

Simple, savoury appetizers are an unfussed way to entertain a gang.



*freshly baked gougères
will have your kitchen smelling
like a bakery*

Text and food styling by DENISE MARCHESSAULT
Photography by CAROLINE WEST

*fragrant marinated
olives with goat cheese*



Every Sunday I have guests for dinner—13 if you count the noisy kids. I don't have a table long enough for all of us, so the giggly, lanky ones sit at the table and the adults huddle around the kitchen island and we sip, chat and nibble our way through an array of appetizers until dinner is ready. Often, appetizers are the dinner. Either way, it's a loud, disorderly affair that I look forward to each week because I'm enjoying my friends, not fussing over food.

If you like low-maintenance entertaining, these simple appetizers just might convince you to open your doors more often: fresh-from-the-oven gougères (pronounced goo-zhairs), fragrant marinated olives with goat cheese and beef carpaccio with freshly dressed greens.

Gougères are ingenious little pastries that are light and airy with a sweet and nutty smack of gruyère cheese. Crisp on the outside, almost hollow on the inside, they are delicious served warm, au naturel, or gussied up with a filling of shrimp and dill, curried chicken or smoked salmon to name but a few.

Gougères are made from choux (pronounced shoe) pastry or pâte à choux. The mixture, more of a sticky batter than malleable dough, is spooned onto a tray or piped from a pastry bag (if you insist on perfectly shaped puffs), and baked. I freeze them unbaked and then bake them fresh before guests arrive for an "ohh" and "ahh" appetizer that will have your kitchen smelling like a bakery.

Once you've mastered choux pastry, you can make all sorts of dangerous treats, including Dauphine potatoes (mashed potatoes mixed with choux pastry and deep-fried—I warned you), Parisienne-style gnocchi, cream-filled profiteroles, éclairs and beignets. There's even a choux-based cake, Gâteau St. Honoré, affectionately named after the patron saint of bakers. There isn't a more versatile dough.

If you don't consider olives a worthy appetizer, warm, marinated olives infused with chillies, herbs, citrus and spice will change your mind. Gently heating the olives in oil intensifies their flavour and imbues them with aromatics that have been known to convert olive skeptics into olive lovers. I keep a large Mason jar of marinated olives in my fridge ready to reheat whenever guests show up at my door.

The olives keep for ages and the flavoured oil is enough reason to keep it on hand; I use it for salad dressings, roast potatoes, crostini and anything else that needs a potent earthy boost. Goat cheese and olives are a delicious duo, especially when the cheese (room temperature, please) is drizzled with oil steeped with mustard seeds, fennel, thyme and peppercorns. Served with a baguette or crackers, this appetizer never fails to please.

Think carpaccio of beef is for restaurants only? I serve it for impromptu kitchen parties because nothing could be easier, and there's no special equipment involved, other than a sharp knife and some plastic wrap. Simply slice a small piece of raw beef tenderloin, place it between two sheets of plastic wrap and gently pound the beef (the bottom of a small saucepan does nicely) until the tenderloin is paper-thin. Remove the top layer of plastic and invert the exposed beef onto a plate. This can be done hours in advance and stored in the refrigerator until ready to use. Just before serving, each fillet is topped with a simple salad, shaved Parmesan, freshly cracked black pepper and a pinch of fleur de sel. Even if your guests are squeamish about rare meat, one bite of the sweet, melt-in-the-mouth fillet will change their minds and have them marvelling at your ingenuity.

With appetizers like these, you'll find lots of excuses to invite guests over.

FIND THE RECIPES ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES

WINE PAIRING

Appetizers and sparkling go together like salt and pepper. If you're feeling flush, you can't go wrong with champagne. If you're feeling flat, look to Cava or Prosecco. Of course, you shouldn't skip over BC's sparkling wines – crisp examples from Vancouver and the Gulf Islands, the Fraser Valley and the Okanagan would bring this global appetizer class back home. —*Treve Ring*

fiamo
Italian kitchen

Artisan PIZZA MONTH

ANY PIZZA \$10
SUNDAY - THURSDAY
FOR THE MONTH OF
MARCH

fiamo is for lovers

515 Yates Street | 250.388.5824 | fiamo.ca

Daksha's Gourmet Spices
Curry Mixes | Cookbooks | Chai

Simple and Easy • Gluten Free

Try One of Our Ten Curry Mixes

Butter Chicken, Aloo Gobi, Tiram Masala, Spicy Fish, Pongolli Spice

order online
www.spicesgourmet.com

Wholesale enquiries welcome | Locally made in Saanichton, B.C.

**Your Friendly Neighbourhood Butcher
... A Cut Above**

**Quality meats,
Poultry, Cheeses,
Specialty Products
& Condiments**

Slaters
FIRST CLASS MEAT 1983 LTD.

2577 Cadboro Bay Road, VICTORIA
592-0823

Gougères

Makes about 45 gougères.

- ¾ cup milk
- ¾ cup water
- ¾ cup plus 1 Tbsp unsalted butter, cut into cubes
- 2 tsp salt
- 2½ tsp sugar
- 2 cups flour
- 4 - 5 eggs
- 1 cup grated Gruyère cheese, more or less if desired
- 1 egg, slightly beaten, for egg wash
- Disposable piping bag fitted with a plain pastry tip (optional)
- Baking sheet lined with parchment or Silpat

Preheat oven to 375°F.

In a medium-sized saucepan, combine the milk, water, butter, salt and sugar. Bring the mixture to a full boil. Remove from the heat and add the flour all at once and stir vigorously with a wooden spoon until the mixture forms a ball and pulls away from the sides of the pan.

If using a stand-up mixer, transfer the dough to the mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. If mixing by hand, use a wooden spoon. Add the eggs to the dough, one at a time, ensuring each egg is well incorporated before adding another. You may not need all five eggs. After the fourth egg has been incorporated, check the consistency of the dough: the mixture is ready when the dough forms a thick ribbon from your spoon, or paddle. If the mixture is too firm, add another egg. Add the grated cheese.

If using a pastry bag, spoon the dough into a pastry bag fitted with a plain tip. Pipe round mounds about 1½ inches in diameter onto a lined baking sheet, leaving an inch or two between each mound. (If not using a pastry bag, simply spoon the dough onto a lined baking sheet.) Brush the top of each mound with the beaten egg. Note: if using a pastry bag, each mound of dough will have a small peak created by the piping tip (think soft ice cream)—gently press down the peak with a fork or fingertip to create a smooth mound.

Set aside for 15 minutes before baking.

Reduce the temperature to 350°F and bake for about 20 to 30 minutes, rotating the pans halfway through the baking. Test one gougère to ensure it is cooked in the centre. If the mixture is cooked on the outside, but not the inside, turn the oven off and leave the pastries in until cooked all the way through. Watch carefully, as your oven will still be hot. Remove to a rack to cool slightly before serving.

Marinated Olives and Goat Cheese

Serves 8 to 10.

Olive Marinade

- 2 cups assorted olives
- 1 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 sprigs each of rosemary and thyme
- 2 fresh red chillies
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 large pieces lemon peel from a clean, organic lemon

Cheese Marinade

- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- 1 Tbsp peppercorns
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1/2 lb soft goat cheese, at room temperature

Place the olive marinade ingredients in a medium saucepan and warm over low heat until aromatic, approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

Pour about a third of a cup of the warm, herb-infused oil into a separate small saucepan. Lightly crush the mustard, fennel and peppercorns and add them, along with the thyme, to the oil. Allow the herbs to infuse the oil, on low heat, approximately 15 minutes. Allow to cool slightly*.

Place the goat cheese in the centre of a small platter and surround it with the marinated olives. Pour the oil and crushed herbs over the cheese. Garnish the platter with the marinated peppers, lemon peel and rosemary. Serve with a baguette or crackers.

*The oil marinade should not be warm enough to melt the cheese.



beef carpaccio is simple to make at home

Carpaccio de Boeuf

Serves 6 to 8 as an appetizer.

7 oz beef tenderloin fillet, chilled
Salad greens

Dressing

½ cup grapeseed oil and 2 Tbsp white wine vinegar
1 Tbsp shallots, sliced
3.5 oz Parmesan shavings
Freshly ground pepper
Fleur de sel

Using a sharp knife, carefully cut the chilled beef into thin slices. Place the sliced beef on a sheet of plastic wrap and cover with another layer of plastic wrap. Gently pound the beef (the bottom of a pot works well) to flatten the meat until it is paper-thin. Remove the top layer of plastic and invert the exposed beef onto a plate. If you are not serving immediately, leave on the (remaining) plastic wrap until ready to serve. (This can be done hours in advance and stored in the refrigerator until ready to use.)

Just before serving, remove the plastic wrap from each fillet. Whisk the grapeseed oil and vinegar together. Top each fillet with a simple salad dressed with the vinaigrette, sliced shallots, shaved Parmesan, freshly cracked black pepper and a pinch of fleur de sel.

TRADITIONAL TEXAS BBQ

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
BREAKFAST @ 8AM
BBQ @ 10AM
FULL MENU OF BBQ TREATS
PULLED PORK, SMOKED RIBS, BURGERS & MORE
PHONE AHEAD FOR PICKUP

250 951 6446
250 951 6445

LEADING THE WAY...
Parkville & District
Chamber of Commerce

@ Parkville Info Centre

1275 East Island Hwy.
(Off Exit 46)

Phone: (250) 248 3613

E-Mail: info@parkvillechamber.com
www.parkvillechamber.com

VISITOR INFORMATION
LOCAL MAPS

BUSINESS INFORMATION
DVD POSTCARDS

PARKVILLE CLOTHING
UNIQUE LOCAL ART

Welcome to a Food Lover's Paradise –

- Exotic Cheeses and Chutneys
- Truffles, Olives and Patés
- Gourmet Oils & Vinegars
- British, European and South African Imported Foods

thebigcheese@mcleansfoods.com

In Nanaimo's Old City Quarter
426 Fitzwilliam St.
Nanaimo, BC
250.754.0100
www.mcleansfoods.com

Great Wines!
Great People!
Great Experiences!

We're open in April; come here and make some memories...

Most award-winning winery in the Cowichan Valley

Rocky Creek Winery
250-748-5622
www.rockycreekwinery.ca