

Little CHRISTMAS Treats

Make Christmas entertaining simple and opt for some festive fizz and cute canapés suggests **Nasreen El-Mariesh**

Water chestnuts wrapped in streaky bacon - to make these irresistibly salty, crunchy morsels simply drain a tin of water chestnuts, wrap each one with some streaky bacon or pancetta (stretch out with the flat of a knife to make it go further), spear with a cocktail stick and dip in brown sugar before turning under a hot grill until crisp.

Christmas tree crudités

The intricate florets of Romanesco broccoli look like mini Christmas trees, promising to liven up any dip. Try with minted pea, Parmesan and yogurt or soft cheese smothered in sweet chilli sauce, sprinkled with fresh coriander.

Mini glazed sausages - everyone loves a good sausage so make yours extra special by drizzling with runny honey or maple syrup in the last minutes of roasting, then sprinkle with sesame seeds. Make even posher by serving with a flavoured mustard; I can't get enough of Maille's Mustard with Chablis and Black Truffle (£29).

Roasted cinnamon almonds - more nibbles than canapés, these spice-dusted nuts will fill your home with a Christmassy scent. Lightly beat an egg white with a drop of water until frothy, toss in 500g of whole almonds with 200g sugar and a teaspoon of cinnamon. Spread on a tray and bake for 1 hour in a low oven.

Baked Camembert - definitely not a canapé, but baked Camembert oozes irresistibly as a cheese platter centrepiece. Slice off the top rind, spike with rosemary and garlic slivers and bake in its bottom box for 20 minutes in a hot oven. Serve immediately with a dollop of cranberry sauce and Parma ham wrapped grissini.

You could cheat and buy in your Christmas canapés in which case M&S, Waitrose and COOK are reliable options. Mix and match with a selection of homemade nibbles and no-one will ever be the wiser.

