

Seasonal Eating
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Football and Apples: Fall Traditions
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The roar of the crowd, the whistles blowing, the clash of shoulder pads. These are the sounds of fall. My parents love football and the sound of the game on television always reminds me of weekends at home. Of course football games call for parties and finger food and in the fall apples reign supreme!

Several weeks ago, I had a really good appetizer at a restaurant in Chattanooga that combined pecan encrusted goat cheese with sautéed apples and figs on crostini. It was absolutely yummy with the sweet apple, tangy cheese and crunchy nuts.

So over the Labor Day weekend, I picked up some apples at the Guntersville, Alabama farmers market while visiting my parents at home and decided to make a play on this appetizer in the form of a spread for crackers to eat while watching the opening weekend games.



I started with a base layer of goat cheese tempered with cream cheese. Goat cheese has a wonderful tangy flavor but can be a little strong, so cream cheese is a good companion to tone it down a little. Make sure your cheeses are at room temperature to make mixing together easier and then add the salt, pepper and dried thyme for a little extra flavor.

The topping is a combination of fresh apples and dried figs, sautéed with a little cinnamon, brown sugar and balsamic vinegar for a sweetness to contrast with the tangy cheese. Sprinkle on some nuts for a little crunch and you have a great appetizer to spread on crackers or pita chips.

I used Jonathon apples, which are tart and good for cooking because they retain some of their texture. You could also use Granny Smith or Honeycrisp apples which are also on the tart side. Golden Delicious apples have a sweet flavor and are good for cooking, especially with pork. If you want a sweet eating apple, try Fuji or Gala. Honeycrisp are also great for fruit trays because they don't brown very quickly.

So pick an apple and celebrate the fall with a seasonal snack to go with the weekend festivities.

For more seasonal eating recipes and information check out the Bedford County Extension website (bedford.tennessee.edu) and stop by the Bedford County Farmers Market on Thursdays at 2:30 at Celebration Pavilion for Farmers Market Fresh demonstrations and recipes.

Apple Goat Cheese Spread

8 ounces cream cheese, softened
10 ounces goat cheese, softened
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
1 tablespoon butter
2 cups peeled and finely chopped apple (Jonathon, Granny Smith, Honeycrisp)
12 dried mission figs, finely chopped
1/4 cup water
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
Pinch kosher salt
1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
1/2 cup chopped walnuts, toasted
Crackers or pita chips

In a medium bowl, stir together cream cheese, goat cheese, pepper, salt and thyme. Spread into the bottom of a serving bowl or small casserole. In a medium skillet, melt butter. Add apples, figs, water, lemon juice, brown sugar, cinnamon and salt. Cook over medium high heat until apples are tender and liquid is syrupy and almost evaporated, about 10-15 minutes. Stir in balsamic vinegar and cook another minute or so. Let cool. Spread over the cheese mixture (if serving later, cover and store in the refrigerator, bring to room temperature before serving). Sprinkle with toasted walnuts and serve with crackers or pita chips.