

Appetizer:

Baked Brie

- 1 (5-7 inch) wheel Brie cheese
- 2 tbsp. butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds
- 3-4 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1-2 sheets (12x18 inch) puff pastry
- 1 egg, beaten

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.

Using a warmed sharp knife, or unflavored dental floss cut the wheel of Brie in half horizontally and separate the top half of the wheel from the bottom half.

Melt 1 tbsp. butter or margarine in a medium frying pan. Add almonds and sauté 5-7 minutes until lightly toasted. Add brown sugar and 1 tbsp. butter and stir until melted.

Sprinkle the bottom half of the Brie with the toasted almonds, and brown sugar. Replace the top half of the Brie and apply pressure to secure the stuffing. Working on a well-floured surface, roll out the puff pastry so that it will fully cover the Brie. Place the Brie in the middle of the puff pastry and fold the excess pastry around the wheel. Put the wheel aside.

If desired, roll out another piece of puff pastry and cut out a circle the same circumference as the top of the Brie. Save the trimmings for decorations. Using a pastry brush, brush the egg on top of the Brie in the puff pastry and place the circle on top. Brush the top of the circle with egg. Cut out decorations using cookie cutters or a small knife on top of the Brie. Brush the entire topside of the Brie with the egg and place the Brie on a sheet pan lined with parchment paper. Bake for 20 to 30 minutes or until the pastry begins to turn golden brown, then turn the temperature down to 325 degrees F and bake for another 20 minutes. Serve on a pretty platter. See Cook's Note 1.

Cook's Note 1: The brie can be made, wrapped securely and stored in the freezer up to a month ahead of time.

Entree:

Parmigiano-Reggiano crisps with Prosciutto and Pears (Modified from A Holiday Fete with Style and Taste in November 20, 2005 issue of Wine Spectator)

- 1 1/2 cups shredded Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 2 pears
- 12 pieces of prosciutto, sliced paper-thin.

Preheat oven to 300 degrees F. Form 24 2" circles of cheese on parchment paper (about 1 tablespoon each). Bake until cheese has melted and just started to color - about 8 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool for 1 minute. Remove with spatula and place on cooling rack.

Peel, core and quarter pears and slice.

Divide each piece of prosciutto in half lengthwise. Roll a piece of prosciutto around a piece of pear and place on cheese crisp. Makes two dozen.

Dessert:

Pumpkin Squares

Filling:

8oz cream cheese
1/4 cp sugar
1 egg

Batter:

1 cp canned pumpkin
1 cp sugar
1 egg
1/3 cp vegetable oil
1 cp flour
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 tsp nutmeg
1/4 tsp ginger

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. 9"x13" pan oiled.

Directions: Whisk filling ingredients until blended. In separate bowl, combine pumpkin, sugar, egg and oil - mix well. Stir in flour, baking powder, baking soda and all spices. Pour into pan. Spoon filling onto the top. Cut with knife for marbled effect.
Bake 25-30 minutes.