



Dip Into Spring
with
Chef Bob Sferra
Culinary Occasions

Parmesan Soufflé Potatoes

Makes 24 hors d'oeuvres

- 12 small red potatoes
- ½ cup mayonnaise (good quality)
- 1½ cups finely grated hard cheese
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Preheat oven to 450°F.

1. Cut potatoes in half lengthwise, and trim rounded bottom of each half so it will sit flat. Hollow out the middle of each potato half with a melon baller.
2. Blanch hollow potatoes in boiling salted water until just tender. Remove from heat, drain and place under cold water to stop the cooking process and cool the potatoes. Place cooled potatoes cut side up on a baking sheet and set aside.
3. Combine mayonnaise, parmesan cheese and garlic in a mixing bowl. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
4. Spoon or pipe cheese mixture into each potato half, just filling the hollow. (Note: Potatoes may be prepared up to this point, then refrigerated until needed.)
5. Bake for 12 minutes or until cheese mixture is golden brown. Serve warm.

Caramelized Brie

Makes one 8-inch round of cheese

- ⅔ cup brown sugar, packed
- ⅓ cup water
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter (1/2 stick)
- ½ cup Spiced Nuts (recipe follows)
- 1 ripe 8-inch wheel of Brie cheese, with top rind evenly cut off

1. Combine the brown sugar and water in a heavy-bottomed saucepan and bring to a boil. Cook over medium heat until the mixture reaches the soft ball stage (240°F on a candy thermometer), about 4 minutes from the time the mixture begins to boil.

2. Let the mixture cool slightly, and then stir in the cream. Continue to boil for another 3 to 4 minutes until the mixture is glossy and slightly thickened. Remove from the heat and stir in the butter. Fold in the spiced pecans.

3. Pour the caramel evenly over the top of the cheese so it coats the top surface and runs a little over the side, distributing the pecans with the help of a knife or spoon. Serve with slices of French bread, crackers or apple wedges.

Spiced Nuts

Makes ½ pound

8 tablespoons unsalted butter (1 stick)

1½ cups brown sugar, packed

1 teaspoon dry mustard

½ teaspoon cayenne pepper

1½ teaspoon ground cumin

1 egg white

½ pound shelled nut halves

Preheat oven to 300°F.

1. Melt the butter in a large skillet. Add the sugar and spices, remove from the heat and stir to dissolve. Let cool, then stir in the egg white.

2. Pour the mixture over the nuts in a large bowl, and then stir and toss until they are evenly coated.

3. Transfer the nuts to a baking sheet and spread them in a single layer. Toast in the preheated oven, shaking and tossing 2 to 3 times during cooking, until the pecans are golden brown, about 20 minutes altogether. Transfer the nuts to a bowl or tray. When the pecans are cool enough to handle, rub them between your hands to evenly distribute the sugar coating and to avoid clumping. Cool completely. Serve as a snack or with cocktails.

Empanadas

Makes 24

½ cup crème fraîche or sour cream

1½ tablespoons minced shallots (about 1 shallot)

½ teaspoon Dijon mustard

½ small clove garlic, minced

½ teaspoon finely chopped chives

• salt and cayenne pepper, to taste

½ pound pulled pork, cooled, coated with barbecue sauce and chopped

• egg wash (1 egg mixed with 2 tablespoons milk)

1 recipe empanada pastry dough (recipe follows), rolled out and cut into 24 three-inch squares

Preheat oven to 375°F.

1. In a medium mixing bowl, stir together the crème fraîche, shallots, Dijon, garlic, and chives; season to taste with salt and cayenne. Gently fold in the pulled pork and mix thoroughly. Place about 2 teaspoonfuls of filling in the center of each pastry square. Form a triangle by folding one corner of pastry over to meet an opposite corner; crimp firmly with a fork to seal.

2. Place the filled triangles on a parchment-lined baking sheet; brush each lightly with egg wash and bake until the pastry is golden brown and crisp, about 25 to 30 minutes. Remove from the oven and let rest 10 minutes; serve warm.

Make It Ahead: Make the empanadas through Step 1; freeze, tightly wrapped, for up to 3 weeks. When you are ready to serve, place the frozen turnovers on a parchment-lined baking sheet and proceed with Step 2. Add 10 minutes to the total baking time.

Empanada Dough

Makes 2 pounds of dough

16 ounces unbleached all-purpose flour (about 3¼ cups)

1 teaspoon salt

10 ounces unsalted butter (2 ½ sticks), cut into 1-inch pieces and chilled

½ teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice

¾ to 1 cup ice cold water

1. In a large mixing bowl, sift together the flour and salt.

2. Cut in the butter with two knives or a pastry cutter until the mixture resembles coarsely ground cornmeal and the butter pieces are about the size of small peas.
3. Mixing the dough lightly, add the juice and water gradually; mix just until the dough comes together. (Note: Work the dough as little as possible or it will be tough.).
4. Turn the dough out onto a floured work surface or silicone mat. Gather the dough into a disk; sprinkle with a little flour and wrap well with plastic wrap. Chill in the refrigerator until firm but malleable, about 1 hour, before rolling out. (This will relax the dough and prevent the butter from melting when handled).

Making Pastry Dough Using a Food Processor

Chill the butter, food processor bowl and blade in the freezer for about 20 minutes. Using the metal blade attachment, pulse together the flour and salt. Add the butter and pulse again until the butter is the size of large peas. Add the liquid, 1 tablespoon at a time, pulsing briefly after each addition. Enough liquid has been added when a spoonful of dough holds together when pressed. Pulse the food processor until the dough just begins to pull together. Shape and wrap as indicated above.

Korean Barbecue (Bulgogi) in Lettuce Cups

Serves 4

12 ounces ribeye or sirloin steak (1 to 1¼-inches thick), frozen

3 tablespoons toasted sesame oil

½ cup dark soy sauce*

⅓ cup unseasoned rice vinegar

4 cloves garlic, minced

⅓ cup palm sugar or dark brown sugar

1½ teaspoons crushed red pepper flakes, or to taste

• peanut or canola oil, for oiling pan

¼ cup toasted sesame seeds**, for garnish

8 lettuce cups (red leaf, green leaf, or Bibb lettuce), chilled

1 bunch green onions, green tops only, cut into ⅛-inch thick diagonal slices

1 medium carrot, peeled and shredded

• whole cilantro leaves, for garnish

1. Allow the steak to sit out for about 15 minutes to slightly soften. Cut the frozen steak across the grain into ⅛-inch thick slices with a very sharp knife; set aside until needed.
2. Whisk together the sesame oil, soy sauce, vinegar, garlic, palm sugar, and crushed red pepper flakes. Add the sliced beef and toss to coat. Marinate for one hour. (Note: Do not marinate longer than 2 hours, or the beef may become salty).

3. Remove the meat from the marinade and shake off the excess; place on a platter.
4. Transfer the marinade to a small saucepan; bring to a boil. Immediately reduce the heat and simmer over medium heat until thick and saucy, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat, and set aside to cool.
5. Preheat a grill pan to medium-high heat; lightly oil the grill pan to prevent sticking. Grill the beef on the first side until browned, about 1 minute; turn the slices over and grill until just cooked through, about 30 seconds more.
6. Remove the beef from the grill; transfer to a serving platter. Transfer the sauce to a serving dish. Sprinkle sesame seeds over the beef. Surround the beef with the chilled lettuce cups, green onions, shredded carrot, and cilantro leaves.
7. To serve, have each guest spoon a few slices of beef into each chilled lettuce cup, then top with green onions, shredded carrot, and cilantro. Serve additional sauce on the side. Eat with your fingers as you would a taco.

*Note: Dark soy sauce is thicker and sweeter than regular soy sauce. It can be found at your local Asian market