



# Celebrate Summer

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The summers of my childhood were defined by long, drowsy days at the lake and illuminated by lightning storms and legions of fireflies—our cocktail of choice was water, drunk straight from the hose. But regardless of where one might have been raised, summer brings with it a thrilling sense of freedom that everyone, everywhere, can enjoy.

This menu is meant to capture that feeling, and is therefore best enjoyed outdoors, in the company of good friends. Wherever possible, I have used fruits and vegetables that are widely in season—but if something comparable is available where you live, by all means use your local produce instead!

## Refreshment

Watermelon Agua Fresca

## Starters

Gazpacho Soup Shots  
Spicy Parmesan Kale Chips  
Crudités with Barb's Best Dip  
Mediterranean Quinoa Salad  
Corn off the Cob Salad  
Classic Caesar Salad

## On the Grill

Beef Tenderloin Kabobs  
Swordfish Kabobs

## Sweets

Peach Cobbler  
Ollalieberrie Pie  
Mom's Best-Ever Cheesecake

## Watermelon Agua Fresca

Traditional Mexican aguas frescas are made with added sugar—to which I’m obviously not opposed—but this recipe is perfectly summery and sweet just the way it is. The only way I’ve found to improve it is to add copious amounts of liquor.

**1 small ripe seedless watermelon**  
**Juice from 4 limes, freshly squeezed**  
**Fresh mint, for garnish**

Slice watermelon and remove rind. Cut watermelon flesh into small chunks sized to easily fit through an electric juicer. Juice watermelon chunks and pour liquid through a fine mesh strainer to remove pulp. Pour watermelon juice into a large pitcher. Add freshly squeezed lime juice to taste. Serve over ice and garnish with fresh mint. **Serves 8.**

## Gazpacho Soup Shots

**3 medium ripe tomatoes, peeled,  
seeded and diced**

**3 cups tomato juice**

**¼ cup Vidalia onion, diced**

**½ fresh green bell pepper, seeded and diced**

**¼ cup fresh yellow or orange bell peppers**

**½ fresh red bell pepper, seeded and diced**

**¼ cup green onions, chopped**

**2 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped**

**1 tbsp fresh dill, chopped**

**1 fresh English cucumber, peeled and chopped**

**3 garlic cloves, minced**

**1 tsp Worcestershire sauce**

**3 tbsp red wine vinegar**

**½ tsp Tabasco Sauce, or more to taste**

**½ tsp Maggi® Liquid Seasoning, or more to taste**

**½ tsp ground cumin**

**⅛ tsp black pepper, freshly ground**

Mix all ingredients together and pulse through a food processor or blender to desired consistency. Place in large glass bowl, cover and chill at least 8 hours or overnight to blend flavors before serving.

**Makes 30 soup shots.**





## Spicy Parmesan Kale Chips

Like bacon, cheese makes everything—even kale—taste delicious!

- 1 large bunch fresh Lacinato kale**
- Extra-virgin olive oil spray (I use a Misto sprayer)**
- Cayenne pepper, to taste**
- ½ cup Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, freshly grated**

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Wash kale leaves very well with cold water and pat each leaf dry with paper towel. Cut away leaves from thick center stem. Discard stem. Place leaves dark side up in a single layer but very close together on an ungreased baking sheet. Lightly spray leaves with oil, sprinkle with cayenne pepper and cheese. Bake 18–20 minutes until leaves begin to crisp and cheese starts to slightly brown. Serve warm or at room temperature. These keep well in an airtight container for up to a week. **Serves 4–6.**

## Crudité's with Barb's Best Dip

This recipe, originally shared by family friend Barb, has been a summer staple of ours for more than 35 years. I have literally never served this dip without someone asking for the recipe. It's remarkably easy, absolutely everybody loves it, and best of all, it's NOT ranch dressing!

- 1 cup mayonnaise**
- 2 tbsp ketchup**
- 1 ½ tbsp yellow onion, coarsely grated**
- 2 tsp tarragon vinegar**
- ¼ tsp dried thyme**
- ¼ tsp curry powder**
- ¼ tsp salt**
- Assorted fresh vegetables, for dipping**

In a small bowl, mix all ingredients together with spatula. Cover and refrigerate overnight to blend flavors. Serve with a variety of fresh, seasonal vegetables. Dip will keep in airtight container in refrigerator for up to two weeks—but it probably won't last that long! **Makes 1 cup.**



# Mom's Best-Ever Cheesecake

## FOR CRUST:

- 1 ⅓ cups Nilla Wafers® crumbs
- ⅓ cup butter or margarine, melted
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon

## FOR FILLING:

- 5 (8-oz) packages cream cheese, room temperature
- 1 ¾ cups granulated sugar
- 3 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- 1 tsp orange zest
- ¼ tsp salt
- ½ tsp pure vanilla extract
- 5 large eggs, room temperature
- 2 large egg yolks, room temperature
- ¼ cup heavy whipping cream

Preheat oven to 500 degrees. In a medium bowl, make the crust by combining wafer crumbs, butter or margarine, sugar and cinnamon and mix well. Press into bottom and slightly up the sides of 9-inch springform pan, cover and chill in the refrigerator.

Meanwhile, make the filling by using an electric mixer to beat cream cheese and sugar together until light and fluffy. Add flour, lemon, orange zest, salt and vanilla and continue to beat. Add eggs one at a time followed by egg yolks one at a time, beating well after each addition. With a spatula, gently stir in the cream by hand. Pour into prepared crust and bake at 500 degrees for 10 minutes. Without opening oven door, turn oven temperature down to 200 degrees and bake for 1 more hour. Turn off heat and leave cheesecake in closed oven for 2 more hours, or until completely cooled. Remove from oven and let stand at room temperature for 15 minutes. Remove sides from springform pan and cover cheesecake with plastic wrap. Chill in refrigerator overnight before serving. **Serves 12–14.**



*The mosaic pieces in this chapter come from the early 20th-century French tradition of pique assiette, which literally means “he who eats from another’s plate.” Each item is delightfully different—and together, they grace our table with a sense of shared history that’s ideal for a buffet-style gathering.*