

# CHEF'S CORNER



## Minimize your latkes for tasty appetizers

Story and photos by Lisa Glickman

Hanukkah is observed for eight nights starting on the 25th day of Kislev, which may fall from late November to late December. Hanukkah usually falls somewhere near that other little holiday known as Christmas, but not this year. This year Hanukkah begins the evening of Dec. 8 and ends Dec. 16. For me that means it's time to light the menorah and invite friends and family over to sip some holiday cheer and eat some yummy food.

Hanukkah celebrates the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrians, who had desecrated the Temple. The holiday is known for the miracle of the one-day supply of oil that miraculously lasted eight days. For that reason oil is the main player in Hanukkah fare. Fried foods like potato pancakes (latkes in Yiddish and *livivot* in Hebrew) and jelly-filled doughnuts (sufganiyot in Hebrew) are traditional Hanukkah treats because they are cooked in oil and remind us of the miracle of the holiday.

Although they should be eaten in moderation, fried foods are delicious when done correctly. Cooking at the

right temperature minimizes oil absorption while creating that sublime, crispy crust on the outside of fried foods. Try to choose a healthier oil that's low in saturated fat. I like peanut oil because it has a very high smoking point and imparts great flavor. It's also low in saturated fat and high in polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, making it healthier than frying with shortening. Soybean and canola oils are also good. Watch oil temperature like a hawk: if it's not hot enough, the food will soak up extra oil. Also, when deep-frying, make sure to leave plenty of room at the top of a deep, heavy pan and use a good deep-fry thermometer to keep an eye on the heat.


Hanukkah is called the festival of lights, and at our house it's also the festival of latkes. For us Hanukkah means latkes and although you can easily find latkes anytime on the menu of a good Jewish deli, Hanukkah signals the green light to treat yourself freely to these crispy, fried potato pancakes. I'll admit that occasionally I have attempted to reinvent the wheel and made latkes with

The inspiration for the antler menorah decorating this Hanukkah arrangement came from a picture of a menorah made from a tree branch. Antlers are pretty easy to find here in Central Oregon.

things like sweet potato, zucchini or even cauliflower and they can be delicious but I always come back to my standard recipe.

### Mini-Latkes

I use my food processor to grate four russet potatoes. I give the grated potatoes a rinse in cold water and a good spin in my salad spinner. Then I add two-thirds of the grated potato back to the food processor now fitted with the steel blade. I add half of a sweet onion, one egg and a couple of heaping tablespoons of matzah meal. Season with salt and pepper, and process until almost smooth. Then mix the processed potato back into the grated potato. I think it makes the perfect latke. My husband insists that they must be fried in schmaltz (chicken fat) to be authentic. Although chicken or even duck fat would be over-the-top delicious, it certainly is not the healthiest option, and olive oil works just fine. Additionally, frying in schmaltz would limit your options to non-dairy toppings. Here is an idea to reinvent the way I usually present latkes.

I use my small ice cream scoop to make mini-latkes. When they are lightly fried on both sides, I gently press them into my mini-muffin tin and place them in a hot (400 degrees) oven to finish cooking. Once finished, they can be taken out of the oven and set aside to wait for my guests to arrive. A quick reheat in the oven and they are ready to be topped with several of these delicious fillings for beautiful, hearty and delicious hors d'oeuvres. 

Lisa Glickman is a private chef and teacher who lives in Bend. She has made TV appearances on COTV in Central Oregon and recently appeared on the Cooking Channel's *The Perfect Three*. She can be reached via her website at [lisa@lisaglickman.com](mailto:lisa@lisaglickman.com).





Mini-latkes topped with an assortment of fillings make for hearty and delicious hors d'oeuvres.

**HERE ARE SOME GREAT MINI-LATKE FILLING IDEAS:**

**Goat cheese and Madeira figs**

Coarsely chop dried figs and place in a small saucepan. Cover with Madeira wine and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until wine is almost completely evaporated. Place ½ teaspoon of goat cheese on latke and top with figs.

**Sour cream and homemade applesauce**

Peel and coarsely chop 3 apples (I like honeycrisp). Place apples in a small saucepan with a splash of water, 2-3 tablespoons of sugar, juice of half a lemon and ground cinnamon to taste. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer and cover. Cook about 15 minutes until apples are very tender. Mash gently with potato masher.

**Smoked salmon and crème fraiche**

Use good-quality lox or hard smoked salmon and top with a sprig of fresh dill.

**Smoked trout mousse with fresh apples**

½ lb. smoked trout

3 tablespoons butter or margarine

1 tart apple such as Granny Smith – peeled, cored and coarsely chopped

½ small red onion – peeled and coarsely chopped

1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 tablespoon brandy

A couple grinds of black pepper

2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil

Remove the skin and any bones from the smoked trout. Place the trout in the bowl of a food processor with the butter and process until blended. Remove to a separate bowl.

Add the apples and onion to the food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Add back the trout/butter mixture, plus the lemon juice, brandy and pinch of black pepper. Process until smooth. Taste and adjust seasonings. Chill in refrigerator until ready to use.

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