

Sandwiches perfect for weddings

From a "Father of the Bride," picture-perfect wedding to a small, intimate affair in a friend's apartment, home weddings and receptions are becoming increasingly popular.

"There's a kind of personalization in the familiar, comfortable surroundings of a home that can't be created in a banquet hall," said Gerard J. Monaghan, president of the 1,500-member Association of Bridal Consultants.

Like the parlor weddings that were typical in the early part of the century, at-home weddings allow a couple to showcase family treasures (embroidered linens and heirloom china) and step down the stairs to the wedding march played on the family's grand piano.

The time of day, number of guests, location, budget and style of the bridal couple must all be considered in planning the reception. Virtually any at-home party, even a catered special dinner, can include special homemade dishes. It's also possible, with the help of friends and family, to prepare a wonderful do-it-yourself reception. The key is to keep the menu simple, and

to plan items that can be made days, or even weeks ahead.

Almost all wedding receptions include appetizers, served with champagne or punch for the traditional toast. Versatile Miniature Focaccia Sandwiches are an easy-to-prepare savory appetizer.

One loaf of purchased bakery-style focaccia bread, layered with richly flavored cream cheese and sun-dried tomato spread, fresh spinach leaves and thinly sliced smoked turkey, makes four dozen delicious bite-sized appetizers.

These small open-face sandwiches look elegant served on a silver platter, sophisticated on a contemporary glass plate, or rustic in a fabric or leaf-lined basket.

For a cocktail party reception, plan eight to 12 different sandwiches for each person, or three of each variety. If a meal will follow, less variety and one or two of each kind of hors d'oeuvre per person will be ample.

A stand-up buffet is more than a cocktail party, but less than a formal dinner. Along with Miniature Focaccia Sandwiches, the buffet might also include platters of

sliced meats, a sumptuous cheese board, overflowing baskets filled with cream cheese surrounded by fresh fruits, salted nuts, and buttery shortbread hearts or small cakes. For either type of reception, a buttercream-frosted wedding cake is the dessert of choice.

MINIATURE FOCACCIA SANDWICHES

- 1 purchased bakery-style focaccia bread (about 12 ounces, 8 inches in diameter, 1 1/2 inches thick)
- 8 ounces Neufchatel cheese or cream cheese softened
- 2 to 3 tablespoons 2% milk
- 1 cup sun-dried tomatoes in oil, patted dry, chopped
- 4 teaspoons chopped fresh basil leaves or 1 1/2 teaspoons dried basil
- 4 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme leaves or 1 1/2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 8 ounces thinly sliced deli smoked turkey breast
- 1 1/2 cups packed fresh spinach leaves, stems removed

With long, sharp serrated knife,

split focaccia bread horizontally in half. Place halves, cut side up, on cutting board; set aside.

In small bowl, combine cream cheese and milk, stirring until smooth. Add tomatoes, basil, thyme and garlic; mix well. Divide cream cheese mixture in half; set aside. Spread remaining mixture evenly between two focaccia rounds, spreading to edges.

Arrange spinach over cream cheese mixture; arrange turkey evenly over spinach. Spread reserved cream cheese mixture over turkey. Wrap each focaccia round securely in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour or overnight. To serve, using a long, sharp serrated knife, cut each focaccia round into 5 lengthwise strips. Cut each strip crosswise into 1 1/2-inch pieces. Yield about 4 dozen.

Serving size: 1 piece (1 1/4 of recipe). Calories per serving: 35. Protein: 2 grams, Fat: 1.5 gram, Carbohydrate: 4 grams, Calcium: 13 mg.

Recipe from the United Dairy Industry of Michigan



AMERICAN DAIRY ASSOCIATION

Miniature Focaccia Sandwiches: Start with a bakery-style loaf of focaccia bread, smoked turkey breast and fresh spinach leaves. The creamy spread pairs cream cheese with sun-dried tomatoes and herbs. Assemble a day ahead and chill for easy slicing.

Enjoy mushrooms without added fat

See related story on Taste front.

Here's a low fat recipe that accentuates the flavor of Porcini mushrooms. If you would like more information on hunting Morel mushrooms, call the Boyne Chamber of Commerce 1-(800) 230-2739.

PORCINI ASQUINI

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 pound boned and skinned chicken breasts
- 1/2 pound fresh Porcini mushrooms (or 3 ounces dried)*
- 1 cup coarsely chopped onion
- 1 cup diced celery
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 2 cans (14 1/2 ounces each) Italian flavored stewed tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups fresh green beans, trimmed and halved

Heat oil in a large, nonstick skillet. Add chicken and cook 3 to 4 minutes on each side, until brown. Remove from skillet. Add mushrooms, onion, celery, and garlic to skillet. Cook, stirring frequently, until tender, 5 to 8 minutes. Add tomatoes, salt and chicken. Top with green beans. Cover and simmer until chicken is cooked through and beans are tender, but still slightly crisp. If desired, serve over hot, cooked rice or pasta. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

*If using dried Porcini mushrooms, reconstitute first by soaking in water. Then drain and squeeze as much water out as possible before adding to recipe.

Nutritional information per serving:

Calories: 290, Fat: 5 Grams, Protein: 32 grams, Carbohydrates: 30 grams.

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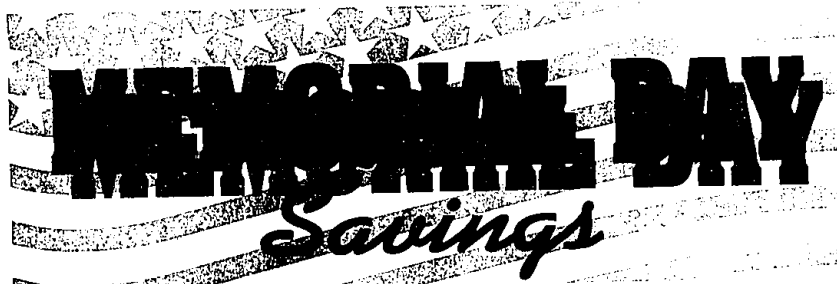
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