

Happy 4th of July!

I don't know about you, but I am having a hard time getting my head around the fact that June is just about done and we are getting ready to celebrate the 4th of July!

However you are planning on celebrating this year, grilled food is typically on the menu! Enjoy a few recipes to help your celebration! Have a safe 4th!

4th of July Punch

Active Time: 20 min

Total Time: 2 hrs 20 min

Servings: 8 (1 cup)

8 C. cubed seedless watermelon (3 lb.)
3/4 C. granulated sugar
1/2 C. fresh lime juice
2 T. grated fresh ginger
1 C. pineapple juice, chilled
1 (12 oz.) can club soda, chilled
2 C. (16 oz.) vodka, rum, or tequila (optional)

Process half of the watermelon in a blender until smooth, about 45 seconds. Pour through a fine mesh strainer into a pitcher; discard solids. Repeat process with remaining watermelon.

Whisk together sugar, lime juice, and ginger in a small bowl until sugar dissolves. Add mixture to strained watermelon in pitcher; stir in chilled pineapple juice. Chill mixture at least 2 hours or up to 2 days.

Fill 8 highball glasses halfway with ice. Stir club soda and alcohol, if using, into watermelon mixture. Pour evenly into glasses

Grilled Breakfast Pizza

Prep Time: 35 min

Total Time: 45 min

Servings: 6-8

1/4 C. olive oil
1 lb. refrigerated pizza dough, at room temperature
8 oz. bulk breakfast sausage
2 bell peppers (1 red, 1 green), chopped
1 small onion, chopped
2 C. frozen shredded hash browns, thawed and squeezed dry
3/4 tsp. salt
Black pepper, to taste
2 C. shredded mozzarella cheese
6 large eggs
Chopped fresh chives, for topping

Preheat a grill to medium high. Brush an upside-down sheet pan with 2 T. olive oil. Shape the pizza dough into an 11-by-14-inch rectangle and place on the oiled side of the pan.

Heat 1 T. olive oil in a large cast-iron skillet on the grill. Add the sausage and cook, breaking up the meat into pieces and stirring occasionally, until no longer pink, 4 to 5 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to remove to a plate. Add the bell peppers and onion to the skillet and cook, stirring, until the vegetables soften, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the remaining 1 T. olive oil, the hash browns, 1/2 tsp. salt and a few grinds of pepper. Cook, stirring, until the hash browns soften and start turning light golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the hash brown-vegetable mixture to the plate with the sausage. Remove the skillet from the grill.

Carefully slide the dough off the pan and onto the grill. Cook, uncovered, until bubbles start to form on top and the bottom is marked, 3 to 4 minutes. Use a large spatula to flip the dough, marked-side up, onto the upside-down sheet pan.

Sprinkle the mozzarella all over the dough, leaving a 1/2-inch border. Top evenly with the hash brown-vegetable mixture and sausage. With the back of a large spoon, make 6 small wells in the toppings and carefully crack an egg into each well. Slide the pizza off the pan and back onto the grill. Cover and cook until the cheese is melted and the egg whites are set but the yolks are still runny, about 12 minutes.

Remove the pizza to a cutting board. Season the eggs with the remaining 1/4 tsp. salt and a few grinds of pepper. Garnish with chives.

Macaroni Pie

Active Time: 30 min

Total Time: 1 hr 45 min

Servings: 6

1/2 (14 oz.) pkg. refrigerated piecrusts
8 oz. uncooked large elbow macaroni
3 T. unsalted butter
3 thyme sprigs, plus thyme leaves for garnish
1/3 C. all-purpose flour

1-1/2 C. whole milk
2 tsp. Dijon mustard
1/2 tsp. black pepper
1/4 tsp. kosher salt
1 C. Gruyère cheese, shredded
1/2 C. extra-sharp white Cheddar cheese, shredded
1/2 C. fontina cheese, shredded

Preheat oven to 350°F. Press piecrust into a 9-inch pie plate; crimp edges. Freeze until firm, about 15 minutes. Line piecrust with aluminum foil; fill with pie weights or dried beans. Bake in preheated oven until golden brown, about 20 minutes. Remove foil and pie weights. Return piecrust to oven; bake until bottom is dry, about 5 minutes. Let cool about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, prepare pasta according to package directions. Drain, rinse, and set aside.

Cook butter and thyme sprigs in a medium saucepan over medium until butter is melted, 3 to 4 minutes. Add flour; cook, stirring constantly, until a light golden paste forms, about 1 minute. Gradually add milk in a steady stream, whisking constantly, until fully combined. Remove and discard thyme sprigs. Add mustard, pepper, and salt to flour mixture; cook, whisking constantly, until smooth and thick, about 2 minutes. Gradually and slowly add cheeses, stirring to melt completely between each addition. Whisk vigorously until mixture is melted and smooth. Remove from heat; gently fold in pasta.

Spoon mixture into prepared piecrust. Return to oven, and bake at 350°F until golden brown, 25 to 30 minutes. Sprinkle with thyme leaves. Let cool 10 minutes; slice into 6 wedges.

Smash Burgers

Prep/Total Time: 15 min.

Servings: 4

1 lb. ground beef (preferably 80% lean)
1 tsp. canola oil
1 tsp. salt, divided
1 tsp. ground pepper, divided
4 hamburger buns, split
Optional: Mayonnaise, sliced American cheese, sliced tomato, dill pickle slices, lettuce, ketchup and yellow mustard

Place a 9-in. cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Meanwhile, gently shape beef into 4 balls, shaping just enough to keep together (do not compact).

Increase burner temperature to medium-high; add oil. Add 2 beef balls. With a heavy metal spatula, flatten each to 1/4- to 1/2-in. thickness; sprinkle each with 1/8 tsp. salt and 1/8 tsp. pepper. Cook until edges start to brown, about 1-1/2 minutes. Turn burgers and sprinkle each with additional 1/8 tsp. salt and 1/8 tsp. pepper. Cook until well browned and a thermometer reads at least 160°, about 1 minute. Repeat with remaining beef.

Serve burgers on buns with toppings as desired.

Grilled Three-Potato Salad

Prep: 25 min. + cooling

Grill: 1 min

Servings: 6

3/4 lb. Yukon Gold potatoes
3/4 lb. red potatoes
1 med. sweet potato, peeled
1/2 C. thinly sliced green onions
1/4 C. canola oil
2 to 3 T. white wine vinegar
1 T. Dijon mustard
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. celery seed
1/4 tsp. pepper

Place potatoes and sweet potato in a Dutch oven; cover with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes or until tender. Drain and cool. Cut into 1-in. chunks.

Place potato mixture in an oiled grill wok, basket or disposable foil pan (if using the foil pan, poke holes in the bottom to allow liquid to drain). Grill, uncovered, over medium heat for 8-12 minutes or until browned, stirring frequently. Transfer to a large salad bowl; add onions.

Whisk the oil, vinegar, mustard, salt, celery seed and pepper. Drizzle over potato mixture and toss to coat. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Grilled Corn with Spicy Bacon Butter

Total Time: 30 min

Servings: 6

4 slices bacon
1 stick salted butter, at room temperature
1 C. fresh parsley, chopped
1/2 C. pickled jalapeño peppers, chopped

Salt and pepper, to taste
6 ears of corn, shucked

Preheat a grill to medium high. Meanwhile, cook the bacon in a skillet over medium heat, turning occasionally, until crisp, 6 to 8 minutes. Drain on paper towels, then crumble. Reserve the bacon fat.

Put the butter in a mini food processor and pulse until smooth. Add the parsley, jalapeños, bacon and 2 tablespoons of the bacon fat and pulse until the butter is light green but still slightly chunky. Season with salt and pepper.

Place each ear of corn on a separate sheet of foil and spread each with about 1 T. of the bacon butter. Season with salt and pepper. Wrap tightly and grill, turning halfway through, until the corn is tender, about 6 minutes. Unwrap and spread with the remaining bacon butter.

Grilled Watermelon

Prep Time: 5 min
Total Time: 11 min
Servings: 6-8

Vegetable oil, for grilling
3 T. granulated sugar
1-1/2 tsp. salt
Zest of one lime
1/4 large watermelon (about 5 lbs), cut into 1-inch thick wedges
Fresh cilantro and lime wedges for serving

Heat a gas or charcoal grill to high heat (about 450° to 500°) and oil the grill grates with vegetable oil.

In a small bowl, stir together the sugar, salt, and lime zest. Pinch the mixture together with your fingertips to combine all of the ingredients.

Lay the watermelon wedges in a single layer on a sheet tray. Reserve 1 tsp. of the salt mixture; set aside. Sprinkle half of the remaining salt mixture all over the watermelon wedges. Flip and sprinkle the wedges with the other half of the salt mixture. Place on a cooling rack set over a sheet tray and let rest for 15 minutes. Using paper towels, press firmly on the slices to remove excess moisture.

Place the wedges on the grill over direct heat and cook for 2 to 3 minutes on each side, until grill marks appear. Remove the watermelon from the grill and place on a sheet tray or serving platter. Sprinkle with the reserved salt mixture and cilantro. Serve with lime wedges, if desired.

Red, White and Blue Pretzel Salad

Prep Time: 30 min
Cook Time: 10 min
Chill Time: 5 hours
Total Time: 5 hours 40 min

For the crust:

2-1/2 C. pretzels, crushed
3/4 C. unsalted butter, melted
3 T. granulated sugar

For the cream filling:

16 oz. package cream cheese, softened to room temperature
16 oz. whipped topping, thawed
3/4 C. granulated sugar

For the Jell-o® layers:

1 C. blueberries, fresh or thawed frozen
1 C. raspberries, fresh or thawed frozen
1 (6 oz.) package blue mixed berry Jell-o®
1 (6 oz.) package raspberry Jell-o®
4 C. boiling water, divided

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

In a medium mixing bowl, combine the crushed pretzels, melted butter and 3 T. of sugar until combined. Press the pretzel mixture into the bottom of a 9x13 baking dish and bake in the oven for 10 minutes. Remove from oven and allow the pretzel crust to fully cool before proceeding.

While the crust is baking, prepare the cream filling. Add the cream cheese and 3/4 C. granulated sugar to a large mixing bowl and beat with an electric mixer until smooth. Fold in the whipped topping until just combined.

Spread half of the cream cheese mixture over the cooled pretzel crust and place the baking dish into the refrigerator to chill for 30 minutes.

Cover remaining cream cheese mixture and place in the refrigerator until ready to use.

While the filling is setting, prepare the blue Jell-o® by mixing together half the boiling water and gelatin powder with a whisk until dissolved. Allow to fully cool.

Place the blueberries over the top of the chilled cream cheese mixture and pour the cooled gelatin mix over the berries. Return to the refrigerator and chill for 2-4 hours until the blue gelatin is set.

Carefully spread the remaining cream cheese mixture over the top of the set blue gelatin. Place back into the refrigerator to chill for 30 minutes.

While the dish is cooling, prepare the raspberry Jell-o® by mixing 2 C. of boiling water with the gelatin powder and stirring until dissolved. Allow to fully cool.

Place the raspberries across the top of the cream cheese mixture and pour the cooled raspberry gelatin over the top.

Return the dish to the refrigerator to chill for another 2-4 hours (or overnight) to fully set the top layer of gelatin.

Slice and serve with a dollop of whipped cream.

Don't skip cooling the pretzel crust or you risk breaking it apart when you add the cream cheese layer.

Remove reserved cream cheese from the frig about 20 minutes before using to make it easier to spread.

Substitute any flavor of red or blue gelatin, or even try other flavors. Coordinate the fruit with the gelatin flavor.

Store leftovers tightly covered in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

Quote of the Week:

"We must be free not because we claim freedom, but because we practice it."

~William Faulkner