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# Swing By!

ENTERTAINING RECIPES  
& THE NEW ART  
OF GATHERING



RIZZOLI  
NEW YORK



Grandpa



# Festive Fête

Regardless of the holiday you celebrate, it seems like the whole world is in a festive spirit in December. A lovely way to revel in the season is by hosting a holiday meal. The meal in this chapter is inspired by classic Christmas dishes but is also generally festive. Poinsettia, the iconic red winter flower, inspires the shape of a cheesy red appetizer and cookies. The pine-cone-shaped mound of soft cheeses is an example of how presentation alone can wow guests. A crown roast is one of the most grand dishes and is suitably hearty for the cold weather. A simple green salad is presented in between layers of pear to spark visual intrigue.

Classic holiday motifs are incorporated into the menu. Touches of plaid, shades of green and navy, and winter leafage decorate the table. The tablecloth pattern features traditional winter motifs such as antlers, bells, and holly . . . and gets a zhuzh with tins of caviar.





Classic motifs are sprinkled across the table. Red and green dominate. On and around the table, there are plaids in a variety of formats: tartan plaids are printed on linens and crackers to adorn the table; doughnuts and cakes also boast this pattern; even my outfit, down to the tartan barrette in my hair, matches the rest. The abundance of plaids creates a visual cohesion. Centerpiece and food garnishes include cedar clippings snipped from my backyard. Other local greens could be substituted, but the scent of this decorative vegetation emphasizes the wintry theme.

A holiday party is the time to invest as much time and money as possible; it's the season to be generous. Take the time to cook long recipes and iron out the wrinkles in your tablecloth. Buy the best ingredients that you can afford, from good cheeses to champagne. If you can find a source for live music, book it. Otherwise, research a great playlist. Most important of all, though, is inviting as many people as you can. There's no other season in which the phrase "the more, the merrier" rings truer.

**PREVIOUS PAGES:** This menu frame features flowers from antique prints, reformatted digitally. The color palette here evokes Christmas without being completely red and green. The place setting is from Chefanie, including the tablecloth, place mat, plates, napkin, flatware, and glassware. **OPPOSITE AND ABOVE:** There are so many ways to set a holiday table. Plaid sets the perfect tone; depending on your appetite for the pattern, it can be used selectively or all over.

Dishes from different courses—appetizers, entrées, and dessert—mingle on the table, allowing guests to indulge in whatever they feel like.





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## Almond Pine Cone

I love anything trompe l'oeil, but especially a mound of cheese dressed up like a pine cone. This pine cone can stand alone or be part of a wider wintry cheeseboard. It's easiest to create this directly on the serving platter to avoid casualties in transit.

*Serves 8*

### INGREDIENTS

2 (8-ounce) blocks cream cheese, softened to room temperature

6 ounces goat cheese, softened to room temperature

1 tablespoon chopped thyme

1 teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

2 cups almonds

3 sprigs rosemary

Crackers, for serving, such as Original Triscuits or Lesley Stowe's Raincoast Chips

### DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare your serving platter.
2. Put the cream cheese, goat cheese, thyme, salt, and pepper in the bowl of a stand mixer with the paddle attachment. Beat on medium speed until thoroughly incorporated, about 5 minutes.
3. On the prepared baking sheet, mold the mixture into an oval shape with one pointy tip, mimicking the shape of an actual pine cone.
4. Starting at the bottom of the pointy tip, insert the first almond (pointy side out). Work your way around the pine cone from the pointy tip to the rounded side. Make rows of almonds around the entire shaped cheese until the whole mound is covered. Insert rosemary sprigs at the top.
5. You can serve immediately, or cover and refrigerate until ready to serve, up to 2 days in advance. Serve with sturdy crackers.





## Vertical Salads

Reimagine your favorite salads in a vertical format. This is a traditional pear and arugula salad with slivered almonds, goat cheese, and herbs—arranged within a full pear for a surprising and unique presentation. The pear is cut horizontally into three pieces: The top of the fruit with stem is cut off, then the pear is cored; the bottom part of the pear is cut crosswise into two more pieces and salad ingredients are inserted in between these pieces. The stem piece is placed back on the top.

You can also apply this technique to other produce to suit the season: Summer tomatoes can be sliced, filled with mozzarella and basil, and drizzled with balsamic reduction. Autumn apples can be filled with a dressed mix of crushed walnuts, spinach, sliced red onion, and feta. Or, in the winter, a roasted acorn squash can be loaded with a lemony rice.





## Scarlet Swizzle

The natural color of cranberry, bubbles in champagne, and fragrance of rosemary create the jovial alchemy that you want in a holiday cocktail.

*Makes 10 drinks*

### INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup Cointreau
- 2 cups cranberry juice
- 1 (750-ml) bottle champagne
- ¼ cup fresh rosemary leaves

### DIRECTIONS

1. Before guests arrive, combine the Cointreau and cranberry juice in a pitcher and stir. Store in the refrigerator until ready to serve, up to 12 hours in advance.
2. When ready to serve, fill a tumbler halfway with the Cointreau and cranberry juice mixture. Top with champagne, garnish with rosemary, and serve.

## Poinsettia Wreath

The saltiness of the cheese, the sweetness of the cranberry sauce, and the melty warmth of the whole dish make it irresistible.

*Serves 8*

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry, thawed
- 4 tablespoons cranberry sauce, ideally homemade but if using a can, warm it so it's more easily spreadable
- 8 (¼-inch-thick, 1 ½-inch-wide) slices Brie
- 1 ½ tablespoons grated pistachio nuts
- 1 large egg, beaten
- Chopped fresh herbs, optional for garnish

### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Unroll the puff pastry dough onto the prepared baking sheet. Within the rectangular pastry sheet, carve a circle about 10 inches in diameter and discard the scraps.

In the center of the circle, carve a star shape with 8 points. The points should be long and narrow so they can partially cover the filling and touch the opposite side of the circle. Discard the center star.

3. Spread the cranberry sauce all over the puff pastry circle (but not on the star points), and add slices of brie where they will be nestled once the star shapes cover them. Sprinkle pistachio over the cranberry sauce and Brie.
4. Bring the star points outward, over a slice of Brie and the filling, to the outer edge of the puff pastry round. Press together, so that the dough sticks. Continue with all of the star points until a wreath shape is formed.
5. Brush the exposed puff pastry with beaten egg. Bake the wreath until golden brown and puffy, 15 to 20 minutes.
6. Garnish with herbs, if desired. Cut it into 8 pieces so that each piece includes a piece of Brie. Serve while still warm.





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Christmas Dinner  
Set for all family



## HOW TO MAKE Decorating Doughnuts

To decorate doughnuts with the plaid pattern seen opposite, apply our patterned sheets to a doughnut's wet glaze. Many doughnut stores will allow you to purchase extra glaze, and you can dip one side of each doughnut into it. For circles that fit your doughnuts, you can trace circles on the patterned sheets, or use a hot metal cookie cutter to cut them to the exact size. A metal cookie cutter can be heated over the flames in a stove, just use a mitt to protect your hands from getting burned. This treat doubles as decor.





3. Pull a handful of dough and roll it into a 1 ¼-inch-diameter ball, about the size of a golf ball. Place on the baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough.

4. Cover the baking sheet with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour and up to 2 hours.

5. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Line a clean baking sheet with parchment paper.

6. Using a sharp knife, make 3 intersecting cuts three quarters of the way into the ball (make sure not to cut all the way through). Separate the 6 wedges and pull down slightly to create the flower petals (the petals will continue to unfurl as the cookies bake). Place each piece onto the prepared baking sheet at least 2 inches apart.

7. Bake until the cookies no longer look wet but before they start to brown, 9 to 11 minutes.

8. Cool on the baking sheet for at least 15 minutes, then arrange on a serving platter. They can be served warm or at room temperature.

## Poinsettia Cookies

Here is an idea to create festive red Christmas flower cookies without needing to purchase a cookie cutter!

*Makes 12 to 14 cookies*

### INGREDIENTS

1 ½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, softened

½ cup sugar

1 3-ounce box red (raspberry) Jell-O gelatin

1 large egg

2 cups all-purpose flour

### DIRECTIONS

1. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

2. In a stand mixer with the paddle attachment, mix the butter, sugar, Jell-O gelatin, and egg on medium speed until creamed, about 5 minutes. Add the flour and mix on low speed until a cookie dough consistency is achieved.



