

Welcome to Our House!

Written by Debbi Covington
Wednesday, 08 December 2010 15:32



Inviting friends over to celebrate is one of the greatest pleasures of the holiday season! If you've been dreaming of hosting a neighborhood Christmas party, take a tip from Santa Covington this year – make a list and check it twice! List-making will help you put the multitude of holiday chores and activities into perspective. And, these quick and easy recipes will keep your kitchen chores to a minimum. Invite your neighbors to a come-as-you-are Open House and plan a menu of easy-to-eat hors d'oeuvres. Stay low-key with the decorations, then dim the lights and add candles for sparkle. Ask your newest neighbor to pass the Rumaki, and recruit others to refill serving dishes and help with the clean up. At the end of the evening, you'll have new friends and a great sense of satisfaction. Merry Christmas!

Rumaki

12 slices bacon

6 ounces chicken livers, cut into 24 pieces

1 (8-ounce) can whole water chestnuts, drained

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3 tablespoons maple or maple-flavored syrup

Cut bacon strips in half crosswise. Cook bacon in a large skillet over medium heat until just cooked but not crisp. Drain on paper towels. Place a piece of chicken liver and a water chestnut on each strip of bacon. Wrap bacon around liver and water chestnut; secure with a toothpick. Place in a foil-lined shallow baking pan. Bake, uncovered, in a 450 degree oven for 10 to 12 minutes or until bacon is crisp and liver is no longer pink, brushing with syrup the last 5 minutes of baking. Serve immediately. Serves 12.

Blue Cheese-Stuffed Endive

1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened

1/2 cup crumbled blue cheese

1/4 cup finely chopped green onions

3 slices bacon, crisp-cooked, drained and crumbled

2 tablespoons toasted walnuts, chopped

35 Belgian endive leaves (about 3 heads)

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In a medium bowl, combine the cream cheese, blue cheese, green onions, bacon and walnuts. Spoon 2 teaspoons of the cheese mixture into each Belgian endive leaf. Serves 18.

Beef Tenderloin Skewers with Fresh Cherries

1 cup red wine vinegar

1/4 cup sugar

6 ounces beef filet mignon

16 fresh dark sweet cherries, pitted

1 tablespoon butter

1 tablespoon olive oil

Mixed baby salad greens

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In a small saucepan, combine vinegar and sugar. Bring to boiling, stirring to dissolve sugar; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, about 25 minutes or until mixture is reduced to 1/3 cup. Remove from heat; set aside. Meanwhile, cut beef into 16 cubes. On each of eight 4-inch metal skewers, alternately thread two of the beef cubes and two of the cherries, leaving a 1/4-inch space between pieces. Sprinkle beef with salt and black pepper. In a large skillet, heat butter and olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the beef skewers to the hot skillet, cook for 3 to 5 minutes or until desired doneness, turning skewers frequently with tongs and being careful not to overcook the beef. Line a serving platter with salad greens. Place skewers on platter. Drizzle with the vinegar reduction. Serves 8.

Spicy Black Bean Rolls

1/4 cup finely snipped sun-dried tomatoes (not oil pack)

1 (15-ounce) can black beans, rinsed and drained

1 small onion, finely chopped

2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

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1/4 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon ground red pepper

8 sheets frozen phyllo dough, thawed

1/2 cup butter, melted

Place tomatoes in a small bowl. Pour enough boiling water over to cover. Let stand for 10 minutes to soften. Drain well. Mash ½ cup of the black beans in a mixing bowl. Add remaining beans, tomatoes, onion, cilantro, garlic, oregano, salt and red pepper; stir until combined. Set aside. Unroll phyllo dough; cover with a damp paper towel. Remove one sheet and place on cutting board or flat surface; brush lightly with some of the melted butter. Place another phyllo sheet on top of the first sheet; brush with butter. Repeat with 2 more sheets of phyllo and butter. Cut phyllo stack lengthwise into thirds, then crosswise into fourths to form 12 squares. Spoon about 1 tablespoon of the bean mixture in a thin strip near bottom edge of a phyllo square. Fold in both sides of the square. Fold bottom edge over bean mixture, and roll up to form a small cylinder. Repeat with remaining phyllo dough, butter and bean mixture. Place rolls on an ungreased baking sheet. Brush tops with remaining melted butter. Bake in a preheated 375 degree oven for 15 to 18 minutes or until golden. Serve warm. Serves 12.

Sweet and Sour Shrimp

1 and 1/2 pounds medium shrimp, cooked, peeled, and deveined

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1 large red onion, thinly sliced

2 teaspoons sugar

2 teaspoons salt

2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce

1 tablespoon black peppercorns

1/2 cup ketchup

1/2 cup cider vinegar

1/2 cup vegetable oil

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

3 bay leaves

Hot sauce, to taste

Fresh dill

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Fresh parsley

Layer shrimp and onions in a deep glass container. Mix remaining ingredients and pour over shrimp and onions. Cover and refrigerate for at least 12 hours. Drain. Garnish with fresh dill and parsley. Serves 12.

Tomato Crostini

2 medium ripe tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped

4 kalamata olives, pitted and chopped

1/4 cup finely chopped red onion

1 canned anchovy fillet, drained and chopped

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

1 tablespoon finely chopped poblano chili pepper

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1 large clove garlic, minced

1 (8-ounce) loaf baguette-style French bread

5 ounces mozzarella cheese, thinly sliced

Stir together tomatoes, olives, red onion, anchovy, vinegar, chili pepper and garlic in a medium mixing bowl. Let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, bias-slice bread into 1/2-inch-thick slices. Place bread slices on a baking sheet. Bake in a 350 degree oven about 5 minutes or until light brown. Turn bread over and bake 5 minutes more. Arrange mozzarella cheese slices evenly on toasted bread. Drain tomato mixture. Top each cheese slice with a spoonful of tomato mixture. Return bread slices to oven; bake for 5 minutes more or until cheese melts and tomato mixture is heated through. Serves 10.

Horseradish Stuffed Mushrooms

24 large white cremini mushrooms

3 tablespoons olive oil, divided

1/3 cup chopped onion

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2 (3-ounce) packages cream cheese, cut up

4 teaspoons prepared horseradish

Chopped fresh Italian parsley, to garnish

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Clean mushrooms and remove the stems. Chop stems; reserve 3/4 cup of the stems (discard remaining stems). Lightly brush mushroom caps with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Place mushroom caps, stem sides down, in a large baking dish. Bake for 5 minutes. Carefully place mushroom caps, stem side down, on a double thickness of paper towels to drain while preparing filling. Set aside. For filling, in a large skillet, cook chopped mushroom stems and onion in remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat about 8 minutes or until onion is tender, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat; add cream cheese and horseradish to mushroom mixture in hot skillet. Let stand 2 minutes. Stir until combined. Place mushroom caps, stem sides up, in the same baking dish. Using a spoon, mound filling into mushroom caps. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes more or until heated through and cheese is slightly browned. Sprinkle with chopped Italian parsley. Serves 12.

The writer owns Catering by Debbi Covington and is the author of the cookbook, Dining Under the Carolina Moon. Debbi's website address is www.cateringbydebbicovington.com . She may be reached at 525-0350 or by email at debbic@cateringbydebbicovington.com.

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