

GOAT CHEESE AND DRIED FRUIT DIP

It's always good to have a great hors d'oeuvre to set out while people begin to gather. This has proven to be a great crowd pleaser and I can just set it out and forget about it. You can even make most of it a day ahead and just leave the baking part for right before you want to serve it. It's perfect for a special occasion!

INGREDIENTS (serves 8)

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs goat cheese

6 dried figs, sliced

6 dried dates, sliced

6 apricots, sliced

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup medium-sweet sherry

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup Cointreau or Grand Marnier

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil

2 large Vidalia onions, thinly sliced

8 garlic cloves, minced

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 rosemary sprig

salt and pepper to taste

Sliced baguettes or crackers for serving

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 350F.

In a 2" deep baking pan or casserole dish, crumble the goat cheese so that it covers the bottom of the dish evenly.

Combine the dried fruits, sherry, and Cointreau in a small pot. Add water just to cover the fruit. Bring to a simmer, then turn off heat and let steep for 30 minutes.

Heat the oil in a large skillet on medium-low. Add and combine the onions. Sauté until caramelized—about 10 minutes, tossing the onions every few minutes. Add the garlic, red pepper flakes, rosemary, salt and pepper and continue to sauté for an additional 5 minutes. If the onions start to burn, add a teaspoon or two of water and/or lower the heat. You want the onions browned, but not burnt. Allow to cool.

Strain the dried fruits and reserve the liquid for other uses. (The liquid is great in salad dressings.)

Remove and discard the rosemary sprig from the onion mixture. Layer the onion mixture on top of the goat cheese. Layer the fruits on top of the onion mixture.

Bake for 20 minutes.

Remove and serve with sliced baguettes or crackers.

INDIAN SPICED COD

After having a blow-out weekend of way too much food and wine, I wanted to dial it back for dinner tonight. I always put fish in the “not evil” category, but my husband and I have very different preferences when it comes to fish. I’m not a huge fan of firm white fish—which he likes—but if you mask it with

enough flavors, then I can be persuaded. This dish seemed to do the trick. It was a winner for both of us.

INGREDIENTS (serves 4)

FOR MARINADE

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ pound cod (or other firm white fish), cut into 1" cubes

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup full-fat Greek yogurt

2 teaspoons garam masala

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 teaspoon freshly grated ginger

1 teaspoon freshly grated garlic

1 teaspoon ground coriander

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground turmeric

$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground cumin

Salt and pepper to taste

FOR VEGETABLES

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil

6 small potatoes, cut in half

1 red pepper, cut into wide strips

1 onion, sliced wide

Salt and pepper to taste

FOR RAITA

1 cup Greek yogurt

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 cup cucumber, small dice

1 teaspoon fresh garlic, minced

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon freshly chopped chives, plus 1 teaspoon for garnish

Zest of one lemon

PREPARATION

Pre-heat oven to 400.

In a large bowl, combine olive oil, yogurt, garam masala, red pepper flakes, ginger, garlic, coriander, turmeric, cumin, salt and pepper. Mix until smooth and the spices are well incorporated. Add the fish cubes, and gently fold into yogurt mixture. Cover with clear wrap and refrigerate for 2-4 hours.

In a small bowl, combine all the raita ingredients and mix well. Cover with clear wrap and place in the refrigerator.

In another large bowl, combine the potatoes, red pepper, and onion. Drizzle on the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Fold to combine.

Line a sheet pan with aluminum foil. Spread out vegetables on top and place in oven for 30 minutes. Remove fish from fridge and place on counter to come to room temp.

After 30 minutes, remove pan from oven and flip vegetables. Place pan back in oven for 15 minutes.

Line a sheet pan with aluminum foil. Spread out fish and marinade on pan and bake for 15 minutes. Continue to bake vegetables on lower level.

(NOTE: Total bake time for vegetables is 60 minutes. Total bake time for fish is 15 minutes.)

Remove both pans from oven. To serve, place vegetables on center of plate and then place pieces of fish on top.

Place a dollop or two of the raita on top. Garnish with chopped chives.

EMPTY THE FRIDGE SALAD

If you've been following my blog, you might notice a theme that runs through many of my recipes—I hate to waste food. And with the cost of fresh produce skyrocketing, it pains me to have to throw away things that might be a tad close to the edge. My solution—stir fry leftover veggies, throw in some greens at the end and chop up those leftover hamburger patties or chicken or steak rather than wasting them. Mix with your favorite dressing or even add some salsa for a little zing. This recipe is extremely flexible, so feel free to substitute your favorites.

INGREDIENTS (serves 1)

2 Tbsp olive oil

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup onions, chopped

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup carrots, chopped

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup celery, chopped

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup cauliflower, chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ cooked yam, chopped

1 cooked turkey patty, chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup spinach

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup salsa

Salt, pepper, red pepper flakes to taste

PREPARATION

Heat a large skillet. Add in the olive oil. Once it starts to shimmer, add in the onions, carrots, celery and cauliflower. Season with salt, pepper and red pepper flakes. Cook until starting to brown, mixing ingredients often.

During the last minute, add the yam and turkey patty to reheat. Remove from heat and mix in spinach and salsa.

Empty all contents onto a plate and enjoy!

SIMPLE SUNDAES

I don't know about you, but I have a boatload of people coming over for the holiday and I'm running out of time to get things ready. Here's a really simple idea for dessert that celebrates the day and gives you time to actually enjoy it.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 6)

2 pints vanilla ice cream

1 pint fresh blueberries, rinsed and stems removed

1 pint fresh strawberries, rinsed and stems removed then sliced

1 cup heavy cream

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla

1 tablespoon confectioners sugar

1 teaspoon Cointreau

8 glass parfait cups or 8 highball glasses

PREPARATION

In a large bowl, add the heavy cream, vanilla, sugar and Cointreau. Using a hand mixer on high speed, whip the ingredients together until there are stiff peaks—about 3-4 minutes. If not ready to use immediately, cover and refrigerate for up to 12 hours.

Place two scoops of ice cream into each parfait cup or glass. Add a handful of blueberries and strawberries on top of each. Spoon a dollop or two of the whipped cream on top.

Feel free to add chopped nuts, chocolate shavings, coconut flakes, your favorite chocolate sauce or a raspberry coulis on top—or add them all. Now sit back and enjoy the fireworks!