

1. How can I transform my pre-dinner cheese plate into something special?

Replace the traditional cheese assortment with just one cheese so guests can really focus on its unique character. Partner it with fresh pears and a crock of homemade mustard apple butter to spread on the cheese and pears.

Cheese, Pears, and Mustard-Laced Apple Butter

PREP: 10 minutes

- 2 cups apple butter
- 2 Tbsp. Dijon-style mustard
- 2 Tbsp. snipped fresh sage or rosemary, or 1½ tsp. dried sage, crushed
- 2 Tbsp. champagne vinegar, pomegranate vinegar, or lemon juice
- 1 1- to 2-lb. round semi-soft cheese, such as Tomme De Savoie or Brie.
- Fresh or dried pears
- Sage sprigs

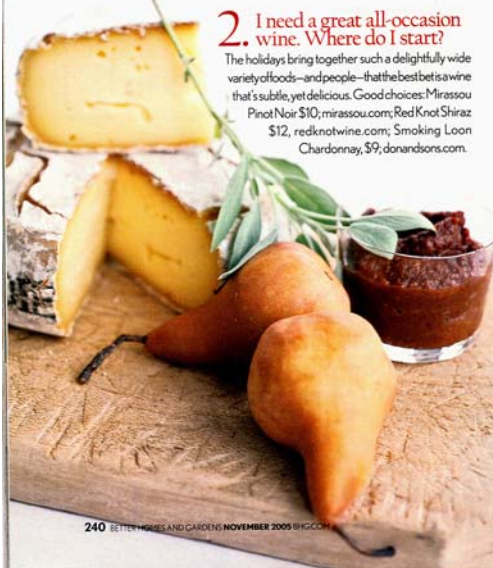
1. In a small saucepan combine apple butter, mustard, and sage; bring to boiling. Stir in champagne vinegar; remove from heat. Place apple butter mixture in a small bowl. Serve warm or at room temperature.

2. Serve with cheese and pears. Garnish with sage sprigs. Store apple butter in the refrigerator up to 1 week. Makes 24 servings.

EACH SERVING (1 TABLESPOON APPLE BUTTER AND 1 OUNCE OF CHEESE): 232 cal, 7 g total fat (4 g sat. fat), 20 mg chol, 280 mg sodium, 37 g carbo, 2 g fiber, 6 g protein. Daily Values: 5% vit. A, 4% vit. C, 13% calcium, 2% iron.

2. I need a great all-occasion wine. Where do I start?

The holidays bring together such a delightfully wide variety of foods—and people—that the best bet is a wine that's subtle, yet delicious. Good choices: Mirassou Pinot Noir, \$10, mirassou.com; Red Knot Shiraz, \$12, redknotwine.com; Smoking Loon Chardonnay, \$9, donandsons.com.



3. What's a fast way to make cranberry relish?

Use this no-cook recipe and a food processor. You'll be done in 10 minutes. And save any leftover relish—it's delicious on turkey sandwiches.

Fresh Cranberry-Fig Relish

PREP: 10 MINUTES

- 4 cups fresh or frozen cranberries
- 1 cup dried figs, stems removed
- 2 Tbsp. snipped fresh mint leaves
- 1 cup orange marmalade
- 2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar

1. Using a food processor or hand food chopper, process or chop cranberries and dried figs until coarsely chopped. Transfer to bowl; add mint. Stir together marmalade and balsamic vinegar. Add to cranberry mixture; stir well. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours or up to 1 week. Or freeze up to 6 months; thaw overnight in refrigerator before serving. Makes 4 cups (sixteen ¼-cup servings).

TEST KITCHEN TIP: If cranberries are frozen, measure while frozen. Let stand at room temperature about 15 minutes to thaw slightly before processing.

EACH SERVING: 96 cal, 0 g total fat, 0 mg chol, 13 mg sodium, 25 g carbo, 3 g fiber, 1 g pro. Daily Values: 1% vit. A, 9% vit. C, 3% calcium, 3% iron.