

Fun And Fast Ways To Prepare For Holiday Family Gatherings

(NAPSA)—Traditional holiday gatherings typically involve dishes that take a long time to prepare and even longer to digest. David Mirassou of Mirassou Winery and his wife Jeannie have started a holiday tradition of their own. They prefer to prepare an assortment of make-ahead appetizers for holiday entertaining, making their family gatherings less formal and more fun.

David and Jeannie Mirassou are part of the sixth generation of America's oldest winemaking family and they like the focus of holiday gatherings to be sharing delicious foods and distinctive wines with their extended family.

"The holiday season is the perfect time for impromptu gatherings," says David Mirassou. "Whether it's an open house with your neighbors, co-workers or with loved ones, enjoy the opportunity to celebrate with great food, wine and family and friends."

Jeannie recommends turning a holiday gathering into an interactive experience guests will remember. Serve a variety of smaller and simpler versions of your favorite classics, allowing your guests more sampling opportunities and you more time with them. Make sure to offer a variety of wines with suggested food pairings and set each bottle next to the corresponding dish.

Roasted Red Pepper And Pesto Spread

Prep time: 30 minutes

Chill time: several hours

Special equipment: cheesecloth

- 1 (3-oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened
- ½ of a (13-oz.) jar roasted red bell peppers, well drained
- 3 tbsps. oil-packed, julienne cut sun-dried tomatoes, drained
- 1 tbsp. capers
- 1 green onion, sliced
- 1 clove garlic
- ¼ cup lightly packed fresh



A fruit-forward Chardonnay pairs perfectly with this fast and festive Roasted Red Pepper and Pesto Spread.

basil leaves

½ cup basil pesto

½ of a (8-oz.) container

whipped cream cheese

Puree cream cheese, peppers, sun-dried tomatoes, capers, onion and garlic in a blender or food processor. Stir in basil and process using on and off pulses until finely chopped. Cover and refrigerate for several hours to chill. Line a 4-cup bowl with two layers of cheesecloth, allowing the cheesecloth to drape over the sides. Spread ¼ of the pepper mixture into the bottom of the bowl. Top with a layer of cream cheese, then pesto, spreading evenly across the surface. Top with the remaining pepper mixture, then fold the excess cheesecloth over the top. Cover and refrigerate for several hours or until mixture is firm. May be made up to 4 days ahead. Remove from cheesecloth and serve with crackers or focaccia. Makes 16 appetizer servings.

Note: If pesto is very oily, place in a small sieve to drain off excess oil.

For additional food and wine pairing tips and holiday recipes, visit www.mirassou.com.