



SAVOR THE SEASON

Three top chefs share their holiday entertaining tips

BY AMBER GIBSON

Whether you're decking the halls with boughs of holly and hanging mistletoe, lighting a menorah or getting the streamers ready to ring in 2015, there's no reason you can't throw a party as fabulous as those of the pros. To help you get started, we got the scoop on the Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year's Eve traditions of two local chefs and one famous Frenchman — plus accompanying recipes that will totally wow your guests.

< RUGELACH

8 ounces cream cheese

½ pound butter, room temperature

¼ cup granulated sugar, plus 9 tablespoons

¼ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 cups flour, plus more for dusting

¼ cup brown sugar

1 ½ teaspoons cinnamon

1 cup nuts (we used pecans)

½ cup apricot preserves, puréed

1 egg, beaten with 1 tablespoon milk for egg wash

Combine the cream

cheese and butter in a mixer fitted with paddle until light and completely mixed. Add ¼ cup of sugar, salt and vanilla until combined. Add the flour and mix until just combined. Dump the dough out and roll it in a ball. Cut the ball into quarters. Wrap each quarter in plastic and refrigerate for an hour.

To make the filling, combine 6 tablespoons of sugar, brown sugar, ½ teaspoon of cinnamon and nuts. On a well-floured board, roll each ball of dough into a circle. Spread the dough with the

jam and sprinkle the filling on top. Press lightly. Cut the circle into wedges or strips. Roll each piece up. (Wedges make crescent-shaped cookies; strips are the ones pictured.) Place the cookies on parchment and chill for 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Brush each cookie with egg wash. Combine 3 tablespoons of sugar and 1 teaspoon of cinnamon or raw sugar (whichever you prefer) and sprinkle each cookie.

Bake for 15-20 minutes.



Classically-trained pastry chef Leigh Omilinsky owes her baking talents to her Jewish grandmother Bertha. No meal at Grandma's was complete without dessert — even though young Leigh might have to play piano first to earn it, then wait for it to cool off. "My grandma says you aren't allowed to eat warm cookies because they're still alive," Omilinsky says. "But my sister and I would sneak them anyway."

Omilinsky's mother and grandmother had different recipes for rugelach, a Hanukkah family favorite. While Grandma grated a Heath bar into the filling, Mom used cream cheese and whatever else was in the pantry. Apricot jam is Omilinsky's favorite filling, so her recipe uses pecans and house-made jam from Chestnut Provisions, the Sofitel's new artisan food brand that offers cheese and charcuterie along with preserved fruits and vegetables.

The best parties are ones where the host is relaxed, so Omilinsky recommends prepping ahead as much as possible and using paper plates for easy clean-up. "They make super cute and festive ones these days," she says.

Leigh Omilinsky

Café Des Architectes (20 E. Chestnut; [Café desarchitectes.com](http://Cafedesarchitectes.com))



RAMZI DREESSEN-SPLASH

RAW SHAVED BRUSSELS SPROUTS, MANCHO CHEESE AND MARCONA ALMONDS SALAD

For the vinaigrette (yield, 1 quart):

2 cups Tarrantes (sparkling wine)

1 cup extra-virgin olive oil

½ cup Dijon mustard

½ cup lemon juice

5 teaspoons salt

Combine all in a bowl and mix to incorporate.

For the Brussels sprouts leaves:

Remove outer leaves. Fry in 400-degree fryer until edges are golden brown and crispy. Season with salt and pepper.

For the salad:

1 cup Brussels sprouts, shaved thinly on a man-

dolin

1 ounce vinaigrette

2 teaspoons chives, minced

5 pieces marcona almonds, toasted and halved

black pepper and microplaned Manchego cheese to taste

5-6 pieces Brussels sprout leaves, fried

Place shaved Brussels sprouts in a bowl and mix with vinaigrette. Allow to sit for 1-2 minutes. Mix in chives and scatter marcona almonds on top. Microplane an even layer of Manchego cheese on top. Cover with freshly ground pepper. Top with fried Brussels sprouts.



Jean-Georges Vongerichten

Pump Room (1301 N. State; Pumproom.com)

"I never plate anything at home," says Jean-Georges Vongerichten. "Holidays should be family-style." With 25 restaurants worldwide, the Alsatian chef is best known for the intricate tasting menus he serves at his namesake New York flagship — so it seems only fair that at home, he take it easy.

Vongerichten, who just received his American passport this year, celebrates both countries' holidays with equal enthusiasm. His decades-old tradition is to spend Christmas at his home in St. Barths with his family. There's a little business involved — Vongerichten operates a restaurant at Eden Rock — but mostly, he spends his time on the beach, enjoying the company of his wife, children and grandkids.

While he doesn't often cook on Christmas, when he does prepare dinner during the holidays, he makes this Brussels sprout salad, a lighter riff on the traditional Caesar. The easy-to-make salad is perfect for serving family-style at home. "My mother overcooked them, boiled," Vongerichten says. "So now I like Brussels raw, roasted or fried for more flavor."



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