



Convenient jarred artichokes and frozen spinach are quickly transformed into this flavorful, fresh-tasting dip.

Spinach and Artichoke Dip

SERVES 6 TO 8 **EASY PREP** **VEG**

COOKING TIME 1 TO 2 HOURS ON LOW

SLOW COOKER SIZE 1½ TO 7 QUARTS

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS Spinach and artichoke dip is a bona fide crowd-pleaser, but it often ends up watery, bland, and left behind on the buffet table. We wanted a reliable dip that was rich, creamy, and packed with flavorful chunks of artichokes and earthy spinach. We discarded versions with flour-thickened cream mixtures in favor of an easy-prep combination of softened cream cheese and mayonnaise that gave our dip both the creaminess we were after and a subtle tanginess that tasters enjoyed. Jarred artichoke hearts and frozen spinach were easier options than their fresh counterparts; we just made sure to rid them of excess moisture. With a sprinkle of fresh chives, our dip was ready for the party. While we prefer the flavor and texture of jarred whole baby artichokes, you can substitute 18 ounces frozen artichoke hearts, thawed and patted dry, for the jarred. Serve with crusty bread, crackers, and/or Crostini.

- 6 ounces cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 3 cups jarred whole baby artichokes packed in water, rinsed, patted dry, and chopped
- 10 ounces frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh chives

1. Whisk cream cheese, mayonnaise, water, lemon juice, garlic, salt, and pepper in large bowl until well combined. Gently fold in artichokes and spinach.

2A. **FOR 1½- TO 5-QUART SLOW COOKER** Transfer mixture to slow cooker, cover, and cook until heated through, 1 to 2 hours on low.

2B. **FOR 5½- TO 7-QUART SLOW COOKER** Transfer mixture to 1½-quart soufflé dish. Set dish in slow cooker and pour water into slow cooker until it reaches about one-third up sides of dish (about 2 cups water). Cover and cook until heated through, 1 to 2 hours on low. Remove dish from slow cooker, if desired.

3. Gently stir dip to recombine. Sprinkle with chives and serve. (Dip can be held on warm or low setting for up to 2 hours.)

SIMPLE ACCOMPANIMENTS

CROSTINI

MAKES 25 TO 30 TOASTS

Crostini taste best straight from the oven.

- 1 large (12- to 15-inch) baguette, cut into ½-inch-thick slices on bias
- 1 garlic clove, peeled and sliced in half
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Arrange bread in single layer on baking sheet. Bake bread until dry and crisp, about 10 minutes, flipping slices over halfway through baking. Rub garlic clove over 1 side of each piece of toasted bread, then brush with oil. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve.



It's worth using your best extra-virgin olive oil for this simple white bean dip.

Rosemary and Garlic White Bean Dip

SERVES 6 TO 8 **EASY PREP** **VEG** **LIGHT**

COOKING TIME 1 TO 2 HOURS ON LOW

SLOW COOKER SIZE 1½ TO 7 QUARTS

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS For a simple white bean dip to really stand out, it needs to have both a little texture and a lot of flavor. To transform humble legumes into a rich, warm dip worthy of a dinner party, we started with delicately flavored cannellini beans. We processed most of the beans into a smooth puree along with a good dose of extra-virgin olive oil, but we reserved a third of the beans to pulse in at the end for an appealing chunky texture. For bold, aromatic flavor, we stirred in a little garlic, rosemary, lemon zest, and lemon juice. Serve with crusty bread, crackers, and/or Crostini (page 23).

- 3 (15-ounce) cans cannellini beans, rinsed
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for serving
- 1 garlic clove, minced

- 1 teaspoon minced fresh rosemary
- ¼ teaspoon grated lemon zest plus 1 tablespoon juice
- ¼ teaspoon salt

1. Process two-thirds of beans, oil, garlic, rosemary, lemon zest and juice, and salt in food processor until smooth, about 10 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. Add remaining beans and pulse until just incorporated (mixture will be chunky), about 2 pulses.

2A. FOR 1½- TO 5-QUART SLOW COOKER Transfer mixture to slow cooker, cover, and cook until heated through, 1 to 2 hours on low.

2B. FOR 5½- TO 7-QUART SLOW COOKER Transfer mixture to 1½-quart soufflé dish. Set dish in slow cooker and pour water into slow cooker until it reaches about one-third up sides of dish (about 2 cups water). Cover and cook until heated through, 1 to 2 hours on low. Remove dish from slow cooker, if desired.

3. Gently stir dip to recombine and adjust consistency with hot water as needed. Drizzle dip with extra oil and serve. (Dip can be held on warm or low setting for up to 2 hours.)

NOTES FROM THE TEST KITCHEN

Canned Cannellini Beans

We go through a lot of cannellini beans here in the test kitchen. Their creamy texture and mildly nutty flavor round out soups, casseroles, pasta dishes, and salads alike, and they can also be used to make appealing dips. Our readers love them, too. Seventy-one percent say that they regularly buy canned cannellini beans. We've always appreciated the convenience of canned beans for use in quick recipes and their ability to be pureed into perfectly creamy spreads.

Modern canning practices, which vary from brand to brand, generally call for cleaning, sorting, and blanching the beans before sealing them in their cans with water and, often, salt, which flavors the beans and tenderizes the skins. All but one of the products we tasted add calcium chloride, which maintains firmness and prevents splitting, and calcium disodium EDTA, a preservative that binds iron in the water and prevents white beans from turning brown. Sampling the beans plain, in dip, and in soup, we found that seasoning ended up playing the biggest role in our results: Our winning can, made by **Goya**, was the saltiest in the bunch, while our last-place contender was a no-salt-added organic product.



Chorizo-Stuffed Bacon-Wrapped Dates

MAKES 4 SERVINGS • TOTAL TIME: 45 MINUTES

GLUTEN-FREE
DAIRY-FREE
PALEO
WHOLE30
GRAIN-FREE

Here's an appetizer you're going to love sinking your teeth into! Inspired by AVEC restaurant in Chicago, this appetizer stuffs delicious, flavorful chorizo into sweet dates that are then wrapped with crispy, salty bacon. Served over a creamy roasted red pepper sauce, these little bites will wow your guests and your taste buds!

FOR THE ROASTED RED PEPPER SAUCE

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

¼ cup minced shallot (about
1 large shallot)

2 garlic cloves, minced

Pinch of kosher salt

A few cracks of black pepper

1 cup roughly chopped jarred
roasted red peppers

2 tablespoons liquid from the jar
of roasted peppers

One 14.5-ounce can whole peeled
tomatoes

1 tablespoon sherry vinegar

FOR THE STUFFED DATES

16 pitted Medjool dates

8 ounces fresh chorizo, bulk
or casings removed (I use San
Manuel chorizo; see note)

8 slices bacon, halved lengthwise
(I use Applegate no-sugar bacon)

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh
parsley, for serving

PAIRING SUGGESTION: Whiskey Sour
(page 241)

PREHEAT the oven to 350°F. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper.

MAKE THE ROASTED RED PEPPER SAUCE: In a small saucepan, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the shallot, garlic, salt, and black pepper and cook, stirring often, until tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the roasted peppers, the liquid from the jar, the tomatoes, and the vinegar and bring to a rapid simmer. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer while you bake the dates to allow the flavors to meld.

PREPARE THE STUFFED DATES: Gently open up a date so that it can easily be stuffed. Place about ½ tablespoon of the chorizo in the cavity of the date. Wrap with a half-strip of bacon and secure with a toothpick. Place on the lined sheet pan and repeat to stuff the rest of the dates.

BAKE the dates until the chorizo is cooked through, 12 to 15 minutes. Turn the oven to high broil and broil until the bacon is just crisp, 2 to 4 minutes, depending on your broiler.

MEANWHILE, carefully transfer the sauce to a blender and blend until smooth and creamy. Return to the saucepan, cover, and keep warm until the dates are done.

TO SERVE: Spoon and spread about one-third of the pepper sauce (see note) across a serving platter. Place the dates on top and garnish with the parsley.

FROM MY KITCHEN TO YOURS

FOR THE CHORIZO: Make sure to buy fresh (uncured) chorizo sausage rather than the salami-like cured kind.

FOR THE SAUCE: The sauce recipe makes more than you'll need for 16 dates. You can at least triple the date portion of the recipe and keep the sauce the same or (as I like to do) freeze the leftover sauce so you can whip up the bacon-wrapped dates in no time when you have a craving or are entertaining guests.

GLUTEN-FREE
DAIRY-FREE
PALEO
GRAIN-FREE

Sileo Celery Salad with Charcuterie

MAKES 6 SERVINGS • TOTAL TIME: 15 MINUTES

Named after my mom's side of the family (Sileo was her maiden name), this celery salad has been in my family for generations and generations. When I was growing up, there was never a Sileo family gathering without this celery salad as part of our antipasti platter. It's an easy-to-make element to really kick up your classic meat and cheese platter and wow your guests with something crunchy, delicious, and unique! You can really get creative with how you'd like to serve this on your platter. As a child, I'd take a big slice of provolone cheese, lay a few slices of salami on top, put a little celery salad in the middle, then fold it and eat it like a taco. Do it, trust me. You can also reserve the leftovers to throw on top of big salads. It's one of those things that gets better with time as it continues to marinate in the fridge!

8 to 10 large celery stalks
4 garlic cloves, peeled
1 cup roughly chopped drained jarred pepperoncini
½ cup finely minced drained jarred roasted red pepper
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste
2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
¼ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

OPTIONAL FOR SERVING

Sliced salami, mortadella, or capicola
Sliced provolone cheese
Marinated artichokes
Castelvetro olives

TRIM the ends of the celery. Using a potato peeler, peel the outer layer of celery to remove the stringy bits. Rinse and dry the celery. Halve the stalks lengthwise, then dice. Place the diced celery in a large bowl.

STICK a toothpick into each of the garlic cloves (this makes them easy to find and remove when serving). Place the cloves in the bowl with the celery.

ADD the pepperoncini, roasted pepper, and black pepper and toss to combine. Add the olive oil and toss, then add the salt and toss again. Add the vinegar and toss once more. (*I know, it seems odd to do it in this order and not all at once, but the Sileo family swears by it, so just trust us, okay?*)

REFRIGERATE for at least 2 hours before serving—but it's best the next day. Taste and add more salt and pepper, if desired. Remove the garlic cloves to serve. You can serve chilled or at room temperature.

FROM MY KITCHEN TO YOURS

My mom usually makes this the day before a party. It keeps for 5 to 7 days in the fridge.

GLUTEN-FREE
DAIRY-FREE
PALEO
WHOLE30
GRAIN-FREE

Shrimp Ceviche

MAKES 4 SERVINGS • TOTAL TIME: 1 HOUR 15 MINUTES

This ceviche is one of my favorite appetizers to make ahead when hosting guests on a sunny day. It's bright, beautiful, and has fabulous flavor. Now, if you've never made ceviche before, yes, you chop the shrimp up raw and it does actually "cook" from the acidity of the lime juice! While this appetizer is great for any occasion, it's an especially wonderful way to cool off in the warmer summer months alongside an ice-cold Clayton's Margarita (page 230).

1 pound shrimp (31/40 count),
peeled, deveined, and tails off
½ cup freshly squeezed lime juice
(about 4 limes)
2 tablespoons freshly squeezed
lemon juice (about 1 lemon)
3 serrano peppers, 2 halved and
seeded, 1 minced (see note)
⅓ cup finely minced red onion
¼ cup finely chopped fresh
cilantro
⅓ cup small-diced seeded English
cucumber
½ teaspoon dried oregano
½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus
more to taste
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black
pepper, plus more to taste
1 avocado, cut into small dice
Grain-free chips (I use Siete
Foods brand), optional for serving
(omit for Whole30)

PAIRING SUGGESTIONS: Clayton's
Margarita (page 230), Mezcal
Mule (page 234)

CUT each shrimp in half horizontally, then cut each half into 3 or 4 smaller pieces (depending on how chunky you want your ceviche).

IN a food processor, combine the lime juice, the lemon juice, and the 2 halved serrano peppers. Blend until smooth.

PLACE the shrimp in a large bowl. Add the citrus/serrano mixture, red onion, cilantro, minced serrano, cucumber, oregano, salt, and black pepper. Using a rubber spatula, gently toss the ceviche. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, to let the flavors meld and the shrimp to cook through from the acid in the lime juice.

BEFORE serving, gently fold in the avocado and adjust the salt and black pepper as desired.

FROM MY KITCHEN TO YOURS

If you want a milder ceviche, omit the minced serrano pepper. If you love a lot of spice like me, keep the seeds in the serrano when blending it with the citrus juices.

Mushroom Caps with Thyme-Cornbread Stuffing

Made with cornbread instead of plain bread crumbs, these stuffed mushrooms are more special but just as easy to prepare. Save the mushroom stems to stir into spaghetti sauce, soup or stew.

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES
(READY IN 40 MINUTES)
MAKES 20 APPETIZERS

1 (8-oz.) pkg. fresh whole mushrooms

1/4 cup chopped onion

1 tablespoon margarine or butter

1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

1/2 teaspoon dried thyme leaves

1/2 cup dry cornbread stuffing

1/4 cup water

Paprika

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Brush mushrooms or wipe clean with damp cloth. Remove stems from mushrooms; set caps aside. Chop enough stems to make 1/3 cup. Discard remaining stems or reserve for another use.

2. Spray medium nonstick skillet with nonstick cooking spray. Heat over medium-high heat until hot. Add chopped mushroom stems; cook 3 minutes or until golden brown, stirring occasionally.

3. Reduce heat to medium. Add onion; cook 2 to 3 minutes or until onion is tender, stirring frequently. Add margarine, parsley and thyme; cook and stir until margarine is melted. Stir in stuffing and water until well mixed.

4. Remove skillet from heat. Spoon stuffing mixture evenly into mushroom caps; press down gently with spoon to hold stuffing in place. Sprinkle with paprika; place in ungreased shallow baking dish.

5. Bake at 350°F. for 20 minutes or until thoroughly heated. If desired, serve on platter garnished with curly endive.

make-ahead tip

Stuff mushrooms as directed in recipe; place in baking dish. Do not bake. Cover; refrigerate up to 24 hours. Uncover; bake as directed in recipe.

NUTRITION INFORMATION PER SERVING: SERVING SIZE: 1 Appetizer • Calories 15 • Calories from Fat 10 • % Daily Value: Total Fat 1 g 2% • Saturated Fat 0 g 0% • Cholesterol 0 mg 0% • Sodium 20 mg 1% • Total Carbohydrate 2 g 1% • Dietary Fiber 0 g 0% • Sugars 0 g • Protein 0 g • Vitamin A 0% • Vitamin C 0% • Calcium 0% • Iron 0% • **Dietary Exchanges:** Free

Crab and Asiago Bundles

(Pictured on page 149.)

Asiago is a hard Italian cheese. Parmesan or romano may be substituted.

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES
(READY IN 55 MINUTES)
MAKES 12 APPETIZERS

- 2 teaspoons olive or vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup sliced green onions
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 (6-oz.) can crabmeat, drained
- 1 (2-oz.) jar diced pimientos, drained
- 2 oz. (1/2 cup) shredded Asiago cheese
- 1/4 cup Italian-style dry bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 4 (18x14-inch) sheets frozen phyllo (filo) pastry, thawed
- 3 tablespoons butter, melted

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Heat oil in medium skillet over medium heat until hot. Add green onions and garlic; cook and stir 1 to 2 minutes or until tender. Remove skillet from heat. Add all remaining ingredients except phyllo sheets and butter; mix well.

2. Unroll phyllo sheets; cover with plastic wrap or towel. Place 1 phyllo sheet on work surface. Brush lightly with butter. Layer with 2 more phyllo sheets, brushing each with butter. Top with last phyllo sheet. Cut stack into 12 (4-inch) squares.

3. Spoon about 4 teaspoons filling in center of each square. (See photo.) For each bundle, bring 2 opposite corners to center to overlap, covering filling. Bring 2 remaining corners to center; press lightly. Place on ungreased cookie sheet. Brush top of each with remaining butter.

4. Bake at 350°F. for 20 to 25 minutes or until golden brown. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.

NUTRITION INFORMATION PER SERVING: SERVING SIZE: 1 Appetizer •
Calories 110 • Calories from Fat 60 • % Daily Value: Total Fat 7 g 11% •
Saturated Fat 3 g 15% • Cholesterol 20 mg 7% • Sodium 220 mg 9% •
Total Carbohydrate 6 g 2% • Dietary Fiber 0 g 0% • Sugars 0 g •
Protein 5 g • Vitamin A 6% • Vitamin C 8% • Calcium 8% • Iron 4% •
Dietary Exchanges: 1/2 Starch, 1/2 Very Lean Meat, 1 Fat OR
1/2 Carbohydrate, 1/2 Very Lean Meat, 1 Fat



Use prepared meatballs for convenience and you won't spend much time in the kitchen. Even the fruity sauce that glazes these takes just a handful of ingredients.

sweet, hot, and SOUR meatballs

prep: 10 minutes **bake:** 20 minutes **oven:** 350°F **makes:** 10 servings

- 1 16-ounce package frozen cooked plain meatballs (32)
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup apple jelly
- 3 tablespoons spicy brown mustard
- 3 tablespoons whiskey or apple juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- Few dashes bottled hot pepper sauce

1 Preheat oven to 350°F. Place frozen meatballs in a single layer in a shallow baking pan. Bake for about 20 minutes or until heated through.

2 Meanwhile, in a large saucepan stir together jelly, mustard, whiskey, Worcestershire sauce, and hot pepper sauce over medium heat. Cook and stir until jelly melts and mixture is bubbly.

3 Using a slotted spoon, transfer meatballs to jelly mixture. Stir gently to coat. Return to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, for 3 to 5 minutes or until sauce thickens, stirring occasionally. Serve meatballs with short skewers or toothpicks. If desired, keep warm in a slow cooker on warm or low heat setting for up to 2 hours.

nutrition facts per serving: 183 cal., 12 g total fat (5 g sat. fat), 16 mg chol., 425 mg sodium, 11 g carb., 1 g dietary fiber, 6 g protein.

This recipe remains a favorite because of its ease. Believe it or not, this elegant (and outstandingly delicious) tart starts with something as simple as a refrigerated pizza crust.

herbed leek tarts

prep: 25 minutes bake: 15 minutes stand: 5 minutes oven: 425°F
makes: 24 servings

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- 1 13.8-ounce package refrigerated pizza dough
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 6 medium leeks, thinly sliced (2 cups; white and light green parts only)
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 teaspoons snipped fresh savory, marjoram, and/or thyme
- 3 tablespoons creamy Dijon-style mustard blend
- 1 cup shredded Gruyère or Swiss cheese (4 ounces)
- ¼ cup pine nuts or chopped almonds, toasted
- Fresh savory sprigs (optional)

1 Preheat oven to 425°F. Grease a large baking sheet. Unroll pizza dough onto prepared baking sheet. Press to form a 13×9-inch rectangle. Cut rectangle in half lengthwise to form two 13×4½-inch rectangles. Separate rectangles on baking sheet so edges are at least 1 inch apart. Bake for 7 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, in a large skillet heat oil over medium heat. Cook leeks and garlic in hot oil about 5 minutes or until tender. Remove from heat. Stir in snipped savory. Spread mustard blend over prebaked crusts. Top each evenly with leek mixture, Gruyère cheese, and nuts.

3 Bake for 8 to 10 minutes more or until cheese melts and crust turns golden brown. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving. Cut each rectangle into 12 pieces. If desired, garnish with savory sprigs.

nutrition facts per serving: 82 cal., 5 g total fat (1 g sat. fat), 5 mg chol., 96 mg sodium, 8 g carb., 0 g dietary fiber, 3 g protein.

A sweet, tangy, and spicy chutney-cream sauce deliciously sets off the chunky sweet potatoes in the wonton filling.

sweet potato wontons

prep: 25 minutes bake: 10 minutes oven: 350°F makes: 24 servings

- 24 wonton wrappers
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 3 tablespoons mango chutney
- 2 tablespoons butter
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup finely chopped onion
- 2 teaspoons curry powder
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups chopped cooked sweet potato*
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup whipping cream
- Carrots, cut into thin bite-size strips and sautéed (optional)

1 Preheat oven to 350°F. Brush wonton wrappers with the 2 tablespoons melted butter. Press wrappers, buttered sides down, into twenty-four $1\frac{3}{4}$ -inch muffin cups, pleating as necessary. Bake for about 10 minutes or until golden brown.

2 Meanwhile, snip any large mango pieces in chutney; set aside. In a large heavy skillet melt the 2 tablespoons butter over medium heat. Cook onion, curry powder, ginger, and garlic in hot butter until onion is tender. Stir in flour. Stir in cooked sweet potato, whipping cream, and chutney. Cook and stir until thickened. Cook and stir for 1 minute more.

3 Spoon sweet potato mixture into wonton shells. Serve immediately. If desired, sprinkle with carrot strips.

nutrition facts per serving: 75 cal., 3 g total fat (2 g sat. fat), 10 mg chol., 83 mg sodium, 10 g carb., 1 g dietary fiber, 1 g protein.

***test kitchen tip:** For cooked sweet potato, peel and cut one 10- to 12-ounce sweet potato into thirds. In a covered small saucepan, cook potato in boiling, lightly salted water for about 20 minutes or just until tender. Drain and chop.





It's hard to resist these cheesy, nutty rounds. If you have any left over, crumble them into salads or serve them in place of bread with your favorite soup.

cheddar-pecan crackers

prep: 20 minutes **chill:** 4 hours **bake:** 10 minutes per batch
stand: 30 minutes **oven:** 350°F **makes:** about 60 crackers

- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese (4 ounces)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon dried thyme, crushed
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped pecans

make-ahead directions:

Layer cooled crackers between waxed paper in an airtight container. Cover and freeze for up to 2 weeks.

1 In a medium mixing bowl let cheddar cheese and butter stand at room temperature for 30 minutes.

2 Beat the cheese and butter with an electric mixer on medium speed until well mixed. Add thyme and cayenne pepper. Beat until combined.

3 Use a wooden spoon to stir in flour and pecans until combined. Form into a ball, using your hands to knead gently if necessary. Shape into an 8-inch-long log. Wrap dough with plastic wrap. Chill about 4 hours or until firm.

4 Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly coat a large baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray; set aside. Using a sharp knife, cut log into $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch-thick slices. Place on prepared baking sheet. Bake about 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Transfer crackers to a wire rack; cool.

nutrition facts per cracker: 26 cal., 2 g total fat (1 g sat. fat), 4 mg chol., 20 mg sodium, 1 g carb., 0 g dietary fiber, 1 g protein.

Four easy flavor-packed toppers make classic bruschetta different and delicious. Part of the fun will be presenting party guests with an array of choices.

bruschetta sampler

prep: 25 minutes **bake:** 7 minutes **oven:** 425°F **makes:** 8 to 10 servings

- 1 8-ounce loaf
baguette-style
French bread
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
Ground black pepper
- 1 recipe Fresh Tomato
and Olive Topping;
Shrimp Topping;
Basil, Pesto, and
White Bean Topping;
and/or Dried Fig and
Pistachio Topping

1 Preheat oven to 425°F. For crostini, bias-slice bread into 1/2-inch-thick slices. Arrange slices in a single layer on an ungreased baking sheet. Lightly brush one side of each bread slice with oil. Lightly sprinkle oiled side of bread with pepper. Bake, uncovered, for 4 minutes. Turn slices over and bake for 3 to 4 minutes more or until crisp and light brown.

2 Prepare one or more of the toppings. Spoon onto toasted bread just before serving.

nutrition facts per serving with basil, pesto, and white bean topping: 282 cal., 18 g total fat (4 g sat. fat), 36 mg chol., 503 mg sodium, 24 g carb., 3 g dietary fiber, 9 g protein.

make-ahead directions: Cool toasts. Place in an airtight container and store at room temperature for up to 24 hours.

fresh tomato and olive topping:

In a small bowl combine 1 cup seeded and finely chopped tomato (2 medium); 1 cup coarsely chopped assorted pitted ripe olives (such as kalamata, Greek, or Mission); $\frac{1}{3}$ cup finely chopped red onion; 2 tablespoons snipped fresh cilantro or parsley; 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar or red wine vinegar; and 2 cloves garlic, minced.

shrimp topping: In a medium bowl combine 8 ounces peeled and deveined cooked shrimp, chopped; 1 tablespoon olive oil; 2 teaspoons white wine vinegar, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt, and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground black pepper; set aside. Halve 2 large cloves of garlic and rub toasts with cut sides before topping with shrimp mixture.

basil, pesto, and white bean topping: In a small bowl combine a 9-ounce container (1 cup) basil pesto; 1 finely chopped hard-cooked egg; and 1 teaspoon lemon juice, sherry vinegar, or red wine vinegar. In another small bowl combine $\frac{1}{2}$ of a 19-ounce can cannellini (white kidney) beans or $\frac{1}{2}$ of a 15-ounce can Great Northern beans, rinsed and drained (1 cup); 1 tablespoon thinly sliced green onion or chopped shallot; 1 tablespoon olive oil; and $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon crushed red pepper.

dried fig and pistachio topping: In a medium mixing bowl combine 3-ounces cream cheese, 2 ounces fontina or provolone cheese, and 3 ounces goat cheese (chèvre). Let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes. In a small bowl combine $\frac{1}{4}$ cup snipped dried figs and 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar. Let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes. Beat cheese mixture with an electric mixer on low speed until well combined. Stir in figs. Serve with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped pistachios.



Tiny in size but huge on flavor, these alluring appetizers are the miniature versions of the classic Spanish empanadas.

spicy beef empanaditas

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prep: 40 minutes bake: 18 minutes stand: 5 minutes oven: 400°F

makes: 18 servings

- 4 ounces lean ground beef
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup finely chopped onion
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cumin
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped pitted ripe olives
- 3 tablespoons tomato puree
- 1 tablespoon golden raisins
- 2 teaspoons finely shredded lime peel
- 1 17.3-ounce package frozen puff pastry sheets (2 sheets), thawed
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1 tablespoon water
- Bottled green salsa (optional)

1 Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or foil; set aside. For filling, in a medium-size skillet cook ground beef, onion, and garlic over medium-high heat until meat is brown. Drain off fat. Stir in salt, cumin, and cayenne pepper. Cook and stir for 2 minutes. Stir in olives, tomato puree, raisins, and lime peel. Remove from heat. Cool for about 10 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, on a lightly floured surface unfold pastry. Using a 3-inch round cookie cutter, cut each sheet into nine rounds (18 total).

3 Spoon a scant tablespoon of the filling onto each pastry round. In a small bowl combine egg and the water. Lightly brush edges of pastry rounds with egg mixture. Fold each round in half. Press edges together with a fork to seal. Prick each top several times. Place on the prepared baking sheet. Lightly brush tops and sides with egg mixture.

4 Bake for 18 to 20 minutes or until pastries are puffed and golden brown. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving. If desired, serve with green salsa.

nutrition facts per serving: 143 cal., 10 g total fat (0 g sat. fat), 16 mg chol., 161 mg sodium, 11 g carb., 0 g dietary fiber, 3 g protein.

Sugar-glazed almonds and refreshing orange-flavored icing contrast pleasantly with the buttery, rich cookies.

glazed almond shortbread stacks

prep: 50 minutes **bake:** 20 minutes **oven:** 325°F **makes:** about 28 cookies

- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- ½ cup butter
- 2 tablespoons sliced almonds, finely chopped
- 1 3-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 4 teaspoons powdered sugar
- ¼ teaspoon finely shredded orange peel
- 1 teaspoon orange juice
- 1 recipe Sugar-Glazed Almonds (opposite)

1 Preheat oven to 325°F. In a medium bowl combine flour and brown sugar. Using a pastry blender, cut in the ½ cup butter until mixture resembles fine crumbs and starts to cling. Stir in the finely chopped almonds. Knead until smooth and shape into a ball. On a lightly floured surface roll or pat dough to a ¼-inch thickness. Use a 1½-inch scalloped round cookie cutter to cut dough. Place 1 inch apart on an ungreased cookie sheet.

2 Bake about 20 minutes or until bottoms just start to brown and cookies are set. Transfer to a wire rack; cool.

3 For frosting, in a small mixing bowl combine cream cheese and powdered sugar. Beat with an electric mixer on medium speed until smooth. Add orange peel and orange juice. Beat until combined. If necessary, stir in additional orange juice to make a frosting of spreading consistency.

4 To assemble, spread shortbread rounds with frosting. Top with Sugar-Glazed Almonds.

nutrition facts per cookie: 87 cal., 6 g total fat (3 g sat. fat), 13 mg chol., 35 mg sodium, 8 g carb., 0 g dietary fiber, 1 g protein.

make-ahead directions: Layer unfrosted cookies between waxed paper in an airtight container. Store at room temperature for up to 2 days or freeze for up to 1 month. To serve, thaw cookies if frozen. Prepare frosting and assemble as directed.

