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A Feast Fit for the Fourth

By Susie Iventosch

At long last, the weather has finally cooperated and it looks like we will have a summer after all! This is terrific news and just in the nick of time for July 4th holiday celebrations, barbecues, picnics, and parades and parties!

In this issue, we feature several ideas for barbecue fare, but most with a little twist on the traditional recipes. For instance, it's hard to imagine July 4th without potato salad, but with hot weather a risk, and so many people on bikini diets, this salad using baby Yukon gold potatoes, tossed in lemon vinaigrette is nice alternative to the mayo and hardboiled egg variety! (I do love the regular old potato salad, but this is a nice fresh option!) And, while baby back ribs with a southern molasses barbecue sauce are amazing, this fun recipe uses hard apple cider and brown sugar to give the ribs a crunchy, but lighter flavor!

However you choose to feed your family and friends on America's birthday, we wish you a very happy Fourth of July!

Cider-glazed Baby Back Ribs



Photo Susie Iventosch

(Serves 4)

INGREDIENTS

Four 6-rib baby back pork racks

One 22-oz. bottle hard apple cider, or two 12-oz. bottles

3/4-1 cup brown sugar

Coarse sea salt and black pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

To Marinate Ribs

Place ribs in (two) Ziploc baggies, or a plastic container with a tight-fitting lid. Season to taste with sea salt and pepper. Distribute cider evenly over ribs and seal bags, or affix lid. Marinate in refrigerator overnight, turning once or twice.

To Cook Ribs

Preheat oven to 300°. Spray roasting pan with non-stick spray and place ribs in pan. Pour juices over the top. Sprinkle evenly with 1/2 cup brown sugar and seal very tightly with aluminum foil. Cook ribs for 2 1/2 hours, or until very tender. Remove from oven and drain off 1/3 of the juices, keeping the ribs in the remaining juices. Cool, cover

and chill until ready to grill.

To Grill

Preheat barbecue to high heat. Spread gelled juices over ribs and sprinkle 1/4 to 1/2 cup brown sugar evenly over top sides of rib racks. Grill for about 2-3 minutes per side, just until ribs are nicely browned and sugar begins to get crunchy. Serve 'em up!

Grilled Corn on the Cob

We have been grilling corn on the barbecue for years, and usually I baste the corn with some kind of butter concoction made with melted butter and chipotle peppers, or lime juice, and seasonings. A few weeks ago, my husband prepared the corn, and it was the juiciest barbecued corn on the cob I had ever tried. Naturally, I wondered what he did differently than in the past, when the corn had always been delicious, but sometimes a little dried out. It turns out the trick was basting the corn with olive oil instead of melted butter. We have tried this half a dozen times so far this season, and every, single time it has been succulent and delicious! Use good quality extra-virgin olive oil for the best flavor.

INGREDIENTS

Corn ears, husked and silk removed

Olive oil (just enough to completely baste entire ears of corn)

Seasoning, such as Cajun spices or salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

Prepare ears of corn by removing husks. You can do this ahead of time and store in a baggie in the refrigerator. When ready to cook, baste the corn with olive oil using a basting brush, and season with spices of your choice. Grill over medium heat for about 10 minutes, rotating the ears every two to three minutes.

Potato Salad with Kalamata Olives and Lemon Vinaigrette



Photo Susie Iventosch

pierced with a knife. Remove potatoes from water with a slotted spoon, or simply drain off all water from pot. Cool and cut into bite-sized pieces and place in a salad bowl. Meanwhile, saute onions over medium-high heat until cooked and just beginning to caramelize. Cool.

To assemble salad, add Kalamata olives, capers, basil and sauteed onions to potatoes in bowl. Pour dressing over and gently toss. Serve cold or at room temperature.

(Serves 6)

INGREDIENTS

2-3 pounds Yukon gold potatoes (I like to use the baby potatoes)
3/4 cup Kalamata olives, pitted and halved
1/4 cup capers (optional)
1 red onion, sliced thinly
1/4 cup finely sliced basil leaves (optional ... parsley works fine, too)

Dressing

3 tablespoons fresh-squeezed lemon juice
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
9-10 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and Pepper, to taste

Place all ingredients in a container or bowl and whisk or shake to blend.

DIRECTIONS

Fill a large pot about 2/3 full with water. Add potatoes (whole if using small potatoes, or cut into quarters if using large potatoes.) Bring to a boil over high heat, and continue to boil until potatoes are just al dente, but done, when

Gorgonzola Buffalo Burgers with Shallot Compote



Photo Susie Iventosch

(Serves 4)

INGREDIENTS

1 pound ground buffalo (1/4 pound per person)
1/2 cup crumbled gorgonzola or blue cheese
1 teaspoon Italian herbs
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
4 burger buns or slices of French bread (8 slices)
1 recipe for Shallot Compote (recipe below)

DIRECTIONS

Mix buffalo meat with cheese and seasonings. Form into patties. Grill over medium heat, for approximately 5 minutes per side, being careful not to overcook. You never want buffalo well-done because it gets very tough and dry due to the lower fat content. Serve with a spoonful of shallot compote on the side or on top.

Shallot Compote

(Yields about one cup)

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cups finely sliced shallots (if small, you can keep them whole)

1 tablespoon unsalted butter
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
6 tablespoons sherry vinegar
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme or marjoram
1/4 teaspoon white pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

In a medium saucepan, heat oil and butter over medium heat. When butter just begins to foam, add shallots and salt. Cook, stirring often, until the shallots begin to brown. Add minced herbs and season with white pepper.

Stir in 4 tablespoons of the vinegar and all of the sugar. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the shallots are caramelized and the jam is thick and syrupy. Add remaining 2 tablespoons of vinegar and just heat through. Remove from heat and cool. Compote will thicken into a jam-like consistency as it cools.

Barbecue Sauce for Chicken (or ribs)

(Makes about 2 1/2 cups)

INGREDIENTS

1 large yellow onion, chopped
3 tablespoons canola oil
1 cup ketchup
1 cup water
1 tablespoon soy sauce
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
2 tablespoons yellow mustard
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
2-3 tablespoons fresh or bottled lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

In a medium sauce pan, heat oil and cook onions until translucent and just beginning to brown. Add remaining ingredients and stir well. Bring to boil and boil for one full minute, stirring the whole time. Marinate the chicken in 1/4-1/2 of the barbecue sauce overnight. Heat and serve remaining sauce with cooked chicken.

*Can store barbecue sauce in an airtight container in the refrigerator for a few weeks!

Barley-Mushroom Pilaf

(Serves 6-8 as a side dish)

This dish is not only great the first night, but delicious the next day with sundried tomatoes, olives, toasted pecans and feta tossed in!

INGREDIENTS

1 3/4 cups pearl barley (can use mixed grains if you prefer, i.e. wheat berries, wild rice, barley, etc.,)
2 tablespoons butter
2 medium onions, chopped
1 pint container fresh mushrooms, sliced (cremini or mini bellas are good)
5 cups chicken broth

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°. In a Dutch oven, or pot with a tight-fitting lid, sauté onions in butter until soft and translucent. Add mushrooms and cook until soft, then add barley and continue to cook over medium heat until barley is golden brown and mushrooms are beginning to turn brown on the edges. Remove from stove. Add 2 cups of chicken broth and stir. Cover pot and bake in oven for about 45 minutes, or until liquid is absorbed. Remove from oven and stir in 2 additional cups of broth. Cover and bake again for another 45 minutes. Finally, stir in last cup of broth, cover and continue to bake for another 30 minutes.

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