

# Holiday Flavors





# Appealing Appetizers



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Get your holiday party started right with the best appetizer spread this side of Thanksgiving. Here are three quick and easy recipes to make your soiree the star of the season.

## CAPRESE KABOBS

Seriously, it doesn't get much easier than this. Start with festive party picks and add a tiny ball of mozzarella, a folded leaf of spinach, and a colorful grape tomato. Drizzle with a quality bal-

samic. Done and done. And chic.

## PARTY SHRIMP

This recipe from Taste of Home works best with tail-on shrimp for easy grabbing.

- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons brown sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 garlic clove, thinly sliced
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon. Italian seasoning
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

1 pound 26-30 per pound uncooked shrimp, peeled and deveined

1. Combine the first eight ingredients in a gallon zip top bag. Add the shrimp and refrigerate at least two hours.

2. Drain shrimp and discard the marinade. Place shrimp on an

ungreased baking sheet and broil 4 inches from heat for 3-4 minutes per side. Avoid overcooking, which leads to rubbery shrimp.

## BACON-WRAPPED WATER CHESTNUTS

- 1 pound bacon strips
- 2 8-ounce cans whole water chestnuts, drained
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup chili sauce

1. Cut bacon strips in half. Cook until almost crisp and drain. Wrap each piece around a water chestnut and secure with a toothpick. Place in an ungreased 9x13 baking dish.

2. Combine the brown sugar, mayonnaise and chili sauce in a small bowl and pour over bacon wrapped water chestnuts. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.



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# Recipes for a Brunch Blast

There's no holiday get-together like a brunch get-together. Whether it's early in the season or a Christmas Day blowout for the family, here are some brunch recipes you can put a bow on.

## SHAKSHOUKA

A flavorful poached egg dish is native to the Middle East. This recipe comes from PBS.

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped fine
- 2 large garlic cloves, chopped fine
- 8 tomatoes, Roma if fresh, or 2 14-oz. cans of chopped tomatoes
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 1/2 teaspoon ground caraway
- 2 teaspoons paprika, smoked paprika if you can find it
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, or to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 4 large eggs
- Chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

1. In a large skillet over medium heat, saute the chopped onions in olive oil until soft. Add the garlic for 2 minutes, then add the spices and stir.
2. Chop the tomatoes and remove the seeds or add the canned tomatoes. Cook for 10 to 15 minutes, or until thickened. Add water if it becomes too thick for the eggs to poach.
3. Carefully crack the eggs on top of the sauce, leaving a space between each one. Lid the skillet and cook for about 5 minutes or until the yolk reaches your desired stage.
4. Sprinkle the cooked eggs with chopped parsley and serve hot.

## HOTTER HOT CHOCOLATE

Recipe is from Tito's Vodka.

- 4 ounces hot chocolate from your favorite recipe
  - 1 ounce vodka
  - Whipped cream and mint leaves, for garnish
- Mix chocolate and vodka together in a mug or, if serving for a crowd, in a slow cooker. Garnish with whipped cream and mint leaves.



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# Potluck Perfection

Chances are, at some point this holiday season, you will have a potluck to bring a dish to. And chances are, it will sneak up on you at the last minute. Never fear!

Try this homemade, bacon-y twist on a holiday classic that doesn't have a can of soup in sight.

## **BACON-TOPPED GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE**

This holiday favorite comes from Better Homes & Gardens.

- 1 1/2 pounds fresh green beans, trimmed
- 1 cup boiling water
- 1/2 ounce dried wild mushrooms, such as morel, oyster or porcini
- 7-8 bacon slices, cut into small pieces
- 12 ounce cremini mushrooms, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 2 cups half-and-half

- 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary
- Salt and pepper, to taste

1. In a very large skillet, cook green beans in boiling lightly salted water for about 3 minutes or until crisp tender. Drain and transfer to ice water to stop cooking. Drain again, set aside. Pour the 1 cup of boiling water over the dried mushrooms. Let stand 15 minutes.

2. In the same skillet, cook bacon until crisp. Using a slotted spoon, transfer bacon to a bowl lined with a paper towel and crumble. Discard all but a tablespoon of bacon drippings. Cook cremini mushrooms in the drippings until lightly brown. Add garlic and cook a minute more.

Remove from heat and stir in green beans.

4. Remove dried mushrooms from water. Reserve liquid. Chop the mushrooms and add to green beans. In a medium saucepan, melt the butter and stir in flour. Cook for 1 minute. Stir in all but 2 tablespoons of mushroom liquid. Stir in half-and-half and cook until thickened and bubbly, then cook 1 minute more. Stir in rosemary, salt and pepper.

5. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Stir the sauce into the bean mixture and spoon into a 2-quart baking dish. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes until bubbly. Top with bacon and bake 5 minutes more.

# Butter Balls

With rolls like these, who cares what else is on the table? Rich, luxurious and full of butter, these sensational rolls will steal the show at your holiday table.

## HISTORY

These rich rolls hail from Boston's famous Parker House, which also brought us the Boston Cream Pie. They're still served there today. The secret is lots of butter and a special folding technique.

## PARKER HOUSE ROLLS

Recipe is from King Arthur Flour.  
Makes 16 rolls.

3 cups flour  
2 1/2 teaspoons instant yeast  
3 tablespoons sugar  
1 1/2 teaspoons salt  
1/4 cup potato flour or 3/4 cup instant mashed potato flakes

3 tablespoons butter

1 cup milk

1 large egg

3 1/2-4 tablespoons butter, melted

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine all the ingredients except the melted butter and mix to form a shaggy dough. Knead the dough, by hand (10 minutes) or by machine (7 to 8 minutes) until it's smooth.

2. Place the dough in a lightly greased bowl and rise for 90 minutes.

3. Transfer to a lightly greased work surface. Divide in half and working with one half at a time, roll or pat into a 8x12-inch rectangle.

4. Brush the dough with a light coating of melted butter. Cut the dough in half lengthwise to make 2 4x12-inch rectangles. One at a time, fold each lengthwise to about 1/2 inch of the other edge, so that the bottom edge sticks out about 1/2 inch beyond the edge. Repeat with each rectangle.

5. Cut each rectangle into four 3-inch pieces, making a total of 8 rolls. Place them smooth side up in a lightly greased 9x13-inch pan. Repeat with each rectangle, making 16 rolls in 4 rows of 4. Gently flatten the rolls to cover the bottom of the pan. Cover the pan and rise for about an hour.

6. Bake rolls for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown. Remove, brush with remaining butter, and pull apart to serve.



# Captivating Candy

With a little work and some science, you can make this Christmas the best of hard candy Christmases. Or soft candy. Or fudge. You name it, with these techniques the candy world is yours.

## HARDWARE

First and foremost, get yourself a candy thermometer. While testing in cold water or with cold spoons worked for grandma, let's all just admit we aren't that good. You can find a candy thermometer at your local kitchen goods store.

You'll also need a good, heavy pot. Make sure it's big enough so that your candy mixture doesn't boil over. (No one needs that kind of trouble.) No thin, cheap aluminum here. You want something that holds heat.

## SOFTWARE

You're going to need a lot of sugar for most candy recipes. As for the rest, fresh is best says the University of Arkansas extension service. Quality is important, too. Don't cheap out on your chocolate, nuts and other ingredients or you may end up disappointed.

Another important factor in



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candy making is the weather. Humidity is key here. You can't make candy in a moist environment; it just won't set. Pick a dry, cool day to make your batches and store them in an airtight container in a cool place.

## FANTASY FUDGE

Recipe comes from Kraft.

3 cups sugar  
 1 5-ounce can evaporated milk  
 1 7-ounce jar marshmallow cream  
 1 teaspoon vanilla  
 3/4 cup butter or margarine  
 12 ounces chocolate

1 cup walnuts, optional

1. Line a 9-inch square pan with foil extending over the sides of the pan. Bring sugar, butter and milk to a full rolling boil in a 3-quart saucepan on medium heat, stirring constantly. Cook 4 minutes or until a candy thermometer reaches 234 degrees.

2. Remove from heat. Add chocolate and marshmallow cream, stir until melted. Add vanilla and nuts, if using, and mix well.

3. Pour fudge into the pan and spread to cover. Cool completely. Use excess foil to lift from pan and cut into 1-inch squares.



# Delightful Dessert

Everyone's got a favorite holiday dessert. Visions of sugar plums can take a hike; we're dreaming of Aunt Clara's chocolate cake and Grandma's pecan pie. Adding to that pantheon of traditional desserts can be intimidating, but we believe in you. And these recipes.

## RUM CAKE

While you may envision a towering confection of light, fluffy layers, let us be the ones to tell you that it's a lot of work and hard to transport. Bundt cakes are easy and impressive, too, and this one will warm you up on a cold day.

Recipe is from King Arthur Flour.

- 2 cups flour
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 3.4-ounce box instant vanilla pudding, not sugar free
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup milk, room temperature
- 4 large eggs, room temperature
- 1/2 cup rum, plain or spiced
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoons butter-rum flavoring, optional



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1/4 cup almond flour for dusting the baking pan, optional

- For the syrup:
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter
  - 1/4 cup water
  - 1 cup sugar
  - 1/4 teaspoon salt
  - 1/2 cup rum, plain or spiced
  - 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

Place the flour, sugar, pudding mix, baking powder, salt, butter and vegetable oil in a mixing bowl and mix at medium speed until thoroughly combined and sandy looking.

2. Beat in the milk and then the eggs, one at a time. Scrape the bowl and beat again to combine. Stir in the rum, vanilla, butter-rum flavor.

3. Spray a bundt pan with cooking spray and sprinkle evenly with almond

flour. Shake out any excess. Pour the batter into the pan and spread level. Bake for 50-60 minutes.

4. Make the syrup while the cake cools. In a medium saucepan, combine all the syrup ingredients except vanilla. Bring to a rapid boil, then bring to a simmer and cook without stirring for 5-8 minutes or until it thickens slightly. Remove from heat and stir in vanilla.

5. Use a long skewer to poke holes

all over the cake while still in the pan. Pour about 1/4 cup syrup over the cake. Allow the syrup to soak in, then repeat until all the syrup is used. Cover the pan loosely with plastic wrap and allow it to sit overnight at room temperature. When ready to serve, loosen the edges and turn out onto a serving plate. If it won't release, place it in the oven at 350 degrees for about 10 minutes to loosen the syrup.



# Prime Pie

If pie is more your speed, don't worry, we've got that covered, too. Pop your pie in a festive glass or metal pie dish for maximum photo-worthiness.

## CHOCOLATE PECAN PIE

This once-a-year pie is sweet, rich and the very epitome of a luxe holiday treat. Recipe is from Karo Syrup.

- 3 eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup light or dark corn syrup
- 2 ounces semi-sweet or bittersweet chocolate, melted
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/4 cup pecans
- 1 9-inch unbaked deep-dish pie crust

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix eggs, sugar, corn syrup, chocolate, butter and vanilla in a large bowl. Stir in pecans. Pour into the pie crust. Bake on a center rack for 50 to 55 minutes or until pie appears barely set. Cool for 2 hours before serving.

## APPLE CRANBERRY SLAB PIE

Slab pies are perfect for feeding a crowd. This recipe is from Taste of Home.

- 4 9-inch pie crusts
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1/4 cup flour
- 4 medium tart apples, peeled and sliced
- 4 cups frozen or fresh cranberries
- 2 teaspoons grated orange zest
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1. Divide pastry dough into two portions, one slightly larger than the other. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate 1 hour or overnight.

2. In a Dutch oven, mix sugar and flour. Stir in fruit, orange zest, juice and spices. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, 10-12 minutes or until apples are tender and juices are thickened, stirring occasionally. Cool slightly.

3. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Roll out the larger portion of dough between two pieces of waxed paper into a 12x16 rectangle. Remove top sheet of waxed paper and place a 9x13 pan upside down over the pastry. Lift the waxed paper and carefully invert the pastry into the pan. Remove waxed paper and press the pastry onto the bottom and up the sides of the pan. Add filling.

4. On a well-floured surface, roll the remaining dough into a 10x14 rectangle, then cut into 3/4-inch strips. Arrange the strips over the filling, sealing the ends to the bottom pastry. Bake 40-50 minutes or until the crust is golden brown and filling bubbly.

