

Lean, filling beans help you behave at holidays

By: *Melissa d'Arabian* November 24, 2014

Parties can be tricky territory for the healthy eater. If you host, you want to serve guests something tasty enough to make the occasion feel special. And if you are a guest, you want to bring something delicious and impressive, but that won't totally blow your diet. My solution? Tuck something nutritious and delicious on that hors d'oeuvres tray. Enter the white bean.

White beans are my favorite party trick. I include white beans in the first course of almost any party I host. Why? White beans are a compact burst of lean protein and fiber, and since they are among the cheapest proteins you can buy, serving them also is a great budget entertaining strategy.

All that the protein and fiber make beans filling. And by filling up a bit on white beans early in the party, I'm less likely to fall prey to endless visits to the chocolate fountain (once or twice will do nicely). But what to make with beans that would be party-worthy? While a white bean chili can make a fantastic appetizer (serve in cute espresso cups or plastic party shooter glasses), it's also easy to think outside the chili pot!

Focus on either the meatiness of the bean (use them in baked taquitos, or swap out the crab and make tiny spicy bean cakes) or the creaminess of the bean (blend them with roasted garlic into a creamy dipping sauce for chicken skewers, use instead of chickpeas for hummus, or add to your favorite tapenade).

The appetizer options for white beans are endless, but to get you started try my winter white bean bruschetta, which pairs the flavors of the holiday season with a classic summertime dish.

WINTER WHITE BEAN BRUSCHETTA

Start to finish: 20 minutes

Servings: 8

4 tablespoons olive oil, divided
1/4 teaspoon sweet or smoky paprika
Kosher salt and ground black pepper
10- to 12-ounce baguette, cut into 24 thin slices
1/2 cup finely chopped yellow onion
10 oil-packed sundried tomatoes, patted dry and finely chopped



1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh rosemary
2 teaspoons chopped fresh oregano (or 1 teaspoon dried)
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 cup dry white wine
15-ounce can white beans, drained and rinsed
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

Heat the oven to 400 F.

In a small bowl, mix 2 tablespoons of the olive oil with the paprika and a pinch each of salt and pepper. Lightly brush the oil mixture over both sides of the baguette slices. Arrange the bread on a rimmed baking sheet then toast in the oven until just turning golden, about 8 minutes, turning halfway through.

In a large skillet over medium, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Add the onion and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the sundried tomatoes, rosemary, oregano and garlic, then cook for another minute. Increase heat to medium-high and add the wine, scraping the pan. Let the wine simmer for 1 minute, then stir in the beans. Season with salt and pepper. Remove from heat and stir in the parsley.

To serve, spoon the bean mixture onto each slice of baguette and arrange on a platter.

Nutrition information per serving: 187 calories; 8 g fat (1 g saturated); 0 mg cholesterol; 20 g carbohydrate; 4 g fiber; 0 g sugar; 5 g protein; 304 mg sodium.