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# The Magic Pantry

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Making the Most From The Pantry

December 2020 / January 2021

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## Happy Holidays!

### Surprise!

I thought I would put together a special edition of the upcoming Magic Pantry that normally comes with the monthly newsletter.

I think with all the upheaval that is part and parcel of the holidays, it might be nice to have a collection of ideas and recipes for a nice, quiet holiday evening.

In my house, we could easily have what is known as a Noshers' Run; a collection of snack or finger foods that we can munch on all night. This works especially well if the event is a Movie or Game Night. To that end I've endeavored to collect some simple ideas that you can pull together to satisfy all your munchers.

### First Things First

Before you put together a shopping list, check out your stash in the pantry, fridge and freezer. What do you have

on hand that could lend itself to becoming a snack item? Here are some ideas:

- ★ Crackers
- ★ Cheese (spreadable and sliced)
- ★ Nuts
- ★ Vegetables (celery, carrots, broccoli, peppers, etc.)
- ★ Pretzels
- ★ Chips
- ★ Chicken or Ham for spreads
- ★ Mustards
- ★ Pickles
- ★ Snack Mix

Did you receive a gift box containing snackable items? Chances are many of these items are already in the box.



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## Recipes and Ideas

**H**ere are some ideas that are easy to put together and easy on both the belt and the budget.

### Chef John's Cheesy Crackers

Makes: 3 dozen crackers

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

#### Ingredients

½ teaspoon vegetable oil

2 tablespoons unsalted butter at room temperature

¾ cup lightly packed shredded sharp Cheddar cheese

⅓ cup lightly packed freshly shredded Parmesan cheese

½ teaspoon paprika

1 pinch cayenne pepper, or to taste

¼ teaspoon salt

½ cup all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon cold water, or as needed

#### Directions

1. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and lightly grease with vegetable oil.
2. Place butter into a mixing bowl; add Cheddar cheese, Parmesan cheese, paprika, cayenne pepper, and salt. Mix together with the back of a spatula until thoroughly combined.
3. Mix flour into cheese mixture with a fork until crumbly. Sprinkle in cold water, 1 or 2 drops at a time, and mix with spatula until it comes together in a dough that holds its shape when squeezed.
4. Transfer dough to a work surface and press into a thick, flattened disk. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate 30 minutes.
5. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C).
6. Roll dough out on a floured work surface to about 1/8-inch thick. Use a pizza cutter to cut 1-inch wide strips from the dough. Cut strips crosswise into rectangles about 1 1/2-inches long. Use the back of a bamboo skewer to punch 5 small holes into each cracker. Arrange crackers onto prepared baking sheet.
7. Bake in the preheated oven until crackers are browned and crisp, about 15 minutes. Let stand about 3 minutes for crackers to cool and release from the foil. Let cool completely before serving.

## Ranch Style Oyster Crackers

Makes: 24 servings

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

### Ingredients

¾ cup vegetable oil\*

1 (1 ounce) package dry Ranch-style dressing mix

½ teaspoon dried dill weed

¼ teaspoon lemon pepper

¼ teaspoon garlic powder

1 (12 ounce) package oyster crackers

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 275 degrees F (135 degrees C).

2. In a mixing bowl, whisk together vegetable oil, ranch-style dressing mix, dill weed, lemon pepper and garlic powder. Pour this spice mixture over the crackers in a medium bowl, and stir until the crackers are coated. Arrange the crackers on a large baking sheet.

3. Bake in the preheated 275 degrees F (135 degrees C) oven for 15 to 20 minutes.

### \*Notes

You may want to reduce the oil to ½ cup.

## Market Scavenger Hunt

**D**uring the holidays it is often difficult to find a pre-made tray of cheeses and meats, but you can find the makings in other parts of your market.

### **Deli Section**

This should be your first stop when looking for the makings for a Noshers' Run. You can find a variety of salads and sandwich spreads along with a variety of cheeses that lend themselves to a variety of breads and crackers.

### **Freezer Section**

Look for snacks and appetizers that are ready made - and don't overlook the puff pastry. You can make cheese straws, hand pies and fruit tarts. Check out the frozen vegetable section - sometimes you can find items like zucchini chips or green beans along with the specialty fries and onion rings.

### **Fresh Produce**

Look for crisp celery (the lighter the color the lighter the flavor.) Check out the bell peppers, too. They come in a variety of colors and each color tends to have a different intensity of flavor. Don't overlook the carrots, broccoli or fresh cauliflower, either. Apples and oranges are always great options, too!

### **Cookie and Cracker Section**

Take a look at what you can find here. I'm fond of table water crackers as they are a crispy neutral base for all sorts of toppings. You can find all kinds of options from the oyster crackers (that are not made of oysters, they are just the right size to put into soups) to butter and saltine crackers. You might find a special holiday collection of a variety of types of crackers.

Don't forget the popcorn and nuts! If you make your own party mix, why not put together a special batch just for the evening?