

Christmas Appetizer Spread

mandarin orange & dried fruit marmalade

candied nuts [spiced pecans, cinnamon walnuts & orange cashews]

parmesan-rosemary shortbread

peppery parmesan crackers

toasted bread, prosciutto & cheese



Yield: 12-14 people

Ingredients

Mandarin orange & dried fruit marmalade:

1 lb sliced and halved mandarin oranges (about 7 mandarin oranges) (see Kayla's notes)

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 teaspoon lemon zest

4 cups water

1 cinnamon stick

1 star anise

4 cloves

½ teaspoon black peppercorns

3 cups sugar

8 oz dried apricots

8 oz dried figs

4 oz dried currants

Candied nuts:

12 oz halved pecans

½ cup water

1 cup sugar

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon cayenne pepper

6 oz halved walnuts
¼ cup water
½ cup sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
4 cloves

6 oz cashews
1/8 cup water
1/8 cup mandarin orange juice
½ cup sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon mandarin orange zest

Parmesan-rosemary shortbread

¾ cup sugar
1 stick unsalted butter
2 egg yolks
2 ¼ cups flour
¾ cup Parmesan cheese
1 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary
½ teaspoon lemon zest

Peppery Parmesan crackers:

1 stick unsalted butter
1 cup flour
5 oz Parmesan cheese
1 tablespoon sugar
2 teaspoons rosemary
¼ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon black pepper

Toasted bread, prosciutto & cheese:

1 loaf rye bread
1 loaf pumpernickel bread
Olive oil

1 lb prosciutto, very thinly sliced
Wedge of Blue Stilton
Wedge of Cranberry-Cheddar
Wheel of Camembert

Directions

Mandarin orange & dried fruit marmalade:

In a small saucepan, combine the mandarin oranges, lemon juice, lemon zest, water, cinnamon stick, star anise, cloves, and black peppercorns. Bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook for 45 minutes. Stir in the sugar, dried apricots, dried figs, and currents. Bring the mixture back to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and continue to cook until the marmalade is thick. Serve warm, room temperature, or chilled.

Candied nuts:

Preheat the oven to 350°F. In a 12-inch pan, combine the water, ½ cup of the sugar, salt and cayenne pepper. Turn the heat on high and let the sugar dissolve. Boil the syrup until some of the liquid has evaporated and the bubbles become smaller. Toss in the pecans, lower the heat to medium and cook for another minute. Add the remaining ½ cup of sugar and stir to coat. Spread the pecans onto a foil-lined sheet pan. Bake for 6 minutes. Let the nuts cool on the foil before removing, gently tossing them with a spoon so they do not stick.

Repeat with the walnuts, however: use a 10-inch pan, replace the cayenne pepper with the cinnamon and cloves

Repeat with the cashews, however: use a 10-inch pan, combine the mandarin orange juice with the water, and replace the cayenne pepper with the mandarin orange zest

Parmesan-rosemary shortbread:

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Using an electric mixer, cream the butter and sugar together until smooth. Whip in the egg yolks. Add the flour, Parmesan cheese, rosemary, and lemon zest. Mix until incorporated. Pour the into a 9x13 buttered baking dish. Press down to create an even layer of shortbread across the bottom. With a fork, poke a few holes in the shortbread. Bake for 10-12 minutes until golden. Let cool. Cut the shortbread into squares.

Peppery Parmesan crackers:

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Using an electric mixer, cream the butter until smooth. Add the flour, Parmesan cheese, sugar, rosemary, salt, and black pepper. Mix on low to combine, and then increase the speed until fully incorporated (the dough will be slightly crumbly). Roll out the dough into a log, packing it as you go. Cover the log in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Cut the log into ¼-inch slices and arrange on a baking sheet. Bake the crackers for about 20 minutes, until golden.

Toasted bread, prosciutto & cheese:

Slice the loaves of bread into ½-inch slices. Spread them out onto a baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil on both sides. With the broiler on high, toast the bread until golden and crisp (but soft on the inside), just a minute or two per side. Prepare the prosciutto and cheeses to be served.

To serve:

Create a large appetizer spread using different boards and bowls as the serving dishes. Arrange the food in any way you like, spreading everything out so guests can pick and choose what they'd like to grab.

Kayla's Notes

I take the entire mandarin orange, peel and everything, and slice them as thin as possible with a very sharp knife. Then just cut each slice in half so you're left with half moons.