



Pretzels

WITH CHEESE DIP

from *Magnolia Table, Volume 2 Cookbook*

prep: 1 hour 40 minutes

cook: 10 minutes **cool:** none

Two ¼-ounce packets active dry yeast

½ cup plus 1 teaspoon sugar

1¼ cups warm water (95° to 110°F)

5 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling

2 teaspoons kosher salt

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Cooking spray

½ cup baking soda

4 cups boiling water

¼ cup Maldon or other flaky salt

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted

Cheese Dip, for serving

1. In a small bowl, dissolve the yeast and 1 teaspoon of the sugar in the warm water. Set aside until the sugar and yeast are dissolved, about 10 minutes.
2. In a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook, combine the flour, the remaining ½ cup sugar, and the kosher salt. Turn the mixer on low to mix the ingredients. Add the oil and the yeast mixture and mix on medium-low speed for about 5 minutes, until the dough is smooth.
3. Spray a large bowl lightly with cooking spray, place the dough in the bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and let rise in a warm spot until doubled in size, about 1 hour.
4. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to

425°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

5. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and divide into 16 equal pieces (about 2½ ounces each). Roll each piece into a 24-inch-long rope and twist each rope into a traditional pretzel shape.

6. In a large heatproof bowl, combine the baking soda and boiling water, stirring until the soda is completely dissolved. Dip each pretzel in the soda/water mixture, then place it on one of the prepared pans, leaving 1½ inches between the pretzels. Sprinkle the pretzels with the Maldon salt.

7. Bake until golden brown, about 8 minutes. Brush each pretzel with melted butter and serve immediately with cheese dip.

8. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 days.

Makes 12 pretzels

tip: *To make cinnamon sugar pretzels, leave off the sprinkling of salt, bake the pretzels as directed, brush them with the melted butter, and dip them in a mixture of 1 cup sugar and 3 tablespoons ground cinnamon.*

Cheese Dip

from *Magnolia Table, Volume 2 Cookbook*

prep: 10 minutes **cook:** under 10 minutes **cool:** none

4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter

¼ cup all-purpose flour

2½ cups milk

6 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature

4 ounces Cheddar cheese, grated (about 1 cup)

2 ounces Gouda cheese, shredded (about ½ cup)

2 teaspoons whole-grain mustard

½ teaspoon smoked paprika

¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional)

½ teaspoon kosher salt

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1. In a medium saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat until it bubbles. Add the flour and whisk constantly until well combined. Whisk and cook until thickened, to make a roux, 1 to 2 minutes.
2. Remove from the heat and add the milk. Whisk well. Return to the heat and cook, whisking constantly, until the mixture begins to thicken and will coat the back of a spoon, 4 to 5 minutes.
3. Add the cream cheese, Cheddar, and Gouda and stir until melted. Stir in the mustard, paprika, cayenne (if using), salt, and black pepper and serve immediately.
4. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. Reheat in a small saucepan over medium heat, whisking slowly. Add a teaspoon of milk at a time to thin it out if needed.

Makes 4 cups, to serve 16



Cheese Balls, Four Ways

from *Magnolia Table, Volume 2 Cookbook*

prep: 25 minutes, plus 4 hours chilling
cook: none **cool:** none

cheese balls

Two 8-ounce blocks cream cheese, at room temperature

8 ounces sharp white Cheddar cheese, grated (about 2 cups)

8 ounces Gouda cheese, shredded (about 2 cups)

3 tablespoons minced sun-dried tomatoes

3 tablespoons chopped fresh dill or basil

1 teaspoon garlic salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

coating options

1 cup minced fresh parsley

2 tablespoons freshly cracked black pepper

¼ cup toasted sesame seeds

1 cup walnuts, toasted and finely chopped

To make the cheese balls

1. In a large bowl, combine the cream cheese, Cheddar, Gouda, sun-dried tomatoes, dill, garlic salt, and pepper and mix well. Form the mixture into 2 cheese balls.
2. Choose one or two of the coating options (see Note). Place the coating in a shallow bowl and roll the balls to cover them well.
3. Wrap the balls individually in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or up to overnight to let the flavors blend. Let the cheese balls sit out at room temperature for 1 hour before serving.

4. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for 3 to 5 days.

Makes two 12-ounce cheese balls

note: If you want to use a different coating for each cheese ball, cut the quantity of the coating ingredients in half.

Beck's Crackers

from the *Magnolia Table Cookbook*

prep: 15 minutes, plus 24 hours standing **cook:** none **cool:** none

2 cups vegetable oil

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Two 0.7-ounce envelopes dry Italian dressing mix, such as Good Seasons

1 tablespoon crushed red pepper flakes

1 tablespoon dried dill

One 1-pound box saltine crackers

1. In a large (14- to 16-cup), deep container with a tight-fitting lid (see Tip), combine the oil, lemon juice, Italian dressing mix, pepper flakes, and dill. Whisk to combine.
2. Add the crackers and turn them over a few times to ensure they are fully coated. Let stand for 24 hours, turning the crackers over twice. (They will absorb the oil and the seasonings will adhere to them; they're a little oily but not dripping and very tasty this way.)
3. Store in a covered container at room temperature for up to 1 week.

Makes 12 to 14 servings

tip: You need a very big (at least 14 cups), deep container with a tight-fitting lid to make these properly, so that

the crackers are not too tightly packed in. You can also use this method to transform ordinary oyster crackers into something pretty amazing.

Baked Brie

from the *Magnolia Table Cookbook*

prep: 10 minutes **cook:** 10 to 15 minutes **cool:** none

One 1-pound wheel double-cream Brie cheese

4 tablespoons (½ stick) salted butter, at room temperature

½ cup lightly packed light brown sugar

Pinch of kosher salt

1 cup chopped pecans, toasted (see page 79)

6 Granny Smith apples

Juice of ½ lemon

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Center the Brie in a pie plate. Set aside.
3. In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or in a large bowl with a handheld electric mixer), beat together the butter, brown sugar, salt, and 2 tablespoons of water on medium speed until the mixture is paste-like. Add the pecans and beat just until combined. Spread the mixture on top of the Brie; it'll be roughly 1 inch thick.
4. Bake until the Brie looks like its sides are about to give way, 10 to 15 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, core and slice the apples into wedges. In a large bowl, toss the wedges with the lemon juice to prevent browning.
6. Serve the warm Brie immediately with the apple slices.

Makes 8 to 10 servings



Baked Spinach Artichoke Dip with Garlic Toast

from the *Magnolia Table Cookbook*

prep: 25 minutes **cook:** 45 minutes
cool: none

garlic toast

- 1 loaf focaccia (about 12 ounces)
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) salted butter, melted
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 ounces bagged shredded Parmesan cheese (about 1 cup)
- ¼ cup minced fresh parsley

baked spinach artichoke dip

- One 1-pound bag or box frozen chopped spinach, thawed, or 1 pound fresh baby spinach (about 16 cups)
- Two 7.5-ounce jars marinated artichokes, drained
- One 8-ounce block cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1 cup mayonnaise, preferably Hellmann's
- 6 ounces bagged shredded Parmesan cheese (about 1½ cups; see Note)
- 6 ounces bagged grated Gouda cheese (about 1½ cups)
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
- 2 teaspoons dried dill
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika

note: For best results and texture in the dip, use shredded rather than grated Parmesan. And I use shredded on the toast as well because I'm already buying it!

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

to make the garlic toast

- Split the loaf in half horizontally and place the two halves cut side up on the prepared baking sheet.
- Stir together the melted butter and garlic and drizzle over the bread.
- Bake until it begins to brown, about 20 minutes. Sprinkle the Parmesan on top and bake until melted and bubbling, about 5 minutes. Remove from the oven and sprinkle the parsley on top. Cut into triangles or wedges.
- Meanwhile, prepare the baked spinach artichoke dip:

if using thawed frozen spinach:

Wrap it in a clean kitchen towel and squeeze it tight to extract as much liquid as possible. Set aside.

if using fresh spinach:

Place it in a large sauté pan with a lid and add 2 tablespoons water. Set the pan over medium-low heat and cook until wilted, using tongs to turn the spinach over as it wilts, moving the uncooked leaves on top to the bottom of the pan to cook them. Cover the pan and steam for 2 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and drain the spinach in a colander. Let stand until cool enough to handle, then wrap the spinach in a clean kitchen towel and squeeze it tight to extract as much liquid as possible. Finely chop the spinach.

- Place the artichokes in a large bowl and smash them well with a fork, removing any tough leaves. Add the spinach, pulling it apart with your fingers or the fork. Add the cream cheese, mayonnaise, Parmesan, Gouda, garlic, and white pepper and stir well

until combined.

- Transfer the mixture to a pie plate and smooth the top. Sprinkle the dill and paprika on top.
- Bake until bubbling and hot, about 20 minutes. Turn the broiler to high and broil until the top is nicely browned. This will happen quickly, so watch carefully and do not step away.
- Serve hot with garlic toasts.

Makes about 5 cups; 8 to 10 servings