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CARNIVAL CANAPÉS

Spring Racing Carnival is best welcomed with plenty of pretty, tasty morsels. A selection of colourful macarons, delicate cupcakes and a show-stopping cake will ensure your event is a race-day winner.

Feast for the eyes

An exercise in gastronomic abandon, grazing tables are high on wow factor and definitive proof that, in some cases, more is definitely more. Here's how to style one for your next event.

They say we eat with our eyes first. When faced with a seemingly endless spread of artfully arranged food, it can be difficult not to feel a little giddy with excitement. For this reason a grazing table is one way to earn serious kudos as a host. So where do you start when putting one together?

Creating your own grazing table or platter starts with identifying the hero ingredients, says food stylist Emma Knowles. She recommends choosing about five savoury and two sweet elements, supplementing those with trimmings like condiments, bread and fruit.

Size is most definitely key. "If, for example, you are doing cheese, it's better to serve three to four big chunks of cheese rather than six or seven little pieces," says Knowles. "Your centrepiece ingredient – be it cheese, charcuterie or a big platter of prawns – is your starting point. You can then add to that to complement it."

When it comes to presentation, it's about creating different points to draw the eye in and covering every square inch of the table to achieve that abundant, Insta-worthy effect. "Introduce layers, using cake stands to raise things up or boards or generous-sized platters to layer the styling. Fill in the gaps with beautiful bunches of grapes or lovely figs," she says.

As with all great food, colour and texture is also important. Whether it's a handful of vibrant fresh berries or a plate of freshly shucked oysters, Knowles says incorporating visual elements into your table setting will create impact. Ultimately, though, it's about letting the food do the talking.

CHEESE BOARD

A crowd-pleaser at any soirée, a spread of delectable cheeses paired with crisp crackers and luxe additions, such as prawns and sashimi, will have your guests in fromage heaven. To top it off, bubbly is a must.



SWEET TOOTH

Can you ever have too much sugar? Absolutely not. An array of decadent cakes, accompanied by fresh berries and a few treats of the chocolate variety, makes for the ultimate dessert fest.





SPRING BRUNCH

Keep it light and bright for a springtime gathering. Serve up an assortment of classic baked treats such as buttery croissants, bagels and muffins, along with breakfast favourites eggs, yoghurt and a rainbow of fresh fruit.

Key Ingredients

SPRING BRUNCH



David Jones Country White Baguette (available in NSW stores), \$5.95, Croissant, \$3.50, Carrot-apple Muffin (available in NSW stores), \$4.95, and Bagels, \$3.95/each. **Daylesford and Hepburn Mineral Springs Co.** Pink Grapefruit Sparkling Mineral Water, \$3.95. **Milla's** Farm Direct Orange Juice 1L, \$5.95. **Pepe Saya** Salted Butter, \$8.95. **WelleCo** Nourishing Plant Protein 300g, \$90.



Melons and berries available from David Jones, prices vary. **Country Road** Platter, \$34.95. **Royal Doulton** ED Ellen DeGeneres Bowl, \$15.95.

CHEESE BOARD



Montecatini Fennel & Garlic Salami 100g, \$6.95. **David Jones** Bella di Cerignola Olives 280g, \$9.65, Glacé Clementines, \$35.95/kg, Chicken and Pistachio Terrine, \$97.95/kg, and Cornichons, \$34.95/kg. **The Fine Cheese Co.** Crispbread 100g, \$7.95. Grapes available from David Jones, prices vary. **Mauri** Gorgonzola, \$78.95/kg. **Will Studd** Brillat Savarin 500g, \$55.95. **Fresh Fodder** Smokey Taramosalata 200g, \$6.95. **Peer Sorensen** Cheeseboard, \$110.

SWEET TOOTH



David Jones Ultimate Chocolate Cake (available in NSW stores), \$59.95, Choc Gold Leaf Cheesecake (available in NSW stores), \$49.95, and Chocolate Dipped Strawberries 4pk (available in Market Street, Bondi, Wollongong and Bourke Street stores), \$11. **Pure Pops** Watermelon Berry Mint 320g, \$12.95/4. Raspberries available from David Jones, prices vary. **Maxwell & Williams** Cake Stand, \$29.95.

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David Jones White Chocolate & Raspberry Mud Cake (macarons sold separately), \$69.95, Strawberry Swirl Cheesecake, \$29.95, Cupcakes, \$2.50, and Macarons, \$2.75/each. **Cartwright & Butler** Chocolate Oat Crumbles, \$10.95, and Salted Caramel Biscuits 200g, \$16.95. Phalaenopsis potted orchid (available at selected stores), \$49.95. **Maxwell & Williams** Diamonds 3-Tier Cake Stand, \$39.95. **Alessi** coffee pot, \$279.