

# Tips to become a cheese lover

Today's photo of lemon trifle has candied slices of lemons in the trifle which are not listed on the recipe. The reason for this is because when we ate it, we decided the candied lemon slices were overkill. If you want to garnish your trifle with some fresh lemons, that would be pretty, but the candied lemons were just too much with all the other sugar in there! If you wanted to add a couple of layers of blueberries in there, they go very nicely with lemon!

If I had to pick my one favourite group of foods, it would have to be cheese. I do realize that cheese is not a food group all unto its own, but it should be. I love it all— from the fabulous variety of cheeses to be discovered at the St. Lawrence Market, all the way down to a good old jar of Cheese Whiz. I love them all. They are certainly not interchangeable, but they all have their time and place. Just in case some of you are skeptical about the Cheese Whiz, when you have worked a long day of cooking for other people, there is nothing quite like a quiet cup of tea on the couch with a few premium plus crackers and Cheese Whiz on top at the end of the night.

Over the years, my hubby and I have changed our cheese eating habits. We used to go on a cheese hunt only for really special occasions— there was always a cheese course with the big holiday meals, birthdays, Christmas, Easter, etc. But now, we are more inclined to skip it on the big holidays and save up our cheese consumption for quiet nights with a simple soup and salad meal. Of course, there is usually a good bottle of wine to go with the cheese as well.

The other thing that has happened is we have managed to raise two food loving sons who require a few slabs on their plate as well, so now the budget has doubled!

For those of you who may go foraging for cheese for your holiday meals, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

1. First, decide whether the cheese you are looking

for will be served before the meal as a snack with drinks or whether it will become a course of its own. If it is to become a cheese course, the proper order of service would be appetizer, main course, salad, cheese course, dessert.

2. Whatever cheese you purchase, keep in mind that cheese does not like contact with plastic. So, if you can buy your cheese from a store where they will cut you a fresh piece off the whole round of cheese, it will be much better than a little prepacked slice wrapped in plastic. You will notice that good cheese purveyors package their cheeses in parchment paper, not plastic wrap.

3. Ask to taste the cheese before purchasing. You cannot appreciate the cheese unless you taste it. If you are tasting a cold cheese, keep in mind that the taste will become stronger once you take it home and allow it to come up to temperature.

4. If you are not sure what to serve, tell your cheese supplier what type of menu you are serving and what the cheese is for— they should easily be able to suggest a selection of cheeses for you.

5. There are so many types of cheeses, try stepping out of the box and try a new one. Even the same cheese that has been aged for a different length of time can have a dramatic effect on the taste.

6. Before serving your cheese, allow it to come up to room temperature. So, unwrap the cheese, place it on the serving platter and cover with a dome lid— allow to rest for at least a couple of hours before serving.

7. If you are serving a cheese course, try eating your cheeses from mild to strong, otherwise you may not truly appreciate the subtle flavour of the milder cheese.

8. Wrap any untouched cheese in parchment and refrigerate immediately for future use.

Have fun and keep cooking!

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# Lemon Trifle

Serves approximately 20

## Ingredients

- 2 store white or lemon pound cakes, cut into cubes
- 1 recipe lemon curd (see below)
- 1 recipe meringues (see below)
- 3 cups whipped cream

## Trifle method

1. Layer the one third of the cubes of pound cake on the bottom of a clear glass trifle bowl. Follow by layering one third of the lemon curd and one third of the whipped cream.

2. Repeat layers, until all ingredients are used up; ending with whipped cream.

3. Refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving or overnight.

4. Before serving, mound the meringues on top of the last layer.

## Lemon Curd ingredients

- 16 large egg yolks
- zest of four lemons, plus one half cup of fresh lemon juice
- 2 cups sugar
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 and 1/4 cup cold, unsalted butter, cut into pieces

## Lemon Curd method

Whisk egg yolks, zest, lemon juices and sugar in a medium-sized, heavy saucepan.

Cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, until mixture is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon, 8



to 10 minutes.

Remove from the heat. Add salt and butter, whisking until smooth. Pour through a fine sieve into a medium bowl; discard the solids.

Press plastic wrap directly onto the surface of the curd to prevent a skin from forming.

## Meringue ingredients

- 2 egg whites
- 3/4 cup sugar

## Meringue method

Beat egg whites until stiff but not dry. Gradually beat in sugar.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Then turn the oven off. Using a parchment-lined baking sheet, place small mounds of the mixture on the baking tray— about 1 tablespoon per meringue.

Place baking trays in the oven that is turned off and leave them there overnight.

Be sure to put a sign on the oven door so that no one turns the oven on with your meringues in there!

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