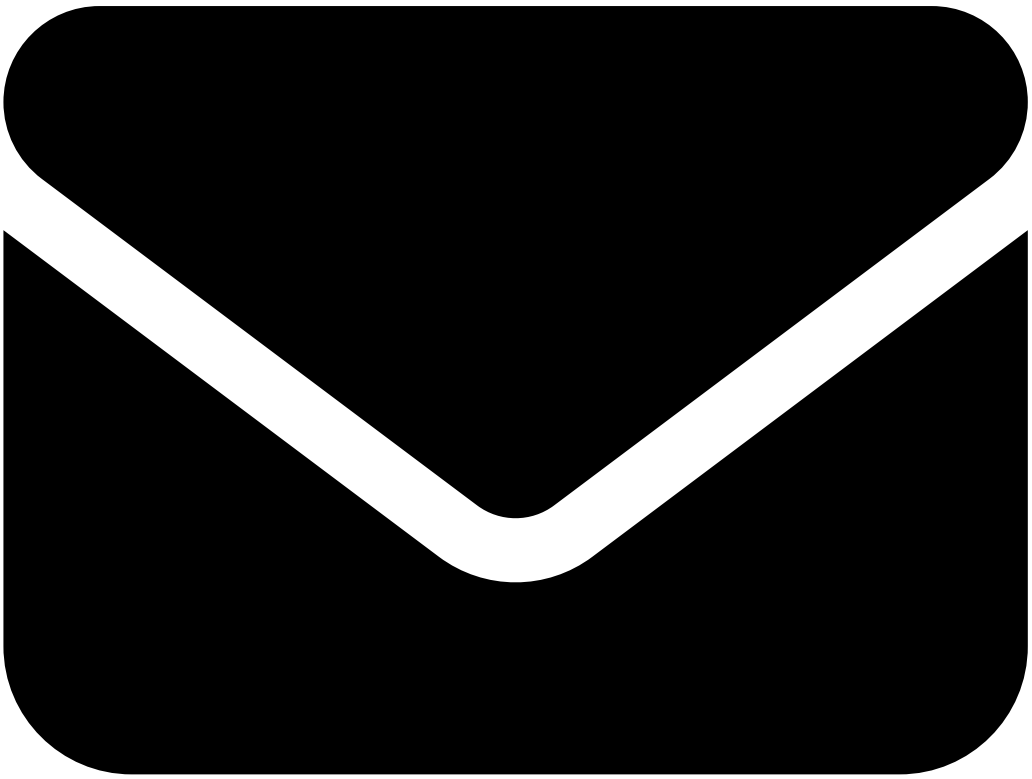
# How to Build an Authentic Italian Antipasto Platter

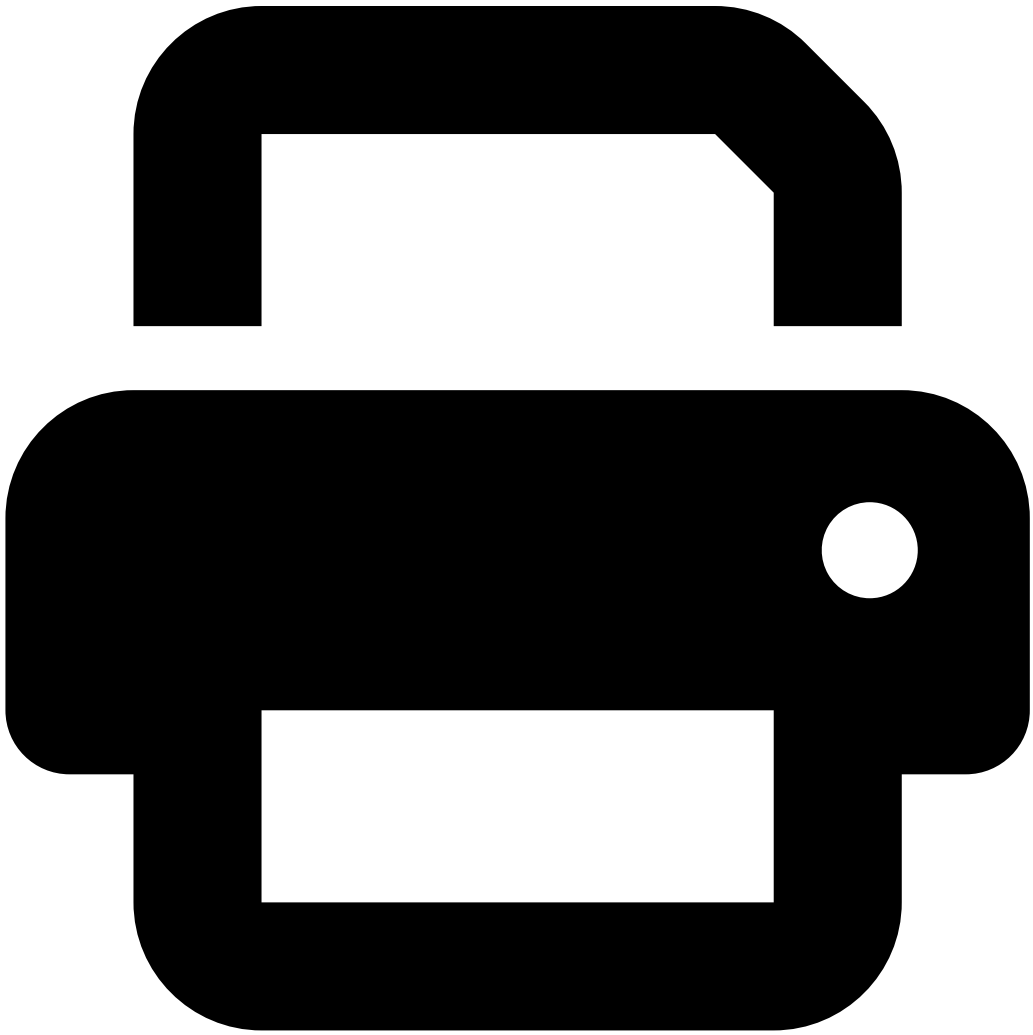
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An Italian antipasto platter is one of my favorite ways to bring people together around the table. It’s colorful, abundant, and filled with all the little bites that make Italian entertaining so special. From savory cured meats and cheeses to marinated vegetables, olives, and homemade appetizers, there’s something for everyone to enjoy.

In Italy, antipasto is traditionally the first course of a meal. It’s meant to awaken your appetite and give everyone a chance to gather, relax, and enjoy a little something before dinner. It doesn’t have to be complicated or overly elaborate. The secret is choosing good-quality ingredients, combining different flavors and textures, and arranging everything in a way that feels inviting.

Whether you’re hosting Thanksgiving, Christmas, a dinner party, or a casual gathering with friends, learning how to build an authentic Italian antipasto platter is a wonderful

way to entertain without spending the entire day in the kitchen.

## What Is an Italian Antipasto Platter?

Antipasto means “before the meal” in Italian. Traditionally, it’s the opening course of an Italian meal and can include a variety of small savory bites.

An authentic Italian antipasto platter usually features a combination of cured meats, cheeses, marinated vegetables, olives, bread, and other seasonal ingredients.

Unlike a traditional American charcuterie board, which often focuses heavily on meats, cheeses, crackers, and sweet accompaniments, an Italian antipasto platter incorporates more traditional Italian ingredients such as roasted peppers, marinated eggplant, artichokes, olives, and bruschetta.

There isn’t one set combination. Every family has its own favorites, and that’s part of what makes antipasto so wonderful.

## Italian Cured Meats

Cured meats are often the centerpiece of an antipasto platter. I like to use two or three different varieties to give guests a nice selection.

Some traditional choices include:

- Prosciutto: Thinly sliced, delicate, and slightly salty.
- Genoa salami: A classic Italian cured meat with a rich, savory flavor.
- Soppressata: A rustic Italian salami that can be mild or

spicy.
- Mortadella: A smooth, delicate Italian sausage with a wonderful texture.

When arranging the meats, fold prosciutto loosely into little ribbons, fold salami into quarters, or roll individual slices. This creates height and makes the platter look more inviting.

## Italian Cheeses

I always like to include a combination of firm, creamy, and mild cheeses. This gives everyone something different to enjoy.

Some of my favorites include:

- Parmigiano Reggiano: Break into rustic chunks rather than cutting into perfect cubes.
- Pecorino Romano: A firm sheep’s milk cheese with a distinct savory flavor.
- Provolone: Mild and creamy, making it a nice contrast to the stronger cheeses.
- Fresh mozzarella: Soft, delicate, and delicious with a drizzle of olive oil.
- Burrata: A beautiful addition when you want something especially creamy and impressive.

Allow the cheeses to come closer to room temperature before serving so their flavors and textures can shine.

## Marinated Vegetables and Olives

This is where an Italian antipasto platter really comes to life. I love the combination of savory, tangy, and slightly sweet vegetables alongside the meats and cheeses.

Consider adding:

- Roasted red peppers
- Marinated artichoke hearts
- Italian green and black olives
- Marinated eggplant
- Italian marinated zucchini
- Grilled or roasted vegetables

Homemade marinated vegetables are especially nice because you can prepare them ahead of time.

## Breads and Small Bites

You need something to enjoy with all those wonderful meats, cheeses, and vegetables.

I like to include a few different options:

- Toasted crostini
- Italian breadsticks (grissini)
- Sliced crusty Italian bread
- Bruschetta
- Small savory appetizers
- Crackers or taralli

Homemade bruschetta is always a welcome addition. You can also add small portions of baked ricotta, fried zucchini flowers, or other Italian appetizers.

The idea is to give guests different ways to enjoy the ingredients.

## Fresh Fruit, Nuts, and Other

## Accompaniments

A little sweetness helps balance the salty and savory ingredients.

Some wonderful additions include:

- Fresh grapes
- Fresh figs
- Dried apricots
- Walnuts or almonds
- Honey
- Seasonal fresh fruit

I especially love adding fresh figs when they’re in season. They pair beautifully with Italian cheeses and cured meats.

# How to Arrange an Italian Antipasto Platter

You don’t need to be a professional food stylist to create a beautiful antipasto platter. The trick is to work in layers and build the board gradually.

Here’s how I like to approach it.

**Step 1: Choose your serving board.**

Start with a large wooden board, marble platter, or serving tray. Choose something with enough room for your ingredients without overcrowding everything.

**Step 2: Add the cheeses first.**

Place your larger pieces of cheese around the board, spacing them out so guests can easily reach them.

**Step 3: Arrange the cured meats.**

Fold, roll, or loosely layer your meats in small groups. Avoid laying everything flat. A little height adds visual interest.

**Step 4: Add your vegetables and olives.**

Place marinated vegetables and olives in small bowls to keep their oils and marinades from spreading across the board. Distribute the bowls throughout the platter.

**Step 5: Fill in with bread and small bites.**

Add crostini, breadsticks, crackers, and any additional appetizers.

**Step 6: Finish with fresh ingredients.**

Fill any open spaces with grapes, figs, nuts, or fresh herbs. I like to finish with a little greenery to give the platter a fresh, colorful appearance.

Remember, you want your platter to look abundant but not overly crowded. Let the ingredients speak for themselves.

## How Much Food Do You Need Per Person?

The amount you need depends on whether you're serving antipasto as a light appetizer before dinner or making it the main attraction for a gathering.

For an appetizer platter served before a meal, these are good starting estimates:

| Ingredient | Amount per person |
|---|---|
| Cured meats | 2–3 ounces |
| Cheese | 2 ounces |
| Marinated vegetables | 2 ounces |
| Bread or crostini | 2–3 pieces |

| | |
|---|---|
| Fruit and nuts | Small handful |

## Make-Ahead Tips for Entertaining

One of the reasons I love serving an antipasto platter is that so much of the preparation can be done ahead of time. When guests arrive, you want to enjoy their company instead of being stuck in the kitchen.

Here are a few ways to make entertaining easier:

- Prepare homemade marinated vegetables a day or two ahead.
- Portion olives and other accompaniments into small containers.
- Cut firm cheeses a few hours before serving and refrigerate them properly.
- Arrange cured meats shortly before serving.
- Wash and dry fresh fruit ahead of time.
- Add bread, crostini, and fresh herbs just before serving.

I recommend assembling the platter shortly before your guests arrive for the freshest presentation.

## How to Serve an Italian Antipasto Platter

An antipasto platter is traditionally served as the first course before the main meal, but it’s also wonderful for casual entertaining.

For a holiday gathering, I like to place it in the center of the table where everyone can help themselves.

If you’re planning a larger Italian-inspired menu, pair your

antipasto with a simple salad, homemade focaccia, or a comforting bowl of soup.

For a casual gathering, you can make the platter the centerpiece and offer additional small bites throughout the evening.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is traditionally served on an Italian antipasto platter?

Traditional antipasto can include cured meats, Italian cheeses, olives, marinated vegetables, bread, bruschetta, and other small savory appetizers. The exact selection varies by region and family tradition.

## What is the difference between antipasto and charcuterie?

Antipasto is the traditional Italian first course, featuring a variety of savory foods. Charcuterie traditionally refers to prepared and preserved meats, although modern charcuterie boards often include cheeses, fruit, nuts, and crackers.

## Can I make an antipasto platter the night before?

You can prepare many of the individual ingredients ahead of time, including marinated vegetables, cheeses, and accompaniments. However, I recommend assembling the complete platter shortly before serving for the best presentation and freshness.

## What cheese is best for an Italian antipasto platter?

Parmigiano Reggiano, Pecorino Romano, provolone, mozzarella, and burrata are all wonderful choices. I recommend choosing a combination of firm and soft cheeses.

## How many people does an antipasto platter serve?

It depends on the size of the platter and what else you're serving. As an appetizer before dinner, plan on approximately 2–3 ounces of meat and 2 ounces of cheese per person, along with smaller portions of vegetables and bread.

# Bring a Little Italian Tradition to Your Table

One of the things I love most about Italian entertaining is that it doesn't have to be complicated. It's about bringing good food to the table, sharing a little of everything, and making people feel welcome.

An Italian antipasto platter is a perfect example of that. Use your favorite cheeses, add a few good-quality cured meats, include some homemade marinated vegetables, and finish with fresh bread and seasonal ingredients.

Make it your own, don't worry about making everything perfect, and most importantly, enjoy the time around the table.

If you make an Italian antipasto platter, I'd love to hear what you included! Leave me a comment below and let me know your favorite ingredients. And if you share it on Instagram, be sure to tag me. I love seeing what you're making in your

kitchens!