

Stouffville retailer has Christmas recipes

KATE GILDERDALE
Correspondent

Busy Stouffville retailer Tom Thompson knows as well as anyone how hectic Christmas can be, especially when unexpected guests call in over the holiday period.

Thompson offers some timely tips for last minute entertaining, making the most of what's on hand at home. His special dip, which is a great way to use up those turkey giblets, is always a popular treat, he noted.

Boil the giblets until tender and place them in a blender or food processor with 1/4 cup mayonnaise, 1/4 cup olive oil, a generous amount of black pepper, 1/2 teaspoon of salt and a little pimento or relish (if using relish, add after blending the other ingredients to ensure a coarse, pate-like texture), and blend to desired consistency.

"Some people use cranberries

instead of relish," said Thompson. "It makes a lovely dip, and it's not too strong."

As an added bonus, the dip is quite low in calories and sodium, he said. You can also make your own variations.

"Some people use yogurt or light mayonnaise in place of the regular mayonnaise, if they're concerned about cholesterol," said Thompson.

However, these substitutions can alter the consistency, he warned. "Be careful not to make it too watery."

The dip can be served in a small bowl or placed in a festive mould.

"You could also use cookie cutters to make a variety of Christmas shapes," suggested Thompson.

One of his favorite hors d'oeuvres is scallops on toothpicks.

"If you have a microwave,

these are very quick to do, but impressive to serve with drinks," he said. "You put the scallops on toothpicks, with pieces of pineapple or water chestnuts at either end and wrap them in bacon."

The scallops should be placed on a microwave rack and cooked at full power until the bacon turns crisp. Thompson suggested you refer to your microwave guide, as timing will vary depending on the number you're cooking.

For a drink that's perfect for winter evenings, he recommended combining ordinary cider with mulled cider spices. When they're heated through "add a shot of vodka and you have great tasting drink, especially when the weather's very cold."

Thompson also suggested a fattening but tempting treat.

"Cut tiny pieces of bread, and fry them in virgin olive oil with chopped garlic," he said. "Let

them soak up the oil; these taste great just as they are, or they can be used with a spread."

Also, if you've got coffee or tea left over, don't throw it away, he urged.

"Leftover coffee can be frozen and used to make iced coffee or you can make a beautiful coffee cake with it," said Thompson.

You could also try making hot spiced tea punch, another of Thompson's favorite recipes, using leftover tea. You'll need 12 whole cardamom pods, or whole allspice, 1/2 teaspoon whole cloves, cinnamon stick, one bottle of hearty Burgundy, 1/4 cup honey.

In a large saucepan, bring one quart plus one cup leftover tea and spices to boil. Remove from heat, and stir. Cover and leave five minutes. Over low heat, add wine and honey, and warm gently, stirring occasionally, about five to 10 minutes. Do not boil.



TOM THOMPSON
Holiday treats

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