

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!

CREAMY CHICKEN AND ORZO

I love one-pot dishes and this is one of my favorites. It's great cooking the orzo in with all of the other ingredients so that the flavors really meld with the pasta. It's a great dish for company, or even for a mid-week quick dinner. And the leftovers are even better the next day.

INGREDIENTS (serves 6)

6 tablespoons butter

2 onions sliced

6 boneless chicken thighs

2 cups mushrooms, sliced

4 cloves garlic, minced

1 tablespoon fresh oregano, chopped

1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped

salt and fresh pepper to taste

2 cups orzo

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup white wine

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup dry sherry

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups chicken stock

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream

1 cup Gruyere, grated

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup Parmesan, grated

Chives, chopped for garnish

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

In a large Dutch oven, melt the 3 tablespoons butter on medium heat. Add the onions and sauté until browned, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.

Melt 3 tablespoons of butter and brown chicken pieces, 4 minutes each side. Place chicken pieces on plate and set aside.

Add browned onions, mushrooms, garlic, oregano, rosemary, salt

and pepper into Dutch oven. Sauté until mushrooms begin to wilt, about three minutes.

Add in orzo, and stir. Add white wine, sherry, chicken stock and stir. Bring to a boil, then place chicken pieces on top, cover pot and place in oven for 25 minutes.

Place Dutch oven back on stove top over low heat. Remove chicken pieces and set aside. Add heavy cream and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup gruyere. Stir until melted. Place chicken pieces back on top. Cover with remaining cheeses. Place pot lid back on and melt cheese for two minutes. Re-season with salt and pepper to taste.

Garnish with chives and remaining gruyere and serve.

BRAISED CABBAGE WITH BACON

It's always a feat to get certain members of my family to eat their greens. I use all kinds of trickery to sneak it into their diets. I put spinach in fruit smoothies and when desperate, I add bacon to my sautéed vegetables. Bacon can make anything taste better. I realize bacon isn't a super food, but it should be.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

4 strips bacon

Canola oil, as needed

1 onion, thinly sliced

4 cups Napa cabbage, chopped

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes

salt and pepper to taste

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chicken stock

1 Tablespoon soy sauce

1 Tablespoon maple syrup

PREPARATION

In a large skillet, render the bacon. Once crispy, remove bacon strips and place on paper towel. Set aside. When cool, chop up the bacon strips and reserve.

Sauté onion in rendered bacon fat for about 6 minutes until beginning to brown. If too dry, add canola oil as needed. Add in cabbage, pepper flakes, salt and pepper. Continue to sauté for one minute. Add chicken stock, soy sauce and maple syrup. Continue to sauté until wilted, about 3-4 more minutes. Turn off heat, add the bacon, toss, then serve.

FRIED HAKE OVER COCONUT RICE WITH TURMERIC SAUCE

I'm not a huge fan of flaky white fish unless it's fried. Originally I thought I'd try this in the airfryer—which you could do—but knew I'd like it better frying it in oil. It was worth the extra calories. I served it with some coconut rice that I had left over and I made a quick turmeric sauce to pull the dish together. Feel free to mix and match your favorite rice dishes and sauces! If you come up with a good one, let me know!

INGREDIENTS (serves 2-3)

FOR SAUCE

2 Tablespoons Canola Oil

1 medium onion, chopped

1 Tablespoon fresh Turmeric, grated

1 clove garlic, grated

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground cumin

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup coconut milk

Salt and pepper to taste

FOR RICE

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups coconut milk

2 cups chicken broth

2 cups basmati rice

1 teaspoon fine sea salt

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

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup sweet shredded coconut

zest of one lemon

FOR HAKE

1 cup canola oil

1 pound Hake (or Cod or other flaky white fish), filleted

1 egg, beaten

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

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

Salt and pepper

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup thinly sliced green onion

Tzatziki for garnish (optional)

PREPARATION

FOR SAUCE

In a sauce pan, heat the olive oil until it begins to shimmer. Add the onions and cook until translucent, about 4-5 minutes.

Place the onions, tumeric, garlic, cumin and coconut milk in a blender. Season with salt and pepper and blend on high until smooth. Taste and re-season if necessary. Set aside.

FOR RICE

In a saucepan, combine coconut milk, broth, rice, salt, currents and shredded coconut. Bring the mixture to a boil, then cover, turn down the heat and simmer for about 18 to 20 minutes, until the liquid is absorbed. Turn off the heat, then let stand covered for 5 to 10. Fluff the rice with a fork, then gently stir in the lemon zest.

FOR HAKE

Season the hake with salt and pepper. Cut into two or three equal sized pieces. Place the flour, egg and panko, each in their own bowl. Season each with salt and pepper and mix. Dredge each piece of the fish through the flour, then the egg, then the panko.

In a large, deep skillet, heat the cup of oil on medium heat. The oil should come up about $\frac{1}{2}$ " high in the pan. Add more if necessary. Bring up to 350 degrees.

Using tongs, gently place the fish pieces in the pan. Be careful of splatters. Cook until brown, about 3-4 minutes. If it's browning too quickly, lower the heat. Carefully flip each

piece over and cook until the other side is brown, about another 3-4 minutes.

To plate, place some rice in the center of the plate. Pour some of the tumeric sauce over the rice. Place a piece of fish on top. Garnish with green onions and a spoonful of tzatziki.

FILO EGG PIE

A friend of mine was having a brunch and asked if I could bring a quiche or some type of egg dish. Since quiche is so 1990s, I started to scour the internet to find something new and fun. I noticed a few videos of people using filo dough wrapped as fans to make a crunchy crust for an egg pie. It seemed like a fun technique, so I gave it whirl using the ingredients I love. It was a big hit! I hope you love it too.

INGREDIENTS (serves 6)

4 strips of bacon

1 onion, thinly sliced

Olive oil, as needed

8 cremini mushrooms, thinly sliced

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups gruyere, large grate

8 eggs

3 Tablespoons milk

1 package, filo dough (sheets)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup parmesan, small grate

salt and pepper to taste

chili flakes to taste

2 scallions, chopped

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

In a large skillet over medium heat, render the bacon. When browned, remove from skillet and set aside on a paper towel. When cool, crumble bacon, set aside.

Pour out half of the bacon drippings and reserve. Sauté the onion in the remainder of the bacon drippings. If too dry, add more drippings or olive oil as needed. Allow onions to start caramelizing—about 6-8 minutes—then add the mushrooms and sauté until wilted, about another 3 minutes. Season with salt, pepper and chili flakes to taste. Again, if too dry add olive oil as needed.

Combine the mushrooms, onions, crumbled bacon and $\frac{1}{2}$ the scallions. Place the mixture in a greased 9" circular baking dish. Make sure the baking dish is at least 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " deep. Allow mixture to cool, then sprinkle the gruyere over the mixture to cover.

Beat the eggs and milk together. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

Take the filo sheets and fold them lengthwise as if making a fan. Then, starting from one end, roll up the fan into a circle and place in the center of the baking dish. Continue making the filo fans and start wrapping them around the first one until you have filo fans covering the entire dish. Don't overstuff the filo sheets. Keep them a little loose.



Pour the egg mixture evenly over the filo. Using a sharp knife, gently Poke a few holes in the filo or move the filo slightly to allow the egg mixture to spread out evenly. Sprinkle $\frac{1}{2}$ of the parmesan on top.

Place in oven and bake for 1 hour. After 25 minutes, start checking to see if the top is turning too brown or burning. Keep an eye on it. If it is getting too brown too quickly, lightly cover the dish with aluminum foil.

Allow to cool for fifteen minutes. Cut into 6 pie pieces. Garnish with the remainder of the chopped scallions and parmesan.

WINTER CITRUS SALAD

In an attempt to force some vegetables into me, my mom believed that salad was the key. But, it was always the same—iceberg lettuce, sliced cucumbers and tasteless supermarket tomatoes tossed with a dressing made from one of those Italian seasoning packets. It was not exactly a dish that I looked forward to.

But, in an effort to brush off the past and forge a new alliance with salad in my life, I've experimented with variations on the classic vinaigrette theme. Here's a winter salad I made for New Year's Eve and it was a big hit. It was the only dish that had no leftovers. Enjoy!

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4-6)

FOR THE SALAD

1 cup shredded Napa Cabbage

3 large handfuls lettuce and/or spinach mix (rough chop)

$\frac{1}{2}$ English cucumber, skinned and sliced

12 cherry tomatoes, quartered

1 carrot, julienned

$\frac{1}{4}$ red onion, thinly sliced

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup pecans, rough chop

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup dried cranberries

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Mandarin orange slices (best from can)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup feta cheese, crumbled

FOR THE DRESSING

4 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon fresh lime juice

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

3 tablespoons fresh orange juice (or use Mandarin juice from can)

1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard

salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

In a small bowl, whisk together all of the dressing ingredients. Set aside.

In a large bowl, lightly toss all of the salad ingredients together, but only half of the feta cheese. Pour the dressing on top and lightly toss. Garnish with the remaining feta cheese.

AIR FRIED CHICKEN THIGHS

After a recent party, I had a whole bunch of miscellaneous hors d'oeuvres left in the fridge. For those of you that follow my blog, you know I hate to waste food, so I came up with a simple way to use them in stuffed chicken thighs. You could use similar leftovers from your fridge as a substitute. Maybe you've got some roasted peppers or sliced olives or babaganoush hiding behind the milk. Take a look! You might not have to call Uber Eats tonight after all.

INGREDIENTS (serves 4)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup tapenade spread

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup goat cheese, crumbled

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup caramelized onions

4 skinless boneless chicken thighs

2 eggs, beaten

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour, seasoned with salt and pepper

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup panko, seasoned with salt and pepper

Salt and pepper to taste

Canola oil for brushing

PREPARATION

Preheat air fryer to 400 degrees.

Lay out of piece of clear wrap on top of a cutting board. Spread out a chicken thigh and cover with another piece of clear wrap. Pound out each thigh until thin, about $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Remove the clear wrap. Season with salt and pepper.

Set out a clean piece of clear wrap and place one thigh on top. Spread a light layer of tapenade on the chicken thighs. Sprinkle goat cheese and onions down the center of each thigh. Using the clear wrap as a guide, roll up each thigh as tightly as possible, making sure the wrap itself doesn't get caught in the folds. Once the thigh is rolled up, place the clear wrap around it and tighten so they look like sausages or a sushi roll. Repeat for each thigh. Place the wrapped thighs in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

Carefully unwrap each thigh, then dredge each first in flour, then eggs, then panko.

Lightly brush each thigh with oil.

Place chicken thighs seam down in air fryer. Lower temp to 380 and bake for 15 minutes. Turn thighs over and bake for 10 more minutes. Remove from fryer and let rest for five minutes.

Slice and serve with salad. Spoon some tapenade on top of chicken slices.