

Mini Bacon Jalapeno Cheese Balls

Submitted by Shannon Gaines Bowman

If you don't want to roll out all the balls, you can spread the mixture in a dish and top with the pecan-bacon mixture for easy dipping. If you're SUPER lazy, you can just mix it all in a bowl and eat it with a spoon. #worthit

- 6 slices bacon, diced (more bacon is never a bad thing)
- ¼ cup chopped pecans*
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley leaves, divided
- 2 (8-oz.) packages cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- ¼ cup crumbled goat cheese
- 3 jalapenos, roasted, peeled, seeded and chopped*
- 1 (1-oz.) package ranch salad dressing and seasoning mix
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- Pretzel sticks



1. Heat a large skillet over medium high heat. Add bacon and cook until brown and crispy, about 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate.
2. In a small bowl, combine half of the bacon, pecans and 2 tablespoons parsley. Set aside.
3. In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat cream cheese, cheddar cheese, goat cheese, jalapenos, ranch dressing seasoning, Worcestershire sauce and remaining bacon and parsley on medium-high until well combined and fluffy, about 1 to 2 minutes.
4. Cover and place in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours or overnight. Shape the mixture into teaspoon-size balls and roll in the prepared bacon-pecan mixture.
5. Pierce with pretzel sticks and serve.

*Try adding spices like chili powder, smoked paprika and garlic and onion powder to the pecans and smoking them first. Smoking your jalapenos instead of roasting them also gives additional depth of flavor to this recipe.

Spaghetti and Meatballs on a Stick

Submitted by Shannon Gaines Bowman

This is a one-bite appetizer, depending on how big your mouth is. But getting all the flavors together is worth a try.

- 1 lb. angel hair pasta or spaghetti
- Olive oil or cooking spray
- 1 jar prepared spaghetti sauce*
- 2 lb. packaged cooked meatballs (½ oz. each), heated according to package directions*
- 64 pronged skewers
- 1 bunch fresh sweet basil, leaves torn in half
- 1 block fresh Parmesan cheese, cut into thin 1-in. square sheets



1. Cook pasta to al dente according to package directions. Spray drained pasta with nonstick cooking spray or toss with olive oil. Set aside.
2. Warm meatballs in the sauce on the stovetop. Transfer meatballs to a serving platter.
3. Working with 3 strands or so, twirl pasta around a skewer. Add a torn basil leaf and square of Parmesan to the skewer, then stick into a sauced meatball.

*Or use your own homemade spaghetti sauce or meatball recipe—even better!

Crazy Good Crackers

Submitted by Shannon Gaines Bowman

Fancy-tasting appetizers don't always use fancy ingredients. OK, smoked blue cheese is a LITTLE fancy: If you decide to smoke your own, I recommend freezing it before you throw it in the smoker.

1 box Ritz crackers

1 bottle of your favorite barbecue sauce
(preferably spicy)

½ lb. smoked beef brisket from your grocery deli
counter, torn into bite-size pieces

4-8 oz. smoked blue cheese, crumbled or sliced
Honey



Layer each cracker with barbecue sauce, brisket and smoked blue cheese,
and top with a drop of honey.