Thanksgiving Cornucopia Cheese Ball

This cornucopia cheese ball is one of those appetizers that looks stunning and is surprisingly simple to put together. It's creamy, smoky, a little tangy, and coated in crunchy rosemary nuts and smoked paprika. Fill the opening with grapes, surround it with your favorite charcuterie ingredients, and you've got a Thanksgiving centerpiece everyone can snack on.

Prep Time: 25 minutes
Chill Time: 1–2 hours
Total Time: 2 hours 25 minutes–3 hours 25 minutes
Servings: 12–16
Course: Appetizer

Ingredients

For the Cheese Ball

- 8 oz cream cheese, softened
- 8 oz cranberry chèvre (goat cheese)
- 8 oz smoked Gouda, freshly shredded
- 2 green onions, finely chopped
- Salt and black pepper, to taste

For the Coating

- 1–1½ cups rosemary mixed nuts, finely crushed
- ½–1 tsp smoked paprika

For Decorating & Serving

- Fresh grapes
- Fresh rosemary sprigs
- Fresh sage leaves
- Dried apple slices
- Additional rosemary mixed nuts

- Pomegranate arils
- Fresh blackberries
- Mini corn
- Rosemary and olive crackers, or your favorite crackers

Feel free to get creative with your decorations! Use whatever seasonal fruits, nuts, herbs, and charcuterie favorites you have on hand.

Instructions

1. Make the Cheese Ball Mixture

In a large mixing bowl, combine the softened cream cheese, cranberry chèvre, freshly shredded smoked Gouda, and finely chopped green onions.

Mix until everything is evenly incorporated and the mixture is creamy but thick enough to hold its shape. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

2. Shape the Cornucopia

Transfer the cheese mixture onto a large piece of plastic wrap.

Using your hands and the plastic wrap, shape the mixture into a cornucopia, starting with a wide, rounded end and gradually tapering it into a narrower, slightly curved point.

At the wider end, use the bottom of a small round bowl or your fingers to create a shallow indentation. This will give the appearance of a cornucopia opening without needing to hollow out the entire cheese ball.

Don't worry about making it perfect! The coating and decorations will help bring everything together.

3. Chill Until Firm

Wrap the shaped cheese ball tightly in plastic wrap, making sure to preserve its shape.

Refrigerate for at least 1–2 hours, or until firm enough to handle without losing its shape.

4. Prepare the Nut Coating

Finely chop or crush the mixed nuts until you have small, coarse pieces.

Combine the crushed nuts with the smoked paprika in a shallow dish and mix until evenly distributed.

5. Coat the Cheese Ball

Carefully unwrap the chilled cheese ball and gently press the rosemary nut mixture all over its surface.

Make sure to coat the sides and curved tip, while keeping the indentation at the wide end visible.

The combination of nuts and smoked paprika gives the outside a warm, golden-brown color that resembles a traditional cornucopia basket.

6. Assemble the Cornucopia Centerpiece

Carefully transfer the cheese ball onto a large serving board or platter, leaving plenty of space around the wider opening.

Tuck in fresh rosemary sprigs and sage leaves around the cheese ball to add texture and color.

Arrange a small bunch of grapes inside the indentation, then let additional grapes cascade out onto the board to create the appearance of an overflowing cornucopia.

Arrange dried apple slices, blackberries, additional rosemary mixed nuts, and pomegranate arils around the grapes. I also added some mini corn for an extra festive Thanksgiving touch.

7. Add Crackers & Serve

Serve slightly softened for easy spreading, and enjoy!

Tips & Notes

Make it ahead: The cheese ball can be prepared and shaped up to 2 days in advance. Keep it tightly wrapped in the refrigerator, then add the nut coating and decorations shortly before serving.

For easier shaping: If the cheese mixture feels too soft or sticky, refrigerate it for 20–30 minutes before forming the cornucopia.

Don't hollow it out: You only need a shallow indentation at the wider end. The grapes spilling out create the illusion of a full cornucopia without compromising the structure of the cheese ball.

Get creative with your decorations: I used grapes, dried apple slices, blackberries, pomegranate arils, rosemary, sage, mixed nuts, and mini corn, but the possibilities are endless. Try figs, pears, dried apricots, cranberries, or whatever you already have on your Thanksgiving charcuterie board.

Serving tip: Remove the cheese ball from the refrigerator about 15–20 minutes before serving so it's easier to spread. Keep decorative corn that isn't intended for eating separate from the edible ingredients.

Storage: Store leftover cheese ball in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3–4 days. Remove any fruit or decorative garnishes before storing.