

## Spreading the CHEER

Food, drink and decorative tips for hosting holiday guests

### A PARTY PLAN

#### **Simple buffet**

Limit your holiday party spread to yummy appetizers and cocktails, and you won't go wrong. Check out the recipes. **Page 2**

## KEEP IT SIMPLE

## Simple buffet fun way to entertain

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A buffet limited to appetizers and cocktails — with or without alcohol — is a fun way to entertain during the holiday season.

Emma Roberts, a caterer in the Boston area and author of "Sassy Sips & Nibbles" (Wimmer Cookbooks), has plenty to say about that approach — from what to serve to what to serve it in.

Let's start with serving the drinks.

"We tell our clients not everyone has or can buy a matching set of glasses, and, really, it's more interesting if they don't match. Go to flea markets and antique shops and pick up some interesting glasses that way," said Roberts.

Now for drink garnishes. "Think of the flavor of the drink. If an apple would work with it, slice it thin and bake it

so it is almost like an apple chip. Freeze fresh cranberries and put them on toothpicks and they act like ice cubes," she said.

Food can include a variety of appetizers made by the host, or guests can contribute to the table. Check the accompanying recipes submitted by Jackson-area residents.

As for serving, Roberts said a clever and popular idea is serving appetizers in tiny, cast-iron 3-inch skillet or retro

foods on retro 6-inch plates. Or buy tiny white cardboard Asian food containers, commonly used for takeout and leftovers, that guests fill with appetizers; that allows guests to handle their food and still walk around the room. Decorate the boxes with a snowflake stamp.

"Or, set up an elaborate coffee bar with whipped cream, shaved chocolate, mini marshmallows and different liqueurs," Roberts said.

The rule of thumb, she added, is to offer drinks and food at different locations.

And if you are having more than 75 guests, you need two bar areas.

Well before the party, "walk through the door your guests will be coming in and analyze where the bar and food should be set up. You may need to move some furniture because you don't want any bottle-necks."

## Some holiday recipes for easy appetizers and cocktails

## Easy recipes for the holidays

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**Martini:**

1½ ounces premium vodka  
2 ounces frozen blueberries,  
pureed with 1 ounce water  
¼ ounce freshly squeezed  
lime juice  
Blueberry skewers

Cook popcorn kernels as directed on package; transfer to large bowl and set aside. Place nuts on three separate cookie sheets and bake in 350 degree oven 6 to 8 minutes, until toasted. Remove and let cool. Add nuts and dried fruit to popcorn. In heavy saucepan over medium heat, mix together syrup and next four ingredients. Simmer about 5 minutes; slowly add syrup mixture to popcorn mixture, stirring constantly. Transfer to baking sheet and cool. Salt to taste and toss well before serving. Serves 6.

For martinis, fill cocktail shaker with ice; add vodka, blueberry puree and lime juice. Shake well and strain into a martini glass. Garnish with a blueberry skewer (thread several blueberries onto one end of a wooden skewer).

— From "Sassy Sips & Nibbles" by Emma Roberts

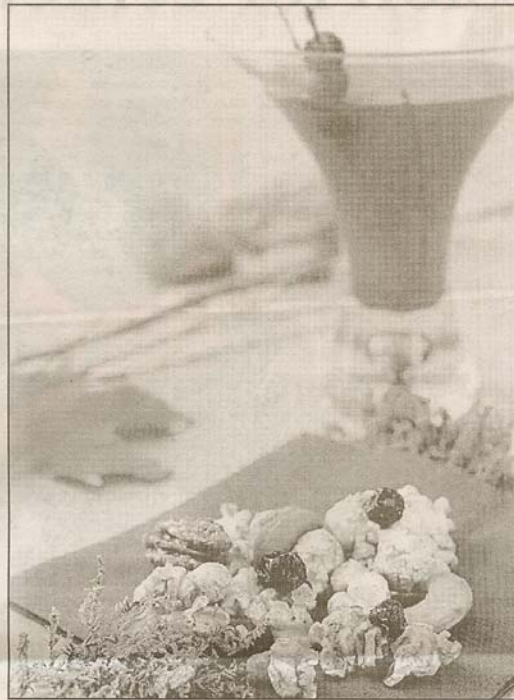
### Bittersweet Chocolate Ruffles with Not So Shirley Temple

**Bittersweet Chocolate Ruffles:**  
1 pound bittersweet chocolate,  
coarsely chopped  
1 12-ounce bag Ruffles potato  
chips

**Sea salt crystals**  
**Drink:**  
1½ ounces Pimm's No. 1 Cup  
2 ounces lemon juice  
1 ounce simple syrup  
Dash grenadine  
2 to 3 ounces Prosecco (Italian  
sparkling wine), chilled  
2 thin slices cucumber, skin re-  
moved  
1 baby strawberry  
Mint leaves

For chips: Slowly melt chocolate over medium heat in double boiler, stirring often. Dip chips into melted chocolate and coat halfway up. Transfer chips to parchment-lined baking sheet. Before chocolate hardens, sprinkle with sea salt. Allow to cool completely before serving. Serve in a silver bowl or other elegant serving bowl.

For drink: Fill cocktail shaker with ice; add Pimm's, juice,



Upscale Trail Mix with Mouth Katahdin Martinis.

syrup and grenadine, shake well and strain into ice-filled wine glass. Top with Prosecco and garnish with cucumber, strawberry and mint leaves.

**Note:** Chips are best day they are prepared but can be made hours in advance if day is not humid. Carefully store in plastic airtight container, separating chip layers with parchment paper.  
— From "Sassy Sips & Nibbles" by Emma Roberts

### Sweet & Salty Birdfeed with Harvest Punch

**Birdfeed:**

2 tablespoons sesame oil  
½ cup honey  
Dash cayenne pepper  
2 cups hulled pumpkin seeds  
½ cup sesame seeds  
½ cup shredded coconut  
Kosher salt

**Punch:**

6 cups apple cider, separated  
1½ cups club soda  
2 ounces Cointreau  
4 ounces brandy  
½ cup superfine sugar  
½ cup crisp, red apple, thinly  
sliced

½ pear, thinly sliced  
½ orange, thinly sliced in  
rounds

For birdfeed: In skillet over medium heat, combine oil, honey and cayenne; simmer 2 minutes. In medium mixing bowl, combine seeds and coconut; slowly incorporate seed mixture into honey mixture, mixing well until blended. Spread mixture over a parchment-lined pan and bake at 325 degrees 10 to 12 minutes. Remove from oven and season with salt. Crumble when cool. Store in airtight container until ready to serve.

For punch: Pour 2 cups cider in ice cube molds and freeze. Pour remaining cider, club soda, Cointreau and brandy into large punch bowl. Add cider ice cubes; add sugar and stir vigorously. Float fruit slices on top.

**Note:** Serve the punch with a cinnamon stick in wide mason jars or any glass. Serve birdfeed in (clean) open birdfeeders, in small terra-cotta pots lined with parchment paper or festive holiday bowls.

— From "Sassy Sips & Nibbles" by Emma Roberts

### Upscale Trail Mix with Mount Katahdin Martinis

**Trail Mix:**

¼ cup popcorn kernels  
1 tablespoon cooking oil  
¼ cup pecan halves  
¼ cup hazelnuts

¼ cup small cashews  
¼ cup dried blueberries or  
currants  
½ cup pure maple syrup  
¼ teaspoon ginger  
¼ teaspoon cinnamon  
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper  
2 tablespoons butter  
Salt to taste

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