

## A 'Hunger Games' menu of recipes inspired by its characters

Hardcore Hunger Games fans out there, tell me I'm not alone. We've spent months — years? — obsessing over these books. Now that the movie has finally released, is there anything left to look forward to?

There's only one solution: a Hunger Games after-party, where you can discuss everything from fashion (would you really wear a matching blue wig and lipstick?) to how you feel about Taylor Swift's Katniss-inspired love song. For those unfortunates who haven't seen the movie or read the book, The Hunger Games is this year's Harry Potter and Twilight, appealing to much of the same audience, though skewing a bit older. Expect to hear about it for a while because The Hunger Games is likely to stay at the top of the pop culture continuum for a time. The characters are memorable and the actors who play them in the film are quite dishy, both in looks and menu inspiration.

To devotees, what better way to discuss the movie than with a Haymitch-approved cocktail in hand? Or a plate of Prim-inspired goat cheese spread appetizers? I can't imagine anything more fun, unless maybe a couple of District 12 tributes dropped by. (Which is definitely a possibility if you serve some favorite dishes of Jennifer Lawrence's Katniss. Except the wild dog stew. We'll leave that for really hardcore fans.)

That brings me to the first item on the menu. It's so easy to make, Haymitch — played by Woody Harrelson — might as well have dropped it off in a silver parachute. You don't even have to kiss Peeta (Josh Hutcherson) for it. That's optional. Simply drop by the store, pick up some strawberries, and serve with fresh whipped cream. It's the kind of snack Gale (Liam Hemsworth) and Katniss might have enjoyed during their hunting forages in the woods. If you want to add some flair, you can buy chocolate-dipped strawberries instead.

But no Hunger Games party would be complete without Prim's (Willow Shields) goat cheese. To add a little panache to her plain, basil-wrapped offering, try a sun-dried tomato and goat cheese spread. Serve with pita chips (or Peeta chips, if you're a really corny fan like me), vegetable crudites, and a sliced baguette, along with olive oil mixed with dipping spices.

Of course, you'll want to keep up with the hot-button issue — Team Gale or Team Peeta? Pipe their names in icing on a plate of sugar cookies so your guests have a chance to cast their vote by their choice of monogrammed dessert. (Even if you're not Team Peeta, you can channel his flair for frosting.) Either use your favorite sugar cookie recipe, or if you're running low on time — or just too busy rereading the first book — pick up a batch of sugar cookies from your local bakery and ice the names yourself.

To complement the food, serve a Tennessee Rose cocktail for those of legal drinking age. You might think Haymitch and President Snow (Donald Sutherland) would never agree on anything, but here's one exception. Haymitch would die for a sip of this cocktail — a modern twist on the traditional whiskey sour — and President Snow wouldn't be able to resist those edible rose petals floating on top. Or, for fans under 21, upgrade Katniss' favorite mint tea into a sophisticated mint mocktail. (You could also keep it handy for a Kentucky Derby party in May.)

And to borrow a favorite line from the book, "May the odds be ever in your favor." Although if you serve these Hunger Games-inspired dishes, you won't need odds — your party is guaranteed to be a winner.

### **>>EASY**

#### Tennessee Rose Cocktail

Ice

2 ounces Tennessee whiskey

3 ounces fresh grapefruit juice

Splash of fresh lemon juice

Splash of creme de cassis (black-currant liqueur)

1 lemon wedge

Edible rose petals (optional)

Fill a cocktail shaker with ice. Add all of the remaining ingredients except the lemon wedge and rose petals; shake well. Strain into an ice-filled collins glass. Garnish with the lemon wedge and rose petals.

Serves 1.

Source: Foodandwine.com

### **>>EASY**

#### Mock Mint Julep

2 cups cold water

1 ½ cups sugar

¾ cup lemon juice

6 mint sprigs

5 cups ice cubes  
2 ½ cups ginger ale, chilled  
Lemon slices and additional mint, optional

In a large bowl, combine the water, sugar, lemon juice and mint. Let stand for at least 45 minutes.

Strain and discard mint. Place ice cubes in two 2-quart pitchers; add half of the lemon mixture and ginger ale to each. Garnish with lemon and mint if desired.

Makes 3 quarts, 13 servings.

Source: Taste of Home

### >>EASY

#### Pita Chips With Sun-Dried Tomato and Goat Cheese Spread

4 pita breads, lightly brushed with olive oil

Kosher salt

12 ounces goat cheese

4 ounces cream cheese

½ cup chopped sun-dried tomatoes

½ cup pitted and chopped kalamata olives

3 tablespoons basil, cut into fine ribbons

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

Grill the pita over a moderate flame on the grill for 1 minute on each side or until you begin to see grill marks on the pita. Remove from the grill and cut into 6 pieces and sprinkle with the kosher salt. (You could also bake them in a 350-degree oven for about 5 minutes, flipping halfway through the cooking.)

Combine the goat and cream cheese together in a bowl. Form into a round shape and place in the center of a large plate, and press the cheese mixture down slightly. Combine the sun-dried tomatoes, olives, basil, olive oil and vinegar. Pour the tomato mixture over the cheese.

Arrange the pita chips along side the cheese mixture and serve immediately.

Serves 4 to 6.

Source: Charlie Trotter Cooks at Home by Charlie Trotter (Ten Speed Press, 2000)