



Newsletter for Summer, 2009

"SUMMERTIME, AND THE LIVIN' IS EASY"

Ahh, the summer! Time to relax, kick back, and enjoy life. This issue of the newsletter highlights many aspects of the season basically revolving around food. This IS a Discuss Cooking Newsletter after all! So grab a pitcher of lemonade or Ice Tea and enjoy the fruits (and vegetables, meats, etc.) of the season.

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WHAT IS YOUR ALL TIME FAVOURITE SUMMER FOOD? – by LPBeier

BBQ Burgers		7	23.33%
Chicken, any way		5	16.67%
Corn Roast		2	6.67%
Cold Plate (i.e. salads, meat, fruit, etc.)		4	13.33%
Hot dogs (on barby or open fire)		0	0%
Grilled Salmon		0	0%
Steak and trimmings		2	6.67%
Roasted Marshmallows/S'mores		0	0%
Ice Cream		0	0%
Fresh Fruits (including Tomatoes)		10	33.33%

This poll was very interesting and educational for me. Items that I put on the poll, thinking they were popular summer foods didn't get any votes and I left off a whole category (tomatoes) that seemed to be the most popular of all!

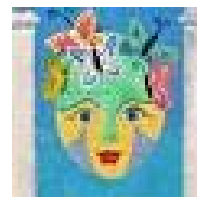
I think the written posts were even more informative than the poll results themselves. Fresh tomato sandwiches, seasonal fruit, zucchini (even the blossoms), watermelon (with or without salt!) topped the lists. We did have a vote for ice cream that didn't make the poll, and several people love their corn on the cob with just about everything else!

Thanks so much for participating and we will continue to have these polls – I will just do a little more research on the answers first!

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OUR FEATURED CHEF: MexicoKaren - by Alix

Alix: Ah summertime! Who better to feature in our Summer Newsletter than someone who lives in perpetual summer? (Or so it seems to us frostbitten Canucks) MexicoKaren hails from Bucarias, Mexico, and is an accomplished painter. She found us through Google and has been with us for nearly 3 years now. MexicoKaren can always be relied upon for great answers to any baking question. When she disappears for any length of time there are always folks wondering where she has gone. We all mourned



with her the loss of her pets last year and are amazed at the positive and loving demeanor she presents everyday. Here is her story.

MexicoKaren: I believe that I might be the most fortunate person on earth. Really. I had a wonderful professional life, pursuing a career that I thoroughly enjoyed, and I retired with a pension that is safe from the ups and downs of the stock market. I have two remarkable children: one teaches school in China and the other lives here in Bucierias where she has a great job, her own little apartment and lots of friends. My extraordinary husband and I have been married a little more than four years: he is the kindest man I have ever known and I count my blessings daily. We have lived for three years in a genuine paradise, surrounded by friends who grace our lives with laughter, quirkiness and kindness.

I have found a second vocation as a painter. My paintings reflect my deep affection for our adopted home, with its diverse cultural history, color and warmth. Having lived through a life-threatening illness 24 years ago, I am acutely aware that every day is a gift. And I am grateful for each one.

NOTE: Reading over this, I realize that I sound a little like PollyAnna...I am definitely NOT all sweetness and light. I have a rather dark sense of humor (my favorites include Monty Python and Coen brothers' movies.) I am addicted to cigarettes and Jelly Bellies and Keith Olbermann's Countdown on MSNBC. I especially enjoy the dark side of Mexican culture, i.e., the Day of the Dead, and fancy-dressed skeletons having a good time are my favorite subject for painting.

Because my mom and dad both taught school, my sister and I also took turns making dinner, and Tuesdays became my day to cook when I was 10. My first effort was meatloaf – straight out of that red and white checked BHG cookbook. It was a big success! My mom was a wonderful, if somewhat basic, cook. She was amazing. I remember once when she bought a case of pineapple tidbits on sale and we had pineapple with everything for awhile – she got very creative. As years have gone by, I have indulged my natural curiosities to learn more about cooking. The internet is a big boon for curious cooks – I love to Google for recipes.

I would call myself a careful cook. I approach my cooking with respect for the fine ingredients and for the people who will eat the food. I am pretty compulsive about using fresh ingredients and I thoroughly enjoy the entire process, especially if I am cooking for guests. We entertain often, anywhere from one additional person to as many as 25. I am a “from scratch” cook. No processed foods, no mixes. Just my point of view – I don't try to impose my opinions on others. If my adorable husband were a more adventurous eater, I might be a more experimental cook, but he likes pretty basic dishes, and I enjoy preparing them for him. Sometimes when I feel “uninspired”, I browse DC or go to a recipe site where I can enter ingredients and get some ideas. Inviting guests for dinner usually inspires me – also inspires me into getting the house cleaned up!

Mexico is a great place for someone who loves to cook. There is an abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as outstanding dairy products and incredibly good chicken and pork and fresh fish. But it becomes a quest to find good cheddar cheese, lasagna noodles, russet potatoes, molasses, cranberries... other items that we can certainly live without, but that are important as comfort food for us. The climate here is also a challenge. We are at sea level and the air is constantly humid – more so in the summer and we are now approaching the warmest summer months. Soon, I won't be able to whip cream or egg whites for a few months and cookies just will not turn out right. On the other hand, I have never baked such good bread as I bake here year around. It must be the humidity. And my wonderful Bosch gas range.

More than anything, I love to bake, especially cakes. Not fancy, multi-layered jobs, but good pound cakes, coffeecakes, etc. I also make very good tamales and I am gradually learning the secrets of cooking good Mexican food. Ah, the subtle mix of spices, herbs and chilies...

I could not begin to list all the things I have learned at DC. What I like best about the site? It is so much more than a place to find a recipe or a cooking tip. It is a community. And I appreciate that the moderators work hard to maintain what I call a "culture of kindness." I am always so impressed when a very beginning cook asks for help and so many people respond in such a patient and gentle manner. I feel like I have a whole group of friends – even though I have never met you. We are obviously a diverse group, with different political and religious convictions, yet our love for cooking unites us all. People who cook must be extra nice people – that's all I can say.

Alix: And on that note, I think we will close the interview and share one of MexicoKaren's most popular recipes. Thanks Karen for sharing a piece of your world with us!

Albondigas/Mexican Meatballs

The broth:

5 tomatoes, chopped or a can (14 oz) of chopped tomatoes, with juice

1 clove garlic

1 small onion, chopped

1 TBS adobo sauce from canned chipotles in adobo

3 TBS oil

2-3 TBS chicken, beef or tomato stock granules (I used a mixture of Knorr's beef and tomato)

Combine the tomatoes with the garlic, onion and adobo sauce and puree in the blender. Heat the oil in a large skillet or dutch oven and cook the pureed mixture for 5-10 minutes to mix the flavors. Add three cups water, stock granules and cook for ten minutes longer.

The Meatballs:

1 lb. ground beef

1 lb. ground pork

1 cup cooked rice

3-5 tomatillos, depending on size

2 eggs

¼ cup cilantro, chopped

2-3 chipotle chiles in adobo sauce

2 cloves garlic

1 small onion

1 TBS chicken, beef or tomato stock granules

Puree the tomatillos, eggs, cilantro, chiles, garlic and onion in a blender. Place the meat in a bowl and add the rice and stock powder. Stir in the blended sauce and mix WELL. Shape the mixture into balls the size of walnuts and cook in the tomato broth for 20 minutes (you may need to do this in two batches.) Sprinkle with additional cilantro for garnish. Serves eight.

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TERMS & TECHNIQUES: Ceviche – by GB

When I think of summertime foods one thing that always pops into my head is ceviche (or seviche). Ceviche is a Latin American dish which is a mix of raw fish with some sort of citrus, usually lime or lemon with herbs and spices and sometimes some veggies. It is a very fresh tasting delicious dish. Even though the fish is raw, the addition of the citrus "cooks" the fish by denaturing the protein. While no heat is applied, the texture of the fish changes and becomes firm as if it were cooked by heat. For those that are a bit squeamish about trying raw fish this is a great baby step towards trying it as it does not look, taste, or feel like you are eating your typical sashimi style raw fish. There are as many recipes for ceviche as there are recipes for salsa. You can almost even think of this dish as a fish salsa if you wanted to.

Scallops Ceviche

Servings: 8
½ pound bay scallops
1/4 cup lime juice
1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 tsp hot pepper flakes
2 tbsp diced seeded cucumber
2 tbsp finely sliced celery
2 tbsp each finely diced red and yellow bell peppers
2 tbsp chopped coriander

If using larger scallops, chop into ½ inch pieces before marinating. Rinse and drain scallops well.

In a glass (not metal or plastic) bowl, mix the scallops with the lime juice and marinate in the refrigerator 2 – 3 hours, until the scallops become opaque. Add other ingredients and refrigerate for another ½ - 3 hours to blend flavours until serving time. To serve, divide among small bowls or Chinese soup spoons.

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AN UNCONVENTIONAL WHITE SANGRIA – by Kitchenelf

I know this isn't your typical Sangria using White Zinfandel, but, it's still wonderful. I make this for 4th of July when I know there won't be much left over!! This will definitely serve a crowd!

I am a stickler about squeezing the oranges and the lemons fresh. If you don't want to do the oranges, at least make the lemons fresh-squeezed.

2 gallons White Zinfandel
1 cup brandy
1/2 cup Cointreau
2 quarts fresh-squeezed orange juice
2 cups fresh-lemon juice
1 cup superfine sugar
2 quarts chilled soda water
3 oranges sliced thin
3 lemons sliced thin

Squeeze the juices and put in refrigerator. Combine the White Zin, brandy, and Cointreau and chill. Chill soda water as well.

When ready to make, dissolve the sugar into the juice first. The acids in the juice will help dissolve the sugar. Once dissolved, add the Zin mixture. Add a couple cups of ice, the soda water, and the fruit slices. Mix gently.

Like I said, it's not your traditional White Sangria; it's good nonetheless. This goes with most anything served at a cookout, but, my favorite pairing for this is simply a warm summer afternoon...enjoy!!!

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COOKING TO STAY COOL – by Bugs

Ah, summertime. What a beautiful season. It's warm, sunny, and relatively carefree. But who wants to cook in that kind of weather? Would you want to trade your gorgeous day spent lying in the sun or splashing in a sprinkler for slaving away in a sweltering hot kitchen? Duuuuh, do I even need to ask?

Isn't splashing through a sprinkler on a hot, summer's day just the most refreshing thing ever? And then after when your feet are all dirty with grass stuck to the bottom, you can just lie on the ground on a towel in the sun and dry off. What's better than listening to the sizzle of a hamburger on the barbecue being cooked to perfection all the while knowing, that you will soon be able to taste that delicious creation? Perhaps the best of all is eating outside. Don't you just love feeling the cool breeze rustle through your hair while blowing away your napkins? Of course, not everybody loves eating in the great outdoors.

One person I know like this would be my sister. She absolutely despises eating dinner outside as she fears the wasps that seem to be attracted to the smell of our delicious food. A sighting of one of those buzzing creatures usually results in a frenzy of screeching and frantic arm waving, followed by an abrupt exit. But can you blame her? The poor kid was unfortunate enough to trod upon a wasps' nest in the front yard however many years ago. That kind of thing just scars you for life. Coincidentally, that also occurred in the summertime.

However, for those who do enjoy outdoor meals, the Taste of Edmonton is something you simply cannot miss! Imagine if you can, a whole street closed off because it is now full of several different stations full of delicious delicacies from restaurants all over the city. Imagine the delicious fragrances wafting from the various vendors selling different kinds of meats, pasta, desserts and pretty much anything else you've got a craving for. Never tried buffalo? Well now is your chance! Ever wanted to try a different kind of sushi? No doubt you can find it here! I love coming down for this event every year because there's always something new and exciting to be found here. The chocolate covered strawberries are definitely a favourite with the whole family!

So however you keep the kitchen cool this summer, remember to enjoy it and eat something delicious everyday!

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MA's SUNDAY – by Kadesma

Summer is such a great time for us. Watching the kids swim and use the water slide is so much fun. We really enjoy our meals during this time. We love a roasted or grilled veggie salad; it's just our favorite veggies over mixed lettuce and dressed with Dijon, Meyer lemon, and honey. The grilled or roasted veggies can be anything you like. We love tiny Yukon gold potatoes cut in half, asparagus cut on the diagonal, yellow summer squash cut in circles, baby carrots, mushrooms, and artichoke pieces. Grill, cool, then toss with your dressing and place on your torn lettuce.

While these veggies are grilling, we of course have some starters 😊 A good homemade salsa and chips. The chips of course are flour tortillas that we cut and fry. The salsa contains homegrown tomatoes, fresh cilantro, diced red onions, avocados, a touch of vinegar and evoo, salt and pepper and some diced poblano chili. There is also Dad's avocado dip and sliced baguette, lots of cold drinks.

Then supper prep begins. I pull the pork for sandwiches. We keep an eye on the beans, slice some nice soft rolls and butter them. Next comes a platter of icy cold fresh fruit with honey and lime squeezed over all and of course the roasted veggie salad. Dessert for this meal will be Panna Cotta with raspberry coulis.

Wish you all could join us. Happy summer eating be it Sunday or any day of the week.

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SUMMER WEDDINGS – by LPBeier

Weddings are fun any time of the year; however, there is nothing like a good summer wedding...and there are usually lots of them! This summer I have the privilege and honour of helping four brides I know make their day extra special and each event is unique in it's own way. One thing I have noticed in my years of catering weddings is that anything goes, especially in the summer.

Cake flavours have come along way from the traditional fruitcake which was packaged up to be placed under the guest's pillow that night. The popular flavours this summer are fruit of a different kind – lemon, banana, raspberry filling, even a mango chiffon cake. Shapes and sizes are changing too. With many venues charging to cut the cake for serving, couples are opting for cupcakes or mini cakes to be served with a smaller than usual cake for the ceremonial cut.

Menus have changed as well. One bride has asked for a dessert reception with items like peppermint patties, chocolate covered strawberries, cheese cake, meringue kisses and a table (literally, see photo) of fruit and dessert cheeses. And full dinner receptions are featuring lighter fare as well, such as cold meats, salads, buns and only one or two hot dishes.



The two things that never change about weddings though are that the bride is always beautiful and the food is always plentiful!

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So that's our Newsletter for the summer. Oh, one more thing – there seems to be a recurring phrase happening throughout – if you can find it you don't win a prize, but at least you had fun trying! See you in the fall!