

Better Homes and Gardens

Fast,
Festive
Cookies
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holiday delight

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CREAMY POTATO SOUP
Recipe on page 196

An Ounce of Wisdom

Everyone loves a holiday cheese tray. But how to nosh on the good stuff without blowing your diet? Eat wisely and well, as in these recipes for soup, toast, and salad.

Sure, cheese is good for you, and with a bit of portion know-how you can savor big taste without packing on extra holiday pounds. Rather than avoid this healthful food as a way to cut saturated fat, pay attention to serving sizes. One ounce of most cheeses is the recommended serving size—and the recipes here, by cheese expert Clark Wolf, feature that amount per serving.

Bold, pungent, aged cheeses satisfy taste, so less is better. These full-flavor recipes, in right-size portions, make it easy to control how much you eat—and that's so much more fun than feeling guilty about whittling away at half a cheese wheel.

by MARGE PERRY photos ANDY LYONS food styling JILL LUST

choose big taste + small bites

- A small amount of cheese is a healthful choice. Just one ounce provides 200–300 mg of calcium—about 20% of the daily requirement, and about the same as drinking 6 ounces of skim milk. “Cheese, particularly aged cheese, has very small amounts of lactose, making it easier for those with some lactose intolerance to digest,” says Bethany Thayer, R.D., American Dietetic Association spokesperson. For protein, an ounce, from soft to aged hard cheeses, ranges from 2 to 15 grams.
- To keep within one-ounce servings while navigating party tables, follow this rule of thumb. One ounce of hard cheese is about equal to the size of your thumb. For spreadables and crumbled cheese, visualize a ping-pong ball.
- Cheese expert Clark Wolf recommends using your nose. Sniff out “good, natural, wholesome, and delicious cheeses, and eat them in reasonable amounts—you’ll do right by body and soul,” he says. A few stinky ones—blue cheeses, Gruyère, Limburger, and Camembert—offer big taste in small bites.
- Serve cheese with healthful accompaniments—apples, pears, walnuts, dried fruit, fairly simple crackers, Wolf suggests, “and, if you can, always serve grapes.”



FOR MORE
The recipes on the following pages are from *American Cheeses* by Clark Wolf (Simon and Schuster, \$25).

The Stats PER OUNCE OF SWISS CHEESE

224	108	7	.02
MG CALCIUM	CALORIES	GRAMS PROTEIN	GRAMS LACTOSE

SOURCE: USDA NATIONAL NUTRIENT DATABASE



SONOMA TOAST



Are any cheeses naturally low in fat?

Yes. Ricotta, created from whey left over from making other cheeses, is one type. Also, those with high water content, such as Brie and part-skim-milk mozzarella, are good choices.

SONOMA TOAST

START TO FINISH: 15 MIN.

- 4 slices country-style sourdough bread
- 4 oz. aged cheese, such as white cheddar or St. George, sliced
- 1 large tomato, thinly sliced
- 8 large fresh basil leaves
- 1 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh basil or other herb

1. Place bread on baking sheet. Broil 4 to 5 inches from heat for 2 to 3 minutes or until toasted, turning once. Add cheese; broil 1 to 2 minutes more or until cheese begins to melt. Remove from oven. Top with sliced tomato and basil leaves.

2. In small bowl whisk together vinegar and oil; drizzle over toasts and sprinkle with chopped herb. **MAKES 4 SERVINGS.**

EACH SERVING 228 cal, 13 g fat, 30 mg chol, 342 mg sodium, 17 g carbo, 1 g fiber, 10 g pro.

CREAMY POTATO SOUP

PREP: 25 MIN. COOK: 35 MIN.

- 2 cups thinly sliced onions or leeks
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 cups milk
- 3 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 lb. Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and sliced
- 4 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 8 oz. Swiss-style cheese such as Gruyère or baby Swiss, shredded
- Snipped fresh herbs
- 2 oz. baby Swiss cheese, thinly sliced (optional)

1. In 4-quart Dutch oven cook onions in hot oil over medium heat for 5 to 10 minutes or until tender. Whisk together milk and flour; add to onions. Cook and stir 5 minutes.

2. Add potatoes and chicken broth. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and cook for 20 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Remove from heat; cool slightly.

3. Puree soup, half at a time, in blender. Return to Dutch oven; add shredded cheese. Cook and stir over medium heat just until cheese is melted. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Sprinkle fresh herbs; garnish with sliced cheese. Serve at once.

MAKES 8 (1-CUP) SERVINGS.

EACH SERVING 220 cal, 11 g fat, 31 mg chol, 441 mg sodium, 18 g carbo, 1 g fiber, 13 g pro.

GOOD AND HEALTHY food



PEAR AND WALNUT SALAD

Pears are a good source of fiber. Comice (kuh-MEES), best eaten uncooked, are available October through January. Bartletts, for eating raw or cooked, are available July through December. For milder dressing, use 2 tablespoons each liqueur and nectar.

START TO FINISH: 25 MIN.

- 1 Comice pear, cored and thinly sliced
- 1 Bartlett pear, cored and thinly sliced
- ¼ cup crumbled blue cheese
- ¼ cup walnuts, toasted and coarsely chopped
- 6 Tbsp. walnut oil
- ¼ cup pear liqueur or pear nectar
- 1 Tbsp. Walnut-Dijon mustard or Dijon-style mustard

1. Arrange pear slices on four salad plates. Sprinkle cheese and walnuts.
2. For dressing whisk together oil, liqueur, and mustard. Season to taste with pepper. Drizzle 2 tablespoons dressing on each salad. Cover and store remaining dressing up to 3 days; serve with spinach salad or cut-up fruit. **MAKES 4 SERVINGS.**

EACH SERVING 350 cal, 28 g fat, 6 mg chol, 209 mg sodium, 19 g carbo, 3 g fiber, 3 g pro.

“It doesn’t take much of a strong-smelling, strong-flavor cheese to make **big impact**.”

CLARK WOLF, CHEESE EXPERT

Big-Flavor Cheeses

Author Clark Wolf chose these recipes to highlight bold cheeses from U.S. producers. If you don’t find the particular cheese, ask at the cheese counter for something similar. To learn more about American cheeses, visit ilovecheese.com.



► **COMPLEX AGED**
Firm, deep-flavored cow’s milk cheeses that melt well are just right for Sonoma Toast, page 196, and sandwiches. **LOOK FOR:** Pleasant Ridge Reserve, St. George from Matos Cheese Factory, and Tarentaise from Thistle Hill Farm.



► **SWISS FAMILY**
There are many delicious American versions of the European original. They have earthy, slightly salty flavor and are ideal for melting, such as in the soup, page 196. **LOOK FOR:** Surchoix (Roth Kase), Sally Jackson’s cow’s milk cheese or Vella Asiago.

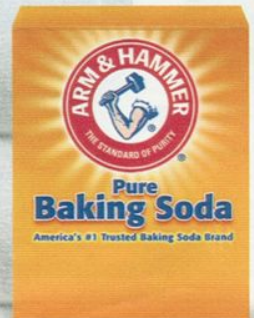


► **REGIONAL BLUE**
Robust, crumbly, and soft, these are made around the country. The texture is ideal with salads, above, and with appetizers. **LOOK FOR:** Berkshire Blue, Maytag Blue, or Point Reyes Original Blue. ♪

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