

May 20, 2012

A Tasting Table Memorial Day Menu

Get ready to fire up your grill for Memorial Day. We've partnered with Tasting Table, a popular food site and daily email publication, to provide you with a Memorial Day menu that will inspire. Tasting Table prides themselves on creating epicurean recommendations that are authentic, trustworthy and actionable, so a fabulous cookout is guaranteed!

Hosting the Perfect Backyard Cookout

Every serious griller looks forward to his or her annual backyard cookout. It's a time-honored tradition that strikes when the weather is right and the days are long. It's also a time to gather your friends and family and, most importantly, a time to show off your grilling abilities. Pick a sunny day or a warm evening, fire up the coals and take advantage of the bounty of produce that arrives with the summer season.



Pasta with Pistachios, Meyer Lemon and Broccoli

Recipe from Jeff Cerciello, the artisan market at Farmshop, Santa Monica, CA, and adapted by the Tasting Table Test Kitchen

Yield: 6 servings

Delicious served warm or at room temperature, this pasta dish makes an excellent accompaniment to the skirt steak.

- 1 cup shelled pistachios
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt, plus more for pasta water
- 1½ pounds medium tube-shaped pasta (such as maccheroni or penne)
- 1 large head broccoli, stems trimmed, florets and stems cut into bite-size pieces
- 2 garlic cloves
- Zest and juice of 1 Meyer lemon (or zest of 1 regular lemon with 3 tablespoons lemon juice and 1 tablespoon orange juice)
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 cup flat-leaf parsley leaves
- ½ cup mint leaves
- 1½ cups extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup finely grated Pepato or Pecorino Romano cheese
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped chives
- Sea salt
- Fennel pollen (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. On a rimmed baking sheet, toast the pistachios until fragrant and lightly toasted, 5 to 6 minutes. Transfer to a large plate and cool, then coarsely grind in a food processor. Transfer the ground pistachios to a bowl and set aside.
2. Meanwhile, bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add some kosher salt and the pasta and cook until almost al dente, about 8 minutes. When the pasta is almost finished, add the broccoli to the pot and cook for 2 minutes more or until the pasta is al dente and the broccoli is tender. Reserve 1 cup of the pasta water and drain the pasta and broccoli through a large colander.
3. In the same food processor, combine the garlic, lemon zest, red pepper flakes and the 1 tablespoon of kosher salt and grind into a fine paste. Add the parsley and mint and pulse to make a rough paste. With the motor running, slowly drizzle in the olive oil. Transfer to a medium saucepan and stir in the ground pistachios.
4. Add the pasta water to the pesto; bring to a boil and simmer for 2 minutes.
5. In a large bowl, combine the pasta, broccoli and pesto. Stir in the lemon juice and set aside for 5 minutes. To serve, divide the pasta among plates or bowls and garnish with the grated cheese, chives, sea salt and fennel pollen, if using.



Limoncello Icebox Cake

Recipe from the Tasting Table Test Kitchen

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

- ¼ cup limoncello
- 1 vanilla bean, split, seeds scraped and reserved and pod discarded
- 2 teaspoons lemon zest (from 1 large or 2 small lemons), divided
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice (from 1 large or 2 small lemons)
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 2½ cups heavy cream
- ¾ cup crème fraîche
- 3½ tablespoons confectioners' sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 36 (about 3 sleeves) prepared ladyfingers
- 1½ cups fresh blackberries

1. In a medium shallow bowl, whisk together the limoncello, vanilla bean seeds, 1½ teaspoons of the lemon zest, lemon juice and granulated sugar. Set aside.
2. In the bowl of a standing mixer, whisk together the heavy cream, crème fraîche, the remaining ½ teaspoon lemon zest, confectioners' sugar and salt at medium-high speed until soft peaks form, about 3 minutes.
3. Briefly dip each ladyfinger in the reserved limoncello mixture and layer in a large trifle dish or a 9-by-13-inch clear dish, starting with a layer of ladyfingers, then one-third of the whipped cream mixture. Repeat two more times, finishing with the whipped cream mixture. Cover and refrigerate overnight.
4. Layer the blackberries on top of the cake and serve.



Chill the Drinks

Few things are better than a frosty beer or ice-cold tea, so keep all drinks on ice and in a shady area.



Set Up Drink Stations

Set up satellite drink stations throughout the backyard. Have one that's alcohol free for the little ones, and another with prepared mixed drinks, or a cooler filled with beer, water and ice. This makes it easy for guests to serve themselves and stay hydrated.



Get Great Ingredients

Select foods that are in season, such as sweet corn or fresh peaches, and buy locally for the best flavor. When buying meat, choose hormone free and organic whenever possible. Seek out a reputable local butcher.



Keep Foods Fresh

If leaving food out for a long period of time, cover it up with mesh screens to avoid pesky critters and keep out of the sunlight to avoid spoilage. If there is a problem with bugs, set all the food up indoors buffet-style and let guests serve themselves.



Make Things Comfortable

Be sure to have plenty of seats scattered around the yard so everyone has a place to sit.



Set a Casual Table

A backyard cookout doesn't require your best wares, but have enough plates and utensils for everyone. Place serving spoons and forks alongside your serving bowls and platters.

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8 cups coarsely chopped seedless watermelon, plus ½ cup finely diced seedless watermelon

½ loaf country bread, crust removed and bread torn into small pieces (about 4 cups)

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling

½ cup tomato juice, preferably low-sodium

½ cup water

¼ cup sherry vinegar

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

½ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Salt

4 toasted bread rounds

Piment d'Espelette (or mildly hot paprika), for serving

Watermelon Gazpacho

Recipe from Jason Fox, Commonwealth, San Francisco, and adapted by the Tasting Table Test Kitchen

Yield: 4 servings

1. In a food processor, puree the 8 cups of coarsely chopped watermelon. Pass through a fine-mesh strainer into a medium bowl (you should have 4 cups of watermelon juice). Discard the remaining pulp.
2. Return the watermelon juice to the food processor along with the bread, the ½ cup of olive oil, tomato juice, water, vinegar, lemon juice and cayenne. Puree until smooth and strain into a large bowl. Season to taste with salt, cover and refrigerate until well chilled, about 4 hours.
3. Divide the gazpacho among 4 shallow bowls. Garnish each bowl with about 2 tablespoons of the finely diced watermelon. Place a toasted bread round on top. Finish with a drizzle of olive oil and a light dusting of piment d'Espelette and serve.



½ cup fresh lime juice (from about 3 limes) plus zest of 1 lime

3 tablespoons fresh orange juice

½ cup cilantro, finely chopped

1 garlic clove, finely chopped

Pinch of granulated sugar

¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for grilling

Salt and freshly ground pepper

1 small baguette, cut on the bias into ¼-inch slices

12 medium romaine hearts, halved lengthwise

¼ cup (about 2 ounces) crumbled cotija cheese

Grilled Romaine Salad with Cotija Cheese and Lime Vinaigrette

Recipe from the Tasting Table Test Kitchen

Yield: 4 servings

1. Prepare the vinaigrette: In a small bowl, whisk together the lime juice, zest, orange juice, cilantro, garlic and sugar. Gradually whisk in the ¾ cup of olive oil until emulsified. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Refrigerate the vinaigrette in a portable container until ready to use.
2. Grill the bread and lettuce: Prepare a medium-hot grill. Lightly brush both sides of the bread slices with olive oil and grill the bread, turning once, until toasted, 2 to 3 minutes per side.
3. Grill the lettuce halves, cut side down, until the leaves begin to char, 20 to 25 seconds. Transfer the lettuce to a platter, drizzle with the vinaigrette and sprinkle with the cotija cheese. Serve immediately with the toasted bread and extra vinaigrette.



Romesco Sauce

4 Roma tomatoes, quartered

3 medium red bell peppers

¾ cup plus 2½ tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon olive oil, divided

Salt and freshly ground pepper

1 head garlic

½ cup almonds

½ cup hazelnuts

1 cup cubed day-old bread, toasted in olive oil

Red wine vinegar

Skirt Steak

1 pound skirt steak

Salt and freshly ground pepper

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

2 garlic cloves, peeled

1 sprig fresh thyme

Skirt Steak with Hazelnut Romesco

Recipe from Drew Belline, No. 246, Decatur, GA, and adapted by the Tasting Table Test Kitchen

Yield: 4 servings

The skirt steak can be cooked on an outdoor grill instead of on the stovetop. Prepare a medium-hot grill. Season the steak with salt and pepper and brush on both sides with the 2 tablespoons of olive oil. In a small saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter, then add the garlic and thyme. Transfer to a small heatproof bowl. Grill the steak as directed, brushing it with the butter mixture during the last 2 to 3 minutes of cooking.

1. Make the romesco sauce: Preheat the oven to 300°F. Season the tomatoes and bell peppers with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, salt and pepper and place on a baking sheet. Slice the top of the head of garlic off, leaving the root intact. Season with salt, pepper and ½ tablespoon of olive oil. Wrap the garlic in foil and bake, along with the tomatoes and the peppers, until the garlic is soft, the tomatoes have begun to caramelize and the peppers are tender and beginning to blister, about 1 hour. Remove from the oven, cover the peppers with foil and set aside for 10 minutes, then peel the skin and remove the seeds and veins from the peppers.
2. In a small skillet set over medium heat, toast the almonds and hazelnuts with 1 teaspoon of the olive oil and salt.
3. Remove the garlic cloves from their skins. In a food processor, combine the tomatoes, peppers, garlic, toasted nuts and bread. Slowly drizzle in the remaining ¾ cup of olive oil until the mixture forms a smooth paste. Season with red wine vinegar, salt and pepper and set aside.
4. Make the steak: Season the skirt steak with salt and pepper. Heat a cast-iron skillet or a cast-iron grill pan set over medium-high heat. Once the pan is hot, add the 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Carefully add the steak to the pan, being careful not to splash the hot oil out of the pan. Sear the steak on one side for 1 minute. Turn the steak over and sear for 1 additional minute. Add the butter, garlic and thyme to the pan and use a pastry brush to baste the steak for 2 to 3 minutes or until the steak is medium-rare. Remove the steak from the pan, cover with foil and set aside to rest for 2 to 3 minutes. Cut the steak across the grain into ½-inch slices and serve immediately with the romesco sauce.