



# Perfect party poppers

Canapés using pheasant, partridge and parma ham will ensure you see in the new year in style

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PHOTOGRAPHY EMMA HARRIS

**T**he party season is upon us. To most, this means frantically rushing about getting the house, children, partner and various four-legged creatures organised, not to mention all the relatives. As a caterer and farmer's wife, I know only too well what this is like but I also like nothing better than to celebrate and enjoy the festivities. However, this is a fine balance as all that running about can render you utterly exhausted and leave you feeling a little less jolly than you would like to be.

So, when throwing a party I like to have things as ready as possible in advance, with food going straight from fridge or freezer to oven. I do not want to be dashing about at our own party or confined to the kitchen on my own with a consoling bottle. After all, the idea of hosting a party is to talk to people and enjoy it.

These are a few of my go-to canapés that work every time. You can prep way before the party and just heat or spruce up a couple of hours before or during your bash.

## PARMA HAM, BLUE CHEESE & FIG RELISH CUPS

**MAKES 24**

These little mouthfuls of joy (pictured above) are a quick and easy canapé to produce and are simple to freeze. This is also a good way of using up any leftover Stilton or blue cheese. Delicious and moreish.

### INGREDIENTS

12 wide slices (roughly 200g) parma ham  
300g blue cheese  
1 pot of fig relish  
*You will need a 24-hole mini-muffin tray*

- ▶ Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6. Cut each slice of parma ham in half, fold each slice in half again and mould into each hole of the muffin tin.
- ▶ Place the tray in the oven for 8 minutes until the ham is just cooked.
- ▶ Take out of the oven and allow to cool completely.
- ▶ Fill each cup with blue cheese, leaving room for the fig relish.
- ▶ Finish with a teaspoonful of the relish. Cover the tray with cling film and pop in the freezer if you are not serving straight away.
- ▶ Before serving, pop back into the oven for 5 minutes. Allow to cool a little so they hold their shape. Top with a sprig of fresh parsley or thyme and serve.



## CHEESE AND PANCETTA STRAWS WITH A ROASTED RED PEPPER DIP

MAKES 24

These delicious twists take just 20 minutes to make and as there are 24 in each batch, they are fantastic if you're feeding a lot of people. You can make them a week in advance and keep them in an airtight container. Just reheat to get the crispness back before serving.

### FOR THE STRAWS

- ▶ Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6. Roll the puff pastry to a larger rectangle about 40cm x 30cm on a floured surface.
- ▶ Spread the mustard and parmesan over the pastry. With a short edge closest to you, cover the half nearest to you with the pancetta, laid with the short edges facing you, then fold the other half of the pastry down over the pancetta.
- ▶ Flour a rolling pin then roll over the pastry evenly to help it stick and to flatten it. Trim the edges to neaten it up.
- ▶ Cut into strips, towards you, about 1cm thick and about 15cm long. Brush each one with the beaten egg then twist it a few times before laying it on a baking sheet lined with baking parchment. Sprinkle with more parmesan, and bake for 15-20 minutes in the oven. When golden and crispy remove and cool on a wire rack.
- ▶ Serve warm.

### FOR THE DIP

- ▶ Place all the ingredients into a food processor, season with salt and pepper.
- ▶ Pulse to make a rough purée. Put into a small bowl or jar and cover with cling film and chill until ready to serve.
- ▶ This will keep for five days in a sealed jar.



### INGREDIENTS

#### CHEESE STRAWS

- 320g sheet ready-rolled puff pastry
- 2 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 60g parmesan cheese, grated
- 4 slices pancetta
- 1 egg, beaten

#### RED PEPPER DIP

- 100g tomatoes, quartered
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- 1 fat red chilli, deseeded and chopped
- 200g roasted red peppers from a jar
- 1 squeeze lemon juice
- 1 handful curly parsley, roughly chopped



## WHITE PUDDING & PARTRIDGE MARINATED IN PORT & REDCURRANT WITH RED ONION MARMALADE

MAKES 24

This is a great way of using up excess partridge. These canapés work every time and keep men happy. They are quick and easy to assemble.

### MARMALADE

- ▶ Pour the olive oil into a large, heavy-based saucepan over a high heat. Tip in the onions and garlic and give them a good stir so they are coated with oil. Add sugar, thyme, bay leaves, chilli flakes (if using) and season with salt and pepper.
- ▶ Give everything another really good stir and reduce the heat slightly. Cook uncovered for 45-50 minutes, stirring occasionally. The onions are ready when all their juices have evaporated and the smell of sugar caramelising fills the room. They should be so soft that they break when pressed against the side of the pan with a spoon.
- ▶ Pour in the wine, vinegar and port and simmer, uncovered, over a high heat for 25-30 minutes, stirring every so often, until the onions are a deep, dark colour and the liquid has reduced by about two-thirds.
- ▶ When drawing a spoon across the bottom of the pan clears a path that fills fast with syrupy juice, it is done. Leave the onions to cool in the pan and then scoop into sterilised jars and seal.
- ▶ Keep in the fridge for up to four months.

### WHITE PUDDING & PARTRIDGE

- ▶ Prep the partridge the day before you are due to serve it.

## INGREDIENTS

## MARMALADE

8 tbsp olive oil  
 2kg red onions, thinly sliced  
 4 garlic cloves, chopped  
 x140g demarara sugar  
 1 sprig fresh thyme  
 2 bay leaves  
 Pinch of chilli flakes (optional)  
 75cl red wine  
 350ml balsamic vinegar  
 200ml port

## WHITE PUDDING

4 partridge breasts (marinated for 24 hours prior to serving)  
 1 tbsp dark muscovado sugar  
 2 tsp reccurant jelly  
 Salt and pepper  
 100ml port  
 Olive oil  
 1 medium-size white pudding sausage, about 400g (available from your butcher or some supermarkets will stock it)  
 Fresh parsley or thyme for decoration

- ▶ Slice the partridge into small strips (these have to fit on top of the white pudding discs) and place into a bowl.
- ▶ Sprinkle in the sugar and mix in the redcurrant jelly; season with salt and pepper. Finally, add in the port and stir. Cover with cling film and leave in the fridge for 24 hours.
- ▶ Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4.
- ▶ Slice the white pudding into 24 even round discs and place onto a pre-lined baking tray.
- ▶ Drizzle with a little olive oil and place in the oven for 10-12 minutes until the tops of the pudding start to get some colour. Remove from the oven and allow to cool. In the meantime, take a heavy-based frying pan and put on a high heat.
- ▶ Drizzle the pan with olive or sunflower oil, add your partridge to the pan just as it starts to smoke (not heavy smoke) and sear for 5-8 minutes until cooked.
- ▶ Remove from the heat. Allow to cool until you can handle it.
- ▶ Take the red onion marmalade and add half a teaspoon to each white pudding slice, then place a strip of partridge on top of each.
- ▶ Place back in the oven for 8-10 minutes until warmed through.
- ▶ Remove from the oven and finish with parsley or thyme.



## PHEASANT GOUJONS WITH ROASTED GARLIC MAYONNAISE

### MAKES 30 GOUJONS

Goujons will freeze well raw. Make sure they are defrosted before fat frying them.

#### ROASTED GARLIC MAYONNAISE

- ▶ Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4. Place the head of garlic on a piece of foil large enough to wrap it in and pour over a little olive oil.
- ▶ Wrap it tightly and roast for 25 minutes or until soft. When it is cool, take out the flesh from each clove and crush it in a bowl with a squeeze of lemon juice.
- ▶ To make the mayonnaise, put the eggs, mustard, vinegar, sugar and some seasoning into a food processor and blend.
- ▶ While it is still going, very slowly add the olive and sunflower oil in a steady stream until the mixture is thick and all the oil has been used (be really careful to not add it too quickly or it could curdle. This takes about 12 minutes.
- ▶ Switch off the food processor and add the cooled roasted garlic and lemon juice. Blend again quickly, then adjust the seasoning if necessary.
- ▶ Place into a dish or jar and cover. The mayonnaise can be kept in the fridge for up to 10 days.

#### PHEASANT GOUJONS

- ▶ Put the flour in a bowl and season. Put the eggs into a bowl and put the breadcrumbs into a bowl or tray.
- ▶ Dip each strip of pheasant into the flour, then the egg, then the breadcrumbs to coat.

- ▶ Heat enough oil in a deep frying pan to submerge the goujons completely (or use a deep-fat fryer). The oil has reached the correct temperature when a breadcrumb dropped into it sizzles.
- ▶ Fry the goujons, six to eight at a time, for 1 to 2 minutes each, until crisp and golden. Drain on kitchen towel and season with salt, pepper and a squeeze of lemon.
- ▶ Keep warm until all the goujons are ready, then serve with the mayonnaise.

## INGREDIENTS

## PHEASANT GOUJONS

3 tbsp plain flour  
 2 medium eggs, lightly beaten  
 150g dry breadcrumbs from a ciabatta or other coarse loaf  
 6 pheasant breasts, skinned, seasoned and cut into 30 strips (5 per breast)  
 Salt and freshly ground pepper  
 Sunflower oil for frying

## GARLIC MAYONNAISE

1 whole head garlic  
 100ml olive oil, plus a drizzle for the garlic  
 Squeeze of lemon juice  
 2 medium eggs  
 1 tsp Dijon mustard  
 1 tbsp white wine vinegar  
 Pinch of caster sugar  
 400ml sunflower oil

*Make the mayonnaise beforehand, if possible, so the garlic has time to infuse*

## MINI STICKY TOFFEE PUDDINGS TOPPED WITH CINNAMON CREAM



### ENOUGH FOR ABOUT 20

#### TOFFEE CAKE

- ▶ Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4. Grease and line a cake tin.
- ▶ To make the pudding, place the dates in a heat-proof bowl with the boiling water, mixed spice and bicarbonate of soda. Leave for 15 minutes to cool. Stir occasionally during this time.
- ▶ Whisk the butter, sugar and vanilla together until pale and fluffy. Gradually whisk in the eggs until well combined.
- ▶ Fold in the dates, sift the flour over the top and fold together with a large metal spoon. Be careful not to knock the air out of the mixture.
- ▶ Pour into the lined cake tin and pop into the oven for around 35–40 minutes.

#### TOFFEE SAUCE

- ▶ Place all the ingredients into a heavy-bottomed saucepan on a low heat and allow to melt. Stir occasionally and until all the ingredients have melted and make a lovely dark sauce.

- ▶ When your cake is cooked, prick the top all over with a skewer or cocktail stick before drizzling a generous amount of the toffee sauce over the cake.
- ▶ Leave the cakes to cool completely in their tin on top of a cooling rack before turning out
- ▶ When the cake is cool, turn out onto a chopping board. Then, take a small cutting ring and cut as many mini cakes as you can. These can be covered in cling film when cool and frozen on a tray.
- ▶ When you need them, defrost and top with the cream and serve.

#### CINNAMON CREAM

- ▶ Simply whisk the double cream until soft peaks form, then sift over the icing sugar and cinnamon and mix again until it has all folded in. Place into a piping bag.
- ▶ Leave in the fridge to chill until you need to serve the canapés. Pipe a small amount onto each cake when ready to serve.

#### INGREDIENTS

##### TOFFEE CAKE

- 400g chopped dates
- 480ml boiling hot water
- 3 tsp mixed spice, heaped
- 2 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 250g unsalted butter
- 250g dark muscovado sugar
- Vanilla extract, a generous splash
- 4 large eggs
- 350g self-raising flour

##### TOFFEE SAUCE

- 150g dark muscovado sugar
- 1 tsp mixed spice
- 50g salted butter
- A pinch of rock salt
- 200ml double cream

##### CINNAMON CREAM

- 100ml double cream
- 2 tsp icing sugar
- ½ tsp cinnamon

*Bea Atkinson runs Holway Kitchen based in Dorchester, Dorset (tel: 01300 320 246; [www.holwaykitchen.co.uk](http://www.holwaykitchen.co.uk))*