

The Chopping Block

Football Food

Play your Best Menu Moves at your Next Football Party

Whether you are entertaining for a big group of fans or a small team, you'll want your snacks to score. So, bench your diet and enjoy winning football food during the road to the Super Bowl.

1: Pre-Game Huddle

2: Winning Entertaining Tips

3: Touchdown Recipes

4: Healthy Audible

5: Post-Game Resources

1: Pre-Game Huddle

What Makes Good Football Food?






Finger foods are usually the name of the game when it comes to football food (unless it's chili, of course). Eating food like chicken wings, pizza, tacos and subs during the big game allows you complete mobility to jump up and down when your team scores (or other hand gestures when the opponent does). But take-out wings and grocery store veggie trays just won't cut it. Since our chefs definitely know how to throw a party, we've compiled their recipes for game day grub so you won't have a food fumble! This collection is The Chopping Block's recipe for success in the art of creating food fit for football.

First, it's important to have a wide assortment of food when hosting a football party. Have some items that people can snack on, some dishes that are a little more filling, and of course, some sweets. An example of a menu with a balanced assortment of food would include:

- Chips and Dips
- Cheese and Bread Items
- Fried Foods
- Chilis/Sandwiches/Mains
- Healthy Options (just a few!)
- Desserts

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In this collection, we'll give you winning recipes for each category, as well as entertaining tips to ensure all of your guests (yes, even those who (gasp!) may not be into sports) have a great time. It's everything you need to execute the perfect party play, so let's kick off the fun!

2: Winning Entertainment Tips

Make your Home Welcoming on Game Day

When you're entertaining, planning is essential so you can have a fun and relaxed event.

Menu Planning

A buffet is almost required for a football viewing party, so this makes planning a bit easier. When choosing dishes, consider ones that complement each other, which is why we want a variety of foods (rich, spicy, starchy, etc.) on the table. Make sure your menu is full of foods that can sit out for several hours, or stay heated in a Crock Pot. Create menu ideas that vary in terms of items made by the piece vs. items that can be made in bulk (e.g. bacon-wrapped dates vs. hummus) so that you're not bogged down with labor-intensive dishes.

Don't take on more than you are comfortable with, so that you can be a relaxed and gracious host. Make sure you allow yourself enough time to prepare so you're not harried and rushed, and do as much as you can ahead of time.

Here's a sample timeline leading up to game day:

Time Management

3-4 Days Ahead

- Confirm your guest list and what, if anything, guests will be contributing to the party. Be sure to find out about any guests' dietary restrictions.
- Finalize your menu, including beverages.
- Write out your shopping list and timeline for do-ahead food preparation.
- Place orders for any food you need to order in advance.

2 Days Ahead

- Buy all groceries and beverages.

1 Day Ahead

- Prepare dishes or parts of dishes that can be held overnight.
- Prepare the table, add the decor to the room, and get out all the serving dishes and utensils you will need.

The Day of the Party

- Start the day with a timetable for your cooking tasks to help you stay on track. Give yourself ample time for each item; getting food done early is far better than keeping your guests waiting!
- Allow yourself time to clean as you go, so you can work in a tidy, organized space and not be faced with a heap of dirty dishes just before your guests arrive.
- As you prepare each recipe, begin by gathering all the ingredients you need. This “mise en place” will save you time hunting for ingredients as you cook.
- Include in your timetable at least half an hour to set up your bar (include a fun, non-alcoholic beverage as an alternative for those not partaking in the alcoholic treats) and table before guests arrive.
- Plan on finishing your preparations an hour before guests arrive. That way you’ll have a cushion if you get behind schedule. If all goes well, you’ll have a chance to pop open a beer and relax. Plus, there's always the [Puppy Bowl](#) to entertain you!

More Entertaining Tips from our Chefs:

- If you have a dishwasher make sure it is empty! You don’t want to have a kitchen full of dirty dishes or to be stuck washing dishes with guests in the house if possible.
- Steer clear of too much last-minute preparation – when it’s time to party, it’s time to party! Do keep an eye out for any dishes that need replenishing throughout the game.

Don't Forget the Decor

Football fans will be glued to the TV — and may not always remember their manners — so protect the center of the action. Cover your coffee table and any other endangered surfaces with kraft paper and masking tape (extra points for matching your team colors).

Add throw pillows and comfy floor cushions to your living room arrangement for extra seating and make sure the TV is in plain view for everyone.

Add a splash of team spirit to your party with garland, football themed napkins, plates, etc.

3: Touchdown Recipes

Our Game Day Collection of Winners

We'll divide up our recipes in the categories we suggested earlier to make your planning easier. Just click on the heading to jump to that section's recipes.

Chips and Dips

- Chipotle Guacamole
- Vidalia Onion Dip
- Warm Crab and Artichoke Dip
- Queso Fundido with Mushroom and Poblano Peppers

Cheese and Bread Items

- Goat Cheese and Pistachio Cheese Ball
- Parmesan and Smoky Paprika Cheese Straws
- Homemade Pretzel-Wrapped Sausages
- Butternut Squash and Rosemary Flatbread with Goat Cheese

Fried Foods

- Honey Sriracha Wings

Chilis/Sandwiches/Mains

- Cumin-Spiced Chili
- Beef Tenderloin Sliders with Horseradish Mayo
- Cocktail Meatballs with Spiced Cranberry Sauce
- BLT Burgers
- Roasted Poblano Mac n' Cheese

Sweet Treats

- Chocolate Toffee Cookies
- Chocolate Toffee Brownies
- Homemade Snickers Bars

Chips and Dips

Every football party needs its share of chips and dips. They are typically easy to prepare, can be done ahead of time and sit out with no problem so that guests can munch on them throughout the game. Of course, every party needs a good guacamole!

Chipotle Guacamole

Yield: 8 servings

Active time: 15 minutes

Start to finish: 15 minutes

5 avocados

Lime juice to taste

2 to 3 chipotle chilies, chopped

1/4 cup fresh cilantro, rough chopped

3 plum tomatoes, small dice

Salt to taste

Tortilla chips

1. Remove the meat from the avocado and place in a bowl.
2. Add the lime juice and mash with a fork or potato masher until smooth.
3. Fold in the chipotle pepper, cilantro and tomatoes.
4. Season with salt to taste, and serve with tortilla chips.

Watch The Chopping Block's [Owner/Chef Shelley Young](#) demonstrate [how to make guacamole](#).

Vidalia Onion Dip

Yield: 2 1/2 cups; 6-8 servings

Active time: 30 minutes

Start to finish: 30 minutes

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 Vidalia onion, small dice

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 1/2 teaspoons granulated sugar

1/4 cup beef stock

2 tablespoons dry sherry

1 tablespoon fresh thyme, rough chopped

8 ounces cream cheese, room temperature

1/2 cup sour cream

1 tablespoon fresh chives, thinly sliced

Salt and pepper to taste

1 red pepper, cut into strips

1 cup snap peas

1. Heat a sauté pan over medium heat, and add the olive oil. Sauté the onion until golden brown and caramelized. If a lot of fond builds up on the bottom of the pan add a splash of water to deglaze.
2. Once the onions are fully caramelized, add the garlic and sugar, and cook an additional minute.
3. Pour in the beef stock and sherry, and reduce until only 1 tablespoon of the liquid remains. Remove from the heat, and stir in the thyme. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and cool to room temperature.
4. Place the cream cheese and sour cream in a medium-size bowl. Whip with an electric mixer until light and fluffy.
5. Stir in the cooled onion mixture and chives. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper to taste.
6. Serve with snap peas and pepper strips for dipping.

Warm Crab and Artichoke Dip

Yield: 6-8 servings

Active time: 25 minutes

Start to finish: 25 minutes

8 ounces cream cheese, softened

1 cup mayonnaise

Juice of 1/2 lemon

2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

1 teaspoon Tabasco

2 scallions, thinly sliced on the bias

1/2 cup roasted red peppers, small dice (see note, below)

1 cup artichoke hearts, rough chopped

1/2 pound crab meat

1 cup parmesan cheese, grated

1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs

2 tablespoons butter, melted

Toasted bread and/or crackers

1. Preheat the oven to 375°.
2. In a food processor mix together the cream cheese, mayonnaise, lemon juice, Worcestershire and Tabasco until smooth and creamy.
3. Transfer this mixture to a bowl and fold in the scallions, roasted peppers, artichoke hearts, crab meat and half of the parmesan. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Pour this mixture into a 9-inch pie dish.
4. Toss together the panko, remaining parmesan cheese and melted butter. Sprinkle on top of the dip.
5. Bake until golden brown and bubbly, about 25 minutes.
6. Serve hot with toasted bread and/or crackers.

Queso Fundido with Mushrooms and Poblano Peppers

Yield: 4 servings as an appetizer

Active time: 20 minutes

Start to finish: 20 minutes

1 poblano pepper

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1/4 pound assorted mushrooms, rough chopped

1/2 onion, medium dice

1 clove garlic, minced

1/2 pound Chihuahua cheese, grated

1 tablespoon cornstarch

1/2 cup pale lager, such as Corona

1 tablespoon tequila

1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, rough chopped

Tortilla chips

1. To roast the poblano pepper, place it directly on your gas burner and cook, turning occasionally, until the skin is completely blackened on all sides. (If you don't have a gas burner, you can use your broiler.) Place the pepper in a bowl, cover with plastic wrap and allow to steam for about 15 minutes. Remove the skin and seeds from the pepper, resisting the urge to rinse it, and cut it into medium dice.
2. Heat a 9-inch cast iron skillet or cazuela over medium heat and add the olive oil. Sauté the mushrooms and onions, stirring occasionally, until lightly caramelized, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook an additional minute.
3. While the mushrooms and onions are cooking, toss the cheese with the cornstarch in a bowl.
4. Add the beer and tequila to the mushroom-onion mixture, and cook until it begins to simmer. Gradually add the cheese, and mix until melted and smooth. Stir in the diced pepper and the cilantro.
5. Serve hot with tortilla chips.

Cheese and Bread Items

Cheesy, bready foods are needed at a football party to help soak up alcohol consumed during the game. Get creative with your cheese ball by shaping it into a football for an extra touch. The pretzel-wrapped sausages in this section are a bit of work, but you can make the dough the day before. We promise your guests won't stop raving about these until next football season!

Goat Cheese and Pistachio Cheese Ball

Yield: 6-8 servings

Active time: 15 minutes

Start to finish: 1 hour, 15 minutes (includes chilling time)

4 cups (1 pound) sharp cheddar cheese, grated

8 ounces cream cheese, room temperature

8 ounces goat cheese, room temperature

2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

2 teaspoons hot sauce

2 scallions, thinly sliced on the bias

2 tablespoons fresh parsley, rough chopped

1 cup pistachios, toasted and rough chopped

1/4 cup sesame seeds, toasted

Assorted crackers

1. Place the cheddar cheese, cream cheese and goat cheese in a food processor and puree until smooth.
2. Add the Worcestershire sauce, Dijon mustard and hot sauce and process until smoothly blended. Scrape the bowl, and then pulse in the scallions and parsley.
3. Mix together the pistachios and sesame seeds in a shallow dish.
4. Roll the cheese mixture into a ball and then roll the ball in the pistachio and sesame seed mixture until evenly coated.
5. Chill the cheese ball for 1 to 2 hours or until slightly firm.
6. Serve with crackers.

Parmesan and Smoky Paprika Cheese Straws

Yield: 2 dozen cheese straws

Active time: 25 minutes

Start to finish: 40 minutes

1 1/2 cups parmesan cheese, grated

2 teaspoons smoky paprika

2 tablespoons fresh chives, finely minced

2 sheets puff pastry, thawed in the refrigerator

1 egg whisked with 1 tablespoon water

1. Preheat the oven to 375°.
2. In a small bowl, toss together the parmesan cheese, smoky paprika and chives.
3. Place a sheet of puff pastry on a well-floured surface. Using a rolling pin, stretch the dough into a 10" × 12" rectangle. Brush the top of the puff pastry with the egg wash. Sprinkle half of the cheese mixture on the egg-washed pastry, covering it evenly all the way to the edges. Gently press the cheese mixture into the pastry with the rolling pin.
4. Using a floured pizza wheel or knife, cut the pastry into twelve strips. Twist each strip to make a spiral shape. Lay the strips 1/2 inch apart on parchment-lined sheet trays.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 with the other sheet of dough and remaining parmesan mixture.
6. Bake until they are light golden brown, 13 to 15 minutes. (Be careful not to overbake the cheese straws because the cheese will become bitter tasting.)
7. Allow to cool and serve at room temperature.

Homemade Pretzel-Wrapped Sausages

Yield: 10 wraps

Active time: 45 minutes

Start to finish: 2 hours, 5 minutes

1/2 cup pilsner-style beer, room temperature

1/2 cup water, about 110°

1 1/2 teaspoons granulated sugar 1 1/2 teaspoons active dry yeast

1 tablespoon kosher salt

2 1/2 to 3 cups all-purpose flour

5 smoked knockwurst sausages, cut into 3- to 4-inch pieces crosswise

3 tablespoons Dijon mustard

1/2 cup sauerkraut

1 large egg white beaten with 2 tablespoons water

Sea salt

Caraway seeds

Poppy seeds

Dijon or whole-grain mustard

1. Place the beer and water in a large bowl, and stir in the sugar and yeast. Allow to sit for about 5 minutes to ensure that the yeast is alive. It should look frothy.
2. Stir in the salt and 2 1/2 cups of the flour. Using a wooden spoon, stir the dough until thick.
3. Turn the dough out onto a floured surface, and knead until smooth, 6 to 7 minutes, adding more flour if the dough is too sticky.
4. Place in a bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and allow to rise at room temperature for one hour or until doubled in size.
5. Preheat the oven to 375° and line a sheet tray with parchment paper.
6. Place the proofed dough on a floured surface, and using a rolling pin, roll the dough into a 10- by 18-inch rectangle.
7. Using a pizza wheel or a chef's knife, cut the dough into triangles that are about 2 1/2-inches wide at their base.
8. Brush each triangle with about 1 teaspoon of Dijon mustard followed by about 1 tablespoon of sauerkraut.
9. Place the smoked sausage at the wide end of the triangle and roll the dough entirely around the sausage. Use a bit of the egg wash to seal the dough.
10. Set the wrapped sausages on the prepared sheet tray.
11. Brush the tops and sides of the dough with the egg wash and sprinkle with the salt, caraway seeds and poppy seeds.
12. Bake until the dough is golden brown and crisp, about 35 minutes.
13. Serve warm with [your favorite mustard](#).

Check out [Chef Sara Salzinski's blog with step-by-step photos](#) to show you how to make this dish.

Butternut Squash and Rosemary Flatbread with Goat Cheese

Yield: 1 large flatbread

Active time: 35 minutes

Start to finish: 55 minutes

1/2 recipe **Flatbread Dough** (recipe follows)

2 tablespoons grapeseed oil

3 cups butternut squash, medium dice

1/2 red onion, thinly sliced

1 teaspoon fresh rosemary, finely chopped

Salt and pepper to taste

Cornmeal, for dusting

3/4 cup ricotta cheese

1/2 cup parmesan cheese, grated

5 cloves roasted garlic, minced (see video, below)

Salt and pepper to taste

1 cup goat cheese, crumbled

1. Preheat the oven to 400°.
2. Roll out the dough on a floured surface into a rectangle that's 1/4 inch thick.
3. Place the dough on a parchment lined sheet tray, and cover with another sheet tray. Bake the dough until light golden brown, about 25 minutes. Once done, set aside to cool a bit.
4. While the dough is baking, prepare the squash. Heat a sauté pan over medium-high heat and add the grapeseed oil. Sauté the squash, stirring occasionally, until lightly caramelized. Stir in the onions, and continue to cook until softened. Mix in the rosemary, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.
5. In a small bowl mix together the ricotta cheese, parmesan, roasted garlic, salt and pepper.
6. Using an offset spatula, spread the ricotta cheese mixture on par baked dough.
7. Top with the sautéed butternut squash-onion mixture and the goat cheese.
8. Continue to bake the flatbread until the dough is golden brown, an additional 10 to 15 minutes.
9. Allow to cool for about 5 minutes and then cut into squares.

Watch our video demonstration of [how to roast garlic](#).

Flatbread Dough

Yield: 2 large flatbreads, or 4 individual

Active time: 20 minutes

Start to finish: 2 hours

1 cup lukewarm water (110° to 120°)

1 tablespoon active dry yeast

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

2 3/4 cups all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon fine sea salt

1. Sprinkle the yeast on top of the water in a large mixing bowl, and stir gently until dissolved.
2. Allow to proof until slightly foamy and aromatic to ensure the yeast is alive, about 5 minutes.
3. Add the oil, 2 cups of the flour and salt, and mix until incorporated.
4. Turn the mixture out on a floured surface.
5. Knead the dough, adding more flour if the dough is too sticky, until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes.
6. Shape the dough into a ball, place it in a bowl and cover with plastic wrap.
7. Allow the dough to rise at room temperature until doubled in size, 60 to 75 minutes, or in the refrigerator overnight.
8. Punch down the dough; roll out, top and bake according to directions.

Watch our video demonstration of [how to make flatbread or pizza dough](#).

Fried Foods

Despite the idea that football parties are all fried foods, you'll notice there's just one recipe in this section. We have learned to limit fried foods from personal experience. If you have multiple fried items on your menu, expect to spend a good portion of the party hovering over a hot pot of oil. Take our advice and include just one fried item on the table so that you can spend time with your guests. These chicken wings are our #1 pick!

Honey - Sriracha Wings

Yield: 4-6 servings

Active time: 20 minutes

Start to finish: 20 minutes

Oil for frying

2 pounds chicken wings, separated at the joints

5 tablespoons butter

1/3 cup honey, plus more for drizzling

1/4 cup sriracha

1 tablespoon soy sauce

2 teaspoons lime juice

Toasted sesame seeds

1. Heat the oil in a deep, heavy pot to 375°.
2. Fry the wings for about 10 minutes or until they are golden brown and crisp.
3. While the wings are frying, prepare the sauce. Melt the butter in a saucepan. Once melted, whisk in the honey, sriracha, soy sauce and lime juice.
4. Remove the wings from the oil and drain on a wire rack or paper towels for a minute or two. Transfer them to a large bowl. Pour the sauce over the wings, and sprinkle with the sesame seeds. Toss until well coated.
5. Serve hot.

Chilis/Sandwiches/Mains

Every football party needs a main course or a series of more substantial dishes. Whether you choose to do a big pot of chili or gumbo or a variety of sandwiches or burgers, these recipes will make you the VIP player!

Cumin-Spiced Chili

Yield: 4-6 servings

Active time: 30 minutes

Start to finish: 45 minutes

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 pound ground turkey

1 medium-size onion, medium dice

1 red pepper, medium dice

3 cloves garlic, rough chopped

2 tablespoons chili powder

2 teaspoons cumin

1/2 cup dark beer

14 ounces whole tomatoes, crushed with their juice

1/4 cup barbecue sauce

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

1 tablespoon hot sauce, or more if desired

15-ounce can pinto beans, drained and rinsed

2 ears corn, kernels removed, or 1 1/2 cups frozen corn

Salt and pepper to taste

Garnishes:

Grated cheddar or Monterey jack cheese

Diced jalapeno

Sour cream

Tortilla chips

Diced tomato

Sliced scallions

1. Heat a deep, heavy pot over medium-high heat and add the olive oil.
2. Sauté the ground turkey until golden brown, breaking it up with the back of a spoon.
3. Add the onions and pepper, and sauté until lightly caramelized. Add the garlic, chili powder and cumin and cook an additional minute to toast the spices.
4. Deglaze the pan with the beer, scraping up any bits of fond from the bottom of the pan. Add the tomatoes, barbecue sauce, Worcestershire and hot sauce.
5. Simmer the chili until slightly thickened, about 20 minutes. Add the corn kernels, beans, salt and pepper to taste.
6. Serve with your favorite garnishes.

This version of chili is super fast since we use ground turkey. If you want a more involved recipe that will simmer on the stove all day (and make your house smell delightful), check out [Chef Quincy Bissic's Short Rib and Black Bean Chili](#). It's a bit time consuming and there are a few more steps than normal, but at the end you will have one of the most exciting flavorful, spicy, meaty, complex, warming chilis ever. Believe us, this chili is worth the extra work and wait!

Beef Tenderloin Sliders with Horseradish Mayo

Yield: 4 sliders

Active time: 35 minutes

Start to finish: 35 minutes

Four 3- to 4-ounce beef tenderloin fillets

2 tablespoons grapeseed oil

Salt and pepper to taste

4 slices cheddar cheese

4 mini hamburger buns or brown 'n' serve rolls

1 cup arugula or watercress

1. Heat a grill pan over medium heat.
2. Brush the beef tenderloin fillets on each side with the grapeseed oil and season with salt and pepper to taste.
3. Grill the fillets on the first side until caramelized, 2 to 3 minutes. Flip and top with a slice of cheddar cheese. Continue to cook until done to your liking. An internal temperature of 125° is ideal for medium rare. Allow the fillets to rest for 5 minutes before assembling the sliders.
4. To assemble the sliders, place the fillets on the bottom halves of the buns. Top with a generous dollop of **Creamy Horseradish Mayonnaise** (recipe follows), followed by arugula or watercress. Top with the remaining buns and serve.

Creamy Horseradish Mayonnaise

Yield: 1/2 cup

Active time: 5 minutes

Start to finish: 5 minutes

1/3 cup mayonnaise

1 tablespoon sour cream

2 tablespoons prepared horseradish

Salt and pepper to taste

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, sour cream and horseradish, and season with salt and pepper to taste.
2. Refrigerate until ready to serve, up to 3 days in advance.

Cocktail Meatballs with Spiced Cranberry Sauce

Yield: About 2 dozen meatballs

Active time: 40 minutes

Start to finish: 40 minutes

For the meatballs:

3/4 pound ground chuck

1/4 pound ground pork

1 shallot, minced

1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs

Salt and pepper to taste

1 egg, beaten

1/2 teaspoon fresh rosemary, minced

For the sauce:

2 tablespoon butter

1/2 red onion, small dice

3/4 cup chili sauce

1/2 cup Cranberry Pepper Jelly

1. Preheat the oven to 375°.
2. To prepare the meatballs mix together the ground meats, shallot, breadcrumbs, salt, pepper, egg and rosemary.
3. Form the meatballs into 1-inch balls, and place them on a parchment-lined sheet tray.
4. Bake the meatballs until they are just cooked through, 12 to 15 minutes.

5. To prepare the sauce, heat a heavy, wide pan over medium heat and add the butter. Sauté the onion, stirring occasionally, until lightly caramelized, 5 to 6 minutes.
6. Add the chili sauce and Cranberry Pepper Jelly and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook for about 5 minutes.
7. Transfer the cooked meatballs to the sauce and spoon the sauce over them to coat.
8. Place a toothpick in each meatball and serve.

BLT Burgers

Yield: 4 burgers

Active time: 35 minutes

Start to finish: 35 minutes

1/4 pound bacon, cut into lardons

1 pound ground chuck

2 tablespoons ketchup or barbecue sauce

1/4 teaspoon garlic powder

1/2 teaspoon dried onion flakes

Salt and pepper to taste

4 slices cheddar cheese

4 seeded Kaiser Rolls

1/2 avocado, cut into thin slices

1 large tomato, thinly sliced

2 cups arugula

Your favorite condiments

1. Heat a sauté pan over low heat, and add the bacon. Cook until golden brown and crisp. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the bacon to a medium-size bowl.
2. Mix the bacon with the ground beef, ketchup or barbecue sauce, garlic powder, onion flakes, salt and pepper. Test the mixture for seasoning by cooking a small piece in a sauté pan and tasting it. Adjust the seasoning if necessary. Form the mixture into 4 burgers.

3. Heat a grill pan over medium heat.
4. Grill the burgers on the first side until well marked. Give the burger a quarter turn and continue to cook until you have a diamond pattern.
5. Flip the burgers over and top with the cheese. Continue to cook until the cheese has melted and the burgers are done to your liking. Use a meat thermometer to eliminate the guesswork. An internal temperature of 130° to 135° is ideal for medium.
6. Serve on the seeded buns topped with avocado, tomato, arugula and your favorite condiments.

Roasted Poblano Mac n' Cheese

Our blogger Erica Forneret loves to make macaroni and cheese a catchall for leftovers. Bits of different cheeses, sour cream, greek yogurt, milk, salsas and other dips can all be thrown in to make rich, delicious and unique cheese sauces. Add in some chopped vegetables and/or meats to create a complete meal. [Here's her full post.](#)

2 Poblano chile peppers, roasted, cleaned and chopped (see video below on how to roast a pepper)

1 box elbow macaroni

½ cup butter, plus 2 Tablespoons melted butter

½ cup all-purpose flour

3 cups milk

3 cups white sharp shredded cheese

1 handful assorted herbs (cilantro, parsley, etc.)

1-2 cups panko breadcrumbs

1. Boil the pasta in salted water til al dente. Drain and set aside.
2. Roast the peppers over a gas burner or toss on a cookie sheet and broil until blackened on all sides. Once blackened, put the peppers in a plastic bag and let them steam for about 10 minutes. The steam will loosen the skin making it easy to wipe off. Remove all the skin by wiping with a few paper towels or scraping with the back of your knife. Remove tops and scrape out all seeds.
3. Make the roux and cheese sauce. Start with a heavy saucepan over medium heat. Melt a stick of butter, dump in the flour, and whisk continuously. This is a white roux so you only need to cook it briefly, a minute or two. Add the milk, continuing to whisk until it comes to a boil. Once boiling, the sauce will thicken quickly so keep an eye on it and when it seems thick enough, add in all of your cheese, whisk together, and take off the heat.

4. Add salt and pepper to taste.
5. Chop herbs and peppers, and mix into the sauce. Butter a large baking dish and put the pasta in it. Pour the cheese sauce on top and stir to combine. Taste again for salt and pepper. Pasta can be really bland so err on the side of a little extra salt. Cover with breadcrumbs, drizzle melted butter on the top to help the breadcrumbs get nice and brown, and sprinkle with any extra cheese.
6. Cook in a 400 degree oven for about 20 minutes until bubbly and golden brown on top.

Watch our video demonstration on [how to roast peppers](#).

Sweets

Every party needs a sweet note, even one for rough and tough football fans. Now is the time to break out your favorite cookies, brownies and candy. We have a recipe for each!

Chocolate Toffee Cookies

Yield: 2 dozen

Active time: 25 minutes

Start to finish: 1 hour, 35 minutes (includes chilling time)

1/4 cup all-purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

Pinch fine sea salt

1/2 pound semisweet chocolate

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1/2 cup plus 6 tablespoons brown sugar

2 eggs

Three 1.4-ounce Heath bars, crushed

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. Line two sheet trays with silpats or greased parchment, and set aside.
2. In a small bowl, combine the flour, baking powder and salt. Set aside.

3. Melt the chocolate and butter together in a small saucepan over low heat until smooth. Stir in the vanilla and set aside.
4. Place the brown sugar and eggs in a medium-size bowl, and beat with an electric mixer until thick and ribbony, about 5 minutes. Beat in the melted chocolate mixture.
5. Fold in the flour mixture and crushed heath bars. Place the batter in the refrigerator and chill until firm.
6. Use a 1-inch scoop to drop the batter onto the prepared sheet trays, spacing them about 2 inches apart.
7. Bake until the tops are cracked and dry but still soft to the touch, about 10-12 minutes.
8. These cookies need to cool completely on the sheet trays before removing them, or the bottoms will stick.

Chocolate Toffee Brownies

Yield: 10-12 servings

Active time: 20 minutes

Start time: 40 minutes

1 stick unsalted butter

3 ounces semisweet chocolate chips

3/4 cup dark brown sugar

3/4 cup granulated sugar

3 eggs

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1 cup all-purpose flour

3 tablespoons cocoa powder

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

3 Heath or Skor bars, crushed into small pieces

1. Preheat the oven to 325°. Butter a 9"x13" baking pan or a quarter sheet pan. Line the bottom with parchment paper and brush with additional butter.

2. Place the butter, chocolate chips and both sugars in a saucepan. Place over low heat, and stir until the mixture is melted. Remove from the heat and whisk in the eggs and vanilla extract.
3. Whisk together the flour, cocoa powder, salt and baking powder in a small bowl. Fold the dry ingredients into the chocolate mixture until just combined, and then fold in the toffee pieces.
4. Pour the batter into the prepared pan, and bake until a tester comes out clean when inserted into the center, 20 to 25 minutes.
5. Allow to cool for 15 minutes and then cut into desired shapes.

Homemade Snickers Bars

If you don't consider yourself a baker, then this recipe is for you! Our blogger Biz Valenti took second place in her office cookie bakeoff with it. [Here's her full post.](#)

For the shortbread layer:

2/3 cup butter, softened
¼ cup sugar
1.25 cups all-purpose flour
¼ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

For the caramel layer:

1 (11 ounce) bag of caramels, wrapping removed
¼ cup heavy cream
1 cup dry roasted (plain) peanuts

For the chocolate layer:

12 ounces good quality milk chocolate chips (I use Ghirardelli)

1. Preheat oven to 350F. Line a 9x9 inch baking dish with parchment paper. Set aside.
2. Cream together the butter, sugar, flour, salt, and vanilla until crumbled and fully incorporated.
3. Press the shortbread mixture into the bottom of the lined baking dish and cook for approximately 20 minutes, until slightly golden.
4. Remove from the oven and set aside.
5. Place the caramels and the cream in a microwave safe bowl and microwave for 2 minutes, stirring every 30 seconds. Stir in the peanuts and pour the mixture evenly over the shortbread. Use a spoon to distribute the caramel evenly.
6. Allow to cool for at least 10 minutes.

7. In a microwave safe bowl, heat chocolate in increments of 30 seconds, stirring each time, until melted.
8. Pour the chocolate over the caramel and spread evenly.
9. Allow the chocolate to cool and harden completely before serving, about 2 hours. You can speed up the process by letting it cool in the fridge. Cut into squares and serve!
*These cut best when you cut them straight from the refrigerator, then you can leave out at room temperature for serving.

4: Heathly Audible

Wellness Chef Alia Dalal Offers Options

Football parties are typically not known for their healthy options, but that doesn't mean you can't include a few tasty snacks that your guests will love but won't weigh them down.

Our [Wellness Chef Alia Dalal](#) has three simple dishes to add to your playlist:

- Instead of pretzels or chips, try these [Crispy Chickpeas](#) for a protein-rich salty, crunchy snack.
- Take a break from all of the carbs on the table with [Marinated Mixed Olives](#). They are full of good fats to help you feel full!
- Finally, Alia's [Mushroom Lentil Tacos](#) can add a lighter, vegetarian option to a DIY taco bar.

5: Post-Game Resources

Practice, Practice, Practice

The only way to ensure you have a winning collection of recipes for any party is to plan, practice and experiment. The Chopping Block is your go-to resource for learning how to cook anything, whether it's fun fare like this Football Food or classic French dishes like Beef Bourignon. Check out our upcoming [cooking classes](#) at our two locations in Chicago in the Merchandise Mart and Lincoln Square.

If you liked this download, check out all of our other *free* [Cooking Resources](#). Happy cooking!