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Editorial Note

With the demands of the holidays-lengthy gift lists, endless Christmas pageants and crowded malls-you may think the last thing you have time for is hosting a holiday open house. But we believe with the proper planning, the right quick and easy recipes and a few tips and hints, you'll discover it can be easier than you imagined.

This collection of five-star, top-rated appetizers is a wonderful mix of hot and cold choices, old standbys and modern favorites, and even timesaving recipes that can be made before-hand.

Don't forget to check out pg. 8 for great tips and hints to help you with your planning.

And even if you aren't hosting a party, add one of these to your family's holiday meal. If they don't deserve to be spoiled this time of year, then who does?

Wishing you the best,

The Staff at Allrecipes

Top 10 Appetizers



Chutney Baked Brie

Submitted by: Hillary Quinn



"This round wheel of Brie is dusted with curry powder, then spread with a mango chutney, studded with chopped cashews, and baked until the cheese inside the rind is melted. The sweet/savory combination is creamy and delicious."

Original recipe yield: 32 servings.

Photo by: Allrecipes

INGREDIENTS:

1 (2.2 pound) wheel Brie cheese 2 teaspoons ground curry powder 1 (12 ounce) jar mango chutney 1 cup chopped cashews 1 French baguette, cut into halfinch slices

DIRECTIONS:

- 1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).
- 2. Sprinkle curry powder over top and sides of Brie; rub the curry powder into the rind to thoroughly coat the surface. Place the Brie wheel in a large pie plate or oven-proof dish. Spread a generous layer of chutney over the top, and evenly sprinkle with cashews.
- 3. Bake 15 minutes in the preheated oven, or until cashews are slightly golden and cheese inside the rind is melted. Serve with slices of baguette.



Hot Artichoke Spinach Dip



Submitted by: Sherrie D

"This is a warm delicious dip...but it's very rich! Serve warm with tortilla chips. Garnish with extra sour cream and salsa if you like."

Original recipe yield: 16 servings.

Photo by: Allrecipes

INGREDIENTS:

1 (14 ounce) can artichoke
hearts, drained
1/3 cup grated Romano cheese
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 teaspoon minced garlic
1 (10 ounce) package frozen chopped
spinach, thawed and drained
1/3 cup heavy cream
1/2 cup sour cream
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

- 1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease a 9x13 inch baking dish.
- 2. In a blender or food processor, place artichoke hearts, Romano cheese, Parmesan cheese and garlic . Pulse until chopped, but not ground. Set aside.
- 3. In a medium bowl, mix together spinach, heavy cream, sour cream and mozzarella cheese. Stir in artichoke mixture. Spoon into prepared baking dish.
- 4. Bake in the preheated oven for 20 to 25 minutes, or until cheese is melted and bubbly.





Coconut Shrimp

Submitted by: Linda Vergura



"These crispy shrimp are rolled in a coconut beer batter before frying. For dipping sauce, I use orange marmalade, mustard and horseradish mixed to taste."

Original recipe yield: 6 servings.

Photo by: Allrecipes

INGREDIENTS:

1 egg
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
2/3 cup beer
11/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
2 cups flaked coconut
24 shrimp
3 cups oil for frying

DIRECTIONS:

- 1. In medium bowl, combine egg, 1/2 cup flour, beer and baking powder. Place 1/4 cup flour and coconut in two separate bowls.
- 2. Hold shrimp by tail, and dredge in flour, shaking off excess flour. Dip in egg and beer batter; allow excess to drip off. Roll shrimp in coconut, and place on a baking sheet lined with wax paper. Refrigerate for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, heat oil to 350°F (175°C) in a deep-fryer.
- 3. Fry shrimp in batches: cook, turning once, for 2 to 3 minutes, or until golden brown. Using tongs, remove shrimp to paper towels to drain. Serve warm with your favorite dipping sauce.



Cinnamon-Roasted Almonds



Submitted by: BJ

"Here is an easy snack idea to serve at any holiday party." Original recipe yield: 10 servings.

Photo by: Allrecipes

INGREDIENTS:

1 egg white

1 teaspoon cold water

4 cups whole almonds

1/2 cup white sugar

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

- 1. Preheat oven to $250^{\circ}F$ ($120^{\circ}C$). Lightly grease a 10x15 inch jellyroll pan.
- 2. Lightly beat the egg white; add water, and beat until frothy but not stiff. Add the nuts, and stir until well coated. Mix the sugar, salt, and cinnamon, and sprinkle over the nuts. Toss to coat, and spread evenly on the prepared pan.
- 3. Bake for 1 hour in the preheated oven, stirring occasionally, until golden. Allow to cool, then store nuts in airtight containers.





Stuffed Mushrooms

Mouth-Watering



Submitted by: Angle Zayac

"These delicious mushrooms taste just like restaurant-style stuffed mushrooms and are my guy's absolute favorite."

Original recipe yield: 12 servings.

Photo by: Adina

INGREDIENTS:

12 whole fresh mushrooms
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 tablespoon minced garlic
1 (8 ounce) package cream
cheese, softened
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/4 teaspoon onion powder
1/4 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper

DIRECTIONS:

- 1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Spray a baking sheet with cooking spray. Clean mushrooms with a damp paper towel. Carefully break off stems. Chop stems extremely fine, discarding tough end of stems.
- 2. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and chopped mushroom stems to the skillet. Fry until any moisture has disappeared, taking care not to burn garlic. Set aside to cool.
- 3. When garlic and mushroom mixture is no longer hot, stir in cream cheese, Parmesan cheese, black pepper, onion powder and cayenne pepper. Mixture should be very thick. Using a little spoon, fill each mushroom cap with a generous amount of stuffing. Arrange the mushroom caps on prepared cookie sheet. Bake for 20 minutes in the preheated oven, or until the mushrooms are piping hot and liquid starts to form under caps.



Herman Reunion Cheese Ball



Submitted by: Ann

"The requests for this family recipe never stop, so here it is for everybody to enjoy. These cheese balls freeze well for months and make wonderful holiday gifts. To give the balls as gifts: wrap each ball or log individually in festive holiday plastic wrap."

Original recipe yield: 12 servings.

Photo by: What a Dish!

INGREDIENTS:

3 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
1/2 teaspoon minced garlic
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon hot pepper sauce
1 pound shredded Cheddar cheese
1 cup pecans, coarsely chopped
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

- 1. In an electric food processor or blender, combine cream cheese, garlic, Worcestershire sauce and hot pepper sauce. Blend well. Add Cheddar cheese and process until the Cheddar is fine, but still in discrete pieces. Shape the mixture into balls or logs. Wrap individually in plastic wrap and place in the freezer.
- 2. While the balls are in the freezer, combine the ground pecans and parsley in a shallow bowl. Remove the balls from the freezer and roll them in the pecan and parsley mixture.







Submitted by: Anne

Tapenade

"This is an easy gourmet appetizer. I've brought this to several parties and it is always a hit! Serve with slices of French bread or crackers."

Original recipe yield: 6 servings.

Fig and Olive

Photo by: Allrecipes **INGREDIENTS:**

1 cup chopped dried figs 1/2 cup water 1 tablespoon olive oil 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar 1 teaspoon dried rosemary 1 teaspoon dried thyme 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper 2/3 cup chopped kalamata olives 2 cloves garlic, minced salt and pepper to taste 1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese

1/3 cup chopped toasted walnuts

DIRECTIONS:

- 1. Combine figs and water in a saucepan over medium heat. Bring to a boil, and cook until tender, and liquid has reduced. Remove from heat, and stir in the olive oil, balsamic vinegar, rosemary, thyme, and cayenne. Add olives and garlic, and mix well. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Cover, and refrigerate for 4 hours or overnight to allow flavors to blend.
- 2. Unwrap cream cheese block, and place on a serving platter. Spoon tapenade over cheese, and sprinkle with walnuts. Serve with slices of French bread or crackers.



Photo by: Allrecipes

Spiced Sweet Roasted Red Pepper Hummus



Submitted by: Holly

"Serve with pita bread-you can cut pita bread into wedges and toast it for a different taste sensation."

Original recipe yield: 8 servings.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 (15 ounce) can garbanzo beans, drained
- 1 (4 ounce) jar roasted red peppers
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 11/2 tablespoons tahini
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

DIRECTIONS:

1. In an electric blender or food processor, puree the chickpeas, red peppers, lemon juice, tahini, garlic, cumin, cayenne, and salt. Process, using long pulses, until the mixture is fairly smooth, and slightly fluffy. Make sure to scrape the mixture off the sides of the food processor or blender in between pulses. Transfer to a serving bowl and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. (The hummus can be made up to 3 days ahead and refrigerated. Return to room temperature before serving.)

2. Sprinkle the hummus with the chopped parsley before serving.





Cajun Appetizer Meatballs



Submitted by: Doreen

"This is a great appetizer meatball recipe with a little kick to it. It can be made ahead and frozen in resealable plastic bags, then added to sauce and heated."

Original recipe yield: 1 servings.

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INGREDIENTS:

1 pound lean ground beef
1 1/2 teaspoons hot pepper sauce
2 tablespoons Cajun seasoning
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon dried parsley
1/4 cup finely chopped onion
1/4 cup fresh bread crumbs
1/4 cup milk
1 egg
1/2 cup barbeque sauce

1/2 cup peach preserves

DIRECTIONS:

- 1. Preheat oven to 350° F (175°C). Lightly grease a medium baking sheet. In a large bowl, mix thoroughly the ground beef, hot pepper sauce, Cajun seasoning, Worcestershire sauce, parsley, onion, bread crumbs, milk, and egg.
- 2. Form the mixture into golf ball sized meatballs and place on the prepared baking sheet. Bake in preheated oven for 30 to 40 minutes, or until there is no pink left in the middle.
- 3. In a small bowl, combine the barbeque sauce and peach preserves. When meatballs are done, place in a serving dish and cover with the barbeque sauce mixture. Toss to coat.



Bacon and Date Appetizer



Submitted by: Cinn

"An easy, quick appetizer that I first tasted at a Native American wedding ceremony. Dates are stuffed with almonds and wrapped in bacon"

Original recipe yield: 6 servings.

Photo by: Allrecipes

INGREDIENTS:

1 (8 ounce) package pitted dates4 ounces almonds1 pound sliced bacon

- 1. Preheat the broiler.
- 2. Slit dates. Place one almond inside each date. Wrap dates with bacon, using toothpicks to hold them together.
- 3. Broil 10 minutes, or until bacon is evenly brown and crisp.





Host an Appetizer Open House

Take the fuss out of planning an elegant holiday event with these easy tips.

Do the math

For hand-held appetizers (stuffed mushrooms, chilled shrimp, etc). You should plan on an average of three of each item per guest. For dips and spreads, plan on needing two tablespoons for each dip per guest (more for tried and true favorites like our Hot Artichoke Spinach Dip).

Hot and cold

You want to be sure to have a steady flow of food for your guests. You can do this by staging when hot appetizers come out of the oven and balancing that with items that don't need heating, like hummus dips and fresh veggies. As a rule, try to have your first batch of hot appetizers coming out of the oven half an hour after the party begins.

Make a list, check it twice

Don't forget that this party is yours to enjoy as well. To ensure that you'll relax and enjoy spending time with your guest, make a complete shopping list (include ingredients as well as decorations and supplies) and a game plan: an hour-by-hour schedule for the day of the party.

Serve it up

Lay out all of your platters and serving dishes at least two days ahead of time. Use sticky notes to identify which ones will be used for which appetizers. This will help make sure you have a place for everything.

Clean as you go

Ideally have someone on "dish patrol" helping clear away dishes and refill platters. (Or maybe you can enlist the help of a teenager?) But if not, place a large garbage container in front of your kitchen sink to make plate scraping easier. Any time during the evening when you can steal a couple of minutes, load plates into the dishwasher.