

# HOLIDAY APPETIZER FOR EASY ENTERTAINING



Winter holidays mean entertaining. Today's busy host or hostess can simplify preparation of elegant party foods by offering a variety of make-ahead, intriguing appetizers that set the tone for a festive gala.

The first step toward a successful party is discovering the wonders of frozen puff pastry sheets. It's a delicious, multi-purpose product in the hands of the smart chef. It can be "jelly-rolled" with different fillings, wrapped around a wheel of cheese or stand on its own as a base for mini-pizzas. In whatever form it's used, it serves as a flaky, buttery complement to piquant mixtures. Tabasco pepper sauce is a prime way to add that inviting flavor to fillings. It blends with a variety of ingredients, enhancing them with its characteristic tang and zest.

A menu of easy, do-ahead hot and cold buffet items follows:

Savory Herbed Baked Brie is sure to raise eyebrows when it's baked like a pie. An artistic chef might make a design on the pastry covering to match the table setting or create a theme for a tasteful presentation.

Star performers on the appetizer tray are Sausage and Spinach Pinwheels and Miniature Pissaladiere. Both get their extra zip from Tabasco sauce. The Pissaladiere, a cousin of the pizza, can be frozen and reheated, or made in steps over a period of time.

Holiday Crab Spread is delectable served on crackers. The vegetables add texture and it tastes even better when prepared a day ahead. Shrimp can also be used successfully in this recipe.

All of these recipes can be made in advance and refrigerated uncooked to be baked, heated or unmolded just before serving.

Terri's Peppered Mushrooms made with a heavenly blend of seasonings are another suggestion for holiday hors d'oeuvres. Keep a small holder for food picks nearby for spearing.

## SAVORY HERBED BAKED BRIE

- 1 wheel (1 kilo) Brie, about 8-inches in diameter
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary, crushed
- 1 teaspoon dried leaf thyme, crushed
- 1 teaspoon dried leaf marjoram, crushed
- 8 very thin slices hard salami (2 ounces), finely chopped
- 1 sheet Frozen Puff Pastry
- 1 egg, lightly beaten

Place Brie in freezer 30 minutes. In a small bowl mix together parsley, garlic, rosemary, thyme and marjoram. Remove Brie from freezer, slice in half lengthwise with a long, thin-bladed knife. Spread herb mixture over cut side of Brie. Sprinkle with chopped salami. Press Brie halves back together. Thaw pastry sheet 20 minutes at room temperature; gently unfold. Roll pastry out on floured surface to a rectangle 18 by 12 inches. Place Brie in center of pastry. Bring edges of pastry over top; cut off excess. Seal corners by brushing with egg and pressing pastry together. To bake, place Brie seam-side-down on lightly greased jelly-roll pan. Brush with egg and make 4 holes in top. Bake in a 350°F oven 30 minutes or until pastry is golden and puffed. (Cheese inside should be runny.) Let stand at least 15 minutes before serving. Serve with crackers. YIELD: 1 whole baked Brie, 15 to 20 servings.

\*Note: A design may be made for the top from the excess pastry dough. It should be sealed with egg and pressed to seal.

## MINIATURE PISSALADIERE

- 2 sheets Frozen Puff Pastry
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 2 medium onions, halved and sliced (1-3/4 cups)
- 1 large clove garlic, mashed
- 1 teaspoon dried leaf basil, crumbled
- 1 teaspoon dried leaf oregano, crumbled
- 3/4 teaspoon Tabasco pepper sauce
- 1 can (14 ounces) whole tomatoes, drained and chopped
- 3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided

Thaw pastry sheets at room temperature about 20 minutes; gently unfold. Roll each sheet on a floured surface to a rectangle 9 x 7-1/2 inches. Cut each rectangle into eighteen pieces, 2-1/2 x 1-1/2 inches (total of 36 pieces). Bake rectangles on ungreased baking sheets in a 350°F oven 12 minutes or until lightly browned but slightly underdone. Remove cool. Set aside. In medium skillet melt butter; add onions and garlic, saute 3 minutes. Add basil, oregano and Tabasco sauce; cook 2 minutes longer. Stir in tomatoes; cook 15 minutes until mixture thickens. Remove from heat, cool to room temperature. Lightly press the top of each pastry to make a "well." Spoon 1-1/2 teaspoons tomato mixture into each "well." Sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon Parmesan cheese. Return to oven; bake 15 minutes longer or until cheese melts and pastries are heated through. YIELD: 12 servings (36 pieces).

## TERRI'S PEPPERED MUSHROOMS

(Not illustrated)

- 1/4 cup butter or margarine
- 1-1/2 pounds small mushrooms, trimmed
- 1 small clove garlic, mashed
- 1/3 cup Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon dried leaf thyme, crumbled
- 1/4 teaspoon Tabasco pepper sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon cracked black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

Melt butter in large covered skillet; add mushrooms, cook over medium heat 5 minutes, stirring often. Stir in garlic, cook 5 minutes longer. Add Worcestershire, thyme, Tabasco sauce, black pepper and salt; simmer 5 minutes. Cover. Cook 10 minutes longer until mushrooms are dark and glossy and the liquid has almost evaporated. Serve hot with cocktail picks as an hors d'oeuvre. Can also be served at room temperature. YIELD: 12 servings.

## SAUSAGE AND SPINACH PINWHEELS

- 1 pound seasoned bulk sausage
- 1 medium onion, chopped (about 1 cup)
- 3/4 teaspoon Tabasco pepper sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground mace
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen chopped spinach, drained and squeezed dry
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen chopped kale, drained and squeezed dry
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten, divided
- 1/3 pound Gruyere cheese, grated (2 cups)
- 2 sheets Frozen Puff Pastry

In large skillet brown sausage over medium heat; add onion, cook 5 minutes. Stir in Tabasco sauce, salt and mace; cook 2 minutes. In food processor combine sausage mixture, spinach, kale, 2 eggs and cheese. Process just to blend. Thaw pastry sheets 20 minutes at room temperature; gently unfold. Roll out each sheet on a floured surface to a rectangle 18 by 8 inches. Spread half the sausage mixture over each rectangle leaving a 1-inch border on the long side. Roll up, jelly-roll fashion, rolling toward the border edge. Brush border with remaining beaten egg; press to seal tightly. Pinch ends together. Brush tops and sides of roll with remaining beaten egg. Make cuts along top of each roll at 1-inch intervals. Place rolls on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake in a 350°F oven 30 minutes or until golden. Allow to stand 15 minutes before slicing. YIELD: 12 servings (36 pieces).

## HOLIDAY CRAB SPREAD

- 1 envelope plain gelatin
- 1/4 cup cold water
- 1 cup clam juice, heated to boiling
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons Dijon-style mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon Tabasco pepper sauce
- 1 can (6-1/2 ounces) white crab meat, drained
- 1/2 cup pared, seeded and chopped cucumber
- 1/2 cup chopped red pepper
- 1/2 cup chopped yellow pepper
- 1/2 cup chopped scallion
- 3/4 cup heavy cream, whipped

In medium bowl mix gelatin with water, let stand 1 minute. Pour boiling clam juice over gelatin and stir until completely dissolved. In small bowl mix mayonnaise, mustard, salt and Tabasco sauce; stir into gelatin mixture. Chill until the consistency of unbeaten egg whites. Stir in crab meat, cucumber, red and yellow peppers and scallion. Fold in whipped cream. Turn mixture into a lightly oiled 4-cup mold. Chill until firm, at least 4 hours. Flavors will blend if refrigerated overnight. Unmold and serve with crackers. YIELD: 12 servings (4 cups).

