

## 2024 Holiday Appetizer Recipes

### **BACON – WRAPPED RUMAKI**

1 – 2 cans (8-oz ea.) whole water chestnuts, drained  
¼ cup soy sauce  
1 tbsp. 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. Makes about 24 - 30

\* = 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.

### **WILD MUSHROOM, GARLIC, AND THYME IN PHYLLO CUPS:**

1 tbsp. butter  
4 oz. wild mushrooms, finely chopped

1 shallot, finely chopped  
1 garlic clove, finely chopped  
1 tsp. finely chopped thyme  
2 tbsp. crème Fraiche or Heavy Cream  
Salt & black pepper to taste  
30 Phyllo cups  
30 thyme springs to garnish

Melt butter in a frying pan over high heat. Add mushrooms, shallots, garlic, and thyme. Cook until tender and slightly crisp, 5 – 10 minutes. Stir in crème Fraiche and remove from heat. Add salt and pepper to taste. Use a teaspoon to fill cups with mushroom mixture. Garnish with thyme. Serve hot or at room temperature.

Makes 30

## **FRENCH CHOCOLATES**

1- 12 ounce package semisweet-chocolate chips  
½ to 1 cup chopped walnuts  
¾ cup sweetened condensed milk  
1/8 tsp. Salt  
1 tsp. Vanilla  
Orange liqueur - optionnel  
Chocolate sprinkles  
Chopped peanuts  
Coco Powder  
Shredded Coconut – Note: Toast for best flavor

In double-boiler top over hot, not boiling, water, melt one 12-ounce package semisweet-chocolate chips. Stir in walnuts, sweetened condensed milk and salt, along with 1 teaspoon vanilla extract or orange flavored liqueur.

Using a wooden spoon, stir till smooth. Cool mixture in refrigerator for about 10 – 15 minutes. Using a mini-ice cream scooper, scoop up mixture, and with buttered hands, shape mixture into 1-inch balls; roll each immediately into the chocolate sprinkles, chopped peanuts, shredded/toasted coconut or the coco powder. Bet you can't eat just one!

Toasted Coconut – Sprinkle shredded coconut into a dry non-stick sauté pan. Over medium-low heat, cook coconut till it starts to toast, swishing the pan often to prevent coconut from burning. Once a nice golden-brown tinge, remove from pan to ensure the cooking stops. Roll French Chocolates in the toasted coconut and enjoy!

## **MELON IN PORT WINE**

1 ripe cantaloupe (2  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 3 pounds)  
¼ cup good quality port wine  
2 sprigs sage  
Freshly ground black pepper

Cut the cantaloupe in half crosswise. Spoon out and discard the seeds. Using a melon baler, scoop out a layer of balls from the flesh of one of the halves, and place them in a bowl. Then, still using the melon baler, scrape out the flesh trimmings from between the holes, and set them aside in another bowl. Repeat this procedure, working layer by layer, until all the flesh has been removed from both melon halves. You should have about 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups of melon balls and 1 cup of trimmings. Reserve the empty melon shells.

Add the port to the bowl containing the melon balls and mix thoroughly. Place the melon trimmings in the bowl of a food processor or blender and liquefy them. Add this mixture to the melon balls, mix well, cover, and refrigerate for at least 1 to 2 hours or overnight if desired.

If using the shells to serve, using a sharp paring knife cut the edge of each reserved melon shell into decorative pointed “teeth.”

At serving time, fill the shells or other serving containers – I use either martini glasses or small ramekin like bowls – with the melon balls and marinade, and decorate each with a sprig of sage and a grind of fresh black pepper. If using as a hors d’oeuvre, place the balls on a serving platter and secure each with a toothpick. Do a fine chiffonade of the sage and sprinkle over the melon balls.

## **MINI ROQUEFORT-APPLE-WALNUT TARTS**

3½ ounces Roquefort or Blue Cheese, at room temperature  
4 Tsp. heavy (whipping) cream  
½ cup finely chopped green apple, unpeeled  
¼ cup (about 1 ounce) finely chopped walnuts  
30 (two – 2.1-ounce packages) frozen pre-baked mini Phyllo dough shells  
30 walnut halves (for garnish)

In a food processor or using a large bowl with a fork, mix the cheese and cream until light and fluffy. Add the apple and chopped walnuts and mix until combined. (May cover and refrigerate for up to 1 day).

Divide the cheese mixture evenly among the Phyllo dough shells. If desired, top each with a walnut half. May cover and refrigerate for up to several hours; bring to room temperature prior to serving.

Makes 30

Note: You can use Walnuts, Pecans, Hazelnuts or other nuts of your choice. You can also use other platforms, such as endive, lettuce cups, or other vehicles to serve the salad in.

## MINI ITALIAN CLUB SANDWICHES

3 large eggs  
2 Tbsp. whipping cream  
¼ tsp. salt  
1/8 tsp. pepper  
1 tbsp. (about) butter  
10 slices bacon  
2 – (8-ounce) round loaves Focaccia bread (7-inch diameter)  
1 cup purchased pesto  
8 ounces thinly sliced turkey  
4 ounces thinly slice provolone cheese

Whisk the eggs, cream, salt, and pepper in a medium bowl until well blended. Heat a 6-inch diameter nonstick skillet over medium-low heat. Brush the skillet with some butter. Pour ¼ cup of the egg mixture into the pan, swirling to coat the bottom of the pan evenly. Cover and cook until the egg crepe is just set about 1 minute and 30 seconds. Invert the skillet over a plate and allow the egg crepe to drop onto the plate. Repeat to make 4 crepes total, brushing the skillet with melted butter as needed and stacking crepes on the plate. Note: I would put a piece of parchment or wax paper between each egg crepe.

Cook the bacon in a heavy large frying pan until crisp. (Note: I would cook the bacon on a parchment lined sheet pan in the oven till crisp.) Transfer the cooked bacon to paper towels to drain.

Preheat a griddle or grill pan over medium-high heat. Cut the focaccia horizontally in half. Place the focaccia cut side down on the griddle and cook until the focaccia is heated through and golden brown on the bottom, about 2 minutes. Spread the pesto over the toasted sides of each halved focaccia. Cover the bottom halves of the focaccia with the egg crepes, turkey, provolone and bacon, dividing equally. Cover with the top halves of

focaccia, pesto side down. Cut the sandwich into bite-size wedges or into squares. Arrange the sandwiches on a platter and serve.

### **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 Wegman's. 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.

## ROASTED POTATO SLICES WITH ROMESCO SAUCE

1 medium plum tomato (about ¼ pound), cored and quartered  
16 whole almonds, toasted  
1 tbsp. coarsely chopped jarred roasted red pepper  
2 small cloves garlic  
1/8 tsp cayenne  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
1 tbsp. red wine vinegar  
4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil  
¾ pound small red potatoes (1-2 inches in diameter), rinsed and dried  
Finely grated zest of 2 medium lemons, for garnish  
¼ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, for garnish

Position a rack in the upper third of the oven and heat the oven to 450-degrees.

In a food processor, combine the tomato, almonds, roasted red pepper, garlic, cayenne, ¼ tsp salt and a few grinds of pepper. Process, scraping the bowl as needed, until the mixture is somewhat smooth - about 1 minute total time. Add the vinegar and 1 Tbsp. of the olive oil and process until well incorporated. Taste and add more salt, if needed.

Trim the ends off each potato and cut the potatoes crosswise into 1/8-to-1/4-inch slices. In a bowl, toss the potatoes with the remaining 3 Tbsp. olive oil and 1 tsp salt to coat well. Lay the slices in a single layer on a baking sheet. Roast the potatoes, turning the slices with a spatula and rotating the baking sheet halfway through roasting until golden brown, 20 to 30 minutes. Let cool slightly.

To serve, arrange the potato slices on a serving platter; blot with a paper towel if they look oily. Top each slice with a generous ¼ tsp of the Romesco Sauce. Note: you may not use all the sauce. Garnish each with a tiny pinch of the lemon zest and a parsley leaf.

Note: The Romesco sauce can be made up to 3 days ahead and refrigerated. Before using, bring it to room temperature and stir well.

## **ROASTED OLIVES**

3 – 5 cups assorted pitted green and black olives  
2 – 3 Rosemary sprigs, cut in half  
Zest of 1 Orange, cut into long thin strips  
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil  
¼ tsp. dried chili flakes  
Salt, to taste

Preheat oven to 400-degrees. In a bowl, combine olives, rosemary, orange zest, oil, chili flakes and salt and toss to coat. Place olive mixture into roasting pan and bake until olives are warmed through, 7 – 10 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature. Serves 4 to 8 – can be doubled or tripled.

## **ROASTED ROSEMARY CASHEWS**

1 – 1 ¼ pound(s) cashews or mixed nuts  
2 tablespoons rosemary – fresh leaves chopped fine  
½ teaspoon cayenne – go lightly here, too much is not good  
2 teaspoons brown sugar – either dark or light  
2 teaspoons salt  
2 – 2 ½ tablespoons melted butter

Preheat oven to 325-degrees.

Place nuts on an un-greased baking sheet and bake for about 10 minutes until they are warmed through. Watch that the nuts do not burn. Stir after about 5 minutes. Note: let your nose tell you when the nuts are roasting, you should be able to smell them. You can also smell if they are burning.



Meanwhile, combine everything else in a large bowl. As soon as you take the nuts out of the oven, toss them in the bowl until completely coated – keep tossing them to ensure they are all completely coated - this takes about 3 – 5 minutes. Serve warm, if desired. The nuts flavor increases as they cool down. Store in a zip lock bag or other airtight container. This recipe makes about 3 cups.

## **SMOKED SALMON CHEESECAKE (OR MOUSSE) WITH TRADITIONAL CONDIMENTS**

1 lb. cream cheese  
½ lb. smoked salmon  
½ cup half & half  
Pinch sea salt  
Pinch white pepper

Traditional condiments:

Capers  
Sliced or diced cucumber  
Sliced scallion or red onion  
Diced tomato  
Diced sweet pickle – gherkins  
Lemon wedge

To make the cheesecake unwrap and bring the cream cheese to room temperature, about 20 to 25 minutes. Chop smoked salmon slightly. Don't chop to much, it will fall apart when blending. Put cheese and salmon in kitchen aid mixer (or cream by hand with rubber spatula), and slowly add half and half to thin out for easy handling. Blend until smooth on medium speed. If you would like to mold, lay plastic wrap in your favorite mold or small spring form pan and spray with Pam or vegetable oil. Refrigerate a little to set and un-mold. I like the rustic look to just spoon it out on the center of a platter with condiments all around. Serve with toast points, rye or dark bread.

## **SNOW PEA WRAPPED SHRIMP SKEWERS WITH LEMON MAYONNAISE**

**Makes 60-70**

35-40 Large Snow Peas  
60-70 Large Shrimp, cooked and peeled  
Lemon Mayonnaise

Blanch snow peas in boiling water for 1 minute. Drain and refresh in cold water. Drain again and pat dry. Split pea's in half, store on paper towel till ready to use.

Place 1 shrimp on top of each snow pea and wrap. Secure with a toothpick. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes prior to serving. Can be assembled up to 8 hours in advance and stored in an airtight container in refrigerator.

Lemon mayonnaise: Using a good quality whole egg brand mayo, whisk fresh lemon juice, 1-3 tbsp. into mayo; can add some sugar and Dijon mustard to increase flavor.

Store in refrigerator until ready to use; for presentation – Stick wrapped shrimp into a round head of lettuce with a whole cut out of the top and the mayo placed in a small glass bowl placed inside the hollowed out opening.

## **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.

## **HONEYED FIG, BACON & BLUE CHEESE TARTLETS**

6 whole dried figs, stems removed  
1 cup hot water, 3 ½ tablespoons honey  
2 ounces cooked and crumbled bacon  
1/3 cup crumbled blue cheese, 1 teaspoon chopped rosemary

Stir the figs, water and 2 tbsp. honey in a medium bowl. Let stand for 1 hour. Drain the figs well in a colander. Coarsely chop the figs.

Heat the oven to 375°F. Stir the pancetta, chopped figs, rosemary, cheese and remaining honey in a medium bowl.

Unfold the pastry sheet on a lightly floured surface. Cut the pastry sheet into **3** (2 1/2-inch wide) strips. Discard the remaining pastry.

Cut **each** pastry strip into **4** (2 1/2-inch) squares, making **12** in all. Press the pastry squares into **12** (1 3/4-inch) mini muffin-pan cups.

Spoon 1½ tbsps. Pancetta mixture into **each** pastry square; bake for 20 minutes or until the pastries are golden brown. Remove the pastries from the pan and let cool on a wire rack for 5 minutes. Garnish with additional fresh rosemary, if desired.

## **ROASTED TURKEY CANAPE WITH CRANBERRY/ORANGE/GINGER RELISH**

White bread

Butter, unsalted, at room temperature

½ pound Roasted Turkey Breast

Cranberry Relish – recipe below

Can large, pitted black olives

Cut out rounds of the white bread with a cookie cutter, about 2½ inches in diameter. Slightly butter the rounds. Cut out rounds of the Roasted Turkey Breast to fit the canapé. Spread a teaspoon of the Cranberry/Orange relish on top of the Roasted Turkey. Now place a slice of the black olive in the center of the canapé.

Place the finished canapés on a parchment lined baking sheet, one that has had some water (just a few drops) sprinkled on the parchment paper to keep the canapé from drying out; store in the refrigerator covered, till ready to serve.

## **CRANBERRY, GINGER, ORANGE RELISH**

½ of an orange, preferably navel (or other seedless variety) scrubbed

12 ounces fresh cranberries, rinsed

¾ cup granulated sugar

1/4<sup>th</sup> cup peeled, chopped ginger root

Cut the orange - with its peel on - into 8 wedges, discarding any seeds. In a large bowl, combine the orange wedges, cranberries, sugar and ginger. Working in batches, transfer a portion of the mixture to a food processor or blender and pulse, scraping the sides of the container until the mixture is finely chopped. Transfer the relish to a bowl, cover and refrigerate. This is

best when made several days in advance and allowed to sit and develop the flavors. This goes great with ham, turkey or just about any meat. It will keep in the refrigerator for several weeks, covered.

## **DUCK POT STICKERS WITH SPICY MANGO SAUCE**

### *For the Wontons:*

1 tablespoon lite soy sauce  
1 teaspoon sesame oil  
2 scallions, finely chopped  
Grated zest of ½ orange  
1 teaspoon brown sugar (light)  
1 ½ cups chopped smoked duck (Can find in most gourmet shops, including Wegmans)  
About 40 round Wonton (Pot-sticker) wrappers  
1 tablespoon vegetable oil  
Whole fresh chives, to garnish (optional)

### *For the Mango sauce:*

2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
½ teaspoon ground cardamom  
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 cup mangos puree (about 1 large mango)  
1 tablespoon honey  
½ teaspoon Chinese chili sauce (or to taste)  
1 tablespoon cider vinegar  
Snipped fresh chives, to garnish

First prepare the sauce. In a medium saucepan, heat the oil over medium-low heat. Add the ground cumin, cardamom and cinnamon and cook for about 3 minutes, **stirring constantly**. Stir in the mango puree, honey, chili sauce, and vinegar. Remove from heat and let cool. Pour into a bowl and cover until ready to serve.

Prepare the wonton filling. In a large bowl, combine the soy sauce, sesame oil, scallions, orange zest and brown sugar until well blended. Add the duck and toss to coat well. Place a teaspoonful of the duck mixture in the center of each wonton wrapper. Brush the edges with water and then seal in the pot-sticker mold.

Preheat the oven to 350-degrees. Line a large baking sheet with aluminum foil and brush lightly with oil. Arrange the wontons on the baking sheet and bake for 10 to 12 minutes, until crisp and golden. Serve with mango sauce garnished with snipped fresh chives.

### **HONEY-THYME MARINATED CHEDDAR**

8 – 10 ounces Extra Sharp Cheddar Cheese cut into ½ inch cubes  
1/3 cup good extra virgin olive oil  
2-3 tablespoons honey  
A few fresh Thyme springs  
½ teaspoon kosher salt  
A big pinch of red pepper flakes

Place the cut cheese into a large bowl. Add the olive oil, honey, salt and red pepper flakes. Toss well and then transfer to a small sealable container. Add the few sprigs of fresh Thyme, and seal. Marinate for about 30 minutes at room temperature. You can serve in the marinating container or place the cheese cubes into an open bowl style container. Serve with toothpicks or small forks.

### **PANETTONE BREAD PUDDING with AMARETTO SAUCE**

Sauce:

½ cup whipping cream  
½ cup whole milk  
3 tablespoons sugar  
¼ cup Amaretto Liqueur  
2 teaspoons cornstarch

### Bread Pudding:

1 (1 pound) loaf Pantone bread, crusts trimmed, bread cut into 1-inch cubes

8 large eggs

1 ½ cups whipping cream

2 ½ cups whole milk

1 ¼ cups sugar

To make the sauce: Bring the cream, milk, and sugar to a boil in a heavy small saucepan over medium heat, stirring frequently. In a small bowl, mix the Amaretto and cornstarch to blend and then whisk into the cream mixture. Simmer over medium-low heat until the sauce thickens, stirring constantly, about 2 minutes. Set it aside and keep warm. (The Amaretto sauce can be made 3 days ahead. Cover and refrigerate. Rewarm before serving.)

To make the bread pudding: Lightly butter a 13 x 9 x 2-inch baking dish. Arrange the bread cubes in the prepared dish. NOTE: I like to toast the bread cubes in the oven, about 250-degrees for 15 – 20 minutes. It gives the pudding a richer, toasty flavor and allows the bread to stay together longer when the custard is added to it.) In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, cream, milk, and sugar to blend. Pour the custard over the bread cubes and press the bread cubes gently to submerge. Let stand for 30 minutes, occasionally pressing the bread cubes into the custard mixture. The recipe can be prepared up to this point 2 hours ahead. Cover and refrigerate.)

Preheat the oven to 350-degrees. Place the baking dish on the center oven shelf and bake until the pudding puffs and is set in the center, about 45 minutes. Cool slightly. Spoon the bread pudding into bowl, drizzle with some of the warm Amaretto sauce and enjoy.

## **CANDY CANE EGG NOG SHOTS**

1 container of good Egg Nog

1 pkg. of candy canes, size dependent on glass size

Booze of your choice, Rum, Southern Comfort, Bourbon, Brandy

Place 1 teaspoon (small glass) or 1 tablespoon (large glass) of booze of your choice in bottom of serving glass. Top off with egg nog, then insert candy cane, swirl once or twice to mix and then serve. As your guests swirl their candy canes in the egg nog, the minty flavor of the candy canes blends with the booze and egg nog as well as some of the coloring from the candy canes. This is a very inexpensive and quick way to offer up a “Holiday Toast”.

You can, if you wish, put a pinch of nutmeg on top of the egg nog as a garnish.

## **PULL-APART PARTY LOAF**

1 round 16-to-18-ounce size loaf Italian or sourdough bread

¼ cup butter, melted

1 teaspoon dry ranch dressing mix

½ cup (about 5 slices) cooked chopped thick-cut bacon

1 small container chopped jalapeno peppers

8 – 10 ounces grated cheese, cheddar/Monterey jack combination

A quick sprinkling of garlic/herb salt

2 teaspoons chopped fresh parsley (curly) for garnish, if desired

Preheat the oven to 350-degrees. Place two 24-inch-long pieces aluminum foil, crossing one over the other, on a flat surface, to form a cross.

Cut the bread, using a serrated knife, in grid pattern, spacing about 1-inch between rows. Do not cut through the bottom of the crust. Set it aside.



Combine the melted butter and the ranch dressing in a medium bowl. Add all the remaining ingredients **except** the parsley, mix well.

Place the sliced loaf in the center of the aluminum foil pieces. Spoon the cheese mixture into the cut areas of the bread. You may have to use your hands to push some mixture into the grooves. Use all the cheese mixture. Wrap the foil loosely around the bread. Place it onto an ungreased baking sheet and place in the oven.

Bake for 30 minutes; pull back the foil and continue baking for an additional 5-10 minutes or until the loaf is golden brown and the cheese is melted. Remove from the oven, place on a platter or in a large soup bowl (this keeps the loaf from slipping around while your guests pull the loaf apart), sprinkle on the parsley, if desired, and serve warm. You can bake this just prior to your event, wrap it in foil and take it with you.

Enjoy!

## **CANDY CANE CREAM CHEESE SQUARES**

2 can (8 oz. each) refrigerated crescent dinner rolls, divided\*  
2 pkgs. (8 oz. each) Philadelphia Cream Cheese, softened  
1 tsp. vanilla  
1 egg, slightly beaten  
1 cup mini candy canes, chopped fine  
½ cup sugar, divided  
2 Tbsp. ground cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350-degrees. Unroll 1 of the cans of crescent dough. Press onto bottom of greased 13x9-inch baking pan to form crust, firmly pressing seams together to seal.

Beat cream cheese, vanilla, egg, mini chopped candy canes, and ¼ cup of the sugar with electric mixer on medium speed until well blended. Spread onto crust.

Unroll the remaining can of crescent dough onto large sheet of either wax paper or parchment paper. Pat out dough to form 13x9 inch rectangle, pressing seams together to seal. Invert cream cheese mixture to form top crust; discard wax/parchment paper. \* NOTE: YOU CAN PURCHASE WHOLE SHEET CRESCENT DOUGH INSTEAD OF THE CRESCENT ROLL DOUGH, IT IS EASIER TO USE.

Bake 30 to 35 minutes or until golden brown; remove from oven. Combine remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar and cinnamon in small bowl; sprinkle over squares when they come out of the oven and are still warm, prior to cutting. Cut and serve with a great cup of coffee. Hint: These are easier to cut and serve when chilled. Serves 12

### **BACON-WRAPPED MANGO CHUTNEY-AND MANCHEGO STUFFED DATES**

12 large Medjool dates  
1 cup mango chutney  
1 cup grated Manchego cheese (approx. 14 oz.)  
6 slices Applewood-smoked bacon

Preheat the oven to 350-degrees. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

Use a paring knife to cut each date in half lengthwise just to the pit. Remove the pit and open the date, but do not cut all the way through it.

In a small bowl, combine the chutney and cheese with a small fork, mashing it together lightly. Spoon a teaspoon of the filling into the center of each date. Close the date around the filling.

Cut each of the bacon slices in half. Wrap a half piece of bacon tightly around the center of each date. Place the dates on the baking sheet with the bacon ends down. Bake for 8-10 minutes, until the bacon is crispy. Drain the bacon on paper towels. Spear each with a toothpick to serve.

Note: You can, if you wish, spear the bacon wrapped dates with a toothpick (wooden) prior to cooking. Do not use plastic toothpicks or toothpicks with frilly ends as these will burn/melt.

### **SHRIMP COCKTAIL TOPPED WITH CRAB AND SERVED IN MINI MARTINI GLASSES**

1 pkg. frozen cooked shrimp, 1 pound bag, Large Size, 35 count per bag  
2 small or 1 large Jar Wegmans Zesty Seafood Sauce  
2 lemons cut into 8ths  
1 pound container Wegmans fresh Back-fin crab meat

Defrost shrimp in refrigerator the day prior to the day of event. Cut each shrimp into thirds, and then mix with sauce in large bowl. Add just enough sauce to ensure that each shrimp is coated. You may not need all the sauce.

Spoon the cut-up shrimp into mini martini glasses, then top with a dollop of the crab meat. Serve with a cut of lemon.

Note: You can get mini martini glasses from World Market. Serves 6

### **RASPBERRY AND CHEESE PHYLLO TARTS**

2 packages (2.1 oz.) baked miniature phyllo dough shells (total 30 shells)  
1 package Boursin Cheese  
1 package (small) soft cream cheese  
1 Jar Raspberry Preserves

Mix the Boursin cheese and the soft cream cheese together.

Remove the plastic covering from the tarts and using a small spoon, place 1 teaspoon full of the cheese mixture into each phyllo cup. This can be done

ahead of time, up to an hour prior to using them. Keep them refrigerated until ready to use. I would keep the cups in the little plastic form they came in to ensure they stay safe. Wrap in plastic wrap to transport.

Once ready, just place about ½ tsp. of the raspberry Preserves on top of each phyllo shell and serve. If you want a really festive presentation, place a raspberry on top of the jam prior to serving. Enjoy. This recipe makes 30 tarts. Makes 30 tarts

### **GOAT CHEESE, GRAPE AND PISTACHIO BITES**

1 cup shelled roasted/salted pistachios  
24 to 36 large seedless red or green grapes  
1 large package plain goat cheese – at room temperature

Toast and chop 1 cup of shelled pistachios. Place on a round plate.

Coat the grapes with a light coating of the goat cheese, rolling them in your hand to coat evenly.

Roll the coated grapes in the chopped pistachios. Serve on either a small platter or in a small decorative dish/bowl. Note: You can substitute any other chopped nuts if you prefer. Once assembled, the grapes should be kept in the refrigerator until ready to serve. Serves 24 to 36

### **CARDAMOM-POACHED APRICOTS WITH MASCARPONE AND PISTACHIOS**

1½ Cups water  
¾ cups superfine sugar  
Seeds from 6 crushed cardamom pods, or 1 – 2 tsp ground cardamom  
8 – 12 oz. ready to eat dried apricots (I usually use an entire package of the plastic round container of dried apricots found in the produce department of Giant)  
2 tsp lemon juice

½ Cup Mascarpone  
1 cup unsalted pistachios, finely chopped.

Place water, sugar, lemon juice and cardamom in saucepan and bring to a boil. Drop in the apricots and return to a simmer and cook for 3 -6 minutes. Don't overcook the apricots or they become too soft.

Remove from the heat, scoop out the apricots with a slotted spoon and allow them to dry on either a cooling rack or a sheet pan covered with parchment paper.

You can whip the cheese in a mixer or just let it come to room temperature. Sometimes I will add a little soft (whipped) cream cheese to the mix. Spread a little of the cheese mixture onto each apricot, then sprinkle with the chopped nuts. Place on parchment lined baking pan and refrigerate till needed.

### **LAYERED TOMATO - BLACK OLIVE – CREAM CHEESE SPREAD**

¼ cup diced Roma tomatoes  
¼ cup diced black olives  
1 tub (12 oz) Philadelphia Cream Cheese  
¼ cup lightly packed fresh basil  
1 clove garlic, peeled  
2 Tablespoons sliced almonds, toasted, for garnish  
Ritz Crackers

Combine the diced tomato and black olives in a bowl. Add 1 tablespoon of finely diced basil.

In the bowl of a food processor, blend the cream cheese, ¼ cup basil leaves, garlic and a quick grind of fresh black pepper. Now, wash out the cream cheese tub and line it with plastic wrap with the ends extending over the sides.

Spoon ½ of the cheese mixture into the bottom of the lined tub; top with the tomato/black olive/basil mixture. Now spoon the rest of the cheese mixture over the tomato mixture filling the tub. Press this down into the tub, then seal with the overhanging plastic wrap. Return top to tub and refrigerate at least 1 hour or overnight.

Un-mold the cheese spread onto a plate and then remove the plastic wrap and surround with Ritz crackers. Enjoy!

### **SUGARED MINT LEAVES**

3 cups fresh mint leaves  
1 egg white  
Confectioners' sugar

Gently wash the freshly picked mint leaves in cold water and place on a paper towel to dry.

Once the mint leaves are totally dry dust a bread board with sifted confectioners' sugar. Gently dip each mint leaf in the unbeaten egg white. Next lay the mint leaf on the sugar and tap it lightly, then turn them over and tap again.

Place the coated leaves on a cookie sheet and refrigerate. These will become as stiff as potato chips. Use to garnish dishes, fruit plates, salads, ice cream, sherbet, or pudding or eat as a sweet taste-refresher between courses. Yield 3 cups

### **FILO TARTLETS WITH BANG BANG CHICKEN**

2 tbsp. sesame seeds  
4 tbsp. smooth peanut butter  
1 garlic clove, crushed  
2 inch piece fresh ginger, chopped  
2 tbsp. lemon juice  
1 tbsp. dark soy sauce  
¼ tsp. tabasco sauce

- 1 boneless, skinless chicken breast
- 1 scallion finely sliced on the diagonal, to garnish
- 2 packs frozen filo cups, thawed

Preheat oven to 250-degrees. Toast sesame seeds in a dry pan over low heat until nutty and golden, 2-3 minutes. To make the bang bang sauce, mix peanut butter, garlic, ginger, lemon, soy sauce, and tabasco until smooth. Set aside.

Put chicken in a sauce pan and cover with cold water. Bring slowly to simmering point. Simmer gently without boiling until cooked through, 7 to 10 minutes. Cool completely in cooking liquid.

Drain and cut chicken on the diagonal into 1/8-inch slices, then cut slices in half. Place 1 tsp. bang-bang sauce in each tartlet. Arrange chicken slices on top, sprinkle with toasted seeds and garnish with scallion slices. Makes approximately 25 to 30 tartlets

### **BLUEBERRY/AMARETTO SAUCE ON CREAM CHEESE**

- 1 jar blueberry jam/spread
- 1 8 oz. package cream cheese, softened
- 2 – 3 tbsp. Amaretto Liquor
- Assorted Crackers

In a bowl, mix together the Blueberry Jam/spread and the tbsps. of Amaretto. Spread the softened cream cheese on a round platter, spreading it out to cover most of the platter. Spoon the Blueberry mixture over the cream cheese. Surround the blueberry/cream cheese with assorted crackers and serve. You can have a basket of extra crackers next to the platter. Use a spreading knife to scoop up the blueberry cream cheese mixture. Serves 8

### **BOURSIN CHEESE WITH RED PEPPER JELLY**

- 1 pkg. Boursin Cheese, either with herbs or black pepper
- 1 box Cranberry/Nut crackers from Wegmans

1 jar Red Pepper Jelly, either mild or hot.

Spread the Boursin Cheese onto the crackers, and then top with a dab of pepper jelly. That's it. Serve on a platter. Note: The spicy (hot) pepper jelly packs a punch, so be aware of that if serving; otherwise just use the regular Red Pepper Jelly. Serves 12 or more.