



When planning for family gatherings in the winter months, look for satisfying dishes that can be made a day or two ahead of time so that the cook can enjoy the event as well! The following dishes are well suited to casual entertaining and bring warmth to the coldest day and satisfy the biggest appetite. Any of these recipes may be cut in half for a smaller party.



### Italian Sausage Soup

Serve with fresh veggies and dip and a selection of breads

- 2 pounds hot or mild Italian sausage
- OR—
- 2 pounds bulk Italian sausage
- 3 large carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 large onion, peeled and chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
- 3 quarts chicken broth or bouillon
- 2 cans (14 oz.) diced tomatoes
- 2 cans (15 oz.) white beans
- 1 Tbsp. dried basil
- 4 cups large shell pasta
- 9 oz. spinach, washed
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Remove sausage from casings (discard casings) and put into an 8 to 10 quart kettle or use bulk sausage. Stir over medium heat until brown and crumbly. Drain off fat and add carrots, onions, and garlic. Simmer for 5 minutes. Add broth, tomatoes, beans and basil and bring to a boil. Simmer for 30 minutes. Add pasta and simmer for 10 more minutes. Stir in spinach, salt and pepper and heat. Serve with grated Parmesan. Serves 18 to 20.

### Fiesta Salad

- 2 (15 oz.) cans black beans, drain and rinse
- 2 (12 oz.) cans Mexicorn with red and green peppers, drain
- 3 avocados, peeled and cubed
- 4 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 large onion, chopped
- ½ cup cider vinegar
- 1 cup olive oil
- 2 pkgs. dry Italian dressing mix

Combine all vegetables. Mix remaining ingredients and pour over vegetables. Refrigerate. If you make this the day before, stir in the avocados just before serving because they discolor. Serves 18 to 20.

### Baked Brie

*This appetizer is a festive family favorite*

- 1 (15 oz.) mini round Brie cheese, semi-frozen for ease in slicing in half horizontally using a serrated knife
- 1/3 cup dried cranberries
- 1/3 cup raisins
- 1/3 cup chopped pecans
- 1 (17 oz.) frozen puffed pastry
- 1 egg

Combine fruit and nuts and spread on top of bottom half of Brie; top with second half. Place frozen puffed pastry unfolded on a lightly floured surface. Place cheese on pastry and wrap, cutting off excess. Seal edges with beaten egg. Excess pastry may be used for designs on top. Brush remaining beaten egg over pastry. Freeze at least 30 minutes or can be frozen for a week. When ready to serve, place on a greased cookie sheet, seam side down, and bake for 40 minutes at 400°, or until soft in center when tested with a knife. Serve with crackers.

### Beef Dressing

Serve with cranberry sauce

- 2 lbs. lean ground beef, browned and crumbled
- 2 (10 oz.) cans cream of chicken soup
- 1 (10 oz.) can cream of celery soup
- 4 cups milk
- 2 (8 oz.) packages seasoned bread cubes

Mix all ingredients together and put into a 9x13" baking pan. Cover with foil and refrigerate until ready to bake. Bake for 1 hour at 350° or until well browned. Garnish with parsley. Serves 15 to 20.

### Escalloped Potatoes

*This dish defines comfort food*

- 16 to 18 medium potatoes, sliced
- 4 (10 oz.) cans cream of mushroom soup
- 1 Tbsp. onion salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 2 cups cream
- 1 cup milk

Steam sliced potatoes in a kettle filled to ¼ with boiling water for 10 minutes. Drain off water. Mix remaining ingredients in a bowl. Alternate layers of potato slices and sauce in a small roaster. Top with shredded cheddar cheese. This can be prepared a day or two ahead of time and refrigerated. Bake for 1 ½ to 2 hours at 350°. Serves 20.

The recipes featured above are from Doris Streiff's *Down on the Farm* and *Down on the Farm Book II* cookbooks. To correspond with Doris, please send your letters to:

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