

An Easter Buffet Starring Oven-Glazed Ham

A generous, delicious buffet of spring dishes for lunch or dinner—what could be better for Easter?

Serves Twelve.

To serve twelve with this menu, you'll need to double the salad and gratin and triple the asparagus recipe. The shopping list already reflects the scaled-up amounts.



At the center of this classic Easter meal is a baked half-ham with a sweet-tart tangerine glaze. Broiled asparagus, a creamy gratin, biscuits, and ginger mini-cupcakes are equally crowd-pleasing. The ham will serve up to 14 people, so we've designed the menu to serve 12. Or you can scale back and have plenty of leftover ham for sandwiches.

the menu

Boston Lettuce Wedges with Mimosa Vinaigrette

Oven-Glazed Ham with a Pan Sauce

Flaky Cheese Biscuits

Sweet Potato & Leek Gratin

Broiled Asparagus & Orange Slices with Olive Oil & Shallots

Bite-Size Ginger Cupcakes with Lemon-Cream Cheese Frosting



SHOPPING LIST

Fresh Produce

3 lb. asparagus
6 medium Idaho potatoes (1-1/4 lb. total)
6 small heads Boston lettuce
4 medium sweet potatoes (2 lb. total)
4 large leeks (2 lb. total)
4 shallots
1 large bulb garlic
1 small piece fresh ginger root (1 oz.)
6 medium lemons
2 medium oranges
1 bunch fresh thyme
1 bunch flat-leaf parsley

Meat, Eggs & Dairy:

1 half-ham, preferably bone in
12 oz. pancetta or country ham
3 large eggs
3/4 lb. (1-1/2 sticks) unsalted butter
1 qt. heavy cream
2 cups grated sharp Cheddar, Gruyère, Gouda, or provolone
3/4 cup buttermilk
1/2 cup sour cream (not low-fat)
5 oz. cream cheese (not low-fat or whipped)

Other Groceries:

4 oz. cake flour
1-1/2 cups orange juice
1/2 cup tangerine or other citrus marmalade
1 oz. crystallized ginger (to yield 1/4 cup finely chopped)

Pantry Staples:

8 oz. (1-3/4 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour; more for shaping the biscuit dough
1-1/2 cups extra-virgin olive oil
5 oz. confectioner's sugar (1-1/4 cups)
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup (packed) light brown sugar
3 Tbs. Dijon mustard
1 Tbs. baking powder
1 Tbs. cornstarch
1-1/4 tsp. ground ginger
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1 whole nutmeg
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1/8 tsp. ground cloves
table salt
kosher salt
black peppercorns



MENU TIMELINE

One day in advance:

Bake the cupcakes (don't frost them yet).
Prepare and bake the sweet potato gratin.
Boil the egg for the mimosa vinaigrette.

About 4 hours before the meal:

Make lemon-cream cheese frosting and frost the cupcakes.
Remove the gratin from the refrigerator; let it come to room temperature.

About 2 hours before the meal:

Begin baking the ham.
Clean and cut the Boston lettuce.
Make the mimosa vinaigrette.
Make, roll out and cut the biscuit dough.
When the ham has about 30 minutes to go, cover gratin with foil and rewarm in the same oven.
Prep asparagus, shallots and orange slices.

About 30 minutes before the meal:

Remove ham and gratin from the oven and tent with foil to keep warm
Increase oven temperature to 450°F; bake the biscuits.
Make the pan sauce for the ham.

Fifteen minutes before the meal:

Broil the asparagus; toss with orange zest and arrange on a serving platter.
Cut the gratin.
Slice the ham.
Dress the lettuce wedges with vinaigrette.
Arrange biscuits and cupcakes on serving platters.

Boston Lettuce Wedges with Mimosa Vinaigrette

by Jennifer McLagan

Serves six.

ingredients

1 large egg
3 small heads Boston lettuce
2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
1-1/2 Tbs. Dijon mustard
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 Tbs. finely chopped shallot

how to make

Put the egg in a small saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil, cover the saucepan, and remove it from the heat. Let stand, covered for 15 minutes. While the egg cooks, remove any damaged leaves from the lettuce heads and trim their bases. Cut each head through the core into four wedges. Rinse under cold water, shake gently to get rid of excess water, and then set the wedges on a clean dishcloth to drain, cut side down.

In a small bowl, whisk the lemon juice and mustard. Add 1/2 tsp. salt and a few grinds of pepper and then whisk in the oil in a slow, steady stream. Stir in the parsley and shallot.

Drain the egg and cool it under cold running water. Remove the shell and separate the white from the yolk. Using the back of the spoon, press the egg white through a fine sieve. Repeat with the egg yolk. Stir the sieved egg into the dressing and taste for seasoning. Arrange two lettuce wedges on each of six large salad plates and spoon the dressing over them. Serve immediately.



photo: Scott Phillips

Baked Ham with Tangerine-Marmalade Glaze

by Bruce Aidells

A supermarket "city ham" is already fully cooked, so heating it isn't essential. But a warm ham tastes better, and baking concentrates the meat's flavor and improves its texture. It also allows you to jazz up the ham with this citrus-tinged glaze.

Serves twelve to fourteen.

ingredients

1 half-ham, preferably bone-in
1-1/2 cups store-bought orange juice
1/2 cup tangerine or other citrus marmalade
1/4 cup packed light brown sugar
1/4 tsp. ground ginger
1/8 tsp. ground cloves
2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice, more to taste
1 Tbs. cornstarch mixed with 3 Tbs. water

how to make

Position a rack in the lower third of the oven and heat the oven to 325°F. Trim away any skin and external fat to a thickness of about 1/4 inch. Set the ham fat side up and score the fat 1/4 inch deep with diagonal slices every 2 inches so that it forms a cross-hatched diamond pattern.

Set the ham in a sturdy roasting pan or a baking dish. It should fit fairly snugly with only a couple of inches of space on any side. Add the orange juice, plus enough water to reach a 1/4-inch depth. Bake, adding water as needed to maintain 1/4 inch of liquid in the pan, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center of the ham registers 105° to 110°F, 1-3/4 to 2-1/4 hours (it should take about 15 minutes per pound).

While ham is baking, gently warm 1/4 cup of the marmalade in a small saucepan set over medium-low heat. Stir in the brown sugar, ginger, and cloves to combine.

Brush with the glaze:

Remove the ham from the oven and raise the temperature to 425°F. Add more water to the pan so the liquid is about 1/2 inch deep. Using a large spoon or pastry brush, smear the glaze generously over the top of the ham. Return the pan to the oven (even if it hasn't reached 425°F yet) and bake until the glaze on the ham bubbles and begins to darken, 10 to 15 min; the ham should have an internal temperature of 120° to 125°F.

Remove the ham from the oven and transfer to a carving board or large platter. Tent loosely with foil and let rest for 20 to 30 minutes while you make the pan sauce. During this period, the ham's internal temperature should rise to 130° to 140°F.



photo: Scott Phillips

Make the sauce:

Pour the pan juices into a gravy separator or a 4-cup Pyrex measuring cup. Let sit for 10 to 15 minutes to allow any fat to rise and then pour or spoon off the fat and discard (some hams don't exude much fat).

Pour the pan juices into a 2-qt. saucepan, whisk in the remaining 1/4 cup marmalade and lemon juice, and bring to a boil. Taste the sauce, and if the flavor isn't as intense as you'd like, continue to boil to concentrate the flavors as desired.

Stir in about half the cornstarch mixture (called a slurry), and whisk until the sauce thickens slightly, about 15 seconds. Add more of the slurry for a thicker sauce. Set aside and keep warm while the ham rests.

Carve the ham, arrange on a platter, and serve with the sauce alongside.

Flaky Cheese Biscuits

by Peter Reinhart

Because of all the delicious cheese, these biscuits may spread a bit as they bake, but they're so good, it really doesn't matter how they look.

Yields about ten 2-3/4-inch biscuits or eighteen 2-inch biscuits.

ingredients

8 oz. (1-3/4 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour; more as needed for shaping the dough
1 Tbs. granulated sugar
2-1/4 tsp. baking powder
3/4 tsp. kosher salt
1/4 tsp. baking soda
4 oz. (8 Tbs.) very cold unsalted butter
3/4 cup very cold buttermilk
2 cups grated sharp Cheddar, Gruyère, Gouda, or provolone

how to make

Mix and fold the dough:

Heat the oven to 500°F and position a rack in the middle of the oven. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment. Put the flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and baking soda in a large mixing bowl and stir with a whisk to distribute the ingredients evenly.

With a sharp knife or a bench knife, cut the cold butter crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick slices. Stack 3 or 4 slices and cut them into three even strips. Rotate the stack a quarter turn and cut the strips in half. You should create 6 small bits of butter per slice. Toss the butter bits into the bowl with the flour mixture. Continue cutting all the butter in the same manner and adding it to the flour mixture.

When all the butter is in the bowl with the flour, use your fingers to separate the butter bits (they tend to stick to each other), coat all the butter pieces with flour, and evenly distribute them throughout the flour mixture. Don't rub the butter too hard with your fingertips or palms, as this will melt the butter. You're just trying to break the butter pieces apart, not blend the butter into the flour.

When all the butter is evenly distributed, add the cold buttermilk and stir with a large spoon until all or most of the flour is absorbed by the buttermilk and the dough forms a coarse lump, about 1 minute.

Pat and fold the dough:

Dust a work surface with flour and dump the dough onto the floured surface, cleaning out the bowl with a spatula or a plastic bowl scraper. Dust the top of the dough and your hands with flour, and press the dough into a 3/4-inch-thick rectangle. Sprinkle a small amount of additional flour and one-third of the cheese on the top of the dough. Fold the dough over on itself in three sections, as if folding a letter (also called a tri-fold). With a bench knife or metal spatula, lift the dough off the counter and dust under it with flour to prevent sticking, if necessary. Dust the top with flour and press the dough out again into a 3/4-inch-thick rectangle. Sprinkle on another third of the cheese and repeat the tri-fold. Repeat this procedure one more time (three times in all), using the remaining cheese.



photo: Scott Phillips

Cut and bake the biscuits:

After the third tri-fold, dust under and on top of the dough, if needed, and roll or press the dough into a 1/2-inch-thick oval. Dip a 2-inch or 2-3/4-inch round biscuit cutter in flour and start cutting biscuits, dipping the cutter in flour between each biscuit. Press straight down to cut and lift straight up to remove; twisting the biscuit cutter will seal the sides and interfere with rising. Use a bench knife or spatula to transfer the biscuits to the baking sheet, placing them about 1/2 inch apart.

Gently gather any scraps of dough, pat and roll out again, and cut more biscuits from the remaining dough. You can gather and roll the scraps two times total and still get good results (the more times you roll out, the tougher the biscuits will be).

Put the baking sheet in the oven and reduce the temperature to 450°F. Bake for 8 minutes; rotate the pan 180 degrees; continue baking until both the tops and bottoms of the biscuits are a rich golden brown and the biscuits have doubled in height, revealing flaky layers on the sides, 4 to 6 minutes more. It's all right if some butter seeps from the biscuits. Remove the pan from the oven and set it on a cooling rack, leaving the biscuits on the pan. Cool the biscuits for at least 3 minutes and serve them hot or warm (they will stay warm for about 20 minutes).

Sweet Potato & Leek Gratin

by Karen Barker, Ben Barker

If you want to prepare the gratin a day ahead, reheat it covered in a 300°F oven until bubbling around the edges and warmed through.

Serves six.

ingredients

2 large leeks (1 lb. total), trimmed, halved lengthwise, sliced 1/4 inch thick crosswise, swished and soaked in enough cold water to cover
2 Tbs. unsalted butter; more for the pan
2 Tbs. olive oil
6 oz. pancetta or country ham, cut into 1/4-inch dice
1/4 cup minced garlic
2 cups heavy cream
3 Tbs. fresh thyme leaves
1 tsp. coarse salt
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
2 medium sweet potatoes (1 lb. total), peeled
3 medium Idaho potatoes (1-1/4 lb. total), peeled

how to make

Lift the leeks gently from their soaking water so that any grit stays behind. Drain them in a colander. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter in the olive oil. Add the pancetta or ham and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden, about 9 min. Remove with a slotted spoon to drain on paper towels. Add the leeks and garlic to the pan, cover, and reduce the heat to low. Sweat the leeks and garlic, cooking slowly and stirring occasionally, until the leeks are softened, about 5 min. (Don't let the leeks or garlic brown.) Add the cream, bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer uncovered for 5 min. Stir in the pancetta or ham, the thyme, and the salt; add pepper to taste. Set aside.

Heat the oven to 350°F. Butter a 2-qt. casserole dish. Slice the sweet potatoes between 1/4 and 1/8 inch thick. Repeat with the Idaho potatoes. Arrange one overlapping layer of Idaho slices on the bottom of the casserole. Season lightly with salt and pepper; spoon 2 Tbs. of the leek cream evenly over the potatoes. Add a layer of sweet potato slices, season lightly with salt and pepper, and spoon on another 2 Tbs. of the leek cream. Repeat with the remaining potatoes until all are used. With your hands or a rubber spatula, press down firmly on the potatoes and drizzle the remaining leek cream over them. Bake until the gratin is golden on top, 50 to 60 min. Let rest in a warm place for 15 min. Cut into squares and serve.



photo: Amy Albert

Broiled Asparagus & Orange Slices with Olive Oil & Shallots

by Pamela Anderson

Serves four as a side dish.

ingredients

1 lb. asparagus, woody stem ends snapped off and discarded
2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 shallot, thinly sliced and separated into rings
4 very thin orange slices, cut into quarters
1/4 tsp. finely grated orange zest

how to make

Adjust an oven rack as close to the broiling element as possible. Heat the broiler on high. In a bowl, toss the asparagus spears with the oil to coat and season with salt and pepper. Arrange the shallot slices in a thin layer on one side of a rimmed baking sheet. Put the asparagus in a single layer on top of them. Toss the orange slices with the leftover oil in the bowl you used for the asparagus. Arrange the slices in a single layer alongside the asparagus. Broil until the asparagus and the oranges just start to char, 5 to 8 min. Remove from the oven and sprinkle the asparagus with the orange zest. Arrange the asparagus, shallots and oranges on a serving dish. Serve hot, warm, or at room temperature



photo: Scott Phillips

TIP: Eight thin lemon slices can be substituted for the orange slices. The cooked orange and lemon slices -- skin and all -- are edible.

Bite-Size Ginger Cupcakes with Lemon-Cream Cheese Frosting

by Greg Patent

Yields 36 miniature cupcakes.

ingredients

14 oz. (1 cup plus 3 Tbs.) sifted cake flour
1 tsp. ground ginger
1/4 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
1/4 tsp. table salt
1/4 tsp. baking soda
1/8 tsp. baking powder
3 oz. (6 Tbs.) unsalted butter, at room temperature
2/3 cup granulated sugar
1/2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1-inch cube (3/4 oz. peeled piece) fresh ginger, finely grated (plus any juice)
4 tsp. lightly packed, finely grated lemon zest
1 large egg, at room temperature
1/2 cup sour cream (not low-fat), at room temperature
1/4 cup (about 1 oz.) finely chopped crystallized ginger
1 recipe Lemon-Cream Cheese Frosting
36 thin strips lemon zest, or sliced candied ginger, for garnish (optional)

how to make

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line three miniature muffin pans (with 12 cups each) with miniature paper cupcake liners.

Sift the cake flour with the ground ginger, nutmeg, salt, baking soda, and baking powder. Whisk to ensure thorough mixing. Using a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or a hand mixer), beat the butter in a medium bowl on medium speed until smooth, about 1 min. Add 3 Tbs. of the sugar, the vanilla, grated ginger and lemon zest; beat on medium speed for 1 min. Add the remaining sugar, about 2 Tbs. at a time, beating for a few seconds after each addition. Scrape the bowl and beat for another 2 min. Scrape the bowl again. Add the egg and beat on medium-high until very smooth, about 1 min.

Add about one-third of the flour mixture and stir gently with a rubber spatula only until incorporated. Add half the sour cream and stir until incorporated. Repeat with half the remaining flour mixture, the rest of the sour cream, and ending with the last of the flour mixture. Stir in the crystallized ginger.

Divide the batter evenly among the prepared muffin cups, filling each cup about three-quarters full. (Use two regular teaspoons: one to pick up the batter, one to push it off.) Don't smooth the batter.

Arrange the pans in the oven so that there's a bit of space between them and bake until the cupcakes are pale golden and spring back when gently pressed in the center, 17 to 20 minutes. Let the cupcakes cool in the tins on wire racks for 5 minutes and then invert the pans onto the racks to remove the cupcakes. Immediately turn the cupcakes right side up on the racks and let cool completely.



photo: Scott Phillips

Spoon a heaping teaspoonful of frosting onto the center of each cupcake and spread and swirl it with the back of the teaspoon. If you like, garnish with sliced crystallized ginger or strips of lemon zest.

Lemon-Cream Cheese Frosting

Yields 1-1/4 cups.

ingredients

5 oz. cream cheese (not low-fat or whipped), at room temperature
2 Tbs. unsalted butter, at room temperature
2 Tbs. lightly packed, finely grated lemon zest
4 tsp. fresh lemon juice
1/2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
5 oz. confectioners' sugar (1-1/4 cups, spooned and leveled)

how to make

In a medium bowl, beat the cream cheese with a hand-held electric mixer on medium speed until very smooth, about 30 seconds. Add the butter and beat until smooth, about 30 seconds. Beat in the lemon zest, lemon juice, and vanilla. On low speed, gradually add the confectioners' sugar, beating until smooth. Increase the speed to high and beat for just a few seconds, until the frosting is smooth and fluffy. Don't overbeat or you may thin the frosting.