

FN2089 (June 2023)

## Pinchin' Pennie\$ in the Kitchen

# 7 Steps to Creating a Charcuterie Board

Charcuterie [shahr-koo-tuh-ree] boards are collections of meats, cheeses, relishes, jams, crackers/bread and/or other food items. These boards are customizable, so they provide an opportunity to use ingredients you already have at home.

For example, use up small amounts of leftover cheese and grilled meats to stretch your budget for protein sources. Include fruits and vegetables that are about to over ripen to reduce waste. Add crackers and bread to avoid leaving them in the pantry to stale.



Here's a guide to creating your own charcuterie board.

### 1. Select a board and a few small bowls.

- A tray, plate, cutting board or baking sheet will work as a board for your creation.
- Make sure the board is sturdy and the size is sufficient to hold enough food for the number of guests. You may want to make more than one board to accommodate many people.
- Multiple, smaller boards may be easier to keep and store in the refrigerator than one large board.
- Bowls can hold small food items and dips or spreads.

### 2. Choose meats or other protein sources such as hard-cooked egg slices or deviled eggs.

- Fold or stack sliced or cubed meat to add eye-pleasing variety to the board.
- Sliced meats can be folded into halves or triangles and arranged like books on a shelf to create a ribbon-like illusion.
- Options could also include chunks of roasted or grilled chicken, turkey, ham, chorizo, pepperoni, prosciutto or salami.

### 3. Pick out crackers or bread.

- Try whole grain or multigrain crackers, sliced baguettes, pita bread, naan bites or pretzels.

### 4. Select cheeses.

- Try including a mixture of soft, semi-hard and hard cheeses for texture variation.
  - Soft variations include feta, brie and ricotta.
  - Semi-hard variations include gouda and jack.
  - Hard variations include cheddar and parmesan.

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## 5. Add color.

- Arrange fruits and vegetables on the board to add a pop of color and a variety of important nutrients, including fiber and vitamins A and C.
- Cut fruits and vegetables into unconventional shapes to add eye-catching elements.
- Fruits could include grapes, berries, cantaloupe, honeydew, oranges or dried fruit.
  - Avoid including fruits that brown when sliced, such as apples and bananas.
- Vegetables could include bell pepper strips, broccoli florets, carrot sticks, snap peas, cucumber slices or celery sticks.

## 6. Include a dip or spread.

- Fill small bowls with dips, spreads, sauces or jelly. Options could include hummus (chickpea dip), jelly or jam, honey, flavored yogurt, salsa, mustards or sour cream- or cream cheese-based dip.

## 7. Fill in with extras.

- Add assorted food items such as nuts, seeds, pickled vegetables, granola or other sweet treats in small bowls.

## Expert Tips

- Consider taste, texture and variety when building your board.
- Choose appropriate utensils for the foods you are serving, such as tongs, forks or spoons.
- Fan ingredients out so they are easy to pick up with a fork or other utensil. Consider leaving the rind on fruits like cantaloupe or oranges for ease of eating.

## Nutrition Tips

- Be mindful of the sodium content of your board. Some meats and cheeses, pickled vegetables and nuts can provide high amounts of sodium.
  - According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium should be consumed each day. Check out nutrition labels before buying various meats and cheeses, use pickled foods sparingly and include lightly salted or unsalted nuts.
- Boards can be made a few hours ahead, covered with plastic wrap and refrigerated until serving time. Once served, eat promptly. Perishable items, such as meat and cheese, must be eaten or placed back in the refrigerator within two hours of serving. Set a timer on your phone so you remember.

## Special Dietary Needs

Consider labeling your board with any potential allergens. The top nine most common allergens are milk, eggs, wheat, soy, tree nuts, peanuts, fish, shellfish and sesame. Additionally, be accommodating to guests that follow a special diet, such as a gluten-free or vegetarian diet. If possible, make your board fit within those diet parameters or make a separate board for those guests, and be aware of cross-contamination that may occur.







**Table 1. Approximate amounts of ingredients for a snack or appetizer charcuterie board**

Number of People	Meat (ounces [oz.])	Crackers/ Bread (oz.)	Cheese (oz.)	Fruits/ Vegetables (oz.)	Dips (cup)
1	½ -1	1	½	1-2	¼
2	1-2	2	1	2-4	½
5	2½	5	2½	5-10	1¼
10	5-10	10	5	10-20	2½

**Meal Charcuterie Board**

Number of People	Meat (ounces [oz.])	Crackers/ Bread (oz.)	Cheese (oz.)	Fruits/ Vegetables (oz.)	Dips (cup)
1	2-3	2-3	1-1 ½	2-4	½
2	4-6	4-6	2-3	4-8	1
5	10-15	10-15	5-7 ½	10-20	2.5
10	20-30	20-30	10-15	20-40	5

## Menu ideas

A charcuterie board could stand as a snack, appetizer or meal depending on the amount of food included and the hardness of its ingredients. Use the guides on Table 1 to help determine how much of each ingredient you need for the number of people you intend to feed.

**Afterschool Snack Board:**

Note beware of choking hazards for young children.

- Whole grain Goldfish crackers
- Tangy sausage cubes
- Cheddar cheese
- Kiwi slices
- Sugar snap peas
- Vanilla yogurt
- Green grapes

**Mediterranean Board:**

- Pita bread
- Feta cheese (blocks or crumbles)
- Green grapes
- Carrots
- Hummus (chickpea dip)
- Cashews
- Kalamata olives



**Everything but the Kitchen Sink Board:**

- Pretzels
- Pepperoni rounds
- Pepper jack cheese
- Blueberries
- Dessert chickpea dip
- Mixed nuts
- Yogurt-covered raisins

**Sophisticated Board:**

- Toasted baguette slices
- Prosciutto
- Brie cheese
- Raspberries
- Radishes
- Strawberry jam
- Pistachios
- Pickled asparagus
- Dark chocolate squares



## Want a charcuterie on the go? Put it in a cup. Five Steps to Creating Charcuterie Cups

### 1. Select a cup.

- Clear cups will allow you and your guests to see all the ingredients.

### 2. Fill the base.

- Heavier food items should be placed at the bottom of the cup.
- Nuts, seeds or a spoonful of dip can provide a base.

### 3. Include crackers or bread.

- Long and narrow crackers or breadsticks will fit into a cup better than round or square ones.
- To avoid soggy crackers, place a layer of vegetables on top of the dip before adding crackers.

### 4. Thread meats, cheeses, fruits and vegetables onto toothpicks or skewers.

- Meats and cheeses can be sliced or cubed.
- Semi-hard to hard cheeses will work best in a cup, and they can be threaded on wooden skewers or toothpicks.
- Fruits and vegetables that are easy to pierce with a toothpick include grapes, berries, grape tomatoes, cucumber slices and bell pepper strips.
- Include one to three skewers in each cup depending on its size.

### 5. Add additional ingredients to fill out the cup.

- Possible additions include pickled vegetables, dark chocolate squares or herb garnishes.

## References

U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. 9th Edition. December 2020. Retrieved 20 March 2023 from [https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/Dietary\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_Americans\\_2020-2025.pdf](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/Dietary_Guidelines_for_Americans_2020-2025.pdf)

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