

Tomato and Cucumber Salad

Looking for what to do with all those delicious cherry tomatoes and cucumbers that all seemed to ripen at the same time? Are your herbs offering a particular big bounty this year? Try this garden salad and have the satisfaction of knowing you made it mostly from your own homegrown garden. It will never taste fresher.

INGREDIENTS (serves 2)

FOR SALAD

1 cup cherry tomatoes, cut in half

1 cucumber, skinned and diced into small cubes

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup red onion, very thinly sliced

FOR DRESSING

1 garlic clove, minced

3 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1 teaspoon fresh parsley, finely chopped

1 teaspoon fresh chives, finely chopped

1 teaspoon fresh oregano, finely chopped

zest of one lemon

salt and pepper

FOR GARNISH

4 ounces feta, crumbled

PREPARATION

In a medium sized bowl, combine the tomatoes, cucumber, and red onion. Gently toss.

In a jar, combine all of the dressing ingredients. Close jar and shake vigorously. Pour dressing on top of salad and gently toss. Garnish with feta cheese.

GRILLED STUFFED ARTICHOKEs

One can only eat so much salad, so in the summer, I love to stuff and grill artichokes as a nice side dish alternative. It takes a little bit of prep, but it's well worth your time. It's great served with a nice dip like tzatziki or even some ranch dressing.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

2 artichokes

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup gorgonzola cheese, crumbled

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup panko

3 tablespoons olive oil, plus some for brushing

salt and pepper

tzatziki or ranch dressing (optional)

PREPARATION

I like to trim the sharp points off of each of the artichoke leaves before I begin. It's optional, but this way no one will

get pricked from the leaves. Just cut $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch from the bottom of each tip.

In a pot large enough to hold the artichokes, bring an inch of salted water up to a boil. Gently place the artichokes in and lower the heat to simmer. Cover pot and steam for 45 minutes.

Drain out the water and using tongs, gently place the artichokes on a cutting board. Allow them to cool for about ten minutes.

Cut the artichoke in half, lengthwise. Gently scoop out the fibrous elements in the middle being careful to leave the heart and most of the leaves in tact. It's okay if some of the center leaves get dislodged in the process. Just discard them.

In a small bowl, combine the cheese, panko, and olive oil. Mix with a small whisk and set aside. Brush the artichokes with olive oil on both sides. Season them with salt and pepper to taste.

Oil the grill grates. Heat the grill to medium-high. Place the artichoke halves cut side down on the grates and grill until you get grill marks, about two to three minutes.

Gently remove artichokes with tongs or a spatula and place on a cutting board, cut side up. Spoon the cheese/panko mixture into the center of each artichoke.

Gently place back on the grill, cut side up, to allow the cheese to melt—about 2-3 minutes.

Serve with tzatziki or ranch dressing on the side.

BBQ CHICKEN SALAD

Whenever we make a barbecue chicken, we like to use at least a five-pound bird on our rotisserie. If you're going to the trouble, you might as well have enough for leftovers. Here's a great idea for a quick next-day lunch.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 2)

2 cups of barbecued chicken, skin off, rough chop

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of mayonnaise

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 tablespoon balsamic glaze

1 teaspoon hot sauce

salt and pepper to taste.

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup celery, chopped

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup red onion, chopped

1 small roll, halved and toasted

PREPARATION

In a cuisinart, add the chicken and do a few quick pulses to chop the meat. Add in the mayo, olive oil, balsamic glaze, hot sauce, and salt & pepper. Continue to pulse until it's to a consistency you like. Taste, and adjust seasoning or mayo amount to your liking.

Add contents into a large bowl. Fold in the celery and red onion. Spoon out onto the roll halves. Serve alongside a fresh garden salad.

ALL PURPOSE MARINADE

For me, there's no point in paying a fortune for bottles of marinade when I know I have most of the ingredients on hand. Plus, there are no chemicals or preservatives added when I make it. Here's a simple recipe that goes great with poultry or fish. It's not bad on a steak either.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup orange juice

1 tablespoon salt

1 teaspoon ground pepper

2 tablespoons molasses

3 chipotle pepper plus 1 tablespoon adobo sauce

PREPARATION

Mix all of the marinade ingredients together in a bowl.

WHITE SANGRIA

There's nothing like white wine sangria to get a summer party going. It's refreshing and the fruit fools you into thinking you're doing something good for your body. Although from tasting it, you wouldn't know that it's very potent. So fair warning—only serve this to people who are not driving!

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4-6)

1 bottle white wine

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup triple sec

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup brandy

1 whole orange, sliced (reserve a few for garnish)

1 whole peach, sliced

$\frac{1}{2}$ fresh raspberries

sparkling water

ice for glasses

PREPARATION

In a large pitcher, combine white wine, triple sec, and brandy. Stir. Add in sliced orange, peach and raspberries. Lightly stir with wooden spoon.

Fill 4 white wine glasses with ice. Fill glass $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up with sangria, allowing some of the fruit to pour into glass. Top with sparkling water and lightly stir. Garnish with orange slice.

MARINATED BLACK COD WITH BABY BOK CHOY

I love black cod. It's a very rich, buttery flavored fish that can really stand up to a good marinade. It's got a bit of a fatty texture and doesn't taste too "fishy," so even those

that might not love seafood might be persuaded to give it a try. And with this miso based marinade and some sautéed bok choy, it's hard to go wrong.

INGREDIENTS (serves 2)

1 lb Black Cod, cut into four pieces

2 tablespoons oil

scallions, chopped for garnish

fried onions, for garnish

MARINADE FOR FISH

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup miso paste

2 tablespoons sugar

2 tablespoons mirin

2 tablespoons sake

1 tablespoon water

1 tablespoon lemon juice

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fish sauce

BOK CHOY

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon water

1 tablespoon sake

1 tablespoon mirin

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fish sauce

1 garlic clove, thinly sliced

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 cups baby bok choy, chopped

salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

In a small bowl, combine the marinade ingredients. Whisk together until smooth.

Place fish and marinade in Ziploc bag and massage marinade around fish. Marinate overnight.

The next day, combine soy sauce, water, sake, mirin, fish sauce, garlic, and red pepper flakes in a small bowl.

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the bok choy to the pan, season with salt and pepper, and sauté for 2 minutes. Pour the sauce on top and gently combine with bok choy. Continue to sauté for an additional minute or two until bok choy is tender. Cover to keep warm and set aside.

Remove fish from Ziploc bag and place pieces on a plate. Pour the marinade in a bowl.

Oil the grill grates if cooking outside or heat a grill pan on a medium high flame.

Place the fish on the grill skin side up, and lightly brush with some of the marinade. Grill for 4 minutes. Flip over, brush some of the marinade on the fish and continue to grill for another 4 minutes.

To serve, place the bok choy on the base of a plate and place a piece of the cod on top. Garnish with scallions and fried onions.

GRILLED GREEN BEANS WITH WHIPPED RICOTTA

I love grilling summer vegetables, but I'm always looking for a way to dress them up. This simple whipped ricotta dish takes advantage of my garden herbs and is great as a topping to grilled green beans. But, make more ricotta than you need, because it's great on grilled bread or as a dip.

FOR THE WHIPPED RICOTTA

1 cup whole milk ricotta
1 teaspoon fresh chives, chopped
1 teaspoon fresh parsley, chopped
1 teaspoon fresh basil, chopped
1 teaspoon lemon zest
1 tablespoon olive oil
3 tablespoons fig jam
salt and pepper to taste
balsamic glaze for garnish

FOR THE GRILLED GREEN BEANS

1 pound French green beans
2 tablespoons olive oil
salt and pepper to taste

balsamic glaze for garnish

PREPARATION

Using an electric mixer with whisk attachment, whip the ricotta for about two minutes until smooth. Set aside.

In a separate small bowl, combine the herbs, lemon zest, olive oil, fig jam, and salt and pepper. Set aside.

Toss green beans with olive oil and salt and pepper. Place on a heated grill or on a grill pan and cook until they just beginning to char, about ten minutes. Turn beans halfway through to get grill marks on both sides.

TO PLATE: Place the green beans on a platter or plate. Make a well in the middle for a small bowl. Spoon the ricotta into the small bowl. Spoon out the olive oil/herb mixture on top of the ricotta. Drizzle with balsamic glaze.

JULY 4th LEFTOVER FRANKS & BEANS

Once your big 4th of July party is over, you might need a few ideas for how to use all of those leftovers. Here's an idea for franks and beans – a dish my dad loved. You could also add some hamburger too, just chop it up.

INGREDIENTS

2 teaspoons butter

½ onion, chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

½ teaspoon red pepper flakes

2 cups baked beans

8 franks, sliced

1/3 cup brown sugar

1 teaspoon honey

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

Melt butter in a skillet. Add onions and sauté until caramelized, about 8 minutes. Add garlic and red pepper flakes and sauté one more minute.

In a small bowl, combine brown sugar, honey and Dijon mustard. Add franks, beans, and honey mixture to skillet and mix together. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Place all contents of the skillet into a buttered casserole dish. Bake uncovered for 30 minutes. Stir mid-way through.

Karenalaya

Classic Jambalaya is a delicious staple of New Orleans cuisine. But like so many dishes I love, there's often a tad too much fat added. Here's my paired down version that won't have your scale saying "One at a time please." It's a great one-pot dish that can be made in advance and feed the whole family.

NOTE: The stock and tomato products are the liquid sources for the rice. If two cups of rice require 4 cups of water, then make sure your stock and tomato liquid combined equals 4 cups.

(This recipe appears in my new book, “*GETTING SAUCED – How I Learned Everything I Know about Food from Working in TV.*” For more stories and recipes, click here to purchase a copy – <https://bit.ly/gettingsauced>

INGREDIENTS (Serves 6)

2 tablespoons canola oil

1 red onion, chopped

4 stalks celery, chopped

1 green pepper, chopped

1 pound turkey meat leftovers, chopped

4 links lean sausage (pre-cooked), sliced

4 cloves garlic, minced

1 (14-ounce) can diced tomatoes

1 (14-ounce) can tomato puree

2 whole chipotle peppers, with two tablespoons of adobe sauce from can

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne

2 cups turkey or chicken stock

2 cups rice

Salt and pepper, to taste

PREPARATION

Heat the canola oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Sauté

the onions, celery, and pepper for 6 minutes until the onions are translucent. Season with salt and pepper. Add the turkey, sausage, and garlic and cook for 4 minutes.

Add diced tomato, tomato puree, the chipotle peppers with sauce, and the cayenne. Cook for another 2 minutes. Add the stock and rice and test the seasoning.

Increase the heat to high and bring to a boil, then cover, reduce the heat to low, and let simmer for 20 minutes, or whatever time the rice instructions suggest.

Serve in warmed bowls with a side of cornbread or your favorite crusty bread.

Feeling Sorry for Myself Grilled Cheese Sandwich

When life starts to go to the dark side, I can always cheer myself up with a good old-fashioned grilled cheese sandwich served with a side of potato chips. I'm sure, given enough cheese, it will cheer you up too.

(This recipe appears in my new book, *"GETTING SAUCED – How I Learned Everything I Know about Food from Working in TV."* For more stories and recipes, click here to purchase a copy – <https://bit.ly/gettingsauced>)

INGREDIENTS (Makes 1 sandwich)

3 tablespoons butter, divided

1 small onion, thinly sliced

2 slices brioche

$\frac{1}{4}$ wheel of Brie or cheese of your choice, sliced

$\frac{1}{4}$ apple, thinly sliced

Fig jam, your favorite brand

Potato chips (optional)

1 or more cocktails (optional)

1 pint ice cream (optional)

PREPARATION

Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a skillet of medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 8 minutes until browned and caramelized, set aside.

In the same skillet, melt 1 tablespoon butter and brown one side of each piece of bread. Remove from skillet and place one slice on a cutting board with the brown side facing up. Slather on fig jam. Top with sliced Brie, apples, and a heaping spoonful of onions.

Top with the other slice of bread, brown side touching the onions. You now have a sandwich with the two uncooked sides facing out.

Melt the remaining tablespoon of butter in the skillet over medium heat, and carefully place the sandwich back in the pan. When the bottom has browned, carefully flip the sandwich over and brown the last remaining side. This way, all sides of the bread are toasty and buttery. It adds to the crunch factor—a very important element when one is feeling blue.

Serve immediately with a side of potato chips, your choice of alcoholic beverage, and a pint of your favorite ice cream.