

TEN SIMPLE APPETIZERS FOR YOUR HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

PARMESAN PASTRY SPIRALS

½ of a 17.3-ounce package frozen puff pastry (1 sheet) thawed
1 tablespoon milk
1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
½ teaspoon cracked black pepper

On a lightly floured surface, roll puff pastry sheet into a 14 x 10 – inch rectangle. Brush pastry with some of the milk; sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and pepper. Starting at a short side, loosely roll up into a spiral, stopping at the center. Repeat rolling up starting at the other short side. Wrap in plastic wrap; freeze for 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350-degrees. Line baking sheets with parchment paper or foil; set aside.

Unwrap the pastry rolls and place on a cutting board. Brush with remaining milk; using a serrated knife with a sawing motion, carefully cut pastry roll crosswise into ¼-inch thick slices. Place slices 1-inch apart on prepared baking sheets, reshaping as necessary.

Bake for 12 to 14 minutes or until crisp and golden. Transfer spirals to a wire rack; cool slightly. Serve warm. Makes about 24 spirals

BOURSIN, GRAPE AND WALNUT CANAPE'S

10 slices firm-textured bread
1 tablespoon butter, melted
Salt and ground black pepper
Boursin cheese
1 teaspoon snipped fresh thyme
1/3 cup chopped walnuts, toasted
10 seedless grapes, either red or green – quartered

Preheat the oven to 425-degrees. Using a 2-inch decorative cutter, either round or square, cut 20 shapes from the bread slices. Brush bread cutouts with melted butter. Sprinkle cut outs lightly with salt and pepper and then place on a baking sheet in a single layer. Bake about 7 minutes or until golden. Cool toast on pan set on a wire rack.

Once cool enough to handle, spread cheese on each toast piece; sprinkle with thyme and top with some chopped walnuts. Place two grape quarters, one red, one green, on top. This makes 20 appetizers.

ROASTED GREEN BEAN BUNDLES

30 fresh green beans, trimmed
1 tablespoon olive oil
¼ teaspoon smoked salt or ½ teaspoon seasoned salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
10 thin slices Capocollo ham or 5 thin slices Prosciutto, halved crosswise
Lemon wedges (optional)

Preheat oven to 425-degrees. In a large saucepan, cook green beans, covered, in a small amount of boiling lightly salted water for 5 minutes; drain. Let stand about 10 minutes or until cool enough to handle.

Arrange green beans in a single layer in a 13x9x2-inch baking pan. Drizzle beans with olive oil and sprinkle with the smoked or seasoned salt and toss to coat. Wrap three green beans in a ham or Prosciutto slice. Place wrapped bundles seam sides down, in the baking pan. If necessary, secure bundles with a wooden toothpick.

Bake, uncovered, about 10 minutes or until beans are crisp-tender and the ham is crisp. Remove toothpick, if using. Arrange bundles on a serving platter and squeeze a little lemon juice over. This makes 10 bundles.

EVERYTHING CHEESE STRAWS

1 17.3-ounce package frozen puff pastry (2 sheets) thawed
1 egg white, lightly beaten
2 teaspoons everything bagel seasoning
1½ cups finely shredded white Cheddar cheese, dill Havarti cheese or Monterey Jack cheese

Preheat the oven to 375-degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or foil; set aside. Unfold pastry on a lightly floured surface, brush one sheet lightly with egg white. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon of everything bagel seasoning and ¾ cup of the cheese. Top with the remaining pastry sheet. Brush with egg white and sprinkle with remaining seasoning and cheese. Using a rolling pin, roll the top pastry sheet to press cheese into pastry and seal.

Using a pizza cutter, cut the pastry into ½ inch wide strips; gently twist each strip several times. If desired, cut strips in half. Transfer dough strips to prepared baking sheet, pressing down ends. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes or until golden. Transfer straws to a wire rack; cool.

CAPER-SHRIMP PHYLLO TARTS

¾ cup dairy sour cream dill-flavor dip
½ teaspoon finely shredded lemon peel
1 teaspoon lemon juice
2 2.1 ounce packages baked miniature phyllo dough shells (30 total)
2 tablespoons capers, drained
30 peeled, cooked small to medium shrimp (with tails)
Fresh dill springs – optional
Finely shredded lemon peel – optional

In a small bowl, stir together dill dip, the ½ teaspoon lemon peel, and the lemon juice. Fill phyllo shells with dill dip mixture (about 1 teaspoon per shell). Sprinkle capers evenly over dip mixture. Place 1 shrimp, tail up, in each shell. If desired, garnish with a small dill spring and additional lemon peel. Makes 30 tarts

TERIYAKI WALNUTS

4 cups walnut halves
3 tablespoons sesame seeds
¼ cup frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed
¼ cup soy sauce
2 tablespoons Asian sesame oil
2 tablespoons light brown sugar
2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger
2 cloves garlic, minced
½ teaspoon crushed dried red pepper flakes

Preheat oven to 350-degrees. Line a large baking sheet with foil or parchment paper; spread walnuts in an even layer. Bake stirring once or twice until lightly browned and fragrant 10 to 12 minutes. Set aside baking sheet for later use. Reduce oven temperature to 300-degrees.

In a large frying pan over medium heat, toast sesame seeds until pale golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Scrape sesame seeds onto a plate and set aside. In the same pan, combine the orange juice concentrate, soy sauce, sesame oil, sugar, ginger, garlic and pepper flakes. Bring to a boil. Add walnuts and cook, stirring, until liquid has evaporated. Add sesame seeds, stirring to coat evenly.

On the baking sheet, spread walnut mixture out in a single layer. Bake until nuts are glazed and dry, 8 to 10 minutes. Let cool. Store the cooked nuts in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 week. Yields 4 cups to toasted nuts

BAKED BRIE WITH CARAMELIZED ONIONS

1 small onion, cut into thin wedges
2 teaspoons butter, unsalted please
1/3 cup tomato preserves or mango chutney
½ teaspoon snipped fresh rosemary or ¼ teaspoon dried - crushed
1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1 – 8 ounce round Brie Cheese
Assorted bread sticks, crackers or sliced French breads slices

For caramelized onions, cook onion in hot butter in a small saucepan, covered, over low heat for 15 minutes or until tender and golden, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, stir together tomato preserves or mango chutney (cut up any large pieces of mango), rosemary and crushed red pepper in a small bowl.

Cut off a thin slice from the top of the Brie to remove the rind; discard. Place the Brie in ungreased 9-inch pie plate; top with tomato or chutney mixture, then with caramelized onions.

Bake, uncovered, in 325-degree oven for about 10 to 12 minutes or until Brie is softened and warmed but not runny. Serve with breadsticks, crackers or bread slices.

BACON-WRAPPED RUMAKI

1 – 2 cans (8-oz ea.) whole water chestnuts, drained
¼ cup soy sauce
1 tablespoon white granulated sugar
1 package of bacon cut in half *
Wooden toothpicks**

In a small bowl combine water chestnuts, soy sauce and sugar, mix well. Let stand at room temperature for 20 – 30 minutes to marinate, or overnight in the refrigerator.

Drain chestnuts, and wrap each one in a piece of bacon sliced in half, then secure with a toothpick. Place on a sheet pan sprayed with cooking spray and with a drain rack or better yet, on a disposable roasting rack; bake at 400 –degrees, till bacon is cooked and crisp (10 to 18 minutes); or under broiler for 4 to 7 minutes, about 4 inches from heat. When baking under the broiler, be sure to stay at the oven as they will burn quickly if not watched. If cooking in the summer, grill them over low heat until the bacon is crisp. If your grill has an upper shelf, you can finish them up there too. Serve warm.

* = You can alter the taste by altering the type of bacon used. You can use Maple Cured, Apple wood Smoked Bacon or even Turkey Bacon. You want a medium or normal thickness since thick sliced bacon takes longer to cook and is somewhat harder to wrap around the chestnuts.

** = Remember to use only WOODEN toothpicks as plastic ones will melt.

SLICED BEEF ON TOAST POINTS

¼ pound thinly sliced rare roast beef*
¼ pound thinly sliced Swiss cheese or other type cheese
1 Granny Smith apple
1 container Creamed Horseradish Sauce
1 loaf French bread, sliced on the bias into ¼ inch thick slices
Either chives or parsley for garnish

Slice the apple in half, from top to bottom; lay it flat on the cut side and slice off about ¼ to create a flat side. Now slice thin slices off the apple and set aside. You may want to pass the sliced apple through a lemon-water bath to prevent them from browning. Alternately, you can use a mandolin to get thin slices off the apple.

Take the sliced bread (do not toast) and spread a little of the creamed horseradish on each slice, then top with a slice of the apple, top that with a slice of the Swiss Cheese, then top that with a slice of the beef. Trim the cheese and beef to fit the bread slice. Now top the beef with a dab of the horseradish and garnish with either crossed chives or a small amount of chopped parsley. Arrange on a round platter in a spoke like pattern with a tomato rose in the center of the serving tray.

*Note: I will sometimes just get a nice strip steak from Wegmans. Grill it to medium rare and then cool. Once cooled, slice it thinly cross-wise; then slice each strip in half. Follow directions as above.

CHEF'S CHEESE BALL

1 8 oz. package cream cheese, softened
1 package red-wine cheddar cheese, softened
1 package chopped walnuts

Mix the two cheeses together and shape into a ball. Roll the ball in the chopped nuts to coat. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate prior to use. Serve on a platter surrounded by crackers.