



ULTIMATE CHEESE BOARD

SERVINGS: 4 | PREP TIME: 15 MINS | COOK TIME: 5 MINS

A beautiful cheese board is a host's secret weapon. All it requires is space and creativity, and you'll have a platter that any guest would be happy to snack on. The best part? With some effective styling and attention to detail, it can look like you spent a ton of time putting it together.

Cheese: I usually do 3-5 cheeses in different textures and flavors. Plan on 3-4 ounces of cheese per person and make sure to label them. Guests can then decide which cheese they'd like to try and even jot down the name if they want to buy it for themselves. Keep stronger cheeses on their own plate, or not too near to the mild cheeses so they don't turn off less adventurous guests. Pull the cheese out of the refrigerator 30-45 minutes before serving, depending on the temperature outside. You want the cheese to be just below room temperature. If it starts to look slick or greasy, it has been out too long.

Fruit: Grapes, figs, apples, and pears are natural partners with cheese. My favorite way to take your board up a notch is to roast the fruit. It takes so little time to prepare, but makes your cheese board look super elegant. Find my recipe for roasted grapes below.

Brine: Olives or mustards are a great bright counterpoint to rich cheese.

Sweet: Jams, jellies and honey are a great way to add a layer of sweetness to your cheese board. I love the look of a hunk of honeycomb - so rustic and pretty!

Meat: Cured meat and cheese are natural partners. Try to buy your meat and cheese together, so you can choose meat that won't overpower the cheese. Prosciutto's delicate flavor goes with almost anything, and bresaola's mustiness is perfect with an earthy goat or sheep's milk cheese. Spicy salami like chorizo or soppressata are full of flavor, so serve with cheeses that compliment them.

Bread: Serve the cheese board with some kind of bread or cracker. Especially if you're serving gooey or soft cheese, you'll need something to spread it on. Find my recipe for easy homemade crostini below.

Knives: Have a knife for each cheese. You don't necessarily have to have special cheese knives, but make sure to put the right kind of knife next to each cheese. For instance, a hard cheese will need a sharp knife, but a soft cheese can be cut with a butter knife.

INSTRUCTIONS:

To make roasted grapes, preheat oven to 425°F. Place the bunch of grapes on a baking pan, drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with herbes de provence and kosher salt. Roast for 15-20 minutes, or until the grapes are wrinkled, and slightly caramelized.

For the crostini, preheat oven to 425°F. Spread the pieces of baguette across two baking sheets and drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle with herbes de provence and kosher salt. Bake for about 15 minutes, flipping once, until golden brown. Set aside to cool.

INGREDIENTS:

ROASTED GRAPES

- 1 bunch grapes
- 2 TBSP. olive oil
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. herbes de provence

CROSTINI

- 1 baguette, sliced 1/4 inch thick (you should get about 24 slices)
- 2 TBSP. olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. herbes de provence

CRANK UP YOUR COOKING TIP:

Arrange anything that should be cold on the cheese board, and then put that in the refrigerator. That way, you can prepare everything ahead of time, and just take the board out 20 minutes before guests arrive. So much less fuss for you!