

Steps for Assembling a Local Cheese Board

These steps were developed courtesy of Lauren Schulte. To see more of her bites and meals, visit her Instagram [@TheBiteSizePantry](#).

1. Pick a board, platter or plate to be your base. There a lot of fun shaped platters that you can buy, or you can assemble the toppings in the shape of your choosing such as a Christmas tree, your home state (I'm from Ohio as you can probably tell from my board selection) or fun holiday or season shapes with the rinds of your cheese.

2. Use small cups, bowls and plates to give your board more dimension and elevation. There will be plenty of different textures and tastes on your board, but when you add these extra small details, it really helps take your platter to the next level. I placed Kalamata and jalapeño-stuffed olives, which I picked out from Heinen's antipasto bar, in two small bowls on opposite ends of the board. I left a little space between the bowls and the edges of the board so that I could nestle other ingredients around them.

3. Place cheese wedges on the two open edges opposite of the bowls. You can leave them both whole or cut a couple slices of each and nestle the slices up against the wedge of cheese. When you add a wedge of cheese, make sure to have the cheese cutters and knives nearby for your guests. In this case, I tucked each under a wedge of cheese, but you can also stick them in the top of the wedge for a different look.

4. If you add meat, pre-slice it into bite-size portions for easy grazing. I chose a smoked sausage from the deli counter at Heinen's, which I sliced at home. To give your board a nice flow, place the meat in a line across the center of your board from one edge to the opposite edge. This gave the board a separation so that I could differentiate the location of the Cleveland-made and Chicago-made cheeses.

5. Pre-slice the remaining cheeses to give guests options. Nestle these slices around the bowls of olives on your plate. This is why I noted to leave space around the bowls from at the edges of the board. You are now going to fill up the board by pilling the cheese slices up to the edges of the board.

6. Crackers come next. Make sure to choose a couple different shapes and varieties of crackers to give your guests options. I chose a thin whole wheat square cracker and a round buttery cracker. I did not include a gluten-free cracker on this board, but it is something to keep in mind for guests with dietary restrictions. Place your crackers in a line following in the same direction as the meat on your board.

7. Fill the remaining open spots with Marcona Almonds. Simply use a handful or two of these almonds to fill in any open spaces. Make sure to push them up against the surrounding cheeses so that there is no open space on the board.

8. If you choose to add a jam or spread, place it in the middle of your board with a serving utensil nearby. The Cherry-Blackberry spread from Bonne Maman was placed where the city of Columbus, OH would be on my board. FUN!

9. Garnish with fresh herbs and fruit. Now that your board is almost complete you can add a couple more elements to create texture. I choose fresh herbs and fruit and nestled them around and under the different elements of my board. Apple slices and rosemary were the perfect compliments to the different flavors of nuts and cheese on my board.

