Golden Christmas Ham Croquettes with Crunchy Apple-Mustard Slaw

Oven-Roasted • Toasted Panko Crust • Sweet Potato Center • Tangy Apple Slaw

Yield: 4 servings (about 16 croquettes) Oven: 375°F for panko; 425°F for croquettes
Prep: 25 minutes Chill: 30 minutes Roast: approximately 18–22 minutes

INGREDIENTS

Ham and Sweet Potato Croquettes

- 2 cups cooked Christmas ham, finely diced
- 2 cups cooked, cooled mashed sweet potatoes (preferably roasted)
- ½ cup red bell pepper, finely diced
- 3 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- ⅓ cup plain panko breadcrumbs
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Up to 1 tablespoon cornstarch, only if the mixture is excessively moist

Golden Crispy Coating

- ¾ cup plain panko breadcrumbs
- 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika
- Olive oil spray, for roasting

Crunchy Apple-Mustard Slaw

- 1 Granny Smith apple, cut into thin matchsticks
- 2 cups finely shredded green cabbage
- ¼ cup finely shredded red cabbage
- 2 tablespoons plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon pure maple syrup
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper, optional
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1 | Prepare the Sweet Potatoes

1. Use cooked, fully cooled mashed sweet potatoes. Roasted sweet potatoes work especially well because they contain less moisture than boiled potatoes.

2. If using leftovers, make sure the mash is firm rather than watery or heavily buttered.

Step 2 | Toast the Panko

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Toss ¾ cup panko with 2 teaspoons olive oil and ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika.

2. Spread on a baking sheet and toast for 5–7 minutes, stirring once, until lightly golden. Cool.

Step 3 | Mix the Croquettes

1. Combine ham, sweet potatoes, bell pepper, green onions, egg, ⅓ cup panko, Dijon, paprika, cumin and black pepper.

2. Mix gently. If too soft to shape, add a little more panko; use up to 1 tablespoon cornstarch only for an unusually wet mixture.

Step 4 | Shape and Chill

1. Divide into approximately 16 portions and roll into balls about 1½ inches across.

2. Place on a parchment-lined tray and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes to firm up.

Step 5 | Coat and Roast

1. Increase oven temperature to 425°F. Roll the chilled croquettes in the toasted panko, gently pressing to adhere.

2. Place on a lightly oiled, parchment-lined sheet pan with space between each. Mist lightly with olive oil.

3. Roast for approximately 18–22 minutes, carefully turning halfway if firm enough, until crisp and heated through to 165°F.

4. Rest for 3 minutes on a cooling rack to protect the crunchy crust.

Step 6 | Make the Apple-Mustard Slaw

1. Combine apple, green cabbage and red cabbage in a bowl.

2. Whisk yogurt, Dijon, cider vinegar, maple syrup, optional cayenne, parsley and pepper in a separate bowl.

3. Toss dressing with apple and cabbage just before serving.

Step 7 | Plate and Serve

1. Place a small nest of slaw on each plate and arrange four croquettes alongside or over it.
2. Garnish with parsley and serve immediately while the crust is crunchy.

CHEF RICH’S COOKING TIPS

1. Toast the panko before coating for deep golden color without frying.
2. Roasting sweet potatoes concentrates flavor and reduces moisture.
3. Chill the croquettes so they hold their shape in the oven.
4. Leave space on the baking sheet for better browning.
5. Use cornstarch sparingly; too much can make the filling gummy.
6. Dress the slaw just before serving to preserve crunch.

FOOD SAFETY

Refrigerate cooked ham promptly and follow the storage guidance for the specific ham product. Freeze for longer storage. Reheat the croquettes to 165°F.