

[Quick, make-ahead appetizers from the Goldring Center for Culinary Medicine](#)

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Caramelized onion jam (left) has a hint of bacon and works well for light holiday appetizers. A cheese and charcuterie board (right) incorporates a variety of flavors and textures, and maple-coated nuts for a little crunch. (Photos by Heather Nace; graphic by Chelsea Christopher)

When you're busy trimming a tree or wrapping gifts, you might not have the time or energy to whip up a main course. [Executive Chef Heather Nace, RD, LDN](#), of Tulane's [Goldring Center for Culinary Medicine](#) offers some quick make-ahead options that are light and will please all members of the family.

- A lightened-up, creamy and cheesy [spinach and artichoke dip](#) is both savory and satisfying.
- [Caramelized onion jam](#) (with a little bacon!) can be gifted in a jar or used in multiple ways throughout the holidays.
- A sweet and spicy [maple-coated nut recipe](#) satisfies those crunchy snackers in your house.
- [Mix-and-match mini tarts](#) put the the dip, the jam and the nuts to use, and are adaptable with other filling ideas that please everyone's taste buds.

BONUS: Have you ever wondered how to create a beautiful, crave-worthy platter of cheeses, meats, and all the trimmings without spending all day assembling and arranging? Here are a few tips to make cheese and charcuterie boards without too much effort, allowing you to enjoy more holiday fun!

Cheeses

Include a variety of flavors and textures

Serve 2 cheeses (hard and soft) for up to 9 diners or

3 cheeses (1 sweet, 1 pungent, 1 hard) for 10-20 diners

Hard – Parmesan, aged Gouda (sweet), Asiago

Firm – Cheddar, Manchego, Gruyere (sweet)

Semi-soft – Havarti (sweet), Muenster

Soft – burrata, mascarpone (sweet), Brie, Camembert (pungent)

Blue – Gorgonzola (pungent)

Crumbly – feta, goat/chevre (sweet)

Charcuterie

Cured meats

Serve 1 choice for up to 9 diners or

2 for 10-20 diners

Suggestions: Prosciutto, soppressata, Calabrese, Genoa salami, Spanish chorizo

Dips and spreads

Suggestions: Any jam, fruit paste, mustard, dip or tapenade

Nuts and seeds

Suggestions: Pecans, walnuts, cashews, pistachios, pumpkin seeds

Fruits

Suggestions: Fresh grapes, sliced apples, berries, figs, dried apricots, dates

Vegetables

Suggestions: Carrot, celery and cucumber sticks, marinated artichokes, mushrooms

Bread and crackers

Suggestions: Sliced baguette, torn whole grain loaf, water crackers

Other

Suggestions: Olives and pickles