



January is a great time to invite a bunch of friends over for a relaxed late-morning brunch. It's a fun way to bring together the best elements of a party – good food, good drinks and good friends. Whether you're entertaining on a cold winter morning or spending a lazy Saturday morning in front of the fireplace, this simple but elegant brunch menu will have everyone clamoring for second helpings. These recipes prove that entertaining doesn't have to be a grand production. You can make some of these dishes ahead or put them together the morning of the brunch without a lot of fuss. So go ahead and sleep late before enjoying a leisurely, feelgood brunch with some of your favorite people.

Campari Fizz

6 ounces Campari

3 teaspoons sugar

1 (750ml) bottle chilled sparkling wine

Pour the Campari into champagne flutes and stir ½ teaspoon sugar into each glass. Top up with sparkling wine and serve.

Warm Fruit Compote

2 oranges

3 ripe peaches, pitted and sliced

8 apricots, pitted and halved

2/3 cup blueberries

2 tablespoons superfine sugar

1 cinnamon stick

Greek yogurt, to serve

Grate the peel from 1 of the oranges, removing only the peel and not the bitter white pith. Cut the peel into thin strips and put in a shallow saucepan. Squeeze the juice from both oranges and add to the pan. Add the peaches, apricots, blueberries, sugar and cinnamon stick to the pan and heat gently until the sugar dissolves. Cover and simmer gently for 4 to 5 minutes or until the fruits are softened. Serve the compote warm with Greek yogurt.

Brown Sugar Bacon

1 pound sliced bacon, room temperature

1 cup light brown sugar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Pat each bacon slice in brown sugar, coating well. Place individual slices on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake for 30 minutes or until bacon is cooked. Remove bacon and drain on baking racks. Do not drain on paper towels. Bacon will become crispy as it cools. Serves 4 to 6.

Spinach and Pancetta Frittata

6 extra-large eggs

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

4 ounces pancetta cubes

4 scallions, chopped

1 garlic clove, peeled and finely chopped

1½ cups baby spinach

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Break the eggs into a bowl and beat with a fork or wire whisk. Season well. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a heavy 12-inch ovenproof skillet. Add the pancetta cubes and cook over medium heat for 3 to 4 minutes until they start to brown. Add the scallions, garlic and spinach and stir-fry for 3 to 4 minutes or until the spinach has wilted and the onions have softened. Pour the egg mixture into the skillet, quickly mix in the other ingredients and stop stirring. Reduce to a low heat and cook for 8 to 10 minutes or until the top has almost set. Slide under a preheated broiler to finish cooking the top. Serve hot or cold, cut into wedges. Serves 6.

Creamy Eggs with Goat Cheese

12 eggs

½ cup light cream

2 tablespoons chopped fresh marjoram

Sea salt

Freshly ground black pepper

4 tablespoons butter

6 ounces firm goat cheese, crumbled

Toasted whole wheat bread, to serve

Beat the eggs in a bowl with the cream and marjoram; season with salt and pepper. Melt the butter in a nonstick skillet, add the eggs and stir over low heat until they are beginning to set. Stir in the goat cheese and continue to cook briefly, still stirring, until cheese melts into the eggs. Spoon eggs onto hot toast and serve immediately. Serves 6.

Lemon Grits

3 cups water

1 cup quick-cooking grits

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Zest of 1 lemon

5 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Butter

8 ounces mascarpone cheese

Bring the water to a boil in a saucepan. Whisk in the grits gradually. Cook over low heat for 15

to 20 minutes or until tender, stirring frequently. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Stir in lemon zest, lemon juice butter and mascarpone cheese. Serves 4.

Caramel-Pecan French Toast

1 cup light brown sugar, firmly packed

½ cup butter

2 tablespoons light corn syrup

6 (½-inch) thick slices French bread

6 eggs, beaten

1½ cups milk

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

½ cup chopped pecans

Combine brown sugar, butter, and corn syrup in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat until thickened, stirring constantly. Pour syrup mixture into a lightly greased 9x13-inch baking dish. Place slices of bread on top of syrup mixture. Combine eggs, milk, and vanilla. Pour egg mixture evenly over bread slices. Cover and chill overnight. Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees for 30 to 35 minutes or until lightly browned. Sprinkle with pecans and bake an additional 10 minutes until nuts are toasted and toast is golden. Serves 6.

Coconut Coffee

2 cups half-and-half

1 (15-ounce) can cream of coconut

8 cups freshly brewed coffee

Sweetened whipped cream

Bring half-and-half and cream of coconut to boil in a large saucepan over medium heat, stirring constantly. Stir in coffee. Serve with sweetened whipped cream. Serves 8 to 10.

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