes
Salt, to taste

Preheat the oven to 400-degrees. In a large bowl, combine the olives, rosemary, orange zest, oil, chili flakes and salt – toss to combine. Allow this mixture to rest for 15 to 20 minutes to allow the flavors to meld.

Place the olive mixture into a roasted pan and bake until olives are warmed through, 78 – 10 minutes. Once warmed, remove from the oven, take out the zest and rosemary sprigs and replace them with fresh ones. Serve warm or at room temperature with forks or picks. Serves 4 to 6 and can be doubled.

SUN-DRIED TOMATO AND OLIVE BRUSCHETTA

1 Jar California Sun-dried tomatoes, Julienne style
1 small can chopped black olives
1 teaspoon chopped garlic
1 teaspoon fresh thyme, chopped, or ¼ tsp. dried
1 cup finely shredded Monterey Jack Cheese
¼ to ½ cup mayonnaise – depends on moisture in tomatoes
1 loaf French bread, cut into ¼ inch slices, not toasted

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Slice the bread and set on a cookie sheet.

Chop the sun-dried tomatoes into a dice. Mix with the next seven ingredients. Top each slice of bread with a spoonful of the cheese/bruschetta mixture. Bake until bubbly, approximately 8 minutes. Allow to cool for one or two minutes prior to serving. You can, if desired, sprinkle the finished product with chopped basil, chopped parsley, or shredded Parmesan cheese.

CAPER SHRIMP PHYLLO TARTS

¾ Cup dairy sour cream dill dip
½ tsp. finely shredded lemon peel
1 tsp. lemon juice
2-2.1 oz. packages frozen baked phyllo cups
2 tbsp. capers, drained
30 small to medium cooked and peeled shrimp
Fresh Dill & fresh Lemon Peel, optional as garnish

In a small bowl, for filling, stir together dill dip, the lemon peel and the lemon juice. Fill each Phyllo cup with about 1 teaspoon filling. Top with a few capers. Place a shrimp, tail up, in each cup. If desired, garnish with fresh dill and additional lemon peel. Serves 30

ARUGULA AND GOAT CHEESE TARTINE

6 slices good country white, sourdough or rustic bread
4 ounces goat cheese
4 ounces baby arugula, washed and rinsed
2 medium tomatoes, sliced
Strawberry-Champagne Jam (McKay's found at Whole Foods)

Toast the bread either in a toaster or in a 350-degree oven on a baking sheet, just until light golden brown. Remove and while warm, spread them with the goat cheese, then the Jam. Next, place a slice of the tomato on top of the jam and then some arugula on top of the tomato. Slice each slice of bread into either half or thirds and enjoy! Serves 12 to 18

SMOKED SALMON MOUSSE IN CUCUMBER CUPS

½ cup (4 ounces) cream cheese, softened
2 scallions, chopped
1-2 tbsp. chopped fresh dill or parsley
1 tsp. horseradish sauce
8 ounces smoked salmon or smoked trout fillets, flaked and any fine bones removed
2-4 tbsp. heavy cream
Salt to taste
Cayenne pepper, to taste
2 cucumbers
Dill springs, to garnish

Place the cream cheese, scallions, dill or parsley, and the horseradish sauce into a blender or the bowl of a food processor and process until well blended. Add the fish and process until smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl once or twice. With the machine running, pour in the cream through the feeder tube until a soft mousse-like mixture forms. Season to taste with salt and pepper; mix well and scoop into a bowl and chill for 15 to 30 minutes.

Using a zester or vegetable peeler score the length of each cucumber to create a striped effect then cut each cucumber into ½ inch thick rounds. Use a small spoon or melon baller scoop out the seeds from the center of each round.

Spoon the smoked mousse into a piping bag fitted with a medium star nozzle, and pipe swirls of the mixture into the prepared cucumber rounds. Chill until ready to serve. Garnish the cucumber cups with small sprigs of dill.

Note: Could also use this same recipe to fill tomatoes, zucchini, squash, artichoke bottoms, or other vegetable containers for either an appetizer or for a garnish on a salad.

MARINATED OLIVE & CHEESE RING

1 Package (8 oz.) cream cheese, cold
1 Package (10 oz.) block sharp white cheddar cheese, cut into ¼ inch slices
1/3 cup pimiento-stuffed olives
1/3 cup pitted Greek Black olives
¼ cup balsamic vinegar
¼ cup olive oil
1 tbsp. minced fresh parsley
1 tbsp. minced fresh basil or 1 tsp. dried basil
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 jar (2 ounces) pimiento strips, drained and chopped
Toasted French bread baguette slices

Cut the cream cheese block lengthwise in half; cut each half into ¼ inch slices. On a serving platter, arrange cheeses upright in a ring, alternating cheddar and cream cheese slices. Place olives in center.

In a small bowl, whisk vinegar, oil, parsley, basil, and garlic until blended; drizzle over cheeses and olives then sprinkle with the chopped pimientos. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 8 hours or overnight. Serve with baguettes slices. This serves 16

SIZZLING SAUSGES WITH SHERRY

1 pound fresh pork or chicken sausage *
1 ½ teaspoons olive oil
1/3 cup sherry
Chopped Fresh Flat Leaf or Curly Parsley

Use either kitchen shears or paring knife to cut sausages into links, 1 to 1½ inches each. Heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat and brown the sausage pieces on all sides, about 5 minutes. Add the sherry being sure the pan is off heat, then cook over medium heat for 3 minutes, shaking the pan so the sausages do not burn. Remove from heat and sprinkle with the chopped parsley. Remove them

from the pan and either insert toothpicks or place into a bowl with toothpicks or mini forks to serve.

*Note: I use precooked sausages, like the chicken and herbs or Andouille Sausage, or Turkey Sausage. If using uncooked sausage like pork sausage, be sure to fully cook them prior to slicing them. Once sliced, you just need to get color on the slices.

WILD MUSHROOM CROSTINI

1 pound fresh wild mushrooms, such as chanterelles, maitakes, hedgehogs, or morels

2 tbsp. unsalted butter

2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, more as needed

Kosher Salt

2 medium shallots, finely chopped (about ¼ cup)

2 tsp. chopped fresh thyme

½ cup Crème Fraiche (about 4 oz.)

1 tbsp. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Freshly ground black pepper

18 slices baguette (cut ¼ to ½ inch thick)

¼ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano Cheese

Gently clean the mushrooms with a damp cloth or a paring knife to remove any dirt or dark spots. Cut off any tough stems. If the mushrooms appear muddy, quickly dip them into a large basin of water and drain. Leave small, bite-size mushrooms whole; quarter or halve larger mushrooms.

Melt 1 tbsp. of the butter together with 1 tbsp. of the oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms and a generous pinch of salt, and cook, stirring frequently, until any liquid has evaporated and the mushrooms are nicely browned, 5 to 6 minutes. (If the mushrooms are dry and the pan begins to scorch, add a drizzle of olive oil.) Remove the pan from the heat and transfer the mushrooms to a cutting board. Let them cool slightly and chop them coarsely.

Return the pan to the stovetop over medium heat and add the remaining 1 tbsp. of butter and 1 tbsp. of oil. When the butter has melted, add the shallots, thyme, and a pinch of salt: cook, stirring, until the shallots are tender and lightly golden,

about 3 minutes. Return the mushrooms to the pan, stir in the Crème Fraiche (if you're making this ahead, hold back about half of the crème fraiche to add just before serving). Cook stirring to coat the mushrooms; stir in the parsley and season with several grinds of pepper and salt, to taste. Remove from the heat and hold in a warm spot.

Shortly before serving, position a rack about 6 inches from the broiler and heat the broiler on high. Arrange the bread slices on a baking sheet and brush them with olive oil... Broil until the bread is golden, 1 to 2 minutes. Flip and toast the other side, about 1 minute more. Remove from the oven, spoon some of the warm mushroom mixture on the bread, sprinkle some of Parmigiano cheese on top and serve. Serves 18

ROASTED PROSCIUTTO-WRAPPED PEAR WITH BLUE CHEESE CREAM

8 very thin slices Prosciutto, trimmed of excess fat
2 medium Bartlett or Anjou pears, cored and cut into 4 wedges each
3 ounces Blue Cheese, crumbled (about ½ cup)
2 – 4 tbsp. light cream or half & half
½ tsp. finely chopped thyme
Freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 450-degrees. Line a baking sheet with either aluminum foil or parchment paper.

Lay the Prosciutto slices side by side on a work surface. Place a pear slice at the end of each piece of Prosciutto and roll up, covering the entire pear slice. Transfer the wrapped pear wedges to the baking sheet and roast about 6 - 8 minutes, until the Prosciutto is lightly browned and the pear has softened.

Meanwhile, combine the blue cheese, cream and thyme in a small saucepan over medium heat. Cook about 3 minutes, stirring constantly, until the cheese melts. Season the sauce with pepper to taste; then arrange the 2 pear slices on a plate and drizzle with the cheese sauce. Serves 4

TOMATO STUFFED WITH CAPRESE SALAD w/BASIL VINAIGRETTE

2 round tomatoes, about the size of a small tennis ball
Baby mozzarella balls, cut in half if too large
Fresh basil
2 plum tomatoes, seeded and diced
Bottle of good quality Basil vinaigrette dressing, I use Kens

Extra equipment:
2 Tall shot glasses

Wash and dry the large tomatoes. Stand the tomatoes upright so the stem end is on top. Now carefully take a wedge slice out of the tomato from the side, top to bottom, about 1 inch wide in the middle. Remove this slice then using a small spoon, hollow out the rest of the tomato. Turn the tomatoes on their side so the opening sits down and place on paper towel to drain.

If the mozzarella balls are large, slice them into quarters. They should be no larger than small olives. Dice up the tomato wedges and then using the plum tomatoes, seed and dice them too. Place all this into a bowl; add some diced fresh basil and one or two tablespoons of dressing - mix, and set aside.

Gently, holding the tomato, use a small spoon to fill the cavity with the tomato/cheese mixture. Fill it to the top; then gently place the stuffed tomato upright in the center of the plate allowing some of the filling to spill out on the plate. If you have any extra filling, just spread it around the tomato. Now, place the tall shot glass next to the tomato and half fill with dressing. Garnish with fresh basil. Serve at once, enjoy! Serves 2 as an appetizer

FRITTATA de PASTA

¼ pound pasta (linguine, spaghetti, or angel hair)
2 tbsp. butter -unsalted
¼ cup sliced onion
1 zucchini, thinly sliced
2 Roma Tomatoes, thinly sliced
8 large eggs, room temperature
1½ cups half-and-half
¼ cup chopped fresh basil
¼ cup grated Romano cheese
1 tsp. kosher salt
2 tbsp. olive oil

Cook pasta *al dente*, drain, and set aside. In a nonstick 10 - inch ovenproof skillet - heat butter and sauté onion, zucchini, and tomatoes for 2 minutes. In a bowl, beat together eggs, half-and-half, basil and cheese. Add sautéed vegetables, cooked pasta, salt and pepper. Mix well. Heat the olive oil in the skillet, add the egg mixture, and cook over medium heat for 3 minutes, then transfer to a pre-heated oven at 375-degrees for 18 to 24 minutes or until the eggs are set and puffed. Remove from oven, allow the frittata to set for a minutes, then un-mold onto serving platter and cut into 6 to 8 serving wedges. Makes 6 to 8 servings

APRICOT-GLAZED ROASTED ASPARAGUS APPETIZER

1 pound asparagus spears, trimmed and peeled, if necessary
Cooking spray
2 tbsp. Apricot preserves
1 tbsp. low-sodium soy sauce
¼ tsp. minced garlic, about 1 clove
1/8 tsp. kosher salt

Preheat oven to 400-degrees; place asparagus spears on a foil-lined jelly roll or cookie sheet pan coated with cooking spray. Combine the apricot preserves, soy sauce, garlic, and salt; pour this mixture over the asparagus. Toss well to coat evenly. Bake for 10 minutes or until the asparagus are crisp-tender. Remove and arrange on a serving plate. Note: You can prepare this dish up to the point of

cooking, then keep cool until you arrive at your guest's house, then roast in the oven. Serves 4 to 6

SPINACH PATE'

13 ounces fresh Organic spinach
2 tbsp. butter
½ tsp. ground coriander
Pinch of cayenne pepper
2 scallions, roughly chopped
1 clove garlic, roughly chopped
1/3 cup blanched almonds
2 tsp. white wine vinegar
½ cup sour cream

Remove the stems from the spinach. Wash the leaves, leaving them wet and place them in a large saucepot. Cover and cook for 2 minutes or until wilted then drain, saving ¼ cup of the cooking liquid. Cool the spinach; then squeeze dry.

Melt the butter in a small saucepan. Add the coriander, cayenne pepper, scallions, garlic and almonds and cook until the scallions are tender. Allow this mixture to cool.

Place the cooled garlic/almond mixture into a food processor and process until finely chopped. Add the spinach and process, gradually adding the cooking liquid and vinegar until everything is well blended. Transfer to a mixing bowl and stir in the sour cream and season well with salt and pepper. Serve as an appetizer with toast points or assorted crackers. Makes 1½ cups

TOMATO-PESTO STUFFED BRIE

2 (5-inch) round wheels of Brie, about 13 oz. each, well chilled
1 cup boiling water
1 package, 3 oz. Sun-dried tomatoes, about 2 cups
4 tbsp. hot sauce

2 green onions, chopped, white and pale green sections
1 jar, 1 ¼ oz., pine nuts, toasted*
2 tbsp. butter, softened
¾ cup chopped fresh parsley, either curly flat-leaf

Pour boiling water over tomatoes in medium bowl. Let stand 4 minutes or just until softened; drain well and pat dry with paper towels. Place tomatoes, hot sauce, and green onions in food processor; process until smooth paste forms.

Using a long sharp knife carefully split each Brie wheel in half horizontally. Spread tomato mixture over cut sides of bottom halves. Sprinkle evenly with pine nuts. Cover bottom halves with top halves, cut side down. Press gently to seal.

Spread butter on edges of rounds, roll in chopped parsley. Refrigerate about 1 hour. Cut into wedges; serve with crackers or French bread.

Notes: To toast pine nuts bake at 350-degrees for 5 minutes or until golden brown.

Note #2- Filled Brie may be served warm. However, do not coat with butter and parsley if serving warm. Just bake the rounds in an ovenproof dish at 350-degrees for 5 to 10 minutes or until slightly softened. This recipe makes 12 wedge servings.

CHICKEN CAKES WITH TERIYAKI

Serves four as an Appetizer

2 Pounds - ground chicken
2 large eggs
½ cup grated onion
3 teaspoons sugar
3 teaspoons soy sauce
Cornstarch for coating
½ bunch scallions, finely chopped for garnish
2-3 tablespoons Canola oil, for cooking, as needed

For the sauce:

4 tablespoons Sake

4 tablespoons sugar

4 tablespoons soy sauce

Mix the ground chicken with the egg, grated onion, sugar and soy sauce until the ingredients are thoroughly combined and well bound. This process takes a few minutes, until the mixture is quite sticky, which makes for a good texture. Shape the mixture into twelve (12) small, flat, round cakes and dust them all over with cornstarch. Note – what I found works best is to dust a serving platter with cornstarch, then lay the patties on that, then dust the top of the patties with cornstarch.

Soak the scallions in cold water for 5-10 minutes and drain well, then slice.

Heat the oil in a frying pan over medium-high heat. Place the chicken cakes in the pan in a single layer and cook over medium heat for 3 to 5 minutes. Watch for the side of the cake to turn white as the chicken cooks. Then turn over and cook for 3 to 4 minutes longer. This will have to be done most likely in two batches. While the second batch of cakes is cooking mix the ingredients for the sauce; lower the heat to the pan so the sauce does not burn and pour ½ of the sauce into the pan. Shake the pan to glaze the bottoms of the cakes; then turn them over to glaze the other side. Remove the pan from the heat and remove the cakes. Place the pan back on the heat, pour the remaining sauce in and then place the first batch of cakes in, swirl to coat, flip so second side is coated, then remove pan from heat and serve. Arrange the chicken cakes on a plate and top with the scallions. Serve immediately.

ANGEL HAIR AND ARTICHOKE FRITTATA

2 ounces angel hair pasta

3 large eggs, room temperature

¼ cup milk

1 teaspoon baking powder

2 tablespoons olive oil
3 ounces artichoke hearts, quartered
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, for garnishing
Chopped fresh herbs, such as tarragon or basil with parsley and chives, for garnishing
6 tablespoons crème fraiche

Preheat oven to 450-degrees.

In a large pot of lightly salted boiling water, cook pasta for 2 to 3 minutes or until al dente. Drain and immediately submerge in cold water. Drain again, set aside.

In a small bowl, whisk the eggs until blended. Whisk in the milk and baking powder. Heat the olive oil in an 8-inch ovenproof nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the pasta and artichoke hearts and toss to mix. Using a spatula, spread the mixture evenly in the pan and then pour the eggs over it, making sure they completely cover the pasta. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes or until the eggs are set on the bottom; season to taste with salt and pepper.

Transfer the skillet to the oven and bake for 2 to 4 minutes or until the eggs are completely cooked through. Remove the frittata from the oven and transfer it to a flat plate. Sprinkle with grated cheese and chopped fresh herbs and let the frittata stand for about 5 minutes before slicing. Serve immediately on small plates; top each serving with crème fraiche. Serves 10 to 12 as a first course
Appetizer or Amuse-Bouche

THAI STIR-FRY SHRIMP IN ENDIVE CUPS

½ pound medium – medium/large shrimp, raw, shelled and deveined
2 whole small green onions, minced – white and green
2 tablespoons finely minced ginger
4 large heads Belgian endive – leaves separated to form cups
2 tablespoons flavorless cooking oil

Wok Sauce:

2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro springs

2 tablespoons oyster sauce
2 tablespoons dry sherry
1 tablespoon dark sesame oil
2 teaspoons hot sauce or Asian Chile Sauce
½ teaspoon sugar
½ teaspoon cornstarch

Cut the shrimp crosswise into rounds, about three or four per shrimp depending on size, refrigerate until needed, covered. Combine the green onions and the ginger and refrigerate. Cut ends of endive, separate leaves and refrigerate. In a small jar, add all the sauce ingredients, shake well and refrigerate.

At serving time, place a wok or sauté pan over high heat until hot. Add the cooking oil and roll it around the sides of the wok. When the oil just begins to smoke, add the shrimp. Stir-fry the shrimp. As soon as the shrimp turn white (about 45 seconds), add the green onions and ginger. Shake the sauce several times then add it to the stir-fry. Stir and toss until the sauce glazes the shrimp. Slide the stir-fry onto a serving platter and surround the shrimp with the endive cups and serve at once. Serves 4 – 6 as an appetizer and 8 – 12 as an hors d'oeuvre

CAJUN CRAB STUFFED MINI PEPPERS

36 mini peppers, red, yellow and orange
1 pound cream cheese
8 oz. crab meat, claws, or shredded
1½ tbsp. Cajun seasoning
1 tbsp. hot sauce
1tsp. dried thyme
Chopped parsley to garnish

Mix the cream cheese, Cajun seasoning, crab, hot sauce and thyme together. Either pipe or spoon this filling into the hollowed out peppers. Top the cheese

mixture by dipping them into the chopped parsley. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Arrange in a circle pattern on a round platter. Serve as an appetizer, 4 per plate or as a hors d'oeuvre.

GRATIN of ASPARAGUS AND HAM

1 ½ pounds medium to large asparagus, about 16 spears
1 cup water
1 tablespoon olive oil
1½ teaspoons butter
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
4 slices best quality boiled or baked ham or Prosciutto
1½ tablespoons grated parmesan cheese

Preheat the oven to 400-degrees

Using a vegetable peeler, peel the lower third of the asparagus spears, and wash them well in cool water.

Bring 1 cup of water to a boil in a large skillet. Add the asparagus, arranging them in one layer. Bring the water back to a boil, cover, and cook over high heat for about 2-3 minutes, until the asparagus are tender but still firm. Note: I cook for only 2 minutes. Remove from the cooking water and shock in ice water to stop the cooking; then place on a paper towel lined cooked sheet to cool. You should have about ½ cup of cooking liquid left. If you have less, add enough water to bring to ½ cup, if you have more, boil it down to ½ cup. Now add the butter, salt, pepper and oil to this liquid, mix well and set aside.

Place 4 spears together on 1 slice of ham and roll the ham tightly around the asparagus. Repeat with the remaining ham and spears. Place all the bundles seam side down and side by side on a cutting board and trim the bottoms so they are all the same size. Now arrange the bundles on an oven safe dish. Sprinkle with the cheese.

Bake the ham and asparagus bundles in the 400-degree oven for 5-6 minutes to warm then through, and then finish under a hot broiler, placing the dish so the

bundles are 3-4 inches from the heat. Broil for about 2-3 minutes, until lightly browned. Be careful not to place the dish too close to the heat, making sure it is safe to use in the broiler. If you don't have such a dish, just increase the oven temp to 450 and place on top shelf for 2-4 minutes. Meanwhile, reheat the sauce in the skillet.

Remove the gratin dish and place a bundle on each of 4 small plates and spoon some sauce over it. Sprinkle with some more cheese and serve. Serves 4

MELON BALL APPETIZER with CRYSTALLIZED GINGER AND HONEY

½ Large, ripe Cantaloupe
½ Large, ripe Honey-Dew melon
2 tbsp. finely chopped crystallized ginger
1 tbsp. honey – preferably a flavored honey
1½ tsps. Fresh lime juice, plus thin lime slices to garnish
Fresh mint leaves, for garnish

Remove any seeds from the melon halves. Using a melon baller, scoop out balls from the melons and place them in a large bowl. Sprinkle the balls with the finely chopped crystallized ginger, and then drizzle with the honey and lime juice. Using a large spoon or rubber spatula, gently toss until well mixed. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Just before serving, gently stir the fruit to mix it with the ginger and juices that have collected in the bottom of the bowl. Garnish with mint leaves. Spoon the fruits, along with their juices into chilled individual martini glasses, either regular or mini. This serves four to eight, depending on the size of the glasses used.

MEXICAN TORTILLA APPETIZER

6 Flour tortillas (6-inch size)
1 Can (16 oz.) refried beans
1/3 cup taco sauce
1 green bell pepper, chopped

1 large tomato, chopped
1 or 2 Green onions, thinly sliced
½ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
2 cups Mexican Blend shredded cheese (8 oz.)

Bake tortillas on cookie sheet in 400-degree oven for 5 minutes or until crisp. Remove and set aside to cool for a few minutes.

Once cool enough to handle, spread ¼ cup of the refried beans, 1 tablespoon taco sauce, the chopped green bell pepper, tomato and onion evenly on each tortilla. Sprinkle with the crushed red pepper and then spread the cheese evenly over the tortillas. Bake 8 – 10 minutes more or until the cheese is melted. Remove from oven and slice each tortilla into 6 wedges. Allow to cool a few minutes prior to serving since the cheese will be very hot. This makes 36 appetizers.