



above Chef Massimo Capra displays his popular take on the charcuterie board at Capra's Kitchen.

mastering charcuterie

creating an irresistible charcuterie board

story Laurie Wallace-Lynch photography Rob Beintema

When it comes to creating a charcuterie board, Executive Chef Massimo Capra of *Capra's Kitchen* lays claim to the grand daddy of them all! "We have a private room for groups and we have created several charcuterie boards made from olive wood that are about six or seven feet long and we pile them high with meats and cheeses and other foods, and then parade the boards through the restaurant—it is quite a show!"

laughs Celebrity Chef Capra. On a somewhat smaller scale, the *Capra's Kitchen* menu features "Boards for the Table" (a selection of salumi, intended to be shared by two, four, or more people as an appetizer course). "This is a selection of cold cuts like prosciutto, capocollo, pancetta or salami and cheeses like mozzarella and parmesan; roasted peppers, sun-dried tomatoes and pickled vegetables and good quality olives from Italy," says Chef Capra. "We make our own pizza dough



above Image from the book *Simple & Inspiring Recipe Ideas to Share at Every Gathering* by Lisa Dawn Bolton. Copyright © 2018 Lisa Dawn Bolton. Published by Appetite by Random House®, a division of Penguin Random House Canada Limited. Reproduced by arrangement with the Publisher. All rights reserved.

and add some delicious flavours on top and serve it on our boards, along with some focaccia.”

Chef Capra is a regular guest chef on *Cityline* and a celebrity judge on *Top Chef Canada*. He acknowledges that charcuterie boards have become more popular than ever, but they are not new to the renowned chef. “I have been making charcuterie for over 30 years, dating back when I was the chef at Toronto’s Prego della Piazza,” states Chef Capra.

Charcuterie dates back to 17th Century France. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the word charcuterie is defined as a delicatessen specialising in dressed meats and meat dishes, also, the products sold in such a shop. It comes from the French word “Chaircuterie” from chair (meat) and cuit (cooked).

Rick Taddeo, operations manager of *Goodfellas Wood Oven Pizza*, has noticed an increase in the popularity of charcuterie boards over the last few years.

“There has been a noticeable spike in the popularity and in the sharing aspect of charcuterie boards,” says Rick. “The boards present a great way to sit and relax with friends while sharing a board which serves three or four people. We

try to mix a soft cheese with a hard cheese and spicy and mild meats, along with almonds and olives. All of our meats, cheeses and olives are imported and offer a variety of tastes and textures that guest really enjoy.”

Goodfellas offers two charcuterie boards on the menu at their four locations in the GTA (soon to be five, including the newest location opening in April in Sussex Centre in Mississauga). Misto di Salumi is a platter of assorted Italian imported meats featuring Culatello Salami Prosciutto Crudo, Soppresata, Mortadella Bologna, Speck, Taggiasca Olives and fresh Focaccia Bread. The Misto di Formaggi platter is brimming with an assortment of Italian imported cheeses featuring Burrata Cheese, Pecorino, Asiago, Imbriago, Parmigiano-Reggiano Cheese, plus red grapes, dried figs, roasted almonds, Taggiasca Olives and fresh Focaccia bread.

Cookbook author Kimberly Stevens describes charcuterie as “a moveable feast” in her gorgeous new book *SAVOR, Entertaining with Charcuterie, Cheese, Spreads & More* (published by Cider Mill Press Book Publishers LLC). “When the serving board comes out, it means something special is about to happen,” says Kimberley Stevens in the Introduction

for SAVOR. “It seems impossible, but that humble wooden board can easily become the most extravagant serving piece at the table.”

Boards can be small, large, round, square, polished or rustic. They can also be slate or marble, yet wooden boards seem to be the most popular as they create the juxtaposition of a rustic backdrop on which to showcase luxurious treats.

In SAVOR, Kimberly seeks the advice of several food experts including siblings Hendrix, Matthew and Boo Simms, owners of Lady & Larder in California, a shop which specializes in artisan charcuterie boards.

Their tips include always using one familiar cheese such as a cheddar, adding variety with cheeses from various categories such as fresh, soft, semi-soft, hard or blue, providing a mixture of sweet and salty tastes with olives and fruit or preserves, and when it comes to portion sizes, count on about three to four ounces of cheese and charcuterie per guest if dinner is to follow.

The versatility of charcuterie is limited only by one’s imagination, as evident in the beautiful hardcover cookbook ON BOARDS: Simple & Inspiring Recipe Ideas to Share at Every Gathering, written by Lisa Dawn Bolton and published by Appetite by Random House.

“For me, the recipe for a perfect gathering is: Find some good company, gather around a big board and make some great memories,” says Lisa Dawn Bolton in ON BOARDS. “Serving food on boards is the perfect solution to serving something delicious that has been, almost entirely, been prepared in advance.”

You can also create some wow-inspiring homemade recipes using Lisa’s recipes for things like Kentucky Bourbon Bacon Jam and other homemade dips and sauces.

Charcuterie can be served any time of the day! For breakfast or lunch, try Lisa’s Bring out the Bagels board or end the day with the Chocolate Charcuterie Dessert Board, loaded with aged cheese, cookies, dark chocolate, salted caramels and Chocolate Salami (a marshmallow chocolate log). Themed nights are a no-brainer when you serve internationally-inspired foods on a big, bountiful board. Chorizo sausages and Pico de Gallo add to a Mexican Fiesta while Basic Hummus, herbed feta cubes, olives, veggies and fresh pita bread form the basis for the Mediterranean Mezze board.

At local restaurants, and with these beautiful new Charcuterie books on hand, you will be inspired to enjoy charcuterie style treats all year long! 6



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