



The ART of the BOARD

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The ART of the BOARD

FUN & FANCY SNACK BOARDS, RECIPES & IDEAS FOR ENTERTAINING ALL YEAR



Olivia Carney

Packed with insider tips and tricks, Olivia Carney's collection of seasonally inspired snack boards, recipes, and cocktails will transform you from hopeless host to host with the most—one salami rose at a time.



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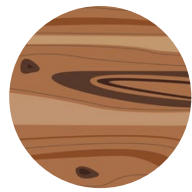
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Wood

A wood board is like your favorite pair of flats: practical and reliable. I typically reach for a modern, minimalistic wood board that offers a bold grain and unique color, which keeps the spread from looking messy once a lot of the food is gone. I love the warmth that a wood board gives off. It's important that you choose a good-quality nonporous hardwood, which is relatively easy to maintain and lasts a long time.



ACACIA: This wood has distinct graining with contrasting colors, making it one of the most popular and beautiful types of wood to use for cheese boards. It's also very durable, so you won't need to worry about the damage from Aunt Judy digging her cheese knife aggressively into the Brie.



BAMBOO: An eco-friendly, durable, and surprisingly affordable option. Bamboo is not only remarkably sustainable but also stronger than most woods, which means that if you want your board to double as a cutting board, bamboo would hold up nicely.



CHERRY: Pick this if you're looking for rich, red undertones for your board. The grain is tighter and finer and has an even texture. Cherry is one of the best all-around woods for regular wear-and-tear. However, it doesn't have any natural moisture protection, and direct sunlight can damage it if it's exposed for prolonged periods.



OLIVE: My personal favorite! Olive wood is incredibly beautiful, and with rich colors and uniquely fine-textured grain, it conveys a certain level of

prestige. A creamy, golden wood with a very uniform pattern and color, olive is unmatched by other options. But beware—it's not for the faint of heart. Olive wood is much more expensive and has a lower durability than other woods, since it lacks necessary natural oils to protect its quality.



TEAK: This environmentally friendly wood is known for its elegance and durability. It's water-resistant and has an abundance of natural oils, which naturally protect its integrity.

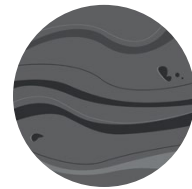
However, with its longevity and sustainability comes a higher price tag.

Marble



There is something about this natural stone that brings me so much joy. It's sleek and inviting, and it really adds an upscale sophistication to your board.

Marble boards also photograph nicely, but you'll want to be careful to avoid ingredients that could stain—it happens quickly! Marble can be a bit pricey, too, so it's important to preserve its condition properly.



Slate

The dark gray color of slate contrasts beautifully with the vibrant colors of cheeses, fruits, and charcuterie. A slate board also allows for a bit of fun and

creativity. Since its surface is like a chalkboard, you can easily decorate, illustrate, or label all your offerings—so your friends who aren't fond of stinky cheese don't reach for the Camembert. I recommend using soapstone instead of regular chalk for labeling since it doesn't create any dust and is safe to consume.

Hopeless Hostess Tip

No board, no problem! If you're strapped for cash or looking to do something a little less traditional, you can still serve delicious spreads. Try using antique plates for a more eclectic vibe, or even just slap some parchment paper down on your kitchen table! Whichever surface you choose, just make sure you're considering the food you'll be serving, how much space you'll need, and the story you're trying to tell with your food.





Step 1: Choose your board

A few things to consider when selecting the base for your masterpiece: How many people are you feeding? Are you traveling with your board? Will any of your selections stain? You can choose more than one surface, if needed.



Step 2: Place your empty ramekins or small bowls

It's easy to forget these once you get going, and you'll want to make sure you save space for dips, honey, jam, briny items, etc. Two per board is typically enough, but you can increase the number if you're using a larger surface area.



Step 3: Add your cheeses

This helps make sure that you reserve the prime real estate for the good stuff! Add your styled cheese, making sure any hard cheeses are sliced for easy grabbing. A rule of thumb is to serve 3 ounces of cheese per person for an appetizer and more for a meal.



Step 4: Place larger produce

These foods will be tough to squeeze in later, so it's good to get them on the board early. They create a base layer to build upon when you add some of the filler items in step 7.



Step 5: Add your carbs

A handful of crackers or slices of bread add texture and color variation, but it's best to limit the amount of space you devote to them to save room for other things.



Step 6: Layer your charcuterie

Layer in your charcuterie next. The rule of thumb is 2 ounces of meat per person for an appetizer and more for a meal. Two to three different kinds of meat provide a nice assortment for your guests to choose from.



Step 7: Fill in the gaps

The final touch! Fill any open spaces with smaller produce, nuts, and other garnishes or bits.

Hopeless Hostess Tip

Before you get to building your board, take a moment to think about your vision. Your spread can reflect the flavors, textures, and pairings that you love, or you can allow yourself to become inspired by your favorite holiday, color combination, television show, or cuisine to create something special. Are you celebrating a birthday? Think about some of the guest of honor's favorite foods. Hosting your annual Independence Day party? Brainstorm something red, white, and blue, like my Fourth of July board on page 75. Having a viewing party for *The Bachelor*? Include fresh roses or shoot your shot at making the beloved salami rose (page 196). Whatever the occasion, consider the experience you're trying to create for your guests and let your board bring that to life. Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone here!

CLASSY CRUDITÉ



Crudité, which actually just means “raw things,” is a beautiful addition to any party. Full of bright, crisp colors and raw ingredients, this board is an elegant upgrade of your classic veggie tray. *Serves 6 to 8*

Accessories: 2 ramekins

Board: 14-by-10-inch rectangle, wood

5 miniature cucumbers

1 bunch tri-color carrots

5 radishes, tops removed and set aside

10 to 12 sugar snap peas

1/4 head purple cauliflower

6 to 8 broccolini stalks

1 bunch asparagus

1 bunch celery

10 tri-color cherry tomatoes

1 cup Creamy Hummus (page 140) or store-bought

1 cup Creamy Veggie Dip (page 138) or store-bought

Mint sprigs

Edible Flowers

1 handful Crispy Chickpeas (page 144) or store-bought

1. Using a sharp knife, thinly slice the cucumbers, carrots, and radishes. To achieve this look, I used smaller vegetables to get short, thin pieces. Open the pea pods and cut the broccoli into smaller florets. Trim and separate the broccolini, asparagus, and celery. Halve the tomatoes or keep them whole.
2. Place two small bowls or ramekins to the board. Fill them with the hummus and veggie dip.
3. Begin to layer the vegetables, in no particular order, starting from the outside of the board and working inward toward the ramekins. Be sure to keep in mind the variation between colors, sizes, and shapes as you arrange the vegetables.
4. Garnish your board with the reserved radish tops, mint sprigs, and edible flowers. Top the hummus with the chickpeas.

My Perfect Bite: Broccolini with a large scoop of hummus and crispy chickpeas.

Bottoms Up! A fragrant, citrus-led sauvignon blanc.

While English peas are best to achieve a plentiful, open-shelled look, sugar snap peas work just as well, and their pods are edible, unlike English peas. Shelling the peas is easy: Pinch the flower end of the pod and pull the string down toward the other end to remove it. Separate the two sides of the pod and place it on the board.





FALL HARVEST

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Designed to highlight the flavors of the season and colors of the falling leaves, this board will surely impress. The extra special Brie Brûlée adds a rich, caramelized flavor to the cheese that is truly unforgettable! *Serves 8 to 10*

Accessories: 1 ramekin, 1 mini pumpkin or gourd, 1 miniature kitchen torch (optional, see tip)

Board: 16-inch round, wood with handles

Brie Brûlée

1 round double crème Brie 1 tablespoon superfine sugar, plus 1 teaspoon

3 tablespoons Cherry cabernet jam or cherry jam

1 (8-ounce) wedge creamy cinnamon Toscano or cinnamon-dusted cheddar Parmesan

1 (6-ounce) log cranberry-cinnamon goat cheese, such as Celebrity, sliced

3 small bunches red grapes

5 candied orange slices

1/2 pomegranate

1 Bosc pear, sliced

3 to 4 handfuls beet crackers

4 ounces sliced Chianti salami

6 ounces prosciutto slices, folded

2 fresh figs, halved

1/2 (6-ounce) package golden berries or dried apricots

1 cup Candied Nuts (page 145), or store-bought

Oregano sprigs

Edible flowers

1. Make the Brie Brûlée: Slice off the top layer of the Brie's rind. Top the Brie with 1 tablespoon of sugar until completely covered. Use a miniature kitchen torch to slowly melt the sugar by evenly moving the torch back and forth until the sugar begins to bubble and crust. Add the remaining 1 teaspoon of sugar and repeat the process to form a thick crust.

2. Assemble the board: Place the mini pumpkin, pomegranate half, and a ramekin filled with the jam on the board. Add the Brie, Toscano, and goat cheese. Arrange the grapes, orange slices, and pear on the board.

3. Add the crackers, salami, and prosciutto slices. Fill in the board with the figs, golden berries, and pecans. Garnish the board with oregano sprigs and edible flowers.

My Perfect Bite: A wedge of Brie Brûlée spread on a cracker with a dollop of jam.

Bottoms Up! Enjoy with a glass or two of Autumn Harvest Punch (page 174)—the perfect party punch for your seasonal gatherings!

Don't have a mini torch? I implore you to buy one. They're so much fun and aren't *that* dangerous—I kid. But really, they aren't too expensive on Amazon and come in handy more than you might think. If you aren't up for it this time, pop the Brie under the broiler for 5 to 6 minutes, or until the top is caramelized and crispy. This might make the cheese a bit melty, so I recommend serving it in an oven-safe dish, not directly on the board.

ELDERFLOWER GIN SOUR

Pairs well with: Spring Floral (page 53), So Very Fondue You (page 117), Burrata & Heirloom Tomato Salad (page 59) *Makes 2 cocktails*

3 ounces gin of choice
1 ounce St. Germain (elderflower liqueur)
1 egg white
1 ounce simple syrup, or to taste
Juice of 1/2 lemon
2 lemon twists (optional)

1. Combine the gin, St. Germain, egg white, simple syrup, and lemon juice in a cocktail shaker or large jar with a lid. Shake well.
2. Add enough ice to fill the shaker and shake again until you see a noticeable amount of foam in the shaker, about 1 minute. Strain into a glass and spoon any remaining foam on top. Garnish with a lemon twist, if desired.



PRETTY PINK LEMONADE SPRITZER

Pairs well with: Melon Ball Salad Platter (page 56), Red, White & Berries (page 75), The Grill Master (page 64) *Makes 1 cocktail*

3 ounces pink lemonade
3 ounces lemon-flavored seltzer
2 ounces gin
1 lime wheel
Edible flowers (optional)

Fill a glass with ice. Add the lemonade and seltzer, gently stirring to combine. Slowly pour the gin into the glass. Garnish with the lime wheel and edible flowers, if using.

Switch up with cocktail with different flavored lemonades and seltzers to find your favorite combination! You can also swap out gin for tequila or vodka.

