

Elegant Cocktail Party

1. Mini Beef Wellingtons

PREP TIME: 15
COOK TIME: 45
SERVES: 24 Pieces

Ingredients

2 tablespoons olive oil
2 pounds beef tenderloin, cut into 24 (1-inch) cubes
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
10 ounces cremini mushrooms, stemmed and finely chopped
1 large shallot, finely chopped
2 sheets frozen puff pastry, thawed (recommended: Dufour)

Directions

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Pat the beef dry with a paper towel and season all sides with salt and pepper. Quickly sear the beef on 2 sides only until deep golden brown, about 4 minutes total; do not overcook. Transfer to a plate to cool.

Add the mushrooms and cook until beginning to brown and release liquid, about 5 minutes. Add the shallots and continue cooking until mushroom mixture dries out, is golden brown and shallots are soft, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat and cool.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat.

On a work surface, roll 1 sheet of puff pastry to a 10 by 14-inch rectangle. Put teaspoon-sized mounds of mushroom mixture on the pastry, evenly spacing them in 4 rows of 3. Top the mushroom mound with a piece of beef, seared side up. With a sharp knife, cut the pastry into even squares around the meat and mushrooms. Working 1 at a time, pull 2 opposite sides of pastry up over each beef piece, then fold the ends over the top to make a packet. Invert and arrange the packets seam side down on the baking sheet and press them lightly to seal the pastry. Repeat with the remaining beef, mushrooms, and pastry.

Bake the Wellingtons until golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from the oven to a serving platter and let cool at least 10 minutes before serving.

2. Rosemary Parmesan Shortbread

PREP TIME: 10

COOK TIME: 14

SERVES: about 2 1/2 dozen pieces

Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup confectioners' sugar
2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh rosemary leaves
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup finely grated Parmesan
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 teaspoon water, if needed

Directions

Put the flour, sugar, rosemary, salt, and Parmesan into the bowl of a food processor and pulse until combined. Add the butter and pulse just until a soft dough forms; the dough should hold together when squeezed with your hands. If not, add the water and pulse until combined.

Spread a large sheet of plastic wrap on a work surface and transfer the dough onto it. Using the plastic wrap as a guide, form the dough into a loose log along 1 edge of the long side of the sheet. Roll the dough log, twisting the plastic gathered at the ends in opposite directions until the log is tight and compact, about 2 1/2 inches in diameter.

Chill in the refrigerator until firm, about 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats. Slice the dough log into 1/3-inch thick slices and arrange on the lined sheets, about 1-inch apart. Bake until the edges are just beginning to brown, 12 to 14 minutes.

Cool the shortbread on the pan for 5 minutes then transfer to wire racks to cool completely. Store the shortbread in an airtight container at room temperature until ready to serve.

3. Spiced Candied Cashews

COOK TIME: 15
SERVES: About 4 Cups

Ingredients

2 cups raw unsalted cashews
1 cup sugar
1 1/2 cups water
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom

Directions

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Put the nuts, sugar, water, and salt into a large skillet over high heat. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring frequently, and cook until the water is nearly evaporated and the liquid becomes syrupy, about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, mix the spices together in a small bowl.

After 10 minutes, sprinkle the spices over the nuts and stir well. Continue stirring constantly while the water evaporates completely, about 5 minutes. When there is no longer any sugar syrup left in the bottom of the pan, turn off the heat and stir the nuts vigorously but carefully in the pan until the sugar seizes up and the nuts are evenly coated with crystallized sugar.

Turn the nuts out onto the lined baking sheet and spread into an even layer. Cool completely before sifting the excess sugar from the coated nuts and storing in an airtight container.

Cook's Note: DO NOT touch the nuts at any time while cooking or just afterward. Cooked sugar is extremely hot and can burn instantly when touched.

4. Big Apple Bubbletini

PREP TIME: 5
SERVES: 8 Cocktails

Ingredients

1 cup fresh apple cider
1/2 cup pomegranate juice
1/2 cup apple brandy or Calvados
1 bottle Prosecco or Cava, chilled
1 crisp apple, such as McIntosh, for garnish

Directions

Mix the cider, pomegranate juice, and apple brandy in a glass measuring cup or pitcher until combined. Chill until ready to serve.

To make a Bubbletini, pour about 1/4 cup of the cider mixture into a chilled martini glass. Top with ice-cold Prosecco. To garnish, either very thinly slice the apple crosswise on a mandoline slicer and float the wheel in the cocktail, or cut thin wedges from the apple and garnish the rim. Repeat with remaining ingredients.