

# brunch in a breeze

From cranberry cocktails to simple baked French toast, this make-ahead holiday menu will have you sailing out of the kitchen in no time

USE TALL PITCHERS AND CAKE PEDESTALS FOR HEIGHT ON A BUFFET

## THE MENU

A great brunch includes a variety of sweet and savory dishes. Round out the meal with good coffee, tea, and fruit juices.

### Sparkling Sea Breeze

Salmon and Brie Breakfast Strata

Baked French Toast with Pecan Streusel

Roasted Vegetable and Ricotta Terrine

Pepper Jelly with biscuits

Fresh fruit with Honey-Mint Syrup

Almond Pound Cake with Kumquat Syrup

## Time-saving Secrets

- **Casseroles.** They're great because they can be made ahead and don't require a lot of babysitting—just an occasional peek in the oven.
- **A mix of methods.** Choose recipes that require different cooking techniques. If you're baking your main dish in the oven, plan for sides that can be stirred on the stovetop, or vice versa.
- **Speedy service.** Choose easy-to-serve items, such as sliced meats and premixed drinks, to prevent bottlenecks at the buffet table. Give most dishes two serving utensils, especially for large parties.
- **Creative plating.** It's not cheating to pick up some prepared food to add to your menu—just put it in a pretty bowl and garnish with fresh herbs or sliced fruit.
- **One simple cocktail.** Don't go overboard on beverage choices. Make one light, fruity drink both with and without alcohol so everyone can enjoy.



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## Sparkling Sea Breeze

HOLIDAY SPIRITS!

Substitute a lemon-lime carbonated soda or club soda for the vodka and wine to make a nonalcoholic version.

**PREP:** 4 minutes

- 2 cups cranberry juice cocktail, chilled
- 2 cups pink grapefruit juice, chilled
- 1 cup cranberry vodka, chilled\*
- 1 (750-ml) bottle sparkling white wine, chilled

**Garnish:** pink grapefruit wheels or wedges

Combine first 3 ingredients in a pitcher or punch bowl. Gently stir in sparkling wine. Garnish, if desired. Makes 8½ cups.

\*Check out our favorite cranberry vodka, featured in our holiday gift guide starting on page 22.



EVERYONE DESERVES A BIG TOY FOR CHRISTMAS! MCTAVISH EIGHTBALL SURFBOARD (\$785); MCTAVISH.COM.AU

➔ Bring seasonal joy to your deck or patio with quick tips for decorating an outdoor tree: [coastalliving.com](http://coastalliving.com)

## Salmon and Brie Breakfast Strata

**PREP:** 18 minutes

**CHILL:** 8 hours

**COOK:** 50 minutes

- 1 (8-ounce) round Brie
  - 1 (16-ounce) round loaf bread, cubed
  - 8 ounces hot-smoked salmon, skin removed and broken into pieces
  - 1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
  - 8 large eggs
  - 4 cups half-and-half
  - 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
- Garnish:** sliced green onions

**1.** Trim rind from Brie, if desired; cut cheese into cubes. Layer bread, Brie, salmon, and Parmesan in a lightly greased 13- x 9-inch baking dish.

**2.** Whisk together eggs, half-and-half, and seasoned salt; pour evenly over salmon mixture. Cover and chill 8 hours.

**3.** Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 55 minutes or until casserole is set. Garnish, if desired. Makes 10 servings.



### TEST KITCHEN TIP

You'll find smoked salmon two ways: cold- and hot-smoked. Cold-smoked salmon is thin, translucent, and presliced, while the hot-smoked versions are opaque, thick, and have skin attached. Hot-smoked salmon is cooked completely, and it's best for this recipe.



**FOOD EDITOR  
JULIA RUTLAND SAYS**

**"ADD THESE  
READY-MADE  
ITEMS TO YOUR  
SHOPPING LIST"**

**Dinner rolls or biscuits.**

Plan on two or three per person. Encourage your guests to make mini-sandwiches by slicing each one about three-quarters of the way through.

**Condiments.**

Offer a variety including coarse-grain mustard, mayonnaise, and chutneys.

**Bone-in fully cooked ham or smoked turkey.**

Simplify with this store-bought crowd-pleaser; as a bonus, the leftovers freeze beautifully.

**Frozen quiche.**

Slip it out of the disposable metal pan while still frozen, right into your own ceramic pie plate.

**Bakery breads.**

Think scones, muffins, and coffee cake, with an assortment of jams.

**Mixed fruit or a fruit tray.**

Place fruit on a pretty platter, charger, or clear bowl. Sprinkle with pomegranate seeds for holiday color and an impressive presentation!

**Frozen cheesecake or pecan pie.**

Portion cheesecake or pie while still frozen for flawless slices. Warm some chocolate sauce on the side for a "homemade" touch.



Red Pepper Jelly

## Red Pepper Jelly

**PREP:** 12 minutes  
**COOK:** 19 minutes

- 2 red bell peppers, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1/2 sweet onion, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 6 medium jalapeño chiles, seeded and minced
- 1 (1.75-ounce) package powdered pectin
- 1 cup apple cider vinegar
- 5 cups sugar

**1.** Process bell pepper and onion in a food processor 1 minute or until pureed.

**2.** Combine red pepper puree, jalapeño chile, pectin, and vinegar in a large Dutch oven; bring to a rolling boil. Quickly stir in sugar, and boil 4 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat.

**3.** Quickly pour hot jelly into hot sterilized jars, filling to 1/4 inch from top; wipe jar rims. Cover at once with metal lids, and screw on bands. Process in boiling-water bath 10 minutes. Makes 6 half-pints.

*Recipe adapted from DamGood Sweet (Taunton, 2009) by David Suas and Raquel Pelzel.*

## Honey-Mint Syrup

**PREP:** 2 minutes  
**COOK:** 6 minutes

- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1 cup torn fresh mint
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint

Combine first 3 ingredients and 1 cup water in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Remove from heat; cool. Strain and chill until ready to use. Before serving, stir in 1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint. Makes about 1 1/2 cups.



Honey-Mint Syrup

TRY THIS OVER FRESH FRUIT OR IN ICED TEA, LEMONADE, OR A BOURBON COCKTAIL

## Baked French Toast with Pecan Streusel

**PREP:** 14 minutes  
**CHILL:** 8 hours  
**COOK:** 45 minutes

- 1 (16-ounce) loaf French bread, cut into 1/2-inch slices
- 8 large eggs
- 3 cups half-and-half
- 3/4 cup firmly packed light-brown sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 2 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

**Pecan Streusel (recipe below)**  
**Maple syrup**

**1.** Arrange bread slices in a greased 13- x 9-inch baking dish.

**2.** Combine eggs and next 5 ingredients in a large bowl, whisking until well blended. Pour egg mixture over bread. Cover and chill 8 hours or overnight.

**3.** Preheat oven to 350°. Sprinkle Pecan Streusel over bread slices. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes or until slightly puffed and golden. Serve with maple syrup. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

## Pecan Streusel

**PREP:** 10 minutes

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 3/4 cup firmly packed light-brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 cup chopped pecans

Combine first 4 ingredients in a small bowl; stir in pecans. Makes 3 cups.



Baked French Toast with Pecan Streusel

**TEST KITCHEN TIP**

Save this Pecan Streusel recipe and use as a topping for quick breads, such as banana bread or muffins.



**JULIA SAYS**

"THIS RECIPE, WITH LAYERS OF ROASTED VEGETABLES AND A RICOTTA CHEESE MIXTURE, IS A GREAT OPTION WHEN YOU'RE TIRED OF HEAVY SIDE DISHES AND WANT A LOW-FAT, HEALTHY OPTION. TRY GRILLING THE VEGETABLES FOR A FLAVOR BOOST"

## Roasted Vegetable and Ricotta Terrine

**PREP:** 32 minutes  
**COOK:** 27 minutes  
**STAND:** 10 minutes  
**CHILL:** 8 hours

- 1 eggplant
- Olive oil cooking spray
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 large red bell pepper, seeded and halved
- 1 large yellow bell pepper, seeded and halved
- 1 large zucchini, sliced lengthwise
- 1 1/2 cups ricotta cheese
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 red chile pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1/2 cup fresh basil leaves, coarsely chopped
- 2 tablespoons bottled balsamic glaze

Garnish: fresh basil

**1.** Remove both ends of eggplant; slice eggplant lengthwise into 8 slices. Place eggplant on a foil-lined baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Coat eggplant with cooking spray; sprinkle with 1/4 teaspoon sea salt and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper. Bake at 450° for 15 minutes or until tender. Remove from oven; brush with balsamic vinegar, and set aside to cool.

**2.** Place bell peppers, cut side down, and zucchini on a foil-lined baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Bake at 450° for 12 minutes or until peppers begin to blister. Place peppers in a large zip-top bag; seal. Let stand 10 minutes. Remove peel from peppers; cut pepper pieces in half lengthwise.

**3.** Combine ricotta and next 5 ingredients in a bowl. Stir in remaining 1/4 teaspoon sea salt and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper.

**4.** Line an 8- x 4-inch loaf pan with plastic wrap, allowing edges to overhang. Gently press 3 eggplant slices crosswise into loaf pan, balsamic side up, allowing top of slices to be even with pan. Press 1 slice up against sides of each end of loaf pan, allowing top of slice to be even with pan.

**5.** Spread one-fourth ricotta mixture over eggplant; top with yellow pepper slices. Spread one-fourth ricotta mixture over yellow peppers. Repeat procedure with red bell pepper, one-fourth ricotta mixture, zucchini slices, and remaining ricotta mixture. Top with remaining 2 slices eggplant, balsamic side down. Cover with plastic wrap, and place a weight on plastic wrap. (We used 3 small soup cans.) Chill 8 hours or overnight.

**6.** Uncover and invert loaf onto a cutting board; carefully remove plastic wrap. Use paper towels to blot liquid, if necessary. Cut into 8 slices, and place on serving plates. Drizzle with balsamic glaze, and garnish, if desired. Makes 8 servings.

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## Almond Pound Cake with Kumquat Syrup

*Pound cakes are famous for their ability to freeze well. After cooling, wrap thoroughly and freeze up to three months.*

**PREP:** 6 minutes  
**COOK:** 45 minutes  
**COOL:** 30 minutes

- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup whole milk

Kumquat Syrup (recipe at right)

**1.** Beat butter with an electric mixer until fluffy. Beat in sugar 1 minute or until well blended. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating thoroughly after each addition to make a thick, creamy batter. Beat in almond extract.

**2.** Whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt in a small bowl. Add about one-third flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat until incorporated. Add a little milk, and beat again. Repeat until all of the flour mixture and milk have been added.

**3.** Pour batter into a greased 9- x 5-inch loaf pan, tapping pan to settle batter and smoothing the top with a spatula. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into center comes out clean. Remove pan to a wire rack, and let cool at least 30 minutes. Run a knife along inside of pan; gently turn cake out into 1 hand, and place on a cake plate. Serve with Kumquat Syrup. Makes 8 servings. 🍴

Reprinted with permission from *Gather: Memorable Menus for Entertaining Throughout the Seasons* (Sasquatch Books, 2009).



**TEST KITCHEN TIP**

Wrap a cooled pound cake in clear wrap or foil, then cover in a pretty dish towel and secure with ribbon for a homemade gift.



**KUMQUAT SYRUP**

Bring 2 cups water and 1 cup sugar to a boil in a heavy saucepan over medium-high heat. Continue to boil, stirring occasionally, 5 minutes or until a light syrup forms. Reduce heat to medium, and add 3/4 pound fresh kumquats, sliced and seeds removed. Simmer 10 minutes or until skins are translucent. Remove pan from heat, and let cool. Cover and chill until ready to use; bring to room temperature before serving. Makes 2 cups.