

Canapés are a light-hearted approach to entertaining

Doing a little entertaining? You'll want to learn about canapés and frivolities. These small pieces of food, attractive in their colors and shapes, and contrasting in their texture and flavors, are a light-hearted approach to cooking and entertaining.

The occasion will probably be the biggest factor in deciding what to offer your guests. Is it a business meeting or the conclusion of a deal and therefore fairly formal? This occasion obviously requires a different approach from that of inviting a few friends around for a drink and a little something to eat.

If it's a get-together before lunch, you will not require enormous quantities of food. However, if it's a two- to three-hour affair at noon or early evening, it needs to be quite extensive. There's nothing worse than a lack of food at a party and you certainly don't want your guests to fall over after their second or third beverage!

Season and location always need to be given a lot of consideration. There is no point in serving expensive asparagus or raspberries in January when something like smoked salmon would be the right thing considering the price and season. The time of year will also determine the location of the party - whether you plan a party in the garden during the summer or in front of the fire in fall. The location will also influence the style of food, the presentation and the service or indeed the whole theme of the party.

Now comes the fun part of choosing the canapés. Here

are a few useful guidelines. Determine how much time and help you have as well as how much can be (and/or needs to be) done the day before and what needs to be done at the last moment. Decide how much time you want to spend in the kitchen at the last moment. You should plan to spend as little as possible so you can be with your guests. Decide what to serve when. It is always advisable to start your party with a selection of cold canapés. The sweet side of the affair should start halfway through the event so that people who want to leave early have the opportunity to savor the entire menu. Now here are a few of my favorites for your enjoyment.

ORCHESTRA OF VEGETABLES WITH DIPS

An arrangement of beautifully prepared vegetables looks attractive and can also be a selection of cold canapés. The rule is to provide plenty of everything - always insure that the dips are strong in taste and well seasoned so they form a contrast to the vegetables.

EGGPLANT DIP

1 large eggplant
1 small clove garlic
3/4 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon tahini paste (sesame paste)
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon olive oil
1 teaspoon freshly chopped parsley
pinch of chili powder
Wash the eggplant and cut a few slices in it with a sharp knife. Place on a baking sheet and bake in a preheated oven at 375°F for about 30 minutes until the skin is black and the eggplant soft.

Cut the eggplant in half and scoop out the flesh. Place in a food processor with all remaining ingredients. Purée till smooth and season to taste.

PRAWN AND GINGER DIP

1/2 cup peeled, cooked and finely chopped shrimp
2 tablespoons chopped cilantro
1 teaspoon finely chopped ginger
1/2 cup cocktail sauce
(Recipe below)

Cocktail sauce:
1/2 cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons tomato ketchup
1 tablespoon orange juice
1 tablespoon natural yogurt
1 tablespoon brandy
1/2 teaspoon chopped dill
Salt and freshly ground pepper
Mix all ingredients together and serve chilled.

CRUSTED Brie WITH CRANBERRIES

The warm mildness of Brie and the sharpness of the cranberries are a great combination. Makes 20.
2 pounds Brie cheese
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
3-4 eggs, beaten
5 cups of fresh white bread crumbs
Oil for deep-frying and cranberry sauce to serve
Cut the Brie into small 1-ounce wedges and turn in the flour until evenly coated. Dip each wedge into the beaten egg, and then coat in the bread crumbs. Repeat the egg and bread crumbs one more time.

Heat the oil and deep-fry the wedges until golden brown. Drain on kitchen paper and spoon a small amount of cranberry sauce onto each one. Press a cocktail stick (toothpick) into each one and serve immediately.

SPICED NUTS

1 tablespoon unsalted butter
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
2 cups assorted blanched nuts: almonds, hazelnuts, cashew nuts and Brazil nuts
2 teaspoons medium-hot curry powder

1 teaspoon sea salt
Heat the butter and oil in a roasting pan. Add the nuts, curry powder and salt and toss well until evenly mixed.
Roast the nuts in a preheated oven at 375°F for about 20 minutes, turning occasionally until golden. Leave to cool, then toss well. Serve at once or store in an airtight container. Makes 2 cups.

HAZELNUT MACAROONS

2 egg whites
Pinch of salt
3/4 cup superfine sugar
1/4 cup skinned hazelnuts, roasted and ground
1/4 cup ground almonds
2 tablespoons ground hazelnuts
Whipped cream

Whisk the egg whites with a pinch of salt until stiff, then whisk in the sugar a spoonful at a time until the mixture is thick and glossy. Fold in the ground almonds and hazelnuts.

Use the mixture to fill a piping bag fitted with a three-fourths inch. Nozzle (Tube) and pipe about 60 small drops on baking trays lined with parchment paper. Sprinkle half of them with chopped nuts. Bake in a preheated oven at 350°F for 15-20 minutes until golden brown. Leave to cool on a wire rack.

Sandwich the macaroons together with a little whipped cream using the nut sprinkled macaroons for tops. Makes 30.

Chef Colin Brown is Executive Chef of The Townsend Hotel in Birmingham. He studied culinary arts at the Glasgow College of Food Technology and has won an array of awards, including the Scottish Chef of the Year, and was a member of the Scottish Culinary Olympic team, which won seven gold medals, six silver medals and four bronze medals in Frankfurt. Married and the father of four children, Brown and his family reside in Auburn Hills. Look for his column in *Taste* on the third Sunday of the month. He welcomes comments and questions from readers. You can e-mail him at www.chef@townsendhotel.com. Enjoy!

TASTE CALENDAR

Italiano Night
Madonna University in Livonia features Italiano Night at 5:30 p.m. Saturday, April 26, in the University Center dining room. This event features, among other things, Italian buffet, wines and silent auction featuring unique jewelry, collectibles and sports memorabilia. Tickets are \$20 per person before the event or \$30 at the door. Alumni, faculty, friends and staff are encouraged to purchase tickets of 10 for \$200. Proceeds benefit scholarships and educational projects. The dining room is located in the Residence Hall on campus at 14221 Levan. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit our Web site at www.madonna.edu and click on "Action 2002" or contact Patricia Kachnowski, University Advancement, at (313) 432-5421.

Taste of the Nation
Share Our Strength's Taste of the Nation dinner will feature food, wine and beer from more than 50 chefs, restaurants and wine distributors on Sunday, April 27 at the Somerset Collection South in Troy. Patron party is 6-7 p.m. and general public is 7-10 p.m. Tickets are \$100 from Kristen Hickey at Unique Restaurant Corp. at (248) 646-0370, ext. 236 and \$200 per patron from Variety, the Children's Charity at (248) 258-5511.

Party Planning
Learn how to throw a fabulous party and enjoy it too. Benefit from 36 years of professional party planning experience of Harold Baldwin by participating in this class Monday, April 28, 7-9 p.m. at Washburn High School. Learn organizational skills, short cuts to dazzle guests and cost cutting, and how to create themes from invitations. Class fee is \$39. For more information, call (248) 203-3300.

Southern Cooking
Davis Jackell, test editor for *Taste of Home* magazine, will demonstrate the wonderful art of southern style cooking.

Fried chicken, milk gravy, homemade biscuits and pie will be featured. This class is scheduled 7-9 p.m. Friday, April 25 at Nancy's Kitchen, 30+ East Street, Rochester, MI 48307. Cost is \$45 per person. For information, visit www.nannyskitchen.com or call (248) 651-1622.

Wine Tasting
More than 500 wines from wineries in the Great Lakes region will be judged, including Ice wines from Canada, at the Eighth Annual Great Lakes Great Wine Tasting and Wine Auction featuring wine and silent auction featuring unique jewelry, collectibles and sports memorabilia. Tickets are \$20 per person before the event or \$30 at the door. Alumni, faculty, friends and staff are encouraged to purchase tickets of 10 for \$200. Proceeds benefit scholarships and educational projects. The dining room is located in the Residence Hall on campus at 14221 Levan. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit our Web site at www.madonna.edu and click on "Action 2002" or contact Patricia Kachnowski, University Advancement, at (313) 432-5421.

Cuisine du Jour
Chef Kipp Bourdeau of Bistro Bourdeau in Auburn Hills will discuss Mastering Mayonaises, Getting Preacquainted with Your Grill and Fast Summer Desserts at 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Thursday, May 15 at Specialties Showroom, 2300 W. 11 Mile, in Berkley. Please mail registration and payment to Trevarrow, 1295 N. Opdyke, Auburn Hills, MI 48325 or call (248) 377-2300 for information.

Continuing education
Schoolcraft College's Department of Culinary Arts features continuing education classes at the new VistaTech Center at the college, 16600 Haggerty, Livonia.
Jeff Gabriel, certified master chef, will teach a class on Cooking 101: Skill Development, which is a prerequisite for hands-on culinary arts classes in the continuing education program. The class meets 6-8 p.m. Wednesday, May 7, and 6-10 p.m. Friday, May 9. The class fee is \$39.
Gabriel also teaches Fresh and Fabulous Salads, 6-9 p.m. Thursday, June 5 (565), and Quick Easy Meals, 9 a.m.-noon, Saturday, June 7 (599).

For more information, call Continuing Education Services at (734) 462-4448.

Do you have an item for the Taste calendar? Please submit it at least two weeks before the event to Ken Abramczyk, Taste editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 East Maple, Birmingham MI 48009 or email kabramczyk@ee.hometown.com

WAR

FROM PAGE B1

into the bag. The bag is set back inside a cardboard box originally holding the foil packets.

After 15 minutes of heating, the meals are ready.

First on the menu, boneless pork chops with Jamaican style sauce with noodles. The foil packet is snipped open, and the pork and noodles mix ... well, it sort of oozes out of the pack.

It's much better if you don't see it coming out of the package," says Renee Skoglund, health and community life reporter. "It's not a visual that's appealing."

But the rest of the troops come around.

"I thought it was good," Jagdfeld said. "The meat is flavorful and moist and it tastes like a pork chop to me."

I added: "If I'm in the middle of the desert and bullets are flying, that's pretty damn good."

Dave Varga, community editor of the *Livonia* and *Redford* Observer newspapers, thought the pork had "pretty good flavor with a nice spice to it, possibly cumin." Ingredients listed were spices and a slew of other flavorings.

Next up: the jambalaya with ham and shrimp. That packet emits an ammonia-like aroma that doesn't sit well with the taste corps.

Skoglund said it had a "smoky fishy" taste, while Mason describes it as a "very fishy" taste. Julie Brown, presentation editor for the *Observer & Eccentric*, uses just one word: "Eeww!"

But Jagdfeld liked it. (Like Mikey, I guess. He'll eat anything.) I disliked the smell of it, so I disliked the taste, too. Varga thought it was too smoky.

We opened the chicken with Thai-style sauce. Two of us thought it was bland, another described it as "how cat food might taste" (as if any of us would dare taste cat food). Skoglund called the beef



Sue Mason (left), community editor for the *Westland and Garden City Observer*, and Julie Brown, presentation editor, test jalapeno cheese, while Taste editor Ken Abramczyk empties a food packet at the food sampling.

with mushrooms in sauce the best.

"The creaminess adds to it," Skoglund said. "It's like a creamed corned beef." Varga and I compared it to Dinty Moore — without a lot of taste, but I thought it was substantive when compared to the others. Mason wanted more

salt (as if the 650 milligrams weren't enough).

Brown said the beef "tasted better than all looks." Later we tapped into the beef teriyaki. The beef actually had some texture to it. "You know you're actually eating beef," Mason said. Brown didn't like it because the dish was

too greasy. Heck, I thought it was good.

An oatmeal cookie received a thumbs-up from the crew.

"To drink, the kits contained a powder similar to Kool-Aid. Each kit contained a spoon, which was a solid piece as far as plasticware goes.

Chocolate mint cake was "too dry. That will need several glasses of milk to get it down," Skoglund said. (Yeah, in the middle of the desert, I thought.)

A nut raisin mix resembled the traditional trail mix that can be purchased at any store, so "there's no surprise there," Brown said.

We each had our favorites.

Varga liked the jalapeno cheese. Mason enjoyed the wild rice and the teriyaki beef. Brown deemed the pork chop the best.

I liked the teriyaki, followed closely by the pork chop.

We summarized our findings. "Nice side dishes," Mason said. "The entrees are passable, but I wouldn't want to make it standard fare. I'm glad I'm not eating those things."

Brown called the foods compact and easy to prepare. "They're nice and hot, which is good," she said. "They won't leave you clamoring for more, but if you are considering risking your life to save others or to liberate another country in battle, well, the meals aren't all that bad. In fact, they may be luxury in 100-degree temperatures in the middle of danger."

And here's a taste to the troops.

kabramczyk@ee.hometown.com
(248) 901-2574

Kudos for a job well done

SEND THE FTD® FOR ALL YOU DO® BOUQUET FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS' WEEK, APRIL 20-26.

Promote a happy workplace. Give the gift that brings a cheerful, sunshine-yellow spot of color to their desk. Say "Thank You" with a thoughtful bouquet for Administrative Professionals' Week. The bouquet arrives in a handblown glass vase.



1-800-WESLEYS

6677 Orchard Lake Road
Just South of Maple in West Bloomfield
844 Regency Boulevard in Farmington Hills
80020 Flower Towne Center in Farmington Hills, Mich.



MAY 7 - 11
FOX THEATRE
Great seats are available at the Fox Theatre and Joe Louis Arena box offices and HockeysTown Authentics in Troy (without service charges) and at all other locations, including Marshall Field's. Charge by phone 248-433-1515 or online at OlympiaEntertainment.com



Great seats are available at the Fox Theatre and Joe Louis Arena box offices and HockeysTown Authentics in Troy (without service charges) and at all other locations, including Marshall Field's. Charge by phone 248-433-1515 or online at OlympiaEntertainment.com