



Elements of the Table

Before guests arrive ensure the scene is set for an evening of frivolity. Press play on cool lounge music and pour yourself a glass of refreshing chilled punch. Guests instantly feel at ease when a calm host greets them at the door.

Next, evoke the inviting atmosphere of The Victoria Room with the use of soft lighting. Moroccan tea-lights placed on a table create an exotic mood, while lanterns strung from trees lend a whimsical look to an outdoor party.

Vintage punch bowls, teapots and pitchers filled with delicious tropical thirst-quenchers are a fantastic visual focal point on a table. Guests adore the unexpected, so don't be afraid to break the rules and serve cocktails in quaint teacups.

Bring colour and texture to a table with rattan placemats, ceramic tiles and luxurious linen napkins in bright hues. A fragrant low floral arrangement is always a welcome addition too. Most importantly, the first share board should be artfully presented on the table when guests arrive, so those with an appetite can begin feasting while the first drinks are being poured.

When entertaining, draw inspiration from the seasons. In winter serve hearty dishes in blackened pans, place a pot of steaming cheese fondue on the table, and heap warm crusty bread on a rustic chopping board. Open a bottle of red wine and create a cosy atmosphere with glass oil lamps and textured throw rugs draped over comfy armchairs. The arrival of balmy weather signals the start of picnics, garden parties and poolside barbecues. For a magic evening under the stars, illuminate the garden with tiki torches, fill up an old-fashion drink dispenser with your favourite cocktail, fire up the grill and let the party begin.



Five Steps to the Perfect Cheese Board



Indulging in cheese is one of life's greatest pleasures. While many will heartily agree with this statement, very few know how to create an impressive cheese board. If you feel intimidated when shopping for cheese, you're not alone. Many of us are guilty of repeatedly purchasing familiar brands of camembert, brie and cheddar. Playing it safe at the deli is no fun when there are scores of glorious cheese varieties waiting to be enjoyed. In five simple steps learn how to navigate a cheese cabinet with confidence and expertly craft a sophisticated cheese board at home.

1. Identifying Cheese 101

Due to the enormous variety of cheeses available there is no standard way of classifying them. Many fall into more than one category and can be identified by age, country of origin, region, dairy content, degree of odour, texture, manufacturing methods, and the list goes on.

This guide is designed to act as a helpful roadmap for those wanting to learn how to navigate their way around a cheese cabinet. It presents the main categories of cheese and the basic characteristics that define them.

13

Fresh

Mozzarella, chevre (goat's cheese), cottage cheese, ricotta, cream cheese, mascarpone, and fetta

Fresh is the simplest cheese. It is uncooked and has not been aged so its texture is soft and creamy. Fresh cheese contains the liquid part of milk and as a result its flavour is mild. It won't keep for long so is best gobbled up soon after it has been made.

Soft-ripened

Camembert, brie, triple crème

Soft-ripened cheeses are semi-soft in texture and sometimes have a white, bloomy rind due to the healthy mould added to the milk or sprayed onto the cheese during the ripening process. These cheeses are deliciously buttery, creamy and mild.

Washed-rind

Taleggio, vignerone

Wash-rind cheeses are stinky and identified by their reddish-orange rind, creamy texture and tacky surface. The pungent smell and taste comes from being washed in a liquid such as beer, wine or salted water to help promote the growth of bacteria and mould.

