Perfect Party Appetizers

12 favorite small-bite recipes — perfect to impress your guests!

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- Stuffed Mushrooms with Pecans
- Mini Crab Cakes with Garlic-Chive Sauce
- Mustard-Dill Tortellini Salad Skewers
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- Bacon-Grits Fritters
- Black-Eyed Pea Pâté
- Marinated Shrimp-and-Artichokes
- Muffuletta Deviled Eggs
- Cornmeal Tarts with Ricotta Pimiento Cheese
- Broccoli Salad Dip
- Buffalo Chicken Pot Stickers

FREE GUIDE

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Blue Cheese Crostini With Balsamic-Roasted Grapes

Keep this recipe in your back pocket to use as your go-to for last-minute company.

Yield: Makes 8 to 10 appetizer servings   Total time: 35 Minutes

Ingredients

- 2 cups halved seedless red grapes
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1½ tablespoons minced shallot
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- ½ teaspoon light brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 (12-oz.) French bread baguette, cut into 15 to 20 (½-inch-thick) slices
- 3 tablespoons butter, softened
- 2 ounces crumbled blue cheese, softened
- ⅓ cup chopped toasted pecans
- Garnish: chopped fresh thyme

Preparation

Preheat oven to 425°. Toss together first 6 ingredients. Arrange grapes in a single layer in a small roasting pan; bake 15 to 20 minutes or until grapes wilt and liquid forms a thin syrup. Remove from oven. Increase oven temperature to broil with oven rack 7 inches from heat. Arrange bread slices in a single layer on a baking sheet. Stir together butter and cheese, and spread evenly over bread slices. Broil 2 to 3 minutes or until browned and bubbly. Spoon grape mixture over toasted bread, and sprinkle with pecans.
Stuffed Mushrooms With Pecans

Tip -- use mushrooms of equal size for even cooking.

Yield: Makes 8 appetizer servings

Ingredients

- 2 medium leeks
- 1 (16-oz.) package fresh mushrooms (about 24 medium-size mushrooms)
- 1 teaspoon salt, divided
- 2 shallots, minced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ¼ cup fine, dry breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup pecans, chopped
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- Garnish: fresh basil sprigs

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Remove and discard root ends and dark green tops of leeks. Thinly slice leeks, and rinse thoroughly under cold running water to remove grit and sand.

2. Rinse mushrooms and pat dry. Remove and discard stems. Place mushrooms, upside down, on a wire rack in an aluminum foil-lined jelly-roll pan. Sprinkle with ½ tsp. salt; invert mushrooms.

3. Bake at 350° for 15 minutes.

4. Sauté leeks, shallots, and garlic in hot oil in a large skillet over medium heat 3 to 5 minutes or until tender. Transfer mixture to a large bowl. Stir in ¼ cup Parmesan cheese, next 3 ingredients, and remaining ½ tsp. salt until well combined. Spoon 1 heaping teaspoonful leek mixture into each mushroom cap. Sprinkle with remaining ¼ cup Parmesan cheese. Bake at 350° for 10 minutes or until golden. Garnish, if desired.
Mini Crab Cakes With Garlic-Chive Sauce

Cook these mini crab cakes over medium-low heat to ensure a deep golden crust without overcooking the delicate crab. Pair with our homemade garlic-chive sauce.

Yield: Makes 16 cakes (serving size: 1 cake and 1 tbsp. sauce)

**Ingredients**
- 1 (8-oz.) package fresh lump crabmeat, drained
- 3 whole grain white bread slices
- 1/3 cup light mayonnaise
- 3 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon Old Bay seasoning
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- Vegetable cooking spray
- Salt to taste
- Garlic-Chive Sauce
  (see next page for recipe)
- Garnish: lemon slices

**Preparation**

1. Pick crabmeat, removing any bits of shell. Pulse bread slices in a blender or food processor 5 times or until finely crumbled. (Yield should be about 1 1/2 cups.)

2. Stir together mayonnaise and next 4 ingredients in a large bowl. Gently stir in breadcrumbs and crabmeat. Shape mixture into 16 (2-inch) cakes (about 2 Tbsp. each).

3. Cook cakes, in batches, on a hot, large griddle or nonstick skillet coated with cooking spray over medium-low heat 4 minutes on each side or until golden brown. Season with salt to taste. (Keep cakes warm in a 200° oven for up to 30 minutes.) Serve with Garlic-Chive Sauce. Garnish, if desired.

Note: For testing purposes, we used Sara Lee Soft & Smooth Whole Grain White Bread.
Mini Crab Cakes With Garlic-Chive Sauce (cont’d)

Garlic-Chive Sauce

Yield: Makes 1 cup (serving size: 1 tbsp.)

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup light sour cream*
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives
- 3/4 teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 1/2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper

Preparation

1. Stir together all ingredients in a small bowl. Cover and chill 30 minutes before serving.

*Light mayonnaise may be substituted.
Mustard-Dill Tortellini Salad Skewers

Time-saver tip: Nix the skewers, and toss salad with ½ cup of dressing just before serving. Spoon into a pretty bowl, and garnish with a dill sprig.

Yield: Makes 12 servings

Ingredients

- 1 (9-oz.) package refrigerated cheese tortellini
- 1 (8-oz.) package frozen sugar snap peas
- 68 (4-inch) wooden skewers
- 1 pt. grape tomatoes, cut in half
- Mustard-Dill Vinaigrette*

Preparation

1. Cook tortellini according to package directions. Rinse under cold running water.

2. Place sugar snap peas in a small bowl; cover with plastic wrap. Microwave at HIGH 2 minutes. Let stand, covered, 2 minutes. Rinse under cold running water.

3. Thread each skewer with 1 sugar snap pea, 1 tortellini, and 1 tomato half. Place skewers in a 13- x 9-inch baking dish. Pour Mustard-Dill Vinaigrette over skewers, turning to coat. Cover and chill 4 hours. Transfer skewers to a serving platter; discard any remaining vinaigrette.

*1 (12-oz.) bottle light Champagne vinaigrette may be substituted. For testing purposes only, we used Girard’s Light Champagne Dressing.
Brown Sugar Fruit Dip

Brown sugar brings sweet goodness to this fruit dip. Pair it with any fresh, seasonal fruit—we prefer strawberries, pineapple, and grapes.

Yield: Makes about 3 1/2 cups

Ingredients

- ½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 (8-oz.) package cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ cup coffee liqueur (optional)
- 1 cup frozen whipped topping, thawed
- Garnish: brown sugar
- Assorted fruit

Preparation

1. Beat brown sugar and cream cheese at medium speed with an electric mixer until smooth. Add sour cream, vanilla, and, if desired, coffee liqueur, beating until blended and smooth; fold in whipped topping. Cover and chill 4 hours. Garnish, if desired. Serve with assorted fruit.

Note: For testing purposes only, we used Kahlúa for coffee liqueur.
Bacon-Grits Fritters

Grits are treasured like gold in the South. These Bacon-Grits Fritters are the perfect Southern delicacy to introduce to your family and friends. Watch them quickly disappear!

Yield: Makes about 32

Ingredients

- 1 cup uncooked quick-cooking grits
- 4 cups milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 ½ cups (6-oz.) shredded extra-sharp white Cheddar cheese
- ½ cup cooked and finely crumbled bacon (about 8 slices)
- 2 green onions, minced
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 2 large eggs
- 3 cups Japanese breadcrumbs (panko)
- Vegetable oil

Preparation

1. Prepare grits according to package directions, using 4 cups milk and 1 tsp. salt. Remove from heat, and let stand 5 minutes. Stir in cheese and next 3 ingredients, stirring until cheese is melted. Spoon mixture into a lightly-greased 8-inch square baking dish or pan, and chill 4 to 24 hours.

2. Roll grits into 1 ½-inch balls. Whisk together eggs and ¼ cup water. Dip balls in egg wash, and roll in breadcrumbs.

3. Pour oil to depth of 3 inches in a large, heavy skillet; heat over medium-high heat to 350°. Fry fritters, in batches, 3 to 4 minutes or until golden brown. Drain on paper towels. Keep fritters warm on a wire rack in a pan in a 225° oven up to 30 minutes. Serve warm.

Make ahead: Prepare recipe as directed through Step 2. Cover and chill in a single layer up to 4 hours. Fry as directed. You may also prepare through Step 2 and freeze on a baking sheet for 30 minutes or until firm. Transfer to a zip-top plastic bag, and freeze. Cook frozen fritters as directed in Step 3, increasing cooking time to 5 to 6 minutes or until golden and centers are thoroughly heated.
Black-Eyed Pea Pâté

A touch of salty country ham and shiitake mushrooms adds deep flavor to this earthy, creamy Southern spread.
Make Ahead: Make and chill recipe up to 2 days ahead.

Yield: Makes 4 cups

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups frozen black-eyed peas
- ½ jalapeño pepper, seeded
- ¾ cup chopped country ham
- 1 (3.5-oz.) package fresh shiitake mushrooms, sliced (or 4-oz. sliced button mushrooms)
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- ½ cup olive oil, divided
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- ¼ cup finely chopped toasted walnuts
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme
- Pickled Red Onions and Cukes (see next page for recipe), drained
- Crostini

Preparation

1. Cook peas according to package directions, adding jalapeño to water. Drain.

2. Sauté ham and next 2 ingredients in 2 Tbsp. hot olive oil over medium-high heat 4 to 5 minutes or until lightly browned. Stir in wine, and cook, stirring occasionally, 1 minute.

3. Process peas, jalapeño, ham mixture, and remaining 6 Tbsp. olive oil in a food processor just until smooth. Stir in walnuts and next 2 ingredients; add salt and pepper to taste. Cover and chill 8 to 24 hours.

4. Stir pâté, and add salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to a shallow bowl, or spoon into small jars. Top with desired amount of Pickled Red Onions and Cukes. Serve with crostini.
Black-Eyed Pea Pâté (cont’d)

A touch of salty country ham and shiitake mushrooms adds deep flavor to this earthy, creamy Southern spread.
Make Ahead: Make and chill recipe up to 2 days ahead.

Yield: Makes about 1 ½ cups Total time: 2 Hours, 10 Minutes

Ingredients

- ½ medium-size red onion, thinly sliced
- ½ English cucumber, seeded and sliced
- 1 cup seasoned rice wine vinegar
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ¼ cup water
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 ½ teaspoons table salt

Preparation

Stir together onion, cucumber, vinegar, minced garlic, water, sugar, and salt in a large bowl. Cover and chill 2 hours to 2 days.
Marinated Shrimp-and-Artichokes

Yield: Makes 8 servings Total time: 15 Minutes

**Ingredients**

- ¼ cup white balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped green onion
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 (0.75-oz.) envelope garlic-and-herb dressing mix
- 1 pound peeled and deveined, large cooked shrimp (2 1/30 count)
- 1 (14-oz.) can artichoke hearts, drained and cut in half
- 1 (6-oz.) can large black olives, drained
- 1 cup halved grape tomatoes
- 1 (4-oz.) package feta cheese, cut into ½-inch cubes
- Small fresh basil leaves

**Preparation**

1. Whisk together balsamic vinegar and next 4 ingredients in a bowl. Stir in shrimp and next 4 ingredients. Cover and chill 8 to 24 hours.

2. Stir in desired amount of basil just before serving. Serve with a slotted spoon.

Note: We tested with Good Seasons Garlic & Herb Salad Dressing & Recipe Mix.
Muffulettta Deviled Eggs

Yield: One dozen

**Ingredients**

- 12 large eggs
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 6 tablespoons Olive Salad
  (see next page for recipe)
- 3 ounces very thinly sliced salami

**Preparation**

Place eggs in a single layer in a stainless steel saucepan. (Do not use nonstick.) Add water to depth of 3 inches. Bring to a rolling boil. Cover, remove from heat, and let stand 15 minutes. Tap each egg on the counter until cracks form all over the shell. Peel under cold running water. Slice eggs in half lengthwise; remove yolks. Mash yolks with a fork in a bowl. Stir in mayonnaise until smooth. Fold in Olive Salad. Spoon mixture into egg white halves. Heat a small skillet over low heat 1 to 2 minutes or until hot. Add salami, and cook, stirring often, 2 to 3 minutes or until lightly browned and crisp. Remove from skillet, and drain on paper towels. Top eggs with salami. Serve immediately, or cover and chill up to 24 hours.
Muffuletta Deviled Eggs (cont’d)

Olive Salad

Ingredients

- 1 (16-oz.) jar mixed pickled vegetables, undrained
- 1 (7-oz.) jar pimiento-stuffed Spanish olives, drained
- 1 (6-oz.) jar pitted kalamata olives, drained
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon drained capers
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ¼ teaspoon paprika
- ⅛ teaspoon ground red pepper

Preparation

Pulse pickled vegetables, pimiento-stuffed Spanish olives, kalamata olives, olive oil, capers, oregano, black pepper, minced garlic, paprika, and ground red pepper in a food processor 5 times or until coarsely chopped. Use immediately, or refrigerate up to 1 week.
**Cornmeal Tarts With Ricotta Pimiento Cheese**

Yield: Makes 5 dozen Total time: 2 Hours, 35 Minutes

**Ingredients**

- 2 cups self-rising white cornmeal mix
- 2 cups buttermilk
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- ¼ cup butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- Ricotta Pimiento Cheese (see next page for recipe)

**Preparation**

Preheat oven to 400°. Stir together cornmeal mix, buttermilk, flour, eggs, butter, and sugar just until moistened. Spoon batter into 2 lightly greased miniature muffin pans, filling two-thirds full. Bake, in batches, 15 minutes or until golden brown. Cool 5 minutes. Scoop about 1 tsp. from top of each muffin; discard or reserve for another use. Spoon about 1 tsp. Ricotta Pimiento Cheese into each muffin; place on a baking sheet. Bake at 400° for 3 to 4 minutes or until cheese melts.
Cornmeal Tarts With Ricotta Pimiento Cheese (cont’d)

Ricotta Pimiento Cheese

Ingredients

- 1 cup (4-oz.) shredded pepper Jack cheese
- ¾ cup (3-oz.) shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon drained diced pimiento
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ⅛ teaspoon table salt
- ⅛ teaspoon ground red pepper

Preparation

Stir together pepper Jack cheese, Cheddar cheese, ricotta cheese, mayonnaise, pimiento, ground black pepper, salt, and ground red pepper in a small bowl. Store in refrigerator up to 3 days.
Broccoli Salad Dip

Yield: Makes 2 ½ cups Total time: 20 Minutes

Ingredients

- ½ pound fresh broccoli
- 6 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 2/3 cup low-fat Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 4 thick bacon slices, cooked and chopped
- ½ cup coarsely chopped cashews
- ½ cup (2-oz.) shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- ½ cup minced red onion

Preparation

1. Remove and discard large leaves and tough ends of stalks from broccoli. Peel and coarsely chop stems; coarsely chop florets.
2. Process cream cheese and next 4 ingredients in a food processor until smooth. Add broccoli; pulse 12 to 15 times or until finely chopped. Fold bacon and remaining ingredients into cream cheese mixture. Serve immediately, or chill up to 3 days.
Buffalo Chicken Pot Stickers

These pot stickers are hearty while still being the perfect size for snacking.

Yield: Makes 4 dozen

**Ingredients**

- 4 cups shredded cooked chicken
- ¾ cup Buffalo-style hot sauce
- 3 green onions, chopped (about ½ cup)
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 48 wonton wrappers
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ¼ cup water
- Parchment Paper

**Preparation**

Stir together chicken, hot sauce, green onions, and freshly ground black pepper in a medium bowl. Spoon 2 tsp. chicken mixture in center of each wonton wrapper. Moisten edges of each wonton with water; fold corners over mixture to form a triangle. Press edges to seal. Heat olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Cook wontons, 12 at a time, in hot oil 2 minutes or until golden. (Do not turn.) Add water; cover and cook 2 more minutes. Transfer to a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, and keep warm in a 200° oven until ready to serve.