

Crostini? Is that a fancy word for an open-faced sandwich? — Husband

1 loaf crusty French bread
 4 tbsp butter, softened
 1 cup apple (or pumpkin) butter
 16 slices prosciutto (about 1/4 pound)
 2 apples thinly sliced
 1 pound brie, thinly sliced
 Kosher salt
 ground black pepper
 olive oil

Heat the oven to 450°F.

Cut 1/2-inch thick, slightly angled slices out of the loaf. Butter the bottom side of the bread slices and put them onto a parchment lined baking sheet. Spread the apple (or pumpkin) butter onto each slice.

Top each piece with 1 slice of prosciutto and 1 – 2 slices of pear or apple. Cover this with the Brie slices, season with salt and pepper, and drizzle with olive oil. Bake until the cheese is melted, about 8 to 10 minutes.

Brussels Sprout Gratin with Chestnuts, Bacon and Caramelized Shallots

1 pot

60 minutes

The shallots

6 peeled shallots, sliced thin
 4 tablespoons butter
 Kosher salt

Preheat oven to 375°F.

In a sauté pan add the butter. When butter has melted add shallots and a pinch of kosher salt. Reduce heat to medium low and continue to cook the shallots, stirring occasionally, until they are soft and browned (12–15 minutes). **DO NOT LET THEM BURN!** If they brown too quickly, add 1 tablespoon of water, stir, and continue cooking. Once they are ready, set them aside. When the shallots caramelize, make the topping.

The topping

3 cups coarse fresh bread crumbs
 3 Tablespoons unsalted butter (melted)
 1 1/2 teaspoon lemon zest (about 1 lemon)
 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
 1/2 ground pepper
 2 tablespoons minced fresh flat-leaf parsley

In a bowl, stir together the bread crumbs, melted butter, lemon zest, salt, pepper, and parsley. Set aside.

Brussels sprouts

2 lb. Brussels sprouts, bottoms trimmed, halved lengthwise

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the Brussels sprouts (sliced half lengthwise) and cook until just tender, 5–7 minutes. Drain, then transfer to a bowl of ice water. Drain well.

For the gratin

1/2 lb thick cut smoked bacon sliced into lardons
 10 canned chestnuts, diced
 2 Tablespoons flour
 8 oz Gruyère cheese, grated
 2 oz Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, grated
 1 teaspoon lemon zest
 3/4 teaspoon ground pepper
 1 cup heavy cream
 olive oil

In a medium sauté pan add 1 tablespoon olive oil and the bacon. Cook until bacon renders and is just starting to get crisp. Toss in the drained Brussels sprouts and chopped chestnuts. Stir well, coating the Brussels sprouts. Reduce heat to low, sprinkle the flour over the Brussels sprouts, and stir well. Add the cream and lemon zest, stir and scrape up any bits on the bottom of the pan. When the cream begins to bubble and thicken **SLIGHTLY**, shut off the heat.

Pour the Brussels mixture into a large bowl and mix in the Gruyère, Parmigiano-Reggiano, lemon zest, caramelized shallots, the 2 teaspoons salt, and the pepper. Transfer the mixture to the gratin dish and smooth the top. Sprinkle the bread crumb mixture evenly on top. Bake until the bread crumbs are golden brown, about 35 minutes. let the gratin rest for 15 minutes before serving.

1/4 cup olive oil
6 medium shallots, sliced into rings
(about 1 cup)

1.5 pounds thin fresh string beans

1 pound button mushrooms, sliced
6 large cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme

2 cups milk
3 tablespoons flour
1/2 finely chopped parsley
1/4 ground nutmeg
1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons grated
parmesan cheese
1 tablespoon Dijon
salt and pepper

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Heat the olive oil in a small skillet over medium-high heat until very hot but not smoking. Add 1/4 cup shallots and cook, stirring, until golden brown and crisp, about 2 minutes. Transfer with a slotted spoon to paper towels to drain.

Repeat with the remaining shallots, cooking 1/4 cup at a time. Reserve the oil in the skillet.

Place the green beans in a steamer basket fitted over boiling water. Cover and steam until bright green and still crisp, about 3 minutes. (Alternately, just boil them). Drain and shock with cold water. Drain again and reserve in a large bowl.

Heat 1 tablespoon of the reserved shallot oil in a large, deep, nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mushroom liquid is evaporated and they begin to brown, about 12 minutes. Add the garlic and thyme and cook, stirring, 1 minute. Transfer the mushroom mixture to the bowl with the green beans.

Whisk together the milk and flour until the flour is mostly dissolved. Add the mixture to the skillet and, whisking constantly, bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to medium-low, whisking occasionally, until thickened, 10 to 15 minutes. (It will continue to thicken in the oven as well, so don't panic if it looks slightly soupy). Remove the pan from heat and stir in the green beans, mushroom mixture, Dijon, 1/2 cup parmesan cheese, parsley, nutmeg, 3/4 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper.

Coat a 2-quart baking dish with cooking spray or olive oil. Spoon the green bean mixture into the prepared dish and sprinkle the top with the crispy shallots and the remaining 2 tablespoons parmesan cheese. Bake until golden on top and bubbling, about 20 minutes.

45 minutes + 3 hours chilling

This may have been designed for mini-cheesecakes, but who has ever thought they only want a mini-cheesecake? — Husband

For the crust

10 graham crackers sheets, finely crushed
(1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups)
2 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

Preheat oven to 325°F. In a mixing bowl^a, whisk together graham cracker crumbs, sugar and cinnamon. Pur in butter and using a fork, stir until evenly moistened. Place mixture along bottom of pie-tin, and press into an even layer. Bake in a oven for 3–5 minutes, then remove from oven and allow to cool.

^aAlternately, use husband power.

For the streusel

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup quick oats
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup + 2 tablespoons packed
light-brown sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground nutmeg
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt
14 cup unsalted butter, cold and diced
into $\frac{1}{2}$ inch cubes

In a mixing bowl^a, whisk together flour, quick oats, brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Add cold butter and using fingertips, rub butter into dry mixture until it comes together in small crumbles and pices of butter are no longer visible.to refridgerator while preparing apples and filling.

^asee previous footnote

For the filling

2 (8 oz) pkgs cream cheese, softened (16 oz total)
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs from happy chickens
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sour cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 pound apples peeled, cored, and finely chopped
2 teaspoon lemon juice

In a bowl, toss chopped apples with lemon juice. Set aside.

In a mixing bowl, using an electric hand mixer^a, cream together cream cheese with sugar until just smooth. Mix in eggs one at a time, then blend in sour cream and vanilla.

Resist the urge to devour.

^asee previous footnote

Assembly

Pour filling over crust. Apply an even layer of apples over crust, and then finish by sprinkling streusel evenly over the top. Bake in oven for 12–15 minutes. Cool at room temperature 30 minutes, then transfer to fridge and chill 3 hours.