CHEESE STRAWS

Makes 22 to 24 straws

2 sheets (1 box) frozen puff pastry, such as Pepperidge Farm, defrosted over night in the refrigerator
1 extra large egg
½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
1 cup freshly grated Gruyere cheese
1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme leaves
1 teaspoon Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 375°.

Roll out each sheet of puff pastry on a lightly floured board until it's 10 x 12 inches. Beat the egg with 1 Tablespoon water and brush the surface of the pastry. Sprinkle each sheet evenly with ¼ cup Parmesan, ½ cup of Gruyere, ½ teaspoon of thyme, ½ teaspoon salt and some pepper.

With the rolling pin, lightly press the flavorings into the puff pastry. Cut each sheet crosswise with a floured knife or pizza wheel into 11 or 12 strips. Twist each strip and lay on baking sheets lined with parchment paper.

Bake 10-15 minutes, until browned and puffed. Turn each straw and bake another 2 minutes. Don't overbake or the cheese will burn.

Cool and serve at room temperature.

WARM MUSHROOM SALAD

Serves 8

2 pound crimini mushrooms
8 Tablespoons unsalted butter
4 Tablespoons olive oil, divided
2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
8-9 cups arugula, washed and dried
16 slices Italian prosciutto (I like to get it sliced to order at Feast)
8 Tablespoons sherry wine vinegar
Chunk of Parmesan cheese
16 sundried tomatoes in oil, drained and julienned
Fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves

Clean the mushrooms by brushing the tops with a clean sponge or mushroom brush. DO NOT WASH THEM. Remove and discard the stems and slice the caps ¼ to ½ inch thick.

* Cook the mushrooms at the hosts' house.

In a large sauté, heat the butter and 4 Tablespoons of the olive oil until bubbly. Add the mushrooms, salt and pepper and sauté for 3-4 minutes over medium heat, tossing frequently. Reduce the heat to low and sauté for another 3-4 minutes, until cooked through.

Meanwhile, arrange the arugula on plates. Cover each portion with 2 slices of prosciutto. When the mushrooms are cooked, add the sherry vinegar and the remaining 4 Tablespoons of olive oil to the hot pan. Spoon the mushrooms and sauce on top of the arugula and prosciutto.

With a vegetable peeler, make large shaving of Parmesan cheese and place on top of the mushrooms.

Sprinkle with the sun-dried tomatoes, parsley leaves, salt and pepper and serve warm.