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# Tapas and Sangria

## 2 recipes for a simple soir ee

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The main appeal of tapas is that they are fun, generally informal, and offer a festive and social style of dining. You chat, eat, drink, share, and don't always have to be seated. If you are not very hungry order a little, and if you are starving, order a lot. The point is that you are not stuck with the formal meal structure of a main course.

The other great part of tapas is if you have a hard time making up your mind, you get to sample a lot of different dishes, which can be a great way to try something new without committing to a full plate. My friends love this style of eating, as do I, and tapas work well for catered events too. Our clients have embraced this style of eating, and the numerous tapas-style restaurants that have popped up all over the place are a testament to this cuisine's popularity.

A word of advice: if your friends and family are unfamiliar with the term "tapas," be sure you explain yourself before they think they heard you say, "Let's go to a topless-style restaurant!" That could make for a humorous misunderstanding!

Tapas are difficult to define. They can be hot or cold, eaten with your fingers, or served with a fork and a piece of bread. Even Spaniards do not agree with each other about what constitutes a tapa. In the Basque Country, tapas are known as *pinxtos*. In other parts of Spain they are *pinchos* which are simply small pieces of bread with different toppings. They can be eaten without silverware, such as Serrano ham and olives, while other tapas, such as stuffed peppers or small fish dishes, are usually eaten with a fork. Fried dishes, stews, meatballs, chorizo, vegetable, salads, etc. can all be served as tapas or "tapas-style." Create lots of different flavors, take a journey into the world of Spanish cuisine, and make sure to serve some delicious Sangria to wash down all of the great flavors!

Here is my grandmother Edilia's Empanada recipe, as well as our often requested white wine Sangria (Sangria Blanco), great for a warm summer evening. The beauty of Sangria is that you marry the freshest fruits of the season with a decent (but not your best) Pinot Grigio or Sauvignon Blanc. There isn't one correct way to make the best Sangria; add what looks fresh and create your own "signature" Sangria. Ideally Sangria's should be left to marinate overnight, but if you want to get

full fruity flavors quickly, use berries and softer fruits such as watermelon, pineapple, kiwi, mango, cherries or peaches.

## Sangria Blanco

1 bottle dry white wine

½ cup white cranberry juice

2 cups freshly scooped watermelon balls

1 cup thinly sliced strawberries

1 lime, thinly sliced

1 orange, thinly sliced

¼ cup Cointreau

3 cups club soda, optional

2 cups frozen green grapes

Combine all ingredients except club soda in a large glass container. Cover and refrigerate at least one hour (best if overnight). Serve over frozen grapes with a splash of club soda.

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## Edilia's Empanadas

### *The Filling:*

1 New York strip steak & 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts cooked and cut into tiny pieces

6 large onions, diced

½ stick Butter

1 tsp. paprika

1 tsp. dried oregano

1 tsp. ground cumin

Salt & pepper

4 hard-boiled eggs, chopped

½ cup raisins (soaked)

1/3 cup ripe black olives

First fry meats in butter (1/4 stick). Sauté onions separately in butter (1/4 stick). Add together, meat, onions, paprika, oregano, salt and pepper, egg, raisins, olives and cumin. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

### *The Dough:*

4 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting

2 teaspoons baking powder

2 teaspoons salt

1/2 cup (1 stick) cold butter, cut into small pieces

1 cup cold water

1 large egg, lightly beaten with 1 tablespoon water (do not beat until ready to bake)

**Make the dough:** In a bowl, combine flour, baking powder, and salt. Using your fingers, cut in butter until mixture is crumbly. Add just enough cold water so dough comes together.

**Knead:** Turn out dough onto a lightly floured work surface, and divide in half. Knead each half two or three times to form smooth balls.

Roll the dough out (thin) and cut into circles using a biscuit cutter or the rim of a wine glass. The size you cut will depend on what you are using it for. For tapas cut 3" circles but for larger appetizer or entrée portions, cut as large as 8" circles. Place the filling in the dough and cook until golden.

Eat, Drink Party!



With an extensive background in luxury event planning, honed at some of the country's most exclusive hotels, Jeffrey Selden leverages his two decades-long party history in his role as Managing Partner of his family owned business, Marcia Selden Catering and Event Planning. Whether it's an opulent party for 500, or an intimate private dinner, he holds an industrywide reputation as a power event-builder with a unique, creative vision and flawless results. Marcia Selden Catering and Event Planning has been named "Best of the Gold Coast" of Fairfield County by Moffly Media for several years running, and was recently honored by The Knot as "The Best of Weddings."

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