

Appetizers & Soups

Alison's Broccoli Pasta Cream Soup

Preparation & Cook Time: 15 minutes
4 appetizer servings or 2 entree portions

½ cup sour cream
1-cup milk
1 can chicken broth
2 tablespoons salsa
¼ chopped onion
1-tablespoon butter
1 cup rotini pasta, cooked
1 cup steamed broccoli
½ cup Parmesan cheese, grated

In a saucepan, sauté onion in the butter until barely translucent. Pour in milk; broth and salsa into the same saucepan, slowly bring to a simmer. Add sour cream and cheese. Simmer until mixture begins to thicken. Add pasta and broccoli. Bring to a quick boil, stirring constantly, then immediately remove from heat. Continue to stir off heat. Serve.

Alison's Chicken Noodle Soup

This recipe is more broad direction than anything else. So, try it and don't be afraid to alter it.

First, I take the carcass of a cooked chicken that I have served for dinner. I toss it into my stockpot and cover it with water buy a good four inches. I stick the pot on the burner and let it cook overnight on low.

The next day, I strain the broth through a sieve into another large pot. Picking through the bones and meat, I take the best pieces of meat and toss them in with the strained broth. Then I discard the leftover meat and bones I don't want. Whatever you do, don't let your animals have this discarded mess. It

is very dangerous for dogs and cats. Bones become lodged in their throats and they can die.

Next, I usually put in a can of diced tomatoes, and one bag of frozen mixed vegetables. My favorite vegetable mix to use is the carrots, broccoli, and cauliflower mix. If I have a can of red beans, I will usually open that and put in the whole can. At this point, I toss in a heaping tablespoon of garlic and assorted herbs of the moment; usually Italian seasoning. I let this entire mix simmer slowly for hours until it really smells like soup. Sometimes near the end, I'll throw in diced celery or onions. Don't put them in too far in advance. Celery adds some saltiness and cooking too long tends to be too much. Onions can become overpowering if they are in the soup too long.

To put the noodles and the soup together, I have learned that it is better to cook the noodles outside of the broth and add them together in the serving bowl. Noodles added to the stockpot thicken the broth too much and tend to swell up and lose their noodle shape. I tend to use egg noodles or rotini pasta.

This is one of those things that I do perhaps three or four times a year. I use a turkey sometimes instead of a chicken. It's easy if you are thinking ahead. It's not a quick meal, but it is one that can feed you several times over the course of a week if you keep the broth and noodles separate in the fridge.

Alison's Pinwheels

There are several varieties of pinwheels that I make. Most people are familiar with the tortilla pinwheels nowadays. I do have a tortilla pinwheel recipe, but I don't think it is like the tortilla pinwheels you can find at

the grocery store deli. My hot pepperoni pinwheel is nothing like the cold tortilla version. Three of my many versions are listed below:

Peppi Pesto Pinwheels:

1 loaf frozen bread dough, thawed
3 tablespoons Alison's Pesto Sauce
2 cups of Italian cheese blend
*(this could be mozzarella, shredded
Parmesan, Romano, or whatever)*
4 ounces sliced pepperoni

Roll bread dough into a 20 x 12 inch rectangle. Spread surface with Alison's Pesto Sauce. Sprinkle with cheese. Top with pepperoni. Roll up starting at long side. Cut into 12 slices. Place slices, cut side up, in greased muffin cups, pressing slightly. Cover. Let rise in warm place 45 minutes. Heat in oven to 375°. Bake 20 minutes or until golden brown. Makes 12 appetizers.

Meat & Cream Cheese Pinwheels:

16 ounces soft cream cheese
2 cloves garlic, minced
½ cup finely chopped onions
½ cup finely chopped parsley
1 teaspoon dry mustard
2 pounds sliced lunchmeat*

*If using roast beef, substitute garlic and onions with horseradish. Mostly I use turkey, ham or pastrami when I make these pinwheels.

Mix first four ingredients in a food processor until combined and smooth. Lay out lunchmeat on cutting board. Spread mixture over the lunchmeat. Roll lunchmeat into long tubes. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill for 2 hours in refrigerator. Remove plastic wrap and cut into ½ inch thick circles. Poke with decorative toothpicks and serve with toasted bread rounds and

hamburger sliced dill pickles or even slices of English cucumber.

Spinach Tortilla Pinwheels:

8 large burrito size tortillas (any flavor)
1 box frozen spinach (thawed)
16 ounces soft cream cheese
6 strips cooked bacon, diced (not bacon bits)
1 clove garlic, minced
2 teaspoons chives, diced
1 teaspoon dry thyme
Pinch of salt

Set tortillas aside in moderately warm place so they are soft and easy to work with. Cold tortillas break too easily. Combine remaining ingredients in a large bowl and mix. Spread mixture on tortillas. Roll tortillas tightly and wrap in plastic wrap. Chill in refrigerator until firm. Slice into ½ inch thick pieces. Makes 40-50 appetizers.

Bacon Wrapped Artichokes with Dijon Cream Sauce

I used to eat these when I could still eat pork bacon. I just loved them at parties. I have tried it with turkey bacon and it is just as good.

1 or 2 cans artichoke hearts, drained
10 slices bacon (you can use turkey bacon)
3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
¼ cup half and half cream or heavy cream

Preheat oven to 400°

Cut each artichoke heart into thumbnail size pieces. Cut the strips of bacon into fourths. Place a thumbnail size of artichoke onto a bacon fourth, wrap and pierce with a plain toothpick.

Place on a foil lined cookie sheet and bake about 30 minutes or until bacon is crisp.

Combine Dijon mustard and cream, use as a dip.

Black Bean Soup

Preparation and Cook Time: 15 minutes
If using dried beans prep time: 1 day
4 entrée servings or 8 side dish servings

2 cups black beans (1 16 ounce can)
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 carrot, chopped
1 stalk celery, chopped
1 medium onion, diced
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 can chicken broth
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1-teaspoon cumin
Salt and black pepper to taste
Sour cream
Green Onions, diced

Soak bean overnight in water if using dried beans. If using canned beans, strain liquid and wash thoroughly under cold water in a strainer.

In a 5-quart pot, put olive oil, carrots, celery, onion and garlic. Sauté lightly. Add beans and chicken stock, tomato paste, and cumin. Bring to a rolling boil. Remove from heat. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Serve hot with a garnish of sour cream and diced green onion.



Cream Cheese Stuffed Mushrooms

Preparation and Cook Time: 20 minutes
4 appetizer servings

12 mushrooms (crimini or button)
8 ounces cream cheese
½ cup breadcrumbs
1-tablespoon Italian seasoning
1-tablespoon garlic, minced
Dash of pepper
Parmesan cheese

Wash mushrooms and remove stems. Place on an oven safe dish with the cavity facing upwards. Chop the mushroom stems into little bits. Combine the chopped stems, and the remaining ingredients in a food processor. Process until smooth, a few mushroom bits is acceptable. Spoon the mixture into the mushroom cavity. Sprinkle Parmesan cheese on top. Cook in a preheated 350° oven for 5 minutes.

If covered with plastic wrap, mushrooms will keep for up to 24 hours in the refrigerator. They can also be put in the microwave for 1-2 minutes on high to achieve a faster cooking time.

Sausage Stuffing variation:

24 mushrooms
½ pound Italian sausage
6 ounces tomato paste
½ teaspoon basil, oregano
¼ teaspoon pepper
½ cup shredded cheddar cheese

Wash mushrooms and remove stems. Place on an oven safe dish with the cavity facing upwards. Chop the mushroom stems into little bits.

Cook sausage in a 10-inch skillet breaking into small chunks. Add tomato paste, basil, oregano, pepper, and cheese. Continue stirring until cheese is melted and sauce is thickened.

Spoon the meat mixture into mushroom cavities. Sprinkle breadcrumbs over the top and cook in a preheated 350° oven for 10-12 minutes.



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hours in the refrigerator. They can also be put in the microwave for 1-2 minutes on high to achieve a faster cooking time.

Crock-pot Little Smoky Wieners

2 pounds little Smokey wieners
1-quart barbecue sauce (I like KC Masterpiece)
2 large green peppers, chunky chopped
1 large white onion, chunky chopped
2-tablespoon butter

Sauté green pepper and onion in butter until tender. Place all ingredients in a crock-pot on hot. Stir together to mix well, and put the lid on. Put toothpicks in a cup next to the crock-pot and let guests help themselves.

French Onion Soup in a Sourdough Bowl

Preparation Time: 20 minutes
2 servings

3 onions
1 clove garlic
1-tablespoon olive oil
1 can beef broth
¼ teaspoon Worcestershire Sauce
2 slices Gruyere Cheese
2 tablespoons Parmesan
2 small sourdough bread rounds

Slice onions into rings and chop garlic finely. Sauté onions and garlic in olive oil in a saucepan. When onions are tender, add beef broth and Worcestershire Sauce. Let simmer for five minutes.

Cut the tops off the small bread rounds and hollow out a hole in the middle. Be sure to leave a thumb width of bread on the bottom and the sides at the very least.

Pour the soup into the bread bowls and top with cheese. Place in broiler until cheese is melted and slightly browned.

Grilled Portobello Mushroom in Red Wine

2 large Portobello mushrooms
1 heaping tablespoon of garlic
1 tablespoon of Italian seasoning
2 cups red wine (merlot, chianti, whatever)

Before you leave for work in the morning combine all the ingredients in a Ziploc bag and let it marinate in the fridge while your gone. When you come home pour the contents into a wok and cook with the lid on for 10 minutes. If you have the barbecue going or you have a grill top, you can grill the mushrooms, while using a pastry or marinade brush to coat them again with the wine mixture.

The mushrooms will come out soft and juicy like fine meat. Serve them with a soft cheese like chevre or feta and some toasted garlic bread. One mushroom cap is a perfect appetizer for two. Two caps serves four or five.

You can also cut them and make a sandwich on toast. If you make a sandwich, spread the cheese on the bread, and cook some sliced onion in the wine mixture, adding a

teaspoon of butter. A mushroom, onion, and cheese sandwich is very filling.

Herbed Tomato Soup

Preparation & Cook Time: 35-40 minutes
4 servings

2 tablespoons butter
¼ cup finely chopped marjoram
2 large cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 can (28 ounces) plum tomatoes
2-½ cups V-8 juice
½ cup low fat milk
2 teaspoons sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon fresh ground black pepper
½ cup low fat yogurt

Heat butter in a medium size non-aluminum saucepan over medium heat until melted and bubbly. Add ½ of marjoram and garlic. Sauté about one minute. Add tomatoes. Bring to a boil. Cook about 15 minutes. Using a hand blender or electric mixer, mix in the saucepan until smooth. Add remaining ingredients. Reduce heat to low. Simmer 15 minutes. Be sure not to let the soup boil at this point. Serve hot, or chill and serve cold with a dollop of sour cream.

Mandi's Baked Brie

Preparation Time: 15 minutes
Cook Time: 20 minutes

1 sheet puff pastry
1 wheel Brie cheese
½ cup golden raisins
¼ cup cherry brandy
½ cup toasted pecans
1 egg, beaten
Enough peach or apricot preserves to spread on pastry dough

Thaw puff pastry. In a small bowl, put raisins in brandy until they swell a little. Toast pecans. Strain raisins and combine with toasted pecans.

Stretch out puff pastry and spread half of the raisin and pecan mixture over the pastry, almost to the edge. Place the wheel of Brie on of spread in the middle. Spread remaining raisins and pecans on top of the Brie. Close puff pastry in circular fashion around Brie, pinching it closed. Brush closed puff pastry with egg.

Place on a parchment paper covered cookie sheet and bake in a 350° oven for 20 minutes. Remove from oven and let rest for at least 30 minutes. After cooled, spread preserves over the top of cooked pastry shell. Cut and serve.

Alison's Brandied Apricot Brie En Croute

Prep Time: 10 minutes
Cook Time: 1 hour
Total Time: 1 hour, 10 minutes

¾ cup chopped fresh apricots (canned apricots or dried** will do - fresh is best)
⅓ cup chopped baking apple - I like tart, so go Granny Smith if you like tart
4 teaspoons chopped pecans, toasted
1 tablespoon Smucker's cherry preserves - or any cherry jelly/preserves
1 8-ounce Brie round
2 sheets frozen puff pastry, thawed
1 egg
1 tablespoon milk
3 tablespoons cherry brandy (Kirsch or kirschwasser)
2 tablespoon apple cider
Toasted baguette slices for serving

Heat an oven to 425°. Arrange the chopped apricots and apples in a single layer on a lightly greased baking sheet. Roast the fruit

in the oven for 15 to 20 minutes, or until it turns light brown and caramelizes. Allow the roasted fruit to cool for 5 minutes. ***If using dried apricots, soak in hot water until they rehydrate. I even soak the apricots in hot Kirsch sometimes, the same Kirsch I use in the glaze - see below.*

Gently toss the roasted apricots and apples with the toasted pecans and cherry preserves until they are thoroughly mixed. *(Side note: if you don't like cherries - use apricot preserves)*

Reduce the oven heat to 400°. Cut the Brie in half, crosswise, and evenly spread the roasted apricot filling across the cut surface of the bottom half. Replace the top half of the Brie so it resembles a sandwich.

Roll each sheet of dough into a 13-inch square. Trim the edges of each pastry sheet so that it forms a circle. Carefully place the filled Brie into the center of one pastry circle and gather up the edges of the dough on top of the Brie. Place the second pastry circle on top of the Brie and tuck the edges of it under the bottom of the wrapped cheese. Beat the egg and milk together and brush it over the surface of the pastry.

Place the Brie en croûte on a clean, lightly greased baking sheet and bake it for 35 to 40 minutes, until the pastry is puffed and golden brown.

While the Brie is baking, make the Kirsch glaze. Stir the Kirsch and apple cider together over medium heat. The mixture will come to a simmer quickly; continue cooking and stirring it until it reduces in volume and is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon. Set the glaze aside to cool to room temperature.

Allow the Brie to cool at room temperature for 15 minutes before serving with the Kirsch glaze brushed or drizzled over it.

This apricot Kirsch Brie recipe makes 8 to 10 servings.

Seafood Chowder

Preparation Time: 1-½ hours

8 servings

1 ½ cup fat free milk
1 (8 ounce) container fat free cream cheese
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 (26 ounce) can fat free condensed cream of mushroom soup
1 cup chopped green onions
1 cup sliced carrots
1 can whole kernel corn, undrained
1 teaspoon dried parsley
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
½ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
½ pound shrimp
½ pound bay scallops
½ pound crabmeat
½ pound calamari tubes
1 can chopped clams

Place ½ cup milk, cream cheese, and garlic in a large pot over low heat. Cook and stir until blended. Mix in soup, green onions, carrots, corn with liquid, potatoes, parsley, and remaining milk. Season with black pepper and cayenne pepper. Simmer 25 minutes. Do not boil.

Mix the shrimp, scallops, crabmeat, calamari, and clams, and continue cooking 10 minutes, or until seafood is opaque.

Spicy Chicken Wings

Preparation & Cooking Time: 45 minutes

4 appetizer servings

½ cup teriyaki sauce
 1 cup oyster sauce
 ¼ cup soy sauce
 ¼ cup ketchup
 2 tablespoons garlic powder
 ¼ cup gin
 2 dashes liquid smoke flavoring
 ½ cup white sugar
 1 ½ pounds chicken wings, separated at joints, tips discarded
 ¼ cup honey

In a large bowl, mix the teriyaki sauce, oyster sauce, soy sauce, ketchup, garlic powder, gin, liquid smoke, and sugar. Place the chicken wings in the bowl, cover, and marinate in the refrigerator 8 hours or overnight. Preheat the grill for low heat. Lightly oil the grill grate. Arrange chicken on the grill, and discard the marinade. Grill the chicken wings on one side for 20 minutes, then turn and brush with honey. Continue grilling 25 minutes, or until juices run clear.

Super Spicy Tuna Melts

Preparation & Cooking Time: 30 minutes
24 appetizer servings

2 cans of tuna in water
 3 heaping tablespoons of mayonnaise
 ¼ cup of red chili sauce – Thai variety
 1 heaping tablespoon of minced garlic
 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
 Diced green onion
 24 slices of cocktail rye bread



Combine all ingredients except the green onion and bread. Spread the tuna mixture on

the cocktail rye bread and sprinkle with diced green onions. Bake at 350° for 10 to 12 minutes or until tuna and cheese are cooked and bubbly.

Teriyaki Chicken Wings

Preparation Time: Being early in the day
6 servings

3 pounds chicken wings, drumettes
 1 large onion, chopped
 1 cup brown sugar
 1 cup low sodium soy sauce
 ¼ cup chicken broth
 2 teaspoons fresh ginger, minced
 1 tablespoon honey
 2 garlic cloves, minced
 Sesame seeds

Rinse chicken and pat dry. Place drumettes on broiler pan. Broil on low 4 to 5 inches from heat for about 20 minutes, 10 minutes a side or until chicken is light, golden brown. Transfer chicken to crockpot. Mix together onion, brown sugar, soy sauce, chicken broth, ginger, honey and garlic in a bowl. Pour over chicken wings. Cover and cook on Low 5 to 6 hours or on High 2 to 3 hours. Stir chicken wings once to ensure they are evenly coated with sauce. Serve on a platter and sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Tuna Flutes

1 baguette French bread, 11" x 2"
 1 can water-packed tuna, preferably albacore
 ½ cup butter, melted
 1 teaspoon chopped parsley
 1 teaspoon lemon juice
 1 tablespoon mayonnaise (optional)
 Red pimentos
 Black or Green olives

Cut a ½ slice off each end of the bread loaf. Hollow out the loaf. Combine ingredients.

Stuff the hollow loaf with mixture, replace the ends of bread like caps. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill for 2 hours or until cold and filling is firm. Cut into ½ inch slices. Garnish with red pimentos or black and green olives. Serve cold. Makes about 20 appetizers per baguette.

Vegetable Crudités

I've never been one to completely agree with Martha Stewart, but she does have one thing that I wholeheartedly agree with, her thought on crudité. Here are Martha's basic rules from crudité. I follow them, and people rave about my vegetable selection every time. Pair this with the Sourdough



Bread Bowl Spinach Dip, Mandi's Baked Brie, and a few of the sauces in the book and you won't go wrong.

Of the dozens and dozens of varieties of vegetables, there are very few unsuitable to a crudité platter. Always avoid these:

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| Beets | Eggplant | Artichokes |
| Okra | Winter Squash | |
| Kale | Potatoes | Rutabaga |

Of the remaining myriad of vegetables, there are those that are best washed, trimmed, and left in their natural state, such as:

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|-----------------|-----------------|
| Cherry Tomatoes | Sugar Snap Peas |
| Mushrooms | Radishes |

The next batch should be left raw, but cut decoratively:

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|-------------------------|-----------|
| Red & Green Peppers | Cucumbers |
| Yellow & Green Zucchini | |

These are best when curled, feathers, or fanned:

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|--------|---------|--------------|
| Celery | Carrots | Green Onions |
|--------|---------|--------------|

Moreover, these require a quick blanching to maximize their flavor, color, and texture:

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|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| Asparagus | Carrots | Green Beans |
| Broccoli | Cauliflower | Snow Peas |

Blanching is a quick and simple operation, best done 4 to 24 hours before a party. Some vegetables, such as green beans, asparagus, and snow peas, require only a few seconds in vigorously boiling water. Yet, even with fastidious draining and storage, they seem to fade overnight, and should therefore be prepared as close to the event as possible. Others, like broccoli and cauliflower, require as much as two minutes, but then remain crispy for days. Your broccoli, if blanched, will be a glorious bright green, instead of the dull silvery green it appears as in its unblanched state.

Here is a timetable for blanching vegetables to maximize their flavor, texture, and color:

- Cauliflower – 5 to 6 minutes
- Asparagus – 3 to 5 minutes, depending on thickness of stalk
- Green Beans – 2 to 4 minutes
- Broccoli - approximately 3 minutes to tenderize and brighten color
- Carrots – approximately 3 minutes to brighten color
- Snow Peas – approximately 30 seconds

Crudité are tough to place a timeframe on. It can take hours to minutes to assemble a platter. I tend to try and get a minimum of one of each color of vegetable and as many shapes as possible. Here is my typical crudité platter:

Red, Green, & Yellow Bell Peppers
 Cherry Tomatoes Broccoli
 Cauliflower Carrots Celery Green
 Onions Zucchini Mushrooms

On occasion when I am being paid to cater, or I have a little extra money for the spread, I add:

Asparagus Snow Peas Green Beans
 Radishes

Then I garnish it with various leafy vegetables, not meant to be eaten, just to look pretty. Kale and red cabbage are just gorgeous for decoration. Few people will attempt to eat them raw on a crudité's platter so don't worry. Arrange your fresh vegetables around a Sourdough Bread Bowl Spinach Dip, or Mandi's Baked Brie, or any of the sauces or dips in this book. Carve out a whole in the middle of a cabbage or squash and use them as bowls.

Fruit is also another important element to a well-balanced crudité's arrangement. I have found that people like fruit in its whole or natural form. Although I like fruit salad, I tend to only make it when called upon, and go with the following list of people's favorite fruit, whole or cut if necessary:

Watermelon Strawberries Grapes
 Pineapple Cantaloupe Honey Dew
 Cherries Peaches Apples

Wash the fruit thoroughly, especially the melons. Pile it up be kind, mixing and matching the colors for best visual appeal. Martha uses a basket for her strawberries and so do I. People love the look of it, as if you can straight from the garden with your harvest.

Here are some other fruit ideas. Cut one fruit open, and let people try it themselves on the rest.

Kiwi Figs Papayas Mangos
 Bananas Oranges