



Your go-to for to-go dishes

Amid the hustle and bustle of Christmas, it's easy to get stressed out about holiday meal planning.

Planning is the key word there. It's always best to have a plan!

That way, when Grandma asks you to bring a side dish to Christmas, you need an appetizer for the church potluck or your daughter just happened to forget to tell you she needed a salad for her school's fundraiser dinner, you have a plan!

I love having some go-to dishes that can easily accompany any holiday meal. They don't take hours to prepare, and you know they'll turn out great.

It avoids the hours of pouring over cookbooks or the Internet for a new recipe. (Especially helpful when you are as indecisive as I am!)



Last weekend I tried out Taste of Home's appetizer wreath, and it was love at first sight ... or first taste. (It's beautiful to look at and it tastes good, too!)

Chef Guy Klinzing shared this recipe with his Holyoke audience at the October Taste of Home Cooking School.

Nothing beats those flaky crescent rolls and cream cheese sauce paired with glorious red and green veggies sprinkled on top. And your guests can each snag a roll for some great-tasting finger food and the perfect start to your holiday celebration.

I arranged 14 of the rolls in a circle, with two left over to stick on the bottom of the wreath for the "bow," topped with celery leaves. And as a side note, I only used about half of the veggies called for in the recipe, so you might want to chop a bit and see how far it goes before you do any more.

The other three recipes— seven-layer salad, cheesy potatoes and Jell-O salad—are oldies but goodies out of my mom's recipe box.

Now that sounds like a plan.

Appetizer Wreath



2 tubes (8 ounces each) refrigerated crescent rolls
1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup sour cream
1 teaspoon dill weed
1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
1 1/2 cups chopped fresh broccoli florets
1 cup finely chopped celery
1/2 cup finely chopped sweet red pepper
Celery leaves

Remove crescent dough from packaging (do not unroll). Cut each tube into eight slices. Arrange in an 11-inch circle on an ungreased 14-inch pizza pan. Bake at 375 degrees for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown. Cool for 5 minutes before carefully removing to a serving platter; cool completely. In a small bowl, beat the cream cheese, sour cream, dill and garlic powder until smooth. Spread over wreath; top with broccoli, celery and red pepper. Form a bow garnish with celery leaves.

Seven-Layer Salad



Lettuce, torn in bite-size pieces
10-ounce frozen peas, cooked, cooled
1 cup chopped green pepper
1 cup chopped celery
8-ounce jar mayonnaise
Parmesan cheese, sprinkled

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8 slices bacon, cooled, crumbled or bacon bits

Layer in 9x13-inch pan, cover and refrigerate at least 8 hours.

Cheesy Potatoes



10 cups frozen hashbrowns
1/4 cup butter plus 2 tablespoons
1 can cream of chicken soup
12-ounce sour cream
1/2 cup milk
Green onions, chopped (optional)
2 cups shredded cheese
1 cup crushed cornflakes

Melt 1/4 cup butter, pour into 9x13 pan. In separate bowl, combine soup, sour cream, milk and green onions. Layer half of the hashbrowns, half of the mixture and half of the cheese. Repeat layers once more. Sprinkle with corn flakes. Melt 2 tablespoons butter and drizzle on top. Bake uncovered at 375 degrees for 55 minutes.

Jell-O Salad

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