

Hosting an Easter Brunch

At Mezzaluna, we want your Easter to be beautiful and delicious, so we've put together some great tips to make the day memorable.

Easter is the day we set aside to celebrate spring and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's also a day that many families and friends gather together for a delicious springtime meal.

Hosting a brunch (which means breakfast-lunch) is a simple, and traditional meal for Easter Sunday. It's a day to pull out all the stops, from an egg-stravagant menu to an energetic egg hunt on the lawn with the children.

Tips for a Great Brunch

Table Setting

1. Set a beautiful springtime table. Make an effort. Pull out your china and crystal and do what you can do to honor your guests.
2. Bring elements of springtime and Easter to make your table look festive.
 - A. Tulips, daffodils, hyacinths
 - B. Arrange wheat grass (can be purchased at Whole Foods). Place colored eggs in the grass.
 - C. Use pastel colors like pale green, yellows, pinks, purples, blues
3. Use a single color palette like green
 - A. Rather than decorate with numerous colors, choose a monochromatic palette (one color with varying shades).
 - B. A tablecloth provides a quiet backdrop to the rest of the table: a lime-green charger, topped with a white plate and napkins edged with the same green.
 - C. Use wheat grass, quail eggs, and dyed eggs.
 - D. Use simple square vases as bowls to showcase green apples, different types of eggs, and daffodils - roots and all.
 - E. Green apples also become unique place cards, with the nametag attached to the stem.
 - F. Use your best china.
 - G. Place cards are fun:
 - A. A colored egg with the guests name written on it.
 - B. Green apple with a slit cut into the top
 - H. Place an individual gift on each plate:
 - A. A chocolate bunny, chick, or sugared egg

Give the kids something to do

1. Egg dying and basket decorating.
2. Have your guests hide the eggs outside.

Brunch Food Preparation

1. Since most of us will go to church on Easter Sunday, it's important to plan and prepare the day before.
2. I suggest serving brunch buffet style – setting out various dishes on a table for your guests to help themselves.
3. Many items can be made ahead of time and can be served at room temperature.

The Mezzaluna Brunch

This is the menu you receive if you have Mezzaluna prepare a brunch in your home.

1. Fresh Peach or Raspberry Bellinis made with Sparkling Water or Champagne
2. Handmade Granola Parfaits with dried cherries and cranberries with Orange-Honey Yogurt
3. Array of Fresh Seasonal Fruit
4. Crème Brulee French toast
5. Caramelized Onion, Apple-Smoked Bacon, Gruyère Cheese and Fresh Thyme Quiche
6. Italian Sausage Kabobs with Grand Marnier and Apricots
7. Roasted Fingerling Potatoes with Asparagus, Cherry Tomatoes and Kalamata Olives
8. Sliced Beef Tenderloin with Béarnaise Sauce
9. Glazed Lemon Poppy Seed or Carrot Cake Muffins

Key Components for a Great Brunch Menu

1. Beverage Prepare a delicious punch where people can serve themselves or make a bellini
2. Fresh Fruit Either in salad form or beautifully displayed on a platter.
3. Egg Dish Egg casserole, quiche, or tart
4. Meat Item Ham is traditional for Easter, beef tenderloin
5. Potatoes Hash brown casserole, roasted fingerling potatoes
6. Vegetable Platter of roasted asparagus with kosher salt and fresh lemon zest
7. Sweets A coffee cake, cupcakes, cookies, small fruit tarts

Mezzaluna Brunch Recipes

Caramelized Onion, Bacon and Gruyère Quiche

Serves 6-8

INGREDIENTS:

1 ready-made piecrust
1 lb. good quality bacon
1 large onion
2 Tablespoons olive oil
6 large eggs
2/3 cup heavy cream or crème fraîche
1 cup milk (preferably whole)
8 ounces gruyère, emmenthal, or other Swiss-type cheese
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg - optional

PREPARATION:

1. Poke the bottom with a fork or the tip of a sharp knife, and place the pastry in the freezer for 30 minutes. Preheat the oven to 425°F.
2. Line the pastry with aluminum foil and pastry weights and bake in the bottom third of the oven until the pastry is golden at the edges, about 15 minutes.
3. Remove from the oven and remove the aluminum foil and pastry weights. Return the pastry to the oven to bake until the bottom is golden, an additional 5 minutes. Remove from the oven and reserve.
4. Slice onion thinly and slowly caramelize in olive oil in a sauté pan for about 20 minutes until golden brown. Add 2 tsp. sugar. Set aside to cool.
5. Fry bacon until crispy, crumble and set aside.
6. In a medium-sized bowl, whisk together the eggs, cream, and the milk until thoroughly blended. Season with the salt and pepper, then add the cheese, bacon, and onions. Stir until it is blended,
7. Turn the mixture into the pre-baked pastry, and spread out the cheese evenly over the bottom of the pastry.
8. Sprinkle the top with nutmeg if you've used a Swiss-type cheese, and bake in the center of the oven until the filling is golden and puffed, and is completely baked through, about 30 minutes. To test for doneness, shake the quiche - if it is solid without a pool of uncooked filling in the center, it is done. You may also stick a sharp knife blade into the center of the filling and if it comes out clean, the quiche is baked through.
9. Remove the quiche from the oven and serve immediately.

Crème Brulee French Toast

Makes 6 servings.

INGREDIENTS:

1 stick (1/2 cup) unsalted butter
1 cup packed brown sugar
2 tablespoons corn syrup
An 8- to 9-inch round loaf country-style bread
5 large eggs
1 1/2 cups half-and-half
1-teaspoon vanilla
1 teaspoon Grand Marnier
1/4-teaspoon salt

PREPARATION:

1. In a small heavy saucepan melt butter with brown sugar and corn syrup over moderate heat, stirring, until smooth and pour into a 13- by 9- by 2-inch baking dish.
2. Cut six 1-inch thick slices from center portion of bread, reserving ends for another use, and trim crusts. Arrange bread slices in one layer in baking dish, squeezing them slightly to fit.
3. In a bowl whisk together eggs, half-and-half, vanilla, Grand Marnier, and salt until combined well and pour evenly over bread. Chill bread mixture, covered, at least 8 hours and up to 1 day.
4. Preheat oven to 350° F. and bring bread to room temperature.
5. Bake bread mixture, uncovered, in middle of oven until puffed and edges are pale golden, 35 to 40 minutes. Serve hot French toast immediately.

Handmade Granola

Makes 8 servings

INGREDIENTS:

Granola
4 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
2 cups sweetened shredded coconut
2 cups sliced almonds
3/4 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup good honey
1 1/2 cups small diced dried apricots
1 cup each - small diced dried figs, dried cherries, dried cranberries, roasted, unsalted cashews

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

PREPARATION:

1. Toss the oats, coconut, and almonds together in a large bowl.
2. Whisk together the oil and honey in a small bowl. Pour the liquids over the oat mixture and stir with a wooden spoon until all the oats and nuts are coated.
3. Pour onto a 13 by 18 by 1-inch sheet pan. Bake, stirring occasionally with a spatula, until the mixture turns a nice, even, golden brown, about 45 minutes.
4. Remove the granola from the oven and allow to cool, stirring occasionally.
5. Add the apricots, figs, cherries, cranberries, and cashews. Store the cooled granola in an airtight container.

Beef Tenderloin with Béarnaise Sauce

Serves 10-12

INGREDIENTS:

5-lb beef tenderloin
Butter, Salt and Pepper

Béarnaise Sauce:

1 Tablespoon finely minced shallots or onions
1/4 cup white wine
1 level teaspoon dried tarragon
1/2-teaspoon chervil
3 egg yolks
1-cup butter
2-3 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Salt to taste



PREPARATION:

For the tenderloin:

1. Preheat oven to 500°. Trim any fat and skin off the tenderloin. Place in a roasting pan or a jellyroll pan and spread the meat generously with butter.
2. Place in oven, immediately reduce heat to 400°. Bake for approximately 30 minutes or until meat thermometer reads 130° for rare.
3. Meat will continue to cook after it is removed from the oven. Allow it to rest 10-15 minutes before slicing into 1-inch medallions.

For the Béarnaise Sauce:

1. Combine the shallots (or onion), white wine, tarragon and chervil in a saucepan. Cook over med-high heat and reduce by half.
2. Remove from heat and allow to cool.
3. Beat together lemon juice and egg yolks with a wooden spoon.
4. Pour this mixture into the top of a simmering double boiler; add the butter, a little at a time, stirring constantly.
5. Add the reduced herb mixture and continue stirring until thickened into the desired consistency. Make sure the sauce NEVER comes to a boil. This will cause it to "break".
6. Serve immediately. (The sauce may also be set aside after step 6 and then slowly re-heated in a double boiler. If sauce were to break (separate or curdle), add an ice cube and stir back together.)

To serve:

Slice into thin pieces and arrange on a platter for service on buffet table. Place sauce in a sauceboat for guests to help themselves.

Tangerine-Glazed Easter Ham

Serves 8-10

INGREDIENTS:

1 (8 to 10-pound) smoked ham, bone-in, skin on
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 bunch fresh sage leaves
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, cut in chunks
2 tangerines, sliced thin, seeds removed
2 cups tangerine juice
2 cups light brown sugar, packed
1 cup water
1/4 teaspoon whole cloves
2 cinnamon sticks

PREPARATION:

1. Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F.
2. Put the ham in a large roasting pan, fat-side up. Using a sharp knife, score the ham with cuts across the skin, about 2-inches apart and 1/2-inch deep. Cut diagonally down the slashes to form a diamond pattern; season the meat generously with salt and pepper.
3. Chop about 8 of the sage leaves and put it in a bowl; mix with the oil to make a paste. Rub the sage-oil all over the ham, being sure to get the flavor into all the slits. Bake the ham for 2 hours. Now there is plenty of time to bang-out the tangerine glaze.

For the glaze:

1. Place a saucepan over medium heat. Add the chunks of butter, tangerines, tangerine juice, brown sugar, water, and spices.
2. Slowly cook the liquid down to a syrupy glaze; this should take about 30 to 40 minutes.
3. After the ham has been going for a couple of hours, pour the tangerine glaze all over it, with the pieces of fruit and all.
4. Scatter the remaining sage leaves on top and stick the ham back in the oven and continue to cook for 1½ hours, basting with the glaze every 30 minutes until the ham is dark and crispy, and the whole thing is glistening with a sugary glaze.
5. Set the ham on a cutting board to rest before carving. Serve the tangerine glaze on the side.



Roasted Fingerling Potatoes

Serves 8

INGREDIENTS:

4 pounds small fingerling or red new potatoes (if using red potatoes, quarter them.)
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
Leaves from ½ bunch fresh thyme
Kosher Salt

PREPARATION:

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Toss together the potatoes, oil, and thyme, and sprinkle with salt.
3. Dump the potatoes out on a rimmed baking sheet and roast until tender and crisp on the edges, 30 to 40 minutes.

Mini Lemon Poppy Seed Muffins

Makes 2 dozen

INGREDIENTS:

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, plus 1 tablespoon, softened
1 cup cake flour
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons poppy seeds
1 large egg
1/2 cup sugar
3/4 cup plain low-fat yogurt
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

PREPARATION:

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Lightly grease 2 mini muffin tins (each with 12 (1 3/4-inch) wells) with 1 tablespoon softened butter and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, sift together cake flour, flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and poppy seeds.
3. In a medium bowl, combine the egg and sugar and beat with an electric mixer on high speed until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes.
4. Reduce the mixer speed to medium and beat in the yogurt, remaining 4 tablespoons of butter, lemon juice, zest and vanilla until well incorporated, about 30 seconds.
5. Fold the wet ingredients into the dry just until moistened and being careful not to over-mix.
6. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin tins, filling each halfway.
7. Bake until the muffins are set and golden brown and a tester comes out clean, 14 to 16 minutes.
8. Remove from the oven and use a toothpick to poke several holes in the top of each muffin.
9. Brush each muffin generously with the lemon glaze.
10. Allow the muffins to cool for 10 minutes in the tin and then transfer them to a wire rack to cool completely.

Lemon Glaze:

1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons powdered sugar
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, strained
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon almond extract

In a small bowl, combine ingredients and whisk to incorporate.