

February 2020

What can you get from CCS? Improved culinary operations, expert culinary knowledge, industry connections, networking through many culinary and food affiliations, an on-call mentor, a diverse culinary background and [more](#).

The "Big Game"

I really don't know where to begin this month. This past year has changed us all for the most part, whether professionally, personally or even politically. However, 2021 brings something that I haven't experienced in many years: the excitement of making great snacks and food and sitting down to watch the Patriots in the playoffs and maybe competing in the Superbowl.

For me, it was the excitement of cooking for a group of my son's friends who made their way to my house to root against us and eat the entire time. That was a great time, and I loved every minute of it.



From the freshest foods from local growers to spices from around the world, we curate for you the elements that will bring that restaurant food experience to your kitchen. Our seasonal offerings will help you make the most of the market's best. [Read more about our new venture](#).



ACF Chefs and Culinary Professionals of Chicagoland, founded in

This playoff season, we have COVID-19, social distancing and—as it turns out—no playoff dreams for a die-hard New England sports fan. I have been spoiled over the years and believe that many of my friends are happy that they don't have to put up with Belichick and Brady and the road through Foxboro. They may still have to deal with Brady, but that's their problem.

So, without the same interest in the outcome this year, I thought I would give you my thoughts on how I would approach the entertaining part of the playoffs. Cheer on your team or just relish in the fact that there are sports to watch that can take you away from the craziness.

It is really easy to entertain when you take the following approach to making a feast for the "big game" or any other time you want to sit down with the family to watch a new movie, binge watch a TV series—or when sitting down at the table is just too much work.

Here are the keys:

- As the cook, serve what you would want to eat
- Make it ahead of time
- Have enough variety that you can accommodate those finicky eaters
- Focus around one main dish or platter
- Don't put out too many snacks for the "pre-game"
- Remember moderation

My favorite meal for these types of occasions are "boards" and "platters" where you can pick and choose what you want to eat at the pace you want to eat it.

For example, if I wanted chicken wings, I would cook a big batch and

1925, is one of the fastest-growing chapters of the American Culinary Federation (ACF). [Click here](#) for more information.



Recipes, reviews and resources for everything food and dining in the Chicago area. [Check out](#) what's happening this week.



The Cicerone Certification Program certifies and educates beer professionals in order to elevate the beer experience for consumers. cicerone.org.

provide the sauces and seasonings to create a variety of styles: Buffalo, BBQ, Asian, etc. Don't just serve ranch or blue cheese, go strong with Indian and Korean flavors

The now ubiquitous cheese/charcuterie tray is always a fan favorite. Here are my thoughts:

- Three cheeses: one soft and fully ripened, an aged firm cheese and one stinky blue veined style
- Three meats: Thinly sliced salami, snack sticks or nuggets, sausage or spreadable meats
- Pickles and pickled vegetables, and plenty of them
- Strong grain or European-style mustards (no hotdog yellow)
- Hot peppers
- Some sweet and savory spreads

You can serve really good bread, crackers or even lettuce leaves as "delivery vehicles."

I know we drink a lot of soda, but a moderate intake of wine or beers is preferred. Beer, as you know, is the perfect foil for this type of food. My wine friends will disagree, but a big cabinet will crush everything, and a really young wine with too much acid may not work. Publicans, monks and craftsmen/craftswomen ate like this for years. That was a simpler time.

- Chef John Reed, CEC, CCA

The Virtual Rubber Band Doorknob Charcuterie Board



Pale Ales

Here are two of my favorite session beers that I have found both old and new.

Both pale ales but different in approach.



A must: [Daisy Cutter by Half Acre](#).

Their first beer, and the core of what makes them so consistent.



A new find that I go back and forth on between brewers (Smittytown by Temperance is #1). If you can find in the Chicago area, look for **English Sporting Beer** (a 2020 GABF winner).

The List



The hunt for unique craft beers is just as fun as the tasting. Here is [The List](#) of beers that we have tasted at our weekly craft beer tap room meeting.

Cheese



Not to be shy about it, but I have been able to work with [some](#) of the best Italian cheeses you can get, and they do make awesome pizza. If you haven't tried them, definitely look for [Galbani](#) next time.



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