

# WELCOMING IN The Season

## HOW TO MARKET YOUR

BY NICOLE ALONI

Hosting an open house at the holidays provides a great opportunity to connect with two of your most important customer groups. View your guest list as a marketing tool. Invite your best customers to show them how much you have appreciated their business all year. Add to the list those people or businesses you have targeted as clients you'd like to land.

Use this relaxed social occasion to show off your specialties and facility. Everyone loves getting the inside scoop about how things really work; set up some food in your kitchen or at least make it available for "tours". Introduce your key employees. Chefs are the new celebrities (think Emeril); allow yours to mingle to create good will and a feeling of inclusion.

Based on lessons learned during my **20 years** in the catering trenches, the following list of tips and strategies is all you will need to put together a bash that's easy on your nerves and your budget. This event will make your customers remember you when they think of hiring someone to do their parties any time of the year.

### invitations

Plan this party for early in the season before you're swamped with parties you're creating for others and guests are overbooked with invitations. An open house attracts the highest guest turnout if scheduled for a Saturday or Sunday afternoon spanning a three- to four-hour time period. I prefer 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

### timeline

Create a timeline which includes all of the tasks involved in staging the party. This not only makes sure everything gets done, but also prompts you to complete as many tasks as possible well before the party – an important catering strategy.

### menu

Following is an appealing winter menu which balances flavor and luxury with ease of service. Select the items that appeal to you and fill in with your kitchen's specialties. Quantities to serve 25 are in parentheses.

### Main Course

Poached Jumbo Shrimp (60 pieces) with Rouille Sauce (see recipe box)  
Pesto Torta (see recipe box) (1 recipe)  
Smoked Salmon Roulade (2 8-inch logs)  
Mixed Spiced Nuts (4 cups)  
Antipasto Platter (see recipe box)  
Classic Gruyere Fondue with Green Apples and Sourdough Bread (see recipe) (2 recipes)  
Roast Pork Tenderloin (three 1.5 lb.), sliced and served with Cranberry Orange Relish (see recipe)



### Dessert Table

Cheesecake Bites (30 pieces) or Brie Encroute stuffed with Dried Fruit  
Chocolate Truffles, Pralines, or other Christmas Sweets (40)  
Individual Fruit Tarts, Mini Pastry, Cannoli (25), or Fresh Fruit Platter



### Beverages

Coffee  
Cranberry Cosmopolitans  
White and Red Wine  
Mineral Water

The coffee, wine, and mineral water can be set up on a self-serve table with glasses, mugs, and ice with tongs. The Cosmos take a little more attention but they create a special stir. You'll need a waiter, vodka in an ice bucket, a pitcher of the combined cointreau and lime juice on ice, plus special ice cubes made of cranberry juice. Cocktails are shaken to order, poured into the chilled glass, and a cranberry cube or two is dropped in for a trailing, rosy sunset effect.



# RESTAURANT WITH A HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE


## Tableware to Serve this Menu

For a grazing party like this, you need only small (6 inch) plates and lots of cocktail napkins. Whether you use your own dishes or order rentals, you will need about 75 plates, 75 all-purpose glasses, 50 small forks, 25 coffee mugs, and 125 cocktail napkins (double all of this for 50). If you decide to use plastic plates, be sure to purchase the rigid variety. I do not recommend using plastic glasses. The expense of renting real glasses is modest compared to the negative impression created by serving a cocktail or good wine in plastic.

## Equipment Needed to Serve this Menu

- A sturdy table that will accommodate the food.
- A cloth to cover the top of the buffet and two more for layering, fluffing, and swagging.
- A 4 to 5 quart round chafing dish or fondue pot.
- A coffee urn with creamer and sugar bowl.
- A large cooler for ice and back-up wine.
- Four large platters.
- A 3-tiered dessert tray or cake pedestals and medium platters.

- Serving tongs (3), ice tongs (2), serving forks (3), fondue forks, or bamboo skewers (50).

Finally – send each guest home with a small box of truffles or glazed nuts made in your kitchen. 



## recipes

### Rouille Sauce

In the bowl of a food processor, combine 1 cup mayonnaise, 1/2 cup roasted red bell pepper strips, 1 small red serrano chile (cored, seeded, and chopped), 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, and 1 tablespoon smashed garlic. Purée. Add 1/4 cup finest quality extra virgin olive oil and blend to mix. Taste for spicing. You may want to add a dash of cayenne or more lemon juice at this point.

### Pesto Torta

Line a 6 to 7 inch bowl with plastic wrap. Combine two 8 oz. packages of goat cheese with one 8 oz. package cream cheese. Press 1/3 of the mixture into an even layer

in the bottom of the bowl. Spread on 1/3 cup prepared basil or other pesto. Sprinkle with 1/3 cup pine nuts. Spread on 1/3 of the cheese mixture. Sprinkle on 1/2 cup chopped, drained sun-dried tomatoes. Smooth on a layer of the remaining cheese mixture. Cover with plastic wrap and press firmly to eliminate any air pockets. Refrigerate at least 4 hours or up to 4 days before serving. To serve – invert the torta over a platter, tug on the ends of the plastic to loosen and unmold; garnish with fresh herbs. Serve with crackers.

### Orange Cranberry Relish

Combine 2 cups whole cranberry sauce with 1/2 cup orange juice, 1/2 cup ruby port, 2 tablespoons orange peel, and 2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger. Simmer 5 to 7 minutes to thicken.

### Antipasto Abbondanza Platter to serve 25

- 3 cups drained marinated mushrooms
- 3 cups drained marinated artichoke hearts
- 2 cups jalapeño or blue cheese stuffed jumbo green olives
- 30 cherry peppers stuffed with prosciutto and provolone
- 35 bite-sized chunks of fresh mozzarella
- 1 lb. thinly sliced Genoa or other hard salami
- 25 crispy breadsticks, each wrapped with a ribbon of very thinly sliced Prosciutto

### SAM'S CLUB® Wine Pairing Tips:

Try these wine pairings when serving Antipasto: Beaujolais Villages, Pinot Noir, or Barbera.

### Classic Gruyere Fondue makes 3 cups

- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 3 tablespoons kirsch
- 1 clove garlic, smashed
- 1 lb. Gruyere (4 cups grated) or 8 oz. Gruyere and 8 oz. Fontina
- 1 to 1-1/4 cups dry white wine
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/8 teaspoon grated nutmeg
- White pepper

Whisk the cornstarch into the kirsch to dissolve. Put a heavy sauce pan over medium heat. Rub the garlic clove around the inside and drop it in. Add 1 cup white wine and the lemon juice and bring to a gentle simmer. Add the shredded cheese(s) one handful at a time, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon. When the cheese is completely melted, and the mixture is smooth, add the kirsch mixture and whisk to blend. Let simmer several minutes to thicken. Season with the nutmeg and white pepper. Transfer immediately to a fondue pot and serve with bread cubes, green apple wedges, blanched carrots, or cauliflower.

