

Easy snacks take the fuss out of entertaining

See related story on Taste front.

RED BELL PEPPER AND CHEESE SPREAD

1/2 small onion, quartered
3 peeled garlic cloves
Olive oil
Roasted red peppers (7 ounce jar) or two you've prepared
1 1/2 cups grated sharp Cheddar cheese
Dash of cayenne pepper

2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

Drizzle garlic cloves with olive oil. Roast in 375 degree F. oven for 50 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Place in food processor with red peppers, cheese and cayenne pepper. Pulse until almost smooth. Transfer to bowl. Stir in chives.

Serve with crackers, crusty bread or as a dip with celery sticks and green pepper strips or thin bread.

sticks.

QUICK PIZZA DIP

8-ounce container soft cream cheese
1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1 cup shredded mozzarella
1 cup pizza sauce
2 tablespoons each chopped red and green pepper
Heat oven to 350 degrees F. Beat

cream cheese and seasonings with electric mixer on medium speed until well blended. Spread on bottom of 8-inch pie plate.

Top with mozzarella, pizza sauce, and green and red pepper. Bake 15-20 minutes. Serve with thin breadsticks.

HAM-IT-UP SNACKS

8-ounce can refrigerated quick crescent dinner rolls
4 thin slices ham, salami or

smoked turkey breast lunch meat

4 teaspoons mustard (Dijon-style, honey-mustard, or any flavored mustard)

1 cup shredded Swiss or sharp Cheddar cheese
2 tablespoons sesame seeds
Heat oven to 375 degrees F. Unroll dough into four long rectangles. Firmly press perforations to seal. Place lunchmeat slices on rectangles, trim if necessary or slightly

roll out dough to stretch. Top lunchmeat with mustard, sprinkle with cheese.

Starting at shortest side, tightly roll up each. Coat rolls with sesame seed. Cut each roll into 6 slices, making 20 slices in all.

Place, cut side down, on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees F. for 10-20 minutes or until golden brown. Immediately remove from cookie sheet. Serve warm.

Hanukkah stars shine

AP — For Hanukkah, bake and serve chocolate Hanukkah stars. These festive cookies are made with cocoa and dusted with powdered sugar. The cookies can also be served plain.

CHOCOLATE HANUKKAH STARS

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter or margarine, softened
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup cocoa
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
Powdered sugar

In a large bowl, beat butter, sugar and eggs on medium speed of electric mixer until light and fluffy. Stir together flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda and salt; add to butter mixture, beating until well blended. Cover; refrigerate dough until firm enough to handle.

Heat oven to 350 degrees F. On lightly floured surface, roll dough to 1/4-inch thickness; cut with star-shaped cookie cutter. Place on ungreased cookie sheet.

Bake in a 350-degree F. oven for 6 to 7 minutes or until no imprint remains when touched lightly in center. Cook for 1 minute; remove from cookie sheet to wire rack. Cool completely. Sprinkle with powdered sugar. Makes about 4 dozen cookies.

Nutrition facts per serving: 60 cal., 1 g pro., 9 g carb., 2.6 g fat, 15 mg chol., 70 mg sodium, 10 mg calcium.

Recipe from: Hershey's Cocoa

Keep your waist slim this holiday season

While the holiday season should be a time of good will and cheer, for many people it is a diet disaster waiting to happen.

Holidays are often equated with an endless stream of parties complete with an array of tempting appetizers and drinks. Unfortunately, many of our holiday favorites are high in fat, cholesterol and calories.

Fear not, one can still enjoy the holiday season without becoming enemies with the bathroom scale.

The holiday season is a difficult time for the weight-conscious. "Think of it as a temporary plateau," said registered dietitian Fay Fitzgerald, Heart Smart Coordinator at the Henry Ford Heart and Vascular Institute. "A reasonable goal may be

weight maintenance rather than weight loss."

Fitzgerald recommends these practical tips to help make it through the holiday season without adding to your waistline or your risk of heart disease.

■ Don't attend a party hungry. Skipping meals can make it difficult to resist high-calorie, high-fat

snacks such as nuts, crackers, chips, dips, cheeseballs, pastries, cookies, pie, fruitcakes, etc.

■ If you do choose to eat cheese and crackers, try some of the lower fat or fat-free varieties.

■ Take advantage of bite-size raw vegetable appetizers at parties. These are healthy and can fill you up before the temptation for other

high-fat items takes over.

■ Offer to bring an appetizer that is low in calories and fat.

■ Get enough rest. If you're tired, it's easy to eat without thinking.

■ Try a non-alcoholic beverage choice such as fruit juice, club soda, mineral water, low-calorie soda or diet tonic water with a twist of fruit. This helps avoid the "empty" calories from alcohol.

Heart Smart makes sense during the holidays

Here are some Heart Smart recipes from Faye Fitzgerald, Heart Smart coordinator at the Henry Ford Heart and Vascular Institute.

CAJUN CRABMEAT SPREAD

1 package (8 oz.) lite cream cheese, softened
1 tablespoon nonfat yogurt
3/4 cup 1 percent low-fat cottage cheese
1/2 teaspoon paprika
3/4 teaspoon ground red pepper
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon ground thyme
1 can crabmeat (6 oz.) drained
1/4 cup finely chopped green pepper

Chili peppers as garnish. If desired

Cocktail bread

In a large bowl, beat cream cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese, paprika, red pepper, garlic powder and thyme until well blended, about 1 minute.

Stir in crabmeat and green pepper. Place in serving bowl, cover and chill.

Before serving, garnish with chili peppers, if desired. Yield: 2 1/2 cups.

Nutrition details per serving (Each serving is 1 slice of bread, 1 teaspoon spread.): Calories 27, trace of fat.

MEXICAN QUESADILLAS

1/4 pound Monterey Jack

cheese, shredded (low-fat, low sodium, low cholesterol variety)

10 flour tortillas (8-inch) Sweet pea guacamole (recipe follows)

Salsa

Divide cheese in an even layer among 5 tortillas, leaving a 1/2-inch border. Top with another tortilla and press lightly to compress. Heat a 10 inch skillet (medium heat). When hot, cook quesadillas, one at a time in vegetable oil spray turning once, until very lightly browned on both sides (about 2 minutes).

Quesadillas are best served immediately, though they can be cooked several hours in advance and held at room temperature. Reheat them prior to serving by placing them in a single layer on a baking sheet and baking them at 400 degrees F. for 4-5 minutes. To serve, cut each one into sixths and arrange them on a platter or in a large basket. Serve with guacamole and salsa on the side. Yield 30 appetizers.

Nutrient analysis per serving: 62 calories, 1 gram fat.

SWEET PEAS GUACAMOLE

10 ounce package frozen jalapeno peppers
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 1/2 to 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
1 (2-inch piece) of red onion, peeled

Cook peas according to package directions. Drain well and pat with paper towels to remove as much moisture as possible.

Mince pepper in a food processor or a blender.

Scrape down sides of container, add oil and 1/4 teaspoon lemon juice and mix until the pepper is even more finely minced (about 30 seconds). Add peas and cumin and pulse, stopping once to scrape down sides of container. Cut onion in half and add to the container. Mix just enough to chop coarsely.

Chill well. Adjust seasonings and lemon juice before serving. Can be made up to 2 days in advance

and refrigerated. Yield: 20 Table-

spoons.

Nutrient analysis per 1 Table-

spoon serving: Calorie 20, trace fat.

VEGETABLE DIP

1 cup 1 percent low-fat cottage cheese
1/2 cup buttermilk
1 tablespoon lemon juice
3 tablespoons reduced-calorie mayonnaise
1 package (10 ounces) frozen spinach, thawed and drained
1/2 cup finely shredded carrot
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1 tablespoon parsley
Celery seed to taste

Blend cottage cheese, buttermilk, mayonnaise until smooth. Add all other ingredients and blend well. Chill mixture and serve with fresh vegetables. Yield approximately 2 cups, 32 servings of 1 tablespoon each.

Nutrient analysis per serving: 14 calories, trace fat.

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