

Devils on Horseback

SERVES Makes 32 pieces

TIME 1 hour, plus 20 minutes freezing

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS


This retro appetizer gives an intense performance at cocktail hour: smoky, crispy bacon wrapped around sweet dates filled with tangy blue cheese. We use Deglet Noor dates for their manageable size. To avoid a sticky mess when portioning blue cheese, we froze it to make it easier to crumble and then split the dates open with a paring knife and stuffed the crumbles inside. The dates' natural stickiness sealed them back up nicely. We wrapped just half a slice of bacon around each date to avoid a lot of overlap (and residual gumminess) and placed the devils seam side down on a wire rack set in a rimmed baking sheet to cook. The bacon slices sealed around the dates, eliminating the extra step of skewering them shut. With the rack in play, the dates shed grease and crisped all around.



INGREDIENTS

- 4 ounces blue cheese
- 32 pitted Deglet Noor dates, about 1 1/4 inches long
- 16 slices bacon

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

-  Use tender dates that measure at least 1 1/4 inches in length; smaller, drier dates are difficult to stuff. Do not use Medjool dates or thick-cut bacon in this recipe. Freezing the blue cheese for 20 minutes makes it easier to crumble. Our preferred supermarket blue cheese is Stella Blue.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1** Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Set wire rack in aluminum foil-lined rimmed baking sheet. Freeze blue cheese until firm, about 20 minutes.
- 2** Cut through 1 long side of each date and open like book. Crumble blue cheese and divide evenly among dates. Close dates around blue cheese and squeeze lightly to seal (dates should be full but not overflowing).
- 3** Lay bacon slices on cutting board and halve each slice crosswise. Working with 1 date at a time, place blue cheese-filled date on end of 1 halved bacon slice and roll to enclose date. Place wrapped dates seam side down on prepared rack.
- 4** Bake until bacon is browned, 27 to 30 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through baking. Let cool for 10 minutes. Serve with toothpicks.
- 5** **TO MAKE AHEAD:** Devils on Horseback can be assembled through step 3 and frozen seam side down on rimmed baking sheet. Frozen pieces can be transferred to zipper-lock bag and frozen for up to 1 month. Increase baking time by 8 to 10 minutes.

