

PICK PERFECT PEACHES

Simple recipes with only a few ingredients keep party prep to a minimum. They become something special when you get extra-choosy at the market. For these crostini, opt for vibrantly colored peaches that smell fruity and give just a bit when squeezed. Add the prettiest arugula you can find and bacon with plenty of smoke (think applewood) to seal the deal.

Peach & Bacon
Crostini
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just chill

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Here's how to celebrate this summer without breaking a sweat: plan a meal where all the dishes are best served cool or room temp. That means cooking is done before your crew even knocks on the door. Put your feet up. Pour a cold one. It's time to chill.





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RELY ON SALADS

Creative spins on salads, like this one with melon, cucumbers and feta or this medley of grilled polenta, tomatoes and herbs, are a chill hostess's best friend. Think recipes that can be prepped early (even the day ahead), then pulled from the fridge and set out when you're ready. Instead of the party starting when the cooking is done, you're in control of the schedule.

Sweet Corn Polenta with Bell Pepper & Tomato Salad
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GRILL AHEAD

It's a summer party, so of course you want to grill something—but wouldn't you rather be nursing a cocktail with your guests than holding a pair of tongs? The solution: Grill in the morning. Here, onions and endive for this fresh fig salad are grilled. The steak and chicken can also be grilled ahead, then marinated as they cool.

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Grilled Lime Chicken & Steak with Herb & Arugula Salad
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Peach & Bacon Crostini

ACTIVE: 30 min TOTAL: 30 min

TO MAKE AHEAD: Holds at room temperature for up to 2 hours.

The grill lends a smoky backbone to peaches and baguette for these crostini. (Photo: page 100.)

16 ½-inch-thick slices whole-grain baguette

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided

2 medium peaches, cut into ½-inch wedges

¼ teaspoon salt, divided

2 slices bacon, chopped

6 cups baby arugula

1 teaspoon lemon zest

1 tablespoon lemon juice

Flaky salt for serving

1. Preheat grill to medium-high.

2. Brush both sides of bread with 2 tablespoons oil. Toss peaches in a large bowl with the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and ¼ teaspoon salt. Grill the peaches until lightly marked and softened, 1 to 2 minutes per side. Return to the bowl. Grill the bread until lightly charred, 1 to 2 minutes per side.

3. Cook bacon in a large skillet over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until crisp, about 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the bacon to a small bowl. Add arugula and the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt to the pan. Cook, stirring occasionally, until just beginning to wilt, about 1 minute. Gently stir the greens, lemon zest and lemon juice into the peaches.

4. Top each crostini with some of the peach mixture, a little bacon and flaky salt, if using.

SERVES 16: 1 crostini each

**CAL 79 / FAT 3G (SAT 0G) / CHOL 1MG / CARBS 11G /
TOTAL SUGARS 2G (ADDED 0G) / PROTEIN 2G / FIBER 1G /
SODIUM 146MG / POTASSIUM 69MG.**

Sweet Corn Polenta with Bell Pepper & Tomato Salad

ACTIVE: 45 min TOTAL: 4 hrs

TO MAKE AHEAD: Prepare through Step 4; refrigerate polenta and salad separately for up to 1 day. Serve salad at room temperature. A flash under the broiler leaves slices of corn-studded polenta golden on the outside and soft on the inside. (Photo: page 102.)

POLENTA

5 cups water

1 cup coarsely ground cornmeal or polenta

1 cup corn, fresh or frozen

½ cup grated Parmesan cheese

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 teaspoon ground pepper

½ teaspoon salt

SALAD

2 medium red and/or yellow bell peppers, halved and seeded

2 cups cherry tomatoes, halved

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided

1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar

½ teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs, such as basil, mint and/or tarragon

1. To prepare polenta: Bring water to a boil in a large saucepan. Reduce heat to low and gradually add cornmeal, whisking constantly to



DEEP-FREEZE DESSERT

These blackberry ice cream sandwiches are actually *better* made ahead. We tested them every day after making a batch and found that on day three they reach perfection. The graham crackers turn delightfully chewy—reminiscent of the experience from your favorite childhood ice cream truck.

just chill

prevent clumping. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the polenta is creamy and reduced to about 4 cups, 50 to 60 minutes. (If the mixture is too stiff, loosen with 2 tablespoons water.)

2. Add corn, Parmesan, butter, pepper and salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the cheese is melted and the corn is tender, about 5 minutes. Coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with cooking spray. Pour in the polenta and let cool to room temperature, about 1 hour. Loosely cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm, about 2 hours or up to 1 day.

3. To prepare salad: Position a rack in upper third of oven; preheat broiler to high. Place peppers cut-side down on a baking sheet. Broil, rotating the pan once, until softened and charred, 4 to 6 minutes. Transfer to a bowl, cover with plastic wrap and let steam for 10 minutes. Rub off the blistered skin and coarsely chop the peppers. Combine with tomatoes, 2 tablespoons oil, vinegar and salt in a medium bowl.

4. Position a rack in upper third of oven; preheat broiler to high. Cut the polenta into 12 squares and place on a baking sheet. Brush both sides of the polenta with the remaining 1 tablespoon oil. Broil, turning once, until golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes per side.

5. To serve: Arrange the polenta and tomato salad on a large serving platter; top with herbs.

SERVES 12: 1 slice polenta & ¼ cup salad each

CAL 121 / FAT 7G (SAT 2G) / CHOL 8MG / CARBS 13G / TOTAL SUGARS 2G (ADDED 0G) / PROTEIN 3G / FIBER 2G / SODIUM 265MG / POTASSIUM 177MG.

Cantaloupe & Cucumber Salad with Fresh Za'atar

ACTIVE: 20 min **TOTAL:** 20 min

TO MAKE AHEAD: Holds at room temperature for up to 2 hours or refrigerated for up to 8 hours.

This juicy melon salad is seasoned with fresh oregano and thyme plus sesame seeds and sumac for a bright summertime take on the Middle Eastern spice blend za'atar. (Photo: page 102.)

5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds, divided
1 tablespoon ground sumac
2 teaspoons chopped fresh oregano
2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme
¼ teaspoon salt
½ English cucumber, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons lime juice
1 medium cantaloupe (about 4 pounds), seeded and cut into 8 wedges
1 cup coarsely crumbled feta cheese

1. Combine 4 tablespoons oil, 1 tablespoon sesame seeds, sumac, oregano, thyme and salt in a small bowl.

2. Toss cucumber with the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and lime juice in a medium bowl. Arrange cantaloupe and the cucumber on a serving platter and drizzle with any liquid remaining in the bowl. Top with feta, the dressing and the remaining 1 tablespoon sesame seeds.

SERVES 8: 1⅔ cups each

CAL 169 / FAT 14G (SAT 4G) / CHOL 17MG / CARBS 8G / TOTAL SUGARS 6G (ADDED 0G) / PROTEIN 4G / FIBER 1G / SODIUM 377MG / POTASSIUM 250MG.

Grilled Endive & Red Onion with Fresh Figs

ACTIVE: 30 min **TOTAL:** 30 min

TO MAKE AHEAD: Holds at room temperature for up to 2 hours or refrigerated for up to 8 hours. *Grilling coaxes sweet-savory depth from endive and red onion. Leave the root ends attached when trimming so they hold together and don't slip through the grill grates.* (Photo: page 103.)

1 lime
4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
4 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, divided
1 tablespoon honey
¾ teaspoon salt, divided
6 medium heads Belgian endive, quartered
3 medium red onions, cut into 1-inch wedges
8 large fresh figs or 1 cup dried, halved
¼ cup chopped fresh basil

1. Preheat grill to medium-high.

2. Zest lime. Whisk the zest with 2 tablespoons each oil and vinegar, honey and ¼ teaspoon salt in a small bowl.

3. Juice the lime. Whisk the juice with the remaining 2 tablespoons each oil and vinegar and ½ teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Add endive and onions; toss to coat. Grill the vegetables, in batches if necessary, until softened and lightly charred, 2 to 3 minutes per side.

4. Arrange the vegetables on a large platter. Top with figs and basil and drizzle with the dressing.

SERVES 8: 1⅔ cups each

CAL 157 / FAT 7G (SAT 1G) / CHOL 0MG / CARBS 23G / TOTAL SUGARS 16G (ADDED 2G) / PROTEIN 2G / FIBER 5G / SODIUM 224MG / POTASSIUM 391MG.

grill rack. Grill the chicken, turning once, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part registers 160°F, 4 to 6 minutes per side. At the same time, grill the steak, turning once, 3 to 5 minutes per side for medium.

4. Transfer the chicken and steak to a clean cutting board and let rest for 5 minutes. Slice and add the chicken to one bowl of the re-served marinade and the steak to the other. Let cool to room temperature, turning occasionally, about 45 minutes.

5. Just before serving, toss arugula and herbs with the remaining 1 tablespoon oil, 2 tablespoons vinegar and ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper in a bowl. Arrange the chicken and steak on a platter and drizzle with any remaining marinade. Serve topped with the arugula salad.

SERVES 8: 1 ½ oz. each chicken and steak plus ½ cup salad

CAL 223 / FAT 11G (SAT 3G) / CHOL 66MG / CARBS 3G / TOTAL SUGARS 2G (ADDED 0G) / PROTEIN 25G / FIBER 0G / SODIUM 453MG / POTASSIUM 341MG.

Blackberry-Ginger Ice Cream Sandwiches

ACTIVE: 35 min **TOTAL:** 3 hrs (plus 24 hrs freezing time)

TO MAKE AHEAD: Freeze for up to 2 weeks. *Here's the trick that turns the graham crackers perfectly chewy: Fold each sandwich in Reynolds plastic wrap before freezing to hold in moisture.* (Photo: page 104.)

2½ cups blackberries, divided
2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon pure maple syrup
½ teaspoon salt
5 cups vanilla bean ice cream, softened
16 whole graham crackers, halved

1. Line an 8-inch-square metal baking pan with 2 pieces of plastic wrap, allowing the ends to hang 3 inches over the sides.

2. Coarsely chop ½ cup blackberries; set aside. Combine the remaining 2 cups blackberries, ginger, lemon juice, maple syrup and salt in a blender or food processor. Puree until smooth. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a large bowl, pressing on the solids to yield as much puree as possible. (Discard solids.)

3. Fold ice cream and the reserved chopped blackberries into the puree. Transfer the mixture to the prepared pan. Place another piece of plastic wrap directly onto the surface, pressing to flatten the ice cream and remove any air bubbles. Freeze until firm, 2 to 2½ hours.

4. Use the overhanging plastic wrap to lift the ice cream out of the pan onto a cutting board. Cut into 16 squares. Lay a piece of plastic wrap on a flat surface and, working quickly, place a graham cracker square on it and top with one square of the ice cream. Top with another graham cracker square and wrap securely. Repeat with the remaining graham crackers and ice cream. Freeze for at least 24 hours and up to 2 weeks.

SERVES 16: 1 ice cream sandwich each

CAL 303 / FAT 14G (SAT 7G) / CHOL 53MG / CARBS 40G / TOTAL SUGARS 23G (ADDED 21G) / PROTEIN 5G / FIBER 2G / SODIUM 178MG / POTASSIUM 91MG.