



## America's Best Make-Ahead Party Foods

Gleaned from local cookbooks across the country, these scrumptious recipes are planned for make-ahead ease. by Amy Chatham Scott.

A new-found appreciation for American products, designs, and cooking has been one of the most exciting and satisfying trends of the 80's. Along with the enjoyment of regional cooking specialties has come a new demand for local cookbooks. Compiled from the kitchens of community women and well-tested by those same good cooks, these books, originally intended for local sales, are finding a national market interested in sharing the best recipes from many areas.

Perhaps the best known of these locally produced cookbooks are those of the women's service leagues across the country, whose cookbooks are a major fundraising source for educational and charitable projects. Last Christmas, members of the Boston area Junior League celebrated the reprinting of their own cookbook by helping us compose a cocktail buffet menu featuring the best make-ahead recipes from local cookbooks across America. (To order the cookbooks by mail, see *Where to Find It*, page 61.)

The party was staged in a renovated pre-Revolutionary house in Hingham, Massachusetts, a 350-year old community on the shore south of Boston. The menu goes beyond the usual cocktail fare to provide a hearty feast. Still, service is simplified by limiting the time to finger foods. If you review the time schedule for this particular menu, you'll find a well-organized plan that leaves you time on the day of the party to dress leisurely and collect your wits before the guests arrive.

We recommend that you get house cleaning, holiday decorating, and grocery shopping completely out of the way at least two full days before the party. Consider planning your party for Sunday evening or late afternoon instead of Saturday. In any case, devote the day before the party to food preparation, deciding on serving platters and utensils and setting them out in place. You'll need a few hours on the morning of the party to put together the



Photograph by James Scherer

foils, and stuff cherry tomatoes and Belgian endive — things that would get soggy if finished the day before. That will leave you with several hours in the afternoon to relax.

An hour before guests arrive, bake the Brie en Croust. Counting down to 15 or 20 minutes before guests arrive, put mushrooms and bread in the oven and fry green chili and crab won tons. These last-minute preparations are not tricky and, with the afternoon to take care of all other details, should not be unduly taxing. Do recruit your husband or a friend to put the other prepared foods out in their serving dishes and to be on hand to greet any early arrivals.

To ensure that you will be the cool and collected hostess, keep the table decoration simple, too. For instance, loose branches of greenery add to the festive air of the table and cost nothing to cut from your yard.

You need not fret if you don't have enough matching platters or serving pieces, either. Cover those that are not

chased at specialty groceries, or clip Kenta palm from your houseplants. Even a pretty napkin can help disguise an odd china pattern. Look through your collections, baskets, pottery, or found objects for pieces that will make unusual serving platters. Here, the Hot Mulled Wine is served in a collection of silver baby christening cups.

Though parsley is handy, look for a clipping of fresh herbs or blooms from non-toxic houseplants or cut flowers as a more innovative garnish that requires no more time.

For a more attractive table, stay away from one food per platter. At our party, Maple Barbecued Spawntails and Green Chili Won Tons were served on a platter with Green Chili Won Tons and Picante Sauce. Stuffed Cherry Tomatoes, Stuffed Belgian Endive, Marinated Brussels Sprouts, Oven-Smoked Trout, and Sesame Cheese Olives are beautifully combined on another platter. Thus, in time and expenses and still making an elegant showing.

Hot Mulled Wine  
Chilled Filet of Beef  
with Hot Herb Bread  
Maple Barbecued Spawntails  
Shrimp Tree with Sherried Shrimp Dip  
Oven-Smoked Trout\*  
Caviar Mousse Recipe\*  
Green Chili Won Tons\*  
Picante Sauce\*  
Crab Won Tons\* Plum Sauce  
Brie en Croust\*  
Sesame Cheese Olives\*  
Spinach-Stuffed Mushrooms\*  
Marinated Brussels Sprouts\*  
Stuffed Belgian Endive\*  
Stuffed Cherry Tomatoes\*  
Coconut Pound Cake\*  
Lemon Curd\*  
Wine Coffee

Right, clockwise from top right: Platter of Green Chili Won Tons with Picante Sauce; Maple Barbecued Spawntails; platter of Sesame Cheese Olives, Oven-Smoked Trout on cucumber slices, Stuffed Cherry Tomatoes, Stuffed Belgian Endive; Marinated Brussels Sprouts; plate of Spinach-Stuffed Mushrooms; plate of Chilled Filet of Beef.



## History in towns Hingham, Massachusetts

BY MONIQUE B. LEHNER and MINXIE J. FANNIN

The 1980's has been a celebratory decade for Hingham, Massachusetts. In 1981 the Old Ship Meetinghouse commemorated three hundred years of continuous religious services. In 1984 Derby Academy, one of the oldest coeducational institutions in the country, had its bicentennial. The town celebrated its 350th anniversary in 1985, and this year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Hingham Historical Society. Time has been kind to this lovely coastal town located south of Boston and north of Plymouth. Settled in the seventeenth century, its agricultural and maritime development occurred in the eighteenth century while commerce and manufacturing came to the town in the early nineteenth century. Today Hingham has grown into a suburb of Boston tempered by an awareness of its history and architectural heritage of more than 125 colonial and 165 Federal buildings.

MONIQUE B. LEHNER, a former president of the New England chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians, and MINXIE J. FANNIN, the chairman of the Senate Art Committee of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, are partners in a historic-preservation consulting firm.



The Gingerbread House at 59 Cottage Street has indeed been a source of inspiration for various forms of art and magazine articles. This charming house is known for its unique architectural style and intricate details.