

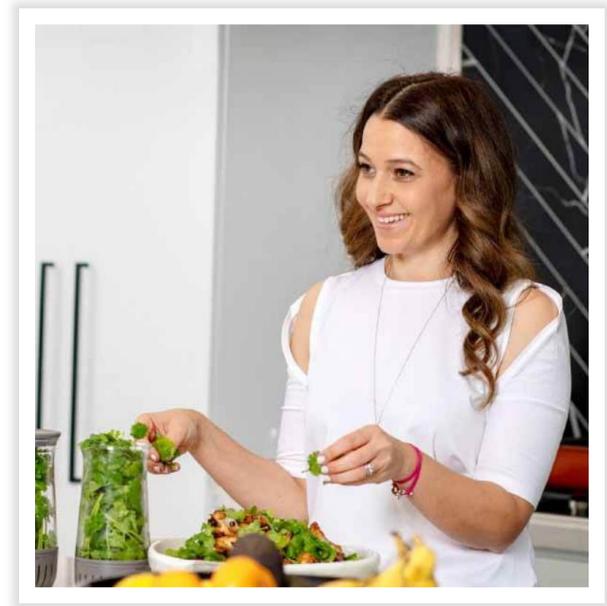


ROUBA SHAHIN

MY JOURNEY WITH FOOD

- GRAZING PLATTER 101 -

I'm so excited that you want to create your own grazing board. Grazing and gatherings go hand in hand. They bring people together through conversation, food and drinks. All our chats, laughter and good times are often shared around a table and here I will give you a simple step by step visual guide on how to create an impressive grazing board for your guests to enjoy and be impressed with. They are fun to eat and look at and are also much easier for you as a host – you can get it ready before your guests arrive, not to mention the less dishes you will have by the end of the night. Just remember people really do EAT WITH THEIR EYES.





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Ingredients List

3 Cheeses

Smaller Soft Cheese

Bresaola / Cold Meat

Crackers

Pears

Grapes

Dip

Dates

Turkish Delight

Strawberries

Dried Fruit

Fried Bread

Almond Bread

Chocolate

Figs

Raspberry Compote

Blueberries

Pistachio

Almonds

Garnish

Flowers

Garnish the Dip

Nuts

Olive Branches



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What you need

A large enough board to arrange each item while maintaining visual order. Make sure the surface of the board is food safe. I used a 70cm round board.

A shopping List, Write down a list of all the ingredients so you don't miss buying a thing.

Preparation is key to anything you do

Keep food to one or two bites, allowing guests to try a bit of everything without getting too full.

Grazing boards are meant to look artful but they need to also be practical so don't over think it. Your guests shouldn't be hesitant to touch and dig into your board.

Prepare/Make all your food/ingredients before you begin assembling.



Olive branch & cheeses

Including branches or herbs gives your board extra height and colour. For this cheese board, I chose fresh olive branches but you could easily use fresh herbs (rosemary sprigs work really well on a cheese board). Olive branches are my go-to because to me they are a symbol of connectedness and love. They remind me of tasty food, family and peace.

To begin with, add only one branch to the side of the board.





What cheese should you use?

Choose three different cheeses. Generally this will include a hard, a soft and a blue. Aim for each cheese to be different in colour, shape and flavour. You want to also avoid having all cheeses with the same texture. You know your guest best so if you feel they will not enjoy a blue cheese then opt for another cheese as I did. I slice the hard cheese into smaller pieces making them easier to pick up and eat. Cheese can be presented in a wedge or in a circular block

Here is a guide when choosing cheese for your ultimate grazing board

- Stick to at least one cheese that your guest will be familiar with such as cheddar.
- Include a soft creamy cheese
- Include an exciting flavour such as goat cheese, or a blue cheese (optional)

I love buying my cheese from specialty cheese shops. I find the staff more familiar with best flavours and textures and more importantly what cheese is ripe and at its peak. You could even taste the cheese before purchasing if you like.



Different types of cheese for you to consider

HARD CHEESES

Cheddar
Colby
Provolone
Gouda
Parmesan
Manchego

SOFT CHEESES

Brie
Goat cheese
Soft blue cheese
gorgonzola
Camembert
Ricotta



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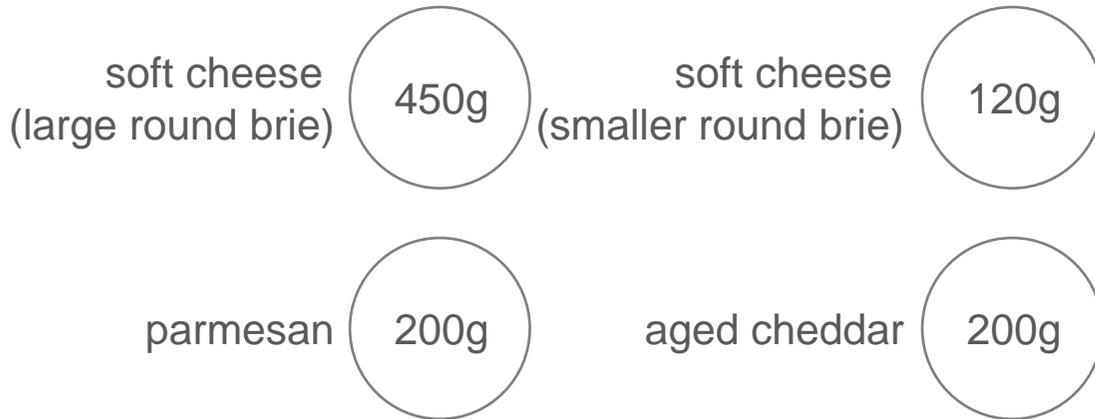
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Serve the cheese at room temperature

Cheese taste better at room temperature so I highly suggest you take the cheese out from the fridge at least an hour before serving to allow it to come to room temperature.

How much cheese should you buy

This board serves 20-30 people with accompaniments (like fruit, chocolates, nuts and bread, etc.). This is the amount of cheese I used:



Remember the harder cheese will probably be the most popular so you'll want the biggest quantity of that.

If you're like me and always worried you will not have enough, buy 1 extra cheese and leave aside in the fridge just in case.

Space out the 3 cheeses and let's begin building your ultimate grazing board.

Smaller cheese on top

Create height by adding a smaller soft cheese on top of the larger one. Choose your cheeses wisely so your layers look nice. Round cheeses look effective layered and you will find them in all sizes so they are perfect for layering.



Bresaola

Your cold meat or vegetarian choices here are endless, I've chosen to use bresaola a family favourite. Cured meat is a delight for most pallets so think marbled meats, thin prosciutto, salami or for our vegetarian friends veggie sticks are perfect with any dip



Crackers

No grazing board is complete without crackers. There are no rules for what crackers to use. Pick at least two different types. A gluten free option is always a good idea to have. Stack the crackers into the suggested space to keep the board looking neat.



Pears

Pears are wonderful accompaniments that go well with any cheese. If you prefer to use apples, they work just as well. Drizzle with a splash of lemon juice to keep them from browning.

If you feel like changing it up completely try the Fuyu persimmons. They are sweet and mild with a great texture and go well with soft cheeses like goat cheese or Camembert. Not many people have tried them so they will add more interest and create conversation. And I love the beautiful pop of orange colour too

Dips

Dips can be served in bowls of various sizes, shapes and colours. Choose a vibrant colour dip and place it into a bowl to add dimension and height to your board. Dips can bring new flavours to your board and they add a pop of colour too. They are effective and yummy so if you have time, try my chunky avocado dip or my stunning beetroot labneh dip. If you are time poor, simply use store-bought dips (pre-made).



Grapes

Crunchy grapes are an obvious choice for any grazing board as they fill up space beautifully. They give a natural sweetness and crunch and pair wonderfully with soft cheese. You can use either red or green seedless grapes but leave the stem on to make the platter visually appealing. You can also clip the grapes using scissors into small clusters to make them easy to grab off the board.



Dates

Dates are sweet and pair with stronger flavoured cheese like blue or goat cheese. These are my home nut filled date. You can use any variety of dates. Here's what to do if you decide to stuff yours too;

- make a small slit lengthways in the date (This will give you a little pocket to stuff)
- Remove the pit.
- Stuff dates with coarsely ground pistachio or desiccated coconut

Strawberries

Strawberries are lush, bold, and sweet and are perfect for your guests to snack on. They are visually appealing and I will always use them to decorate the board. If your strawberries are large, slice them in half lengthways through the stem and leave the greenery on for a fun presentation.

If they are unavailable, cherries are a good substitute. Just be mindful to avoid juicy fruits like watermelon or peaches as they will run all over the board.



Dried Fruit

Dried fruits are colourful, flavourful and an easy accompaniment to your grazing board. The variety you choose is completely up to you. They will add a chewy element to your board.



Fried Bread

There are no doubts that baguettes are the king of the bread world. So they are a must! You can use fresh baguette slices otherwise toasted instead of the fried bread

To toast the baguette;

- Thinly slice a baguette, drizzle it with olive oil, and bake at 190° degrees for a few minutes until lightly browned. Arrange on the platter
- You can easily find toasted baguettes in the bread section at many supermarkets





Almond bread

I used almond bread as it adds shape and texture to the board. Nuts and fruit crisps, biscotti or rustic flatbreads will all work too. Pre-made almond bread is found at most supermarkets.

Chocolate

Everybody loves chocolate, right? There are no rules here nor should there be!



Figs

Fresh figs pair well with firm and hard cheese due to their soft texture and sweet flavour. Halve them to create a beautiful colour. If fresh figs are not in season, substitute with dried figs.



Raspberry compote

Nearly there!!

Add a bit of colour to your board or I should say to your cheese for an extra-special effect. Raspberry compote enhances the flavour of the cheese. Use a store bought one or simple make it.

½ cup fresh or frozen raspberry

3 tablespoons honey

¼ tsp cornstarch

½ tsp pure vanilla extract

Squeeze of lemon juice



Blueberries

Fresh blueberries are a must for colour and crunch. There's something about the combination of blueberries and grazing boards. They just seem to work! They have a tart-sweet flavour but I will admit I love them on the grazing board for their vibrant colour.

Pistachio

Nuts will bring your board together and help fill any remaining gaps. Plus they happen to go great with everything we have used on this platter. I highly advise to choose only 2 nuts for your board. Here are some

suggestions:

- Walnuts
- Almonds
- Pistachio
- Macadamia Nuts
- Hazelnuts
- Pecans



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Garnish with flowers

Garnishing with Edible flowers adds a delicate touch to any grazing board. You could easily use fresh flowers instead. Choose delicate fresh flowers that are smaller in size.



Garnish the dip and fill any gaps with nuts

Fill out those empty spaces with nuts or berries. Stick to the 2 two varieties you chose earlier. Garnish your dip with a contrast colour.

Place more
olive branches
around the board
You did it!!! One last thing'



You will need to use the same herb/greenery you used in step 1. Fill the empty spaces on the outside of your grazing board with more greenery to visually add interest. My olive branches have small leaves and are flexible enough that I can really tuck them into small spaces. Tuck yours around the edges to help frame your grazing board.



Quality is everything! Let the food on your grazing board become a talking point. Where you got your ingredients from, how you made the raspberry compote and what a delicious dip that is will become conversation starters. I would love to be a fly on the wall right now and watch the creation of your beautiful board. Have fun and most importantly let this be a stress free experience. This board is so forgiving. Not one will notice if it's not perfect!!!

And if you do this for an occasion or a job don't forget to send me photos
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