

OYSTERS ROCKEFELLER 2T

- 12 medium oysters on the half shell**
- 1/2 cup heavy cream**
- 4 oz. smoked mozzarella, grated**
Rind of 1 lemon, freshly grated
- 1 cup Swiss chard, wilted**
- 12 1-inch pieces crispy bacon**
- 1 cup kosher salt**
- 3 tbsp. water**

In a small saucepan, combine heavy cream, mozzarella, and lemon rind. Simmer over low heat until mozzarella melts and mixture thickens. Remove oysters from the shells, and set aside. Place shells on a baking sheet. Put a piece of wilted Swiss chard into each shell, top with an oyster, and finish with a teaspoon cream sauce. Bake at 375 degrees for 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from oven and top each oyster with a piece of bacon. Mix together kosher salt and water. To present oysters, make small piles of the salt on a serving platter and top each pile with an oyster in the shell. Makes 12 servings; allow 1 per person.

APPLE AND CELERY ROOT SOUP

- 1 celery root, peeled**
- 2 apples, peeled**
- 1 small onion, peeled**
- 2 parsnips, peeled**
- 2 cups apple cider**
- 2 cups chicken stock or broth**
- 1/2 clove fresh garlic**
- 3 strips uncooked bacon**
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme**
- 2 tbsp. fresh sage, chopped**
- 1 cup heavy cream**
Salt and pepper to taste

Coarsely chop celery root, apples, onions, and parsnips. Put in a large saucepan, add cider, and simmer over low heat for 5 minutes. Add chicken stock and return to a simmer. Add garlic, bacon, and fresh herbs, then simmer for about an hour or until reduced by one-third. Transfer mixture (in batches, if necessary) to a blender, and puree on high for 3 to 4 minutes or until soup is completely smooth. Strain soup through a fine mesh strainer to remove lumps. Add heavy cream, and cook gently over low heat just until heated through. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Makes about 12 servings.

CREAMY POLENTA WITH BRAISED MUSHROOMS AND AGED BALSAMIC VINEGAR

- 5 cups whole milk**
- 3 cloves peeled garlic**
- 2 strips uncooked bacon**
- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter**
- 1 cup large grain cornmeal**
- 1-1/2 lb. mixed mushrooms**
- 4 oz. 10- to 20-year-old balsamic vinegar**

In a medium saucepan, combine milk, garlic, bacon, and 4 tablespoons of the butter. Bring to a gentle simmer. Slowly whisk in cornmeal and add salt and pepper to taste. Simmer over low heat for 35 to 45 minutes or until cornmeal is tender but not over-thickened.

In a sauté pan, melt remaining butter over medium heat and add mushrooms and salt and pepper to taste. Sauté mushrooms until tender. To serve, place a spoonful of polenta on a small plate, top with mushrooms, and drizzle with a few drops of balsamic vinegar, a finishing touch guests may do at the buffet table. Makes about 12 hors d'oeuvres.

SLOW-COOKED PORK BELLY

- 4 lbs. skinless pork belly 1/2 C kosher salt**
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar**
- 1 tsp. fennel pollen (available at www.thespicehouse.com) OR 1 tsp. ground fennel seeds or ground star anise**
- 2 cups apple cider reduced by three-quarters**

In a small mixing bowl, combine salt, sugar, and fennel pollen to make a dry rub. Put pork belly on a wire rack on a baking sheet, and coat generously on all sides with rub. Bake in a preheated 400-degree oven for one hour, basting with rendered fat every 10 to 15 minutes. After an hour, reduce heat to 300 degrees and bake and baste for two hours or until pork is fork tender. Remove from oven and cool overnight. To serve, cut pork into two-inch squares and heat slowly in a warm oven. When hot, drizzle with apple cider reduction and arrange on a serving platter. Makes about 12 hors d'oeuvres.