Charcuterie Board 101 – Grocery List

General buying/building guidelines:
2–4 ounces of cheese per person (depending on appetizer vs. meal)
1–4 ounces of meat per person (depending on appetizer vs. meal)

You will need a board or platter just big enough to fit your items (you want the board to look very full and have minimal space left after the items are placed).

You may need small bowls or ramekins, depending on if you would like your dips and spreads, or other small items such as pickles or olives to be “contained” or more rustically displayed.

Cheeses:
Ideally, you will pick a cheese from a minimum of 2, but preferably all 3 of the categories listed below (depending on how many people you are serving). If you are picking more than 1 item from a category, try to have them be different colors, texture (example: parmesan and fontina), or come from different milks.

“Hard” – these are the cheeses that will easily slice, and will not “spread” unless melted
   - Examples: Aged cheddar, fontina, gouda, parmesan, fresh mozzarella, feta
   - Vegan cheddars and sliced cheeses will also fall in this category

“Soft” – these are the cheeses that are “squishier” and will often spread
   - Examples: Brie, camembert, goat cheese logs, boursin, burrata, St. Andre
   - Vegan options often fall in this category. Most cashew cheeses or almond ricottas, etc. would fit in this category, as would a vegan cheese ball

“Stinky” – these are usually blue cheeses, but there are others that would work well here too, with slight crossover from the soft category
   - Examples: Amish blue, aged camembert, Stilton, Epoisses, Roquefort, gorgonzola, Taleggio
   - Vegan options: there are brands of vegan blue cheeses available, but this would be the most difficult category to replicate
Meats:
Traditionally, meat was the feature on a charcuterie board. These days it often takes a back seat to the cheeses. For a very small charcuterie board, you should have 1–2 varieties of meat, and you can go up from there, depending on your focus. Here are some good options:

- Pork based: Hard salami, prosciutto, Spanish chorizo, Salchichon, Jamon Serrano, Pates, pepperoni, rillettes, Mortadella, ‘Nduja, Capicola, Saucisson Sec, Sopressata
- Beef based: bresaola, deli roast beef, beef jerky, beef salami, beef pepperoni
- Poultry based: deli meats, turkey pepperoni, cooked and sliced chicken sausages

Other Items:
You will need a few more items for your charcuterie board, ideally one from each of the following categories. However, if you are trying to keep it small or to a budget, just try to cover as many as possible.

- Mustard: ideally grainy, but flavored or Dijon also work well
- A sweet spread
  - Honey (ideally with the comb)
  - Jam, preserve, or marmalade – jelly doesn’t work well here unless it is a spicy variety
- Pickles
  - Cornichons are traditional
  - Giardiniera
  - Other pickled veggies – add spicy element here
- Fruit
  - Fresh berries, figs, grapes
  - Persimmons (when in season
  - Melon cubes (particularly if prosciutto is being used)
  - Dried fruit (raisins and cranberries are not ideal, as they are too small to easily serve)
- Nuts: candied, flavored, or plain roasted and salted
- Herbs: rosemary and parsley are often used in whole sprigs as decoration, but some herbs can be used to enhance cheeses or dips as well
- “Serving vessels”: crackers or crostini (usually at least 2 options), can be sweet or savory
Cheese Alternatives
Not all charcuterie boards need to contain cheese. If you are not going to offer cheeses, you may want to consider spreads or dips. Here are some great alternatives to cheese:

- Hummus (flavored ones will add a nice color “pop” to your board)
- Tzatziki sauce (there are vegan alternatives)
- Pesto (either traditional or something fun like sun-dried tomato)
- Olive tapenade
- Bruschetta mixture
- Ranch (especially if you will be using veggies)
- Artichoke spreads

Meat Alternatives
If you do not want to include any meat on your board, there are a variety of other items that you can use to fill your board:

- Bell peppers in a variety of colors
- Cauliflower florets
- Broccoli florets
- Cucumbers
- Carrot and celery sticks
- Quartered radishes
- Oven roasted cherry tomatoes
- Marinated artichoke hearts