

New Years Day Brunch



Mini Breakfast Parfaits

While everyone is busy making New Year's Eve plans, I'm usually planning a fun and fresh start for a New Year's Day gathering. I started the New Year's Day brunch tradition a few years ago in Austin, but brought it to Chicago and I think it might be the first of many in The Windy City. Assuming my guests and I don't drink too much champagne the night before and actually arrive for brunch, I love hosting a late-morning meal on the first day of the year since there aren't too many places we have to be on that day (versus Christmas or Chanukah or Thanksgiving, when holiday rituals take place without fail). Other than football and parade-watching, hearing stories from the Eve before in our pajamas with a tasty brunch is the perfect way to kick off a new cycle of time - New Year's Day is full of exciting possibilities and upcoming surprises.

And, so this year, I started with fresh, fruity, and new-tritious New Years Day brunch parfaits, using small mini dessert flares gifted from Mom from our favorite Pier1. (Hey, they may even be on sale!) If you don't have glasses like these handy, you could use votive candle holders or small cups or ramekins. I layered the glasses with fresh strawberries, blackberries, and vanilla yogurt. To fancy them up a bit, I grated gingersnap cookies on top. Triple Ginger Cookies from Trader Joe's are my new fave since they have pieces of ginger in them.



New Years Brunch - Pancakes n' PJ's

The star of New Years Day brunch was a multigrain pancake bar. I've hosted pancake parties before but without an array of topping choices. After all, sometimes pancakes are best with the fruit or chocolate chips baked in. But, since I'd be making pancakes for about 15 people, I thought it would be easiest to make one kind and offer toppings so everyone could create their own breakfast. I originally thought of the idea, but became even more inspired on Pinterest, which led me to One Stylish Bride - this idea was used for a wedding - love it for the morning after the big event. Looking for a make-your-own party idea? I came across others on Pinterest like a popcorn bar, pizza bar, hot cocoa bar, salad bar, and trail mix bar. So many options! For my pancake bar, I used - ready for it? FiberOne whole wheat pancake mix. It's healthy, it actually tastes good, and it only takes water to make the batter. On the table, I used a dry erase board to showcase the topping options, wrapped a few different sized boxes with silver tissue paper and gold ribbon, and small white bowls and dishes for the toppings. White, silver, and gold showcased the freshness of a new year with a festive feel since the celebrations of the previous evening were continued. If hosting a pancake bar party, ask guests to bring their favorite pancake topping, or provide things like fresh berries, nuts, chocolate chips of course, and you could even serve different flavored syrups if you really want to get fancy. Whipped cream and powdered sugar (or confectioner's sugar) and cinnamon would be a nice touch too.



So, friends. Brunch it up with a make-your-own menu! Cheers to a tasty and creative new year!