



# Grillin' Chillin' and Mojitos, Oh My!

Patio party foods to relax by

BY LYNETTE LA MERE

**I** confess; I was a deck neglecter! My outdoor space began the warm season this year in a very poor state. It was a sad waste of a true blessing in my little world. I'm busy! I work! But no more excuses, I'm now happily on the road to a full recovery. I've spruced up my patio by bringing the comforts of indoors outside where I can enjoy the sunset and the breeze with my children and friends. The addition of a few new plants, nice outdoor furniture, new cushions and outdoor friendly linens have done wonders, it's like enlarging my home. Blocking some space with pre-manufactured partitions was a great move for my deck and gave it a bit more privacy as well. Next I'll be looking for solar lamps, lighting, evening heating and some beautiful umbrellas for shade... It's an exciting project transforming a neglected outdoor area into a great "get away" oasis right there at my house. It feels good to make the most of my home and spill out onto the outdoor areas with the style and panache to match my glorious dinners.

## Mojitos

Yield: 1 pitcher

Refreshment defined; Mojitos do justice to fragrant, fresh local mint and makes a creative contribution to a summer gathering.

- 1 3/4 cup simple syrup (half water, half sugar, boiled until clear, cooled)
- 1 cup lime juice
- 3 cup light rum
- 2 bunches mint, rinsed and stemmed
- 5 limes, cut in chunky wedges
- two liter bottle club soda
- Meyer's dark rum to float
- Lots of ice & cocktail straws

Once the simple syrup is cool, add the lime juice and rum to it in a pitcher to create the base. Pluck the leaves from the washed mint and bruise them with a mortar or crush them with a spoon in each glass, a large pinch for each glass will do. Top the mint with 3 to 5 wedges of lime and fill half way with the base. Top that with lots of ice and club soda and float a splash of dark rum on the top. A cocktail straw is important with these.

## Grilled Vegetables with a Virgin Oil Herb Drizzle

Serves 8 -10

In event season we make about two hundred pounds a week of these and still I find it hard to write a recipe; it's just so simple. The drizzle is easy once you've roasted the garlic cloves, I suggest making extra as they have so many uses in an active kitchen. Put a couple cups of peeled garlic cloves into a small baking pan, cover them half way with olive oil and cover the pan. Bake it at 350 degrees until golden and tender, about 45 minutes, keep this in the refrigerator and use the oil or garlic in any savory dish.

- 1 Tbl. roasted garlic (recipe above)
- 1/4 cup virgin olive oil
- salt & pepper to taste
- 1/4 bunch fresh Italian parsley, wash, shake, dry and chop
- 1/4 bunch fresh basil, wash, shake, dry and chop
- 3 lb. variety of fresh seasonal vegetables (sky's the limit here)
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- Finishing flake or kosher salt & pepper to taste (be generous)

For the drizzle; smash the roasted cloves with the back of a fork. Whisk in the oil, salt, pepper and herbs and set aside.

Cut the vegetables into similar size (you can leave young or small squashes or brussels sprouts whole and skewer them on water soaked bamboo skewers if you like) and toss them with the olive oil and salt and pepper to

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## COOKING AT HOME

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taste. Grill over medium coals or on a ridged grill pan till tips begin to darken and the vegetables are al dente; remember that they will continue to steam a little all piled together on the platter before they cool. Platter the veggies as they leave the grill, drizzle with the Virgin Oil Herb Drizzle, a finishing salt & fresh grind of pepper.

### Grilled Peach Salsa

Serve this with grilled fish, chicken, lamb chops, or flank steak slices.

- 2 lb. ripe **peaches** (5 or 6), halved, pits removed
- 1 Tbl. **olive oil**
- 2 **serrano or jalapeño peppers**
- 1/2 **red onion**, sliced thickly
- 1/2 cup tightly packed **cilantro leaves**
- 2 Tbl. fresh **lime juice**
- salt and pepper** to taste

Brush the cut side of the peaches with olive oil and put cut side down on heated grill or grill pan. Grill until peaches begin to soften, turn over with tongs and grill until they begin to fill with their own juices. Let cool.

Grill chilies until charred. Peel, seed and chop then up fine. Brush onion slices with olive oil and grill then dice.

Remove skin from peaches. Cut peaches into half inch or larger chunks. Toss with other ingredients and serve within two or three hours.

### Summer Seared Tofu, Leek and Mushroom Soup

8 servings

A modern twist to the classic French Onion Soup, this is a lighter, luscious, deeply flavored clean soup that comes together very quickly. A perfect starter when the foggy ocean breezes kick up. So delicious, simple & easy; everyone will want the recipe, so have a copy on hand.

- 1/2 lb. firm **tofu**
- 3 **leeks**
- olive oil**, to sauté
- 1/2 **napa cabbage**
- 3-4 **portabella mushrooms**, stems removed  
3/4 inch dice
- 2 Tbl. **roasted garlic paste**
- 80 oz. **vegetable stock**

Sear the tofu on a hot, oiled sauté pan, dice then set aside. Trim off the root ends of the leeks and the darker green part leaving about 2 inches of the pale green. Slice the leeks lengthwise and rinse well, being careful to get in between the layers, then cut in 1/2 inch slices. Sauté the leeks

in the same sauté pan. Chop the top half of the cabbage in 1/2 inch slices.

In a soup pot start the mushrooms cooking in a splash of olive oil. After about 4 minutes, add in the garlic paste, sautéed leeks, diced tofu, cabbage, stock and salt & pepper to taste. Stir over medium heat for 5 minutes then serve.

### Classic Potato Salad

Serves 8-12

Far superior to anything premade, this is perfect do ahead / bring along fare and it's just good old fashioned delicious.

- 5 lb. **red potatoes** (cut in bite size, boil, strain until dry)
- half a bunch of **celery**
- 1 **red onion**
- 6 hard boiled **eggs**
- 5 oz. **sweet relish**
- 12 oz. **mayonnaise**
- 2 Tbl. **mustard**
- 3 **green onions**
- 10 oz. **sour cream**
- 1 1/2 tsp. **prepared horseradish**
- celery salt** to taste and fresh ground **pepper**

Chop onions, celery and eggs while the potatoes boil. Mix everything together and enjoy.

### Perfect Peach Pie

The trick is fragrant, ripe Farmer's Market Peaches and to bake it on a regular metal pie tin, in a nice hot oven on the bottom shelf and then, once out, let it rest and cool for 2 or 3 hours before serving.

Crusts:

- 3 cups all-purpose **flour**
- 8 oz. **butter**
- 1/2 tsp. **salt**
- 1 tsp. **sugar**
- Approx. 1/2 cup cold **milk**

Peach Filling:

- 5 cups of blanched and sliced **peaches**  
(instructions follow)
- 1/2 cup **sugar**
- 2 1/2 Tbl. **flour**
- dash of **salt**
- 1/4 tsp. ground **allspice**
- 1/2 tsp **cinnamon**
- grating of **nutmeg**
- 2 Tbl. **butter**
- drizzle of **honey**
- bit of **milk & sugar** on the top

Flash-blanching peaches is a wonderful ritual

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## COOKING AT HOME

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just for the smell alone. Bring a large pot of water to boil and plop in your ripe peaches. Now count slowly to thirty while you put a bowl of ice water together in the sink. Lift the peaches out of the pot and into the ice bath; let them cool a minute, then peel.

The secret to a perfect crust is to not over handle the dough, I still cringe when I see people patting and shoving and rolling it over and over. Dice the butter in half inch or so batons. Put the dry ingredients in a medium bowl and work in the butter with your fingers. Stopping when you still see pea size lumps of butter. Add the milk as needed to combine the ingredients and just bring them together. On a well-floured surface roll out the smaller half with a firm push of a rolling pin to about an 1/8 of an inch thick. With a thin spatula, lift one side and flop it over your pin, then gently roll the dough around the pin to transfer it to the pie shell, if it tears you can mend it with a bit of milk. Trim the excess around the outside rim with a butter knife or scissors. Set it in the refrigerator.

Preheat your oven to 375 degrees. Slice the blanched peaches into a bowl and toss with the sugar, flour and spices. Pour into the bottom crust. Dot the peaches with butter and drizzle with honey. Re-flour your surface and roll out the remaining dough, cut strips for a lattice or do a straightforward top crust with a center stem hole. Brush the rim with milk to adhere the top crust. Lattice tops are not hard to make, children can do them, just start on one side with a strip going each way and gently fold over alternating strips as you place on the next, crimp the edges to seal.

Brush the top crust or lattice with milk and sprinkle with sugar, avoiding the rims. Place on the bottom shelf of the hot oven and bake 50 to 55 minutes until deep golden. Remove and let the pie rest & thicken several hours.

LYNETTE LA MERE is the proprietor of Pure Joy Catering, Inc (805) 963-5766 ([www.PureJoyCatering.com](http://www.PureJoyCatering.com)) and a freelance writer who flourishes in Santa Barbara.

Shopping hints: All ingredients appear in bold-faced type and can be found at Farmer's Market, The Saturday Fisherman's Market or the Santa Barbara Fish Market, both in the Harbor.