

Throw the Perfect Holiday Couples Party

From cookies and milk to the partridge in a pear tree, the holidays are filled with classic pairings. This year, gather family and friends together and ring in the season with a themed party that celebrates famous couplings.

A themed party always calls for a little extra creativity to wow guests and ensure a great time is had by all. Since what you serve is always a key ingredient to a successful soiree, plan to have plenty of tasty appetizers and beverages available as soon as guests arrive. Try this recipe for Mini Steak Skewers with Smoked Paprika Aioli, a smoky flavor. Juicy red fruit, ripe blueberry and the smoothness of sweet chocolate is a winning combo with the savory steak that guests will surely adore.

Simple tips for your festive fete

While planning your themed gathering, make sure to highlight pairs that evoke the holiday spirit. Try some of these hosting tips to make your pairing party the event of the season:

- **Couples in costume:** Encourage couples to dress similarly and in classic holiday fashion. For example, some may show up in matching holiday sweaters or as a famous couple from a holiday movie.

- **Cheese and wine:** Nothing goes better together than cheese and wine. Make your spread complete with a variety of fine cheeses and a flavorful wine, such as those from Black Box. One 3-liter box is the equivalent of four bottles.

- **Dynamic duets:** When planning your playlist, look for holiday standards that feature only duets or duos to highlight your special theme.

- **Must-have mistletoe:** Add a kiss of romance and fun to your event with festive mistletoe. Every couple will look forward to seeing this gorgeous greenery perched across your doorway.

- **Don't forget dessert:** A holiday party would not be complete without the ultimate combination of holiday sweets: cookies and milk. Set them out just as you did in childhood days and watch as guests dig in to this perfect post-dinner treat.



Mini Steak Skewers with Smoked Paprika Aioli

Makes 10-12 skewers

You'll need 4-inch skewers to make this appetizer. If you can't find them, long toothpicks will be fine, as will larger skewers cut to size. Be sure to soak them for 15-20 minutes before cooking to avoid burning. Because this is holiday time, it's nice to use a higher quality meat like filet mignon, but you can use whatever steak you like.

Aioli:

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste

Skewers:

- 3/4 pound filet mignon, cut into 3/4-inch squares (should get 30-36)
- 1/2 small red pepper, cut into 3/4-inch squares (should get 20-22)
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste
- Olive oil, for greasing the pan or grill
- To make aioli, mix mayonnaise, lemon juice, paprika, garlic and olive oil in small bowl until well blended. Season to taste with salt and pepper and set aside. This can be done up to 24 hours in advance.
- To make skewers, thread one piece of steak onto skewer, followed by a pepper, another piece of steak, one more pep-

per, and one more piece of steak. You should have three squares of beef and 2 pepper squares on each skewer. Repeat until all beef and peppers are used. Season generously with salt and pepper on all sides.

Set grill pan over high heat, or preheat grill to medium-high. Rub oil onto surface of pan or grates. Place skewers on pan or grill. If using pan, cook for about 8 minutes for medium steak, turning during cooking so all sides have grill marks. If using grill, cook for 6-8 minutes for medium, keeping lid closed as much as possible, turning throughout, until cooked to your liking. Alternatively, you can broil skewers for 6-8 minutes, turning once halfway through.



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