

ENTERTAINING IDEAS

California Cheese Ball Is An Easy Entertainer

(NAPSA)—It's easy to see why cheese balls have never gone out of style. They're simple to prepare and serve, delicious, and everyone loves them. Equally suited to both casual and formal get-togethers, cheese balls can be made ahead of time and set out just before guests arrive. This recipe features a flavorful mix of California cow's milk cheeses, including such favorites as Cheddar and Ricotta. Feel free to substitute other California cheeses that you enjoy—you're limited only by your imagination.

Quick to assemble and surprisingly versatile, cheese balls can be prepared several days in advance; in fact, storage in the refrigerator for a day or two only improves their flavor. They're also a great way to use those remaining pieces of cheese that invariably gather in the refrigerator.

To serve, shape the cheese mixture into a festive ball or log shape, or pack into a small crock or bowl with the coating ingredients pressed on top. These tasty appetizers can be paired with assorted crackers or breads and your choice of wine, sparkling wine or beer.

And here's a delicious idea—after the party guests have gone home, you can use leftover cheese balls for a tasty and quick pasta sauce. Just crumble the cheese ball mixture over cooked hot pasta and toss with fresh tomatoes, chopped olives or fresh herbs (use up to one cup of cheese ball mixture per half-pound of dried pasta).

California is the nation's dairy leader and ranks second in cheese production. The state is home to more than 60 cheesemakers who produce 250 varieties and styles of cheese. More delicious California cheese



Cheese balls can get any party rolling.

recipes are available by visiting www.RealCaliforniaCheese.com.

CALIFORNIA CHEESE BALL WITH ONIONS & WALNUTS

Yields 2 cheese balls

- 4 ounces (½ cup) California Cream Cheese**
- 4 ounces (½ cup) California Ricotta**
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- 12 ounces (3 cups) grated California sharp Cheddar**
- ½ cup finely chopped green onion**
- ½ cup cooked, crumbled bacon (optional)**
- ½ cup chopped walnuts**

In a large bowl, or in a food processor, combine Cream Cheese, Ricotta, pepper and salt. Beat or process until blended and smooth. Add

Cheddar, ¼ cup green onion and crumbled bacon. Beat vigorously until ingredients are evenly mixed. If using a food processor, take care not to overmix; Cheddar mixture should retain some of its texture. While chilling the mixture is not essential, it will be easier to shape if refrigerated for 2-3 hours at this point. Combine walnuts with remaining ¼ cup chopped green onion and spread on a large plate or sheet of waxed paper. Dampen your hands with water to keep cheese mixture from sticking to them. Divide mixture in half, then pat and press each half into a ball about 3 inches across; don't worry about keeping the shape perfect. Roll each ball in nut and onion mixture, patting the coating gently onto ball. Wrap each ball separately in plastic wrap and chill until serving.