

EAT COOL

GOOD FOOD FOR HOT DAYS



100 Easy, Satisfying, and
Refreshing Recipes that
Won't Heat Up Your Kitchen

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INTRODUCTION

“IN THIS HEAT EVERY EXTRA GESTURE WAS AN AFFRONT TO THE COMMON STORE OF LIFE.”

—F. SCOTT FITZGERALD, *THE GREAT GATSBY*

In the depths of a prolonged hot spell, the mere thought of figuring out what to eat can fill any cook with anxiety and fatigue. Who can be blamed for taking the path of least resistance and settling for whatever food option requires the minimum of attention and effort? The reality, though, is that the way we cook and eat dramatically affects our mood and sense of well-being—and this goes double when our internal radiators are on the verge of boiling over. At such times, in fact, a thoughtful approach to feeding ourselves and our families can be the difference between lethargy, ill temper, and discomfort on one hand and composure, alertness, and productivity on the other.

The objective of *Eat Cool* is to provide such an approach. It is a fun, versatile guidebook and collection of tried and tested recipes for cooks of all levels to expand their range of options and personal culinary tool kit. In these pages you'll find a family-friendly array of creative and delicious meals, snacks, drinks, and desserts based on smart ingredients to keep your body from overheating; dozens of achievable, make-ahead dishes that can be served cold or at room temperature; and a variety of no-heat techniques and principles that will keep your fridge stocked with items ideal for quick assembly of satisfying meals. (If you happen to learn a thing or two about using local, seasonal ingredients along the way, so much the better.)

Astute readers will note Asian, Indian, South American, Mexican, Middle Eastern, and Mediterranean influences throughout. Not only are these cuisines among my very favorites—they're also rich sources of climate-savvy culinary wisdom, having evolved over thousands of years in hot and humid regions. Accordingly, I've drawn liberally from them and emulated certain approaches,

such as drinking hot tea (see the Sweet Lemongrass-Ginger Tea on page 193) and eating spicy foods, including the Spicy Papaya Slaw (page 61), Pasta with Crab, Herbs, and Chiles (page 139), and Spicy Daikon Pickles (page 223).

While I believe food should be beautiful and visually pleasing, *Eat Cool* is meant not as an aspirational or coffee table cookbook, but rather as real, working manual—which I hope will become well worn and food-stained over time. Nor is it an activist's manual, although it can be part of any family's broader approach to eating more seasonally and sustainably or to lowering energy use during hot weather.

To this end, all recipes included in *Eat Cool* meet the following criteria:

1. IS IT DELICIOUS AND ENJOYABLE TO EAT?

Seems simple, right? First and foremost is a variety of contrasting yet complementary flavors, textures, colors, and temperatures. Broadly, cold recipes must be more brightly flavored, well balanced, and thoroughly seasoned than dishes served hot. The Cold Carrot, Cashew, and Ginger Soup (page 86), for example, infuses crunch, salt, and heat via add-ins such as hot, olive oil-fried carrot leaves and crunchy spices. Another example is the fun-to-slurp Glass Noodle Salad with Pork, Cucumber, and Lemongrass (page 79), which offsets sizzling meat with cold and crunchy vegetables, herbs, and spices, tossed with slippery noodles and a vibrant dressing. I also made a point of choosing fruits and vegetables in season during the summer months, for the obvious reason that seasonal produce is superior in flavor, aroma, texture, and appearance—see the Fresh Corn Salad with Peas and Herbs on page 63.

2. WILL IT KEEP YOU RELATIVELY COOL?

To eat cool does not mean giving up meat, dairy, or rich foods, but duty compels me to report that you'll find relief from the heat if you eat them more selectively and boost the proportion of vegetables, fruits, and grains in your diet. These are less work for your body to digest. Many recipes in this book, therefore, are lower in fat and plant based—and those that call for animal-based protein use cuts of meat that don't need to be cooked long (which also keeps your kitchen cooler). *Eat Cool* can help you learn to eat this way painlessly, thanks to its abundant use of fresh and cooling ingredients like yogurt, cucumbers, herbs, greens, citrus, ice, aloe vera, vinegar, melon, and berries.

3. DOES IT AVOID THE NEED FOR LOTS OF LABOR AND COOKING?

While the recipes in this book inevitably vary somewhat with respect to both labor-intensiveness and cooking time, I've selected ingredients and techniques throughout that should minimize both. The Grilled Marinated Skirt Steak and Barley Salad with Dried Cherries, Fresh Herbs, and Lemon Pickle (page 149), for example, cooks quickly on the grill. For dishes with pasta and grains, some shapes or varieties take less time to cook, such as the rice noodles in the Cold Korean-Style Vegetable Noodles with Gochujang and Kimchi (page 131) that finish in just three to four minutes. Other techniques to hasten the cooking process include cutting food small to maximize surface area, such as in the Grilled Chicken and Sweet Potato Street Tacos with Radish, Pickled Red Cabbage, and Black Beans (page 141). For those soups that do require cooking, such as Cauliflower, Pea, and Leek Soup Topped with Heirloom Tomatoes, Pea Tendrils, and Olive Oil (page 91), sweating vegetables and other ingredients in a covered pot over low heat develops flavor without the need for hours of stovetop simmering.

Finally, for those occasions when temperatures are at their most infernal, you'll find a multitude of recipes that take very little time to throw together and even avoid the need for cooking entirely—such as the Melon and Cucumber Breakfast Salad (page 20), Shaved Salad in Creamy Tahini Dressing (page 64), and Scallop Ceviche with Lime, Avocado, Cilantro, and Chiles (page 42), plus tips on creating family-friendly meals from tinned seafood (see page 120) and purchased rotisserie chicken (see page 147). Starting on page 214, you'll

find flavorful condiments, pickles, and sauces designed to help you develop an arsenal of pantry items to add to salads, simple proteins, and precooked grains for instant meals.

4. CAN THE HOME CHEF MAKE IT SUCCESSFULLY?

As a cooking instructor, I believe that cooking is a life skill everyone should have. Being self-sufficient in the kitchen is quite liberating. Accordingly, *Eat Cool* recipes are written to be approachable and realistic for the busy home cook to make, with a bias toward avoiding anything fussy or complicated (any recipe I wasn't sure about was tested by friends, neighbors, or colleagues during the summer months to make sure it was achievable and written clearly enough to follow). Many of the recipes have elements that can be prepped in advance (in hot weather, I suggest using the early morning for this). You'll be amazed how much easier it is to produce a meal (and entertain) when all you have to do is assemble its components. For example, when making the Poke Bowls with Pickled Bok Choy, Hijiki, and Marinated Shiitake Mushrooms over Sushi Rice (page 126), you can pickle the bok choy and ginger and marinate the mushrooms well ahead of time. When dinnertime comes, all that's left to do is slice the tuna and make the rice.

5. ARE ITS INGREDIENTS EASY TO FIND (OR CAN VIABLE SUBSTITUTIONS BE PROVIDED)?

The recipes in this book are based on ingredients that can be readily found across the country—for the most part, at least. As noted, *Eat Cool* pulls from global influences, so some recipes may send you to the international aisle of your supermarket or a specialty market for the more exotic ingredients. I also offer alternative suggestions for items that may be hard to find or have a short season. While I encourage you to try your local market first, it's worth remembering that in this day and age, you can order practically anything online.

I could go on and on about this topic, but let me stop there. It's time to take a deep breath and jump in—or dip in your pinky toe if you're the cautious sort. Remember, just because it's hot enough out there to fry an egg on the sidewalk doesn't mean you have to settle for sidewalk eggs! The many alternatives this book offers will help you stay cool, calm, and collected—and happily fed—until that blessed heat finally lifts. *Eat cool* and be happy.



PASSION FRUIT, MANGO, AND COCONUT PARFAITS

SERVES 6 | ACTIVE TIME: 35 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 35 MINUTES

Comprised of layers of passion fruit curd, mango puree, and cooling coconut yogurt and topped with crunchy coconut chips, this tropical recipe is an edible sunrise worth getting out of bed early for. It makes for a quick, self-contained breakfast or a great, fresh finale for a brunch spread. This recipe requires some effort and time, so I often make it the night before and refrigerate; these parfaits will hold up nicely in the fridge for a few days—but don't be surprised if they disappear long before that. For the best textured whipped coconut cream, look for canned coconut milk that contains guar gum.

- ½ cup unsweetened passion fruit pulp, thawed if frozen**
- ½ cup sugar**
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled**
- 5 large egg yolks**
- 2½ cups chopped ripe mango (from 2 peeled and pitted mangos)**
- 1 (13.5-ounce) can unsweetened coconut milk (made with guar gum)**
- 1½ cups low-fat plain Greek yogurt**
- 1 cup unsweetened coconut chips for sprinkling**

Place the passion fruit pulp, sugar, butter, and egg yolks in a medium saucepan and stir until smooth. Heat over medium-low heat while stirring constantly until barely simmering and thickened, 8 to 10 minutes. The mixture should thicken before it reaches a boil. Use a silicone spatula to push the curd through a fine-mesh strainer into a medium stainless steel bowl. Place that bowl over a large bowl of ice water and stir until cool. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Place the mango in a high-powdered blender or food processor and process until smooth. Transfer the mixture to a large piping bag.

Use a can opener to open the can of coconut milk. Transfer about ½ cup of the thick cream layer from the top of the can into a medium bowl. Beat with a whisk until soft peaks form, then fold into the passion fruit curd. Transfer this mixture to a large piping bag, if desired.

In a medium bowl, whisk ½ cup coconut milk from the can with the Greek yogurt until smooth. Transfer this mixture to a large piping bag.

Set up 6 parfait or juice glasses wide enough to accommodate a spoon. Pipe or spoon layers of the mango puree, passion fruit curd, and yogurt into each glass. Serve immediately, or refrigerate up to 2 days ahead until ready to serve. Top each glass with coconut flakes right before serving.



GREEN SHAKSHUKA

SERVES 4 | ACTIVE TIME: 25 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 40 MINUTES

Traditional North African shakshuka is started on the stovetop by cooking red peppers and onions (and sometimes tomatoes) with a bevy of spices. The mixture is topped with raw eggs and baked in the oven. Finally, the bubbling pan is brought to the table and served with bread for dipping. In my reworked shakshuka, green leafy vegetables, almonds, and chopped chiles form the base of the dish and are baked with the eggs from the get-go, no stovetop cooking necessary. If your objective is to cool off, the spicy heat from the serrano chile will induce sweating, so use as much as your taste buds can stand.

2 cloves garlic, peeled

3 tablespoons raw almonds

1 teaspoon fresh lemon zest

2 cups baby kale

2 cups baby spinach

1 cup baby arugula

1 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves

1 cup fresh cilantro leaves

2 teaspoons chopped serrano chile,
or more to taste

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

½ cup plus 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

Sea salt

8 large eggs

Freshly ground black pepper

½ cup fresh basil leaves for serving

Flatbread or pita for serving

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Combine the garlic, almonds, and lemon zest in the bowl of a food processor and process until finely chopped, about 1 minute.

Add the kale, spinach, arugula, parsley, cilantro, chile, lemon juice, and ½ cup of the olive oil and pulse until smooth, scraping the sides of the bowl if needed. Season with salt.

Spread the green vegetable sauce all over the bottom of a 4-quart shallow glass or ceramic baking dish. Use a spoon to gently form 8 wells in the sauce. Gently crack the eggs over each of the wells. Season the eggs with salt and pepper and drizzle with the remaining 1 tablespoon oil.

Place in the oven and bake until the egg whites are just set and the yolks are still slightly runny, 10 to 13 minutes. Remove from the oven and top with the basil leaves. Serve immediately with flatbread or pita for dipping.



MATCHSTICK APPLE, JICAMA, AND FENNEL SLAW WITH HONEY LEMON VINAIGRETTE

SERVES 4 AS AN ENTREE OR 8 AS A SIDE SALAD | ACTIVE TIME: 25 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 25 MINUTES

This sweet, salty, crunchy salad is a refreshing option to make for a picnic or bring to a cookout, anywhere food may be in transit or sitting out in the sun for a while—the apple, jicama, and fennel retain their crunch and the citrus in the dressing prevents the apples from turning brown. In other words, it probably withstands hot conditions better than you and I would. If you have leftovers, save them; the slaw’s crunch and flavor make a superb supplement to a sliced turkey or ham sandwich.

1 tablespoon fresh lemon zest

3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

3 tablespoons honey

2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

½ cup extra virgin olive oil

Sea salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 sweet apple, such as Pink Lady or Gala

1 Granny Smith apple

**1 fennel bulb, bottom trimmed, cored,
and thinly sliced**

2 cups peeled and julienned jicama

**2 medium heads purple or green endive, thinly
sliced**

1 cup fennel fronds, coarsely chopped

1 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves

6 peppadew peppers, coarsely chopped

**½ cup toasted salted sunflower seeds, plus more
for garnish**

Place the lemon zest, lemon juice, honey, and mustard in the bottom of a large bowl and whisk to combine. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil until incorporated. Season with salt and pepper.

Use a knife or mandoline to julienne the apples. Discard the cores. Top the dressing with the apples and toss to coat so that they don’t start oxidizing and turn brown.

Add the fennel, jicama, endive, fennel fronds, parsley, peppadew peppers, and sunflower seeds. Toss to combine. Sprinkle with the remaining sunflower seeds and serve immediately, or refrigerate for up to 1 day (garnish just before serving).



SEARED EGGPLANT WITH MINT, BASIL, AND WALNUTS IN YOGURT OLIVE OIL DRESSING

SERVES 4 | ACTIVE TIME: 25 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 25 MINUTES

Its glamorous and vaguely sinister-sounding name notwithstanding, the nightshade family boasts several of my favorite fruits and vegetables, including bell peppers, tomatoes, and eggplants, which hit peak ripeness during the hot and humid late summer months. Keen eggplant spotters at farmers markets during August will discover alternate colors—white, green, and orange, for example—as well as shapes and sizes that run the gamut beyond the familiar aubergine oblong. The great thing about eggplant is that its mild flavors and satisfying texture take on aspects of whatever you do to or put with it. Here, that's a delicious array of flavors, from the sweet (honey) to the sour-tangy (yogurt, mustard, vinegar), to the fragrant (herbs, garlic), to the smoky (char from the grill).

¼ cup whole milk plain yogurt

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling

1 tablespoon grainy mustard

1 teaspoon white wine vinegar

1 teaspoon honey

1 small clove garlic, peeled and minced

¼ teaspoon Aleppo chile flakes

Flaky sea salt

Freshly ground black pepper

4 to 5 small eggplants (about 1¾ pounds total), such as Italian, graffiti, or any variety that looks good or is in season

¾ cup raw walnut halves

½ cup fresh basil leaves, torn if large

½ cup fresh mint leaves, torn if large

In a medium bowl, whisk together the yogurt, 3 tablespoons olive oil, the mustard, vinegar, honey, garlic, and chile flakes. Season with salt and pepper and set aside.

Cut the stem ends off the eggplants and cut vertically into ¼-inch-thick slices. Set aside.

Heat a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat and cook the walnuts, stirring a few times, until toasted and almost charred in parts, about 4 minutes. Remove to a small bowl and set aside.

Drizzle the eggplant slices lightly with olive oil. With the heat still on medium-high, add the slices to the skillet in batches and let cook, flipping halfway through cooking, until charred in parts, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer the eggplant to large plates or a serving platter and sprinkle very lightly with salt. Continue cooking the remaining eggplant, placing it on the platter, and sprinkling with salt until all the eggplant is cooked.

Drizzle the eggplant all over with the dressing. Use your hands to break and crumble the walnuts over the top. Sprinkle everywhere with the basil and mint. Serve warm or at room temperature within a few hours (garnish just before serving).



THAI CELERY SALAD WITH SHRIMP, PEANUTS, CHILES, AND CILANTRO

SERVES 4 | ACTIVE TIME: 35 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 1 HOUR 35 MINUTES

Understanding that both celery and peanuts are prevalent in Southeast Asian cuisines, I decided to give the classic peanut-butter-on-celery-sticks combo from childhood a sophisticated makeover inspired by hot-cold Thai salads. Both Eastern and Western medicine endorse celery for its cooling, anti-inflammatory properties, making it a natural go-to for hot-weather cooking. More important, I've always been a fan of celery personally. Chiles and lemongrass make a transporting marinade for the grilled shrimp. Sliced celery, cucumber, onion, cilantro, and crispy celery leaves get tossed with a sweet, salty, and sour dressing and chopped peanuts. The result is crunchy, tangy, delectable, and filling—and pretty darn healthy, to boot.

2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced

2 bird's eye (Thai) or serrano chiles, stemmed and thinly sliced, divided

2 tablespoons minced lemongrass

4 tablespoons canola oil, divided

¼ teaspoon sea salt

1 pound 26- to 30-count large shrimp, peeled and deveined

3 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon fresh lime zest

½ cup fresh lime juice

¼ cup Thai fish sauce

3 cups sliced celery stalks (sliced ½ inch thick on a bias)

1 cup celery leaves

½ cup thinly sliced red onion

2 cups sliced seedless cucumber (halved lengthwise, then thinly sliced on a bias)

1 cup fresh cilantro sprigs, plus more for garnish

1 cup chopped roasted peanuts

Place the garlic, 1 sliced chile, the lemongrass, 2 tablespoons of the canola oil, and the salt in a medium bowl. Add the shrimp and stir to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Meanwhile, whisk together the sugar, lime zest, remaining sliced chile, the lime juice, fish sauce, and remaining 2 tablespoons canola oil until the sugar dissolves. Set aside.

Remove the shrimp from the refrigerator. Preheat a grill or grill pan over medium-high heat.

Add the shrimp, in batches, if necessary, and cook, flipping once halfway through cooking, until the shrimp are a bright pink-red color but also spotted black from the grill and just cooked through, about 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate.

Place the celery stalks, celery leaves, onion, cucumber, and cilantro in a large bowl.

Add the dressing and toss well to combine. Divide the salad among 4 plates and top each with some of the shrimp. Garnish with cilantro sprigs and the chopped peanuts. Serve immediately.



YOGURT SOUP WITH CHICKPEAS, DILL, MINT, GOLDEN RAISINS, CORIANDER, AND SUMAC

SERVES 4 TO 6 | ACTIVE TIME: 20 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 20 MINUTES

Looking for an antidote to muggy, humidity-inspired lethargy? This creamy-and-cooling-yet-tangy-and-flavorful Middle Eastern-inspired, no-cook vegetarian soup will wake up your senses and keep you on the qui vive while others begin to wilt, become cantankerous, or—in extreme cases—undergo total psychological decompensation. It starts with a foundation of cooling yogurt, broth, and spices, including nutty, earthy cumin, fragrant coriander, and ground sumac, a tart dried fruit. This recipe raises the flavor and texture stakes by drawing on a quartet of complementary ingredients: chickpeas for heartiness and chew, golden raisins for a touch of sweet, onion for crunch, and fresh dill and mint to add vibrancy and to cut through any richness. Serve by the bowlful as a main course, or dole out smaller portions to kick-start any Mediterranean-themed meal.

3 cups whole milk plain yogurt

3 cups vegetable broth

1½ teaspoons ground coriander

1 teaspoon ground cumin

¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

½ teaspoon ground sumac, plus more for serving

Sea salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1½ cups drained and rinsed chickpeas (from one 15.5-ounce can)

½ cup chopped red onion

½ cup golden raisins

¼ cup finely chopped fresh mint leaves, plus more for garnish

¼ cup finely chopped fresh dill, plus dill sprigs for garnish

Extra virgin olive oil for drizzling

In a large bowl, combine the yogurt, vegetable broth, coriander, cumin, cayenne, sumac, 1 teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper. Whisk to combine.

Add the chickpeas, red onion, raisins, mint, and dill. Stir to combine.

Ladle the soup into 4 bowls and top each with a generous drizzle of olive oil, more mint and dill, a sprinkling of sumac, and more salt and pepper if desired. Serve immediately or within a few hours (garnish just before serving).



GRILLED SHRIMP WITH HERB BUTTER AND ARUGULA ON CIABATTA TOAST

SERVES 4 | ACTIVE TIME: 25 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 55 MINUTES

Elegant and delicious, this toothsome toast is a crowd pleaser for any posh al fresco occasion. If your guests are good eaters, you might consider having more on hand, as this recipe provokes demands for seconds. Who can resist ripe tomatoes marinated in olive oil and white balsamic vinegar, herby compound butter, lemon-and-chile grilled shrimp, and peppery arugula?

1 pound extra-large (16/20 count) shrimp, peeled and deveined (3 to 4 shrimp per toast)

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided

¼ teaspoon crushed red chile flakes

1 tablespoon fresh lemon zest

Sea salt

Freshly ground black pepper

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

½ cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves and stems

1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme leaves

¼ cup thinly sliced fresh basil leaves

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh oregano leaves

2 medium vine tomatoes (about 12 ounces total), coarsely chopped

1 tablespoon white balsamic vinegar

1 clove garlic, minced

1 (1-pound) ciabatta loaf

1½ cups baby arugula

Place the shrimp in a medium bowl. Add 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, the chile flakes, lemon zest, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon black pepper. Stir to coat the shrimp in the marinade and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or up to 2 hours.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, mix together the butter, parsley, thyme, basil, oregano, and ½ teaspoon salt. Set aside.

Place the tomatoes in a medium bowl. Add the vinegar, the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil, and the garlic. Season with ¼ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon black pepper and toss to combine.

Use a large serrated knife to slice the ciabatta loaf in half crosswise. Then slice each half into 2 slices that are about 3 inches wide by 6 inches long.

Heat a grill or grill pan to medium-high. Place the bread on the grill (in batches if necessary), cut-side down, and cook until grill marks form, 3 to 4 minutes per batch. Place the toasts cut-side up on 4 plates. Let cool slightly, then spread each slice with some of the herb butter and top each slice with ½ cup arugula.

Add the shrimp to the grill and cook, flipping once halfway through, until grill marks form and the shrimp are opaque and curled, about 2 minutes per side. Divide the grilled shrimp evenly among the sandwiches, placing them atop the arugula layer.

Evenly sprinkle the chopped tomatoes over the shrimp. Serve immediately.



HEIRLOOM TOMATOES WITH SMOKY TOMATO BUTTER, ROBIOLA, AND MICROGREENS ON SOURDOUGH TOAST

MAKES 4 | ACTIVE TIME: 35 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 55 MINUTES

Is there any fresh produce as delicious as a ripe tomato in season? If so, please let me know, because I have yet to come across it. Given these sentiments, it may not surprise you to learn that one of my all-time favorite sandwiches is the simple, ripe tomato sandwich—good bread, fresh tomatoes, butter, and salt—that’s it. Some tomato sandwich connoisseurs will make a case for the mayo spread, but for me, softened butter is the perfect foil, helping to counterbalance the acidity of the tomatoes and bring out their natural sweetness.

I’ve used a smoky sun-dried tomato compound butter here to double the bang for your tomato buck, and just to “gild the lily,” robiola cheese—a soft, rich, nutty-flavored, slightly ripe-smelling cheese made with a cow’s, goat’s, and sheep’s milk mixture (good to know in case it comes up at trivia night). Last, I’ve incorporated microgreens, with a subtle earthiness and tender leaves that nicely complement the other components here. I like combining a few of the many different types of microgreens on the market, but using a single variety is also permissible—opt for whatever is in season.

Not all tomatoes are created equal, of course. I strongly recommend using tomatoes fresh from your garden or the farmers market for this sandwich. And they should be ripe and juicy. If your tomatoes are still a few days away from peak ripeness, make sure to ripen them on the countertop, never in the fridge, which will dry them out and cause them to turn mealy—i.e., unworthy of starring in their very own sandwich. Final hint: This sandwich is an ideal vehicle for those homely or blemished—but otherwise fresh, ripe, and delicious—heirloom tomatoes found at farm stands and green markets, often at a discount. Thinly sliced, covered with robiola and microgreens, and aburst with peak summer flavor, they’ll thrill your diners as well as any prize-winning beauty.

recipe continues on page 114

½ cup sun-dried tomatoes

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

¼ teaspoon sea salt

4 slices sourdough bread, from 1 large sourdough bread loaf

1 pound heirloom tomatoes, thinly sliced into rounds

8 ounces robiola cheese, thinly sliced

½ cup microgreens

Place the sun-dried tomatoes in a bowl and cover with 2 cups hot tap water. Let sit until softened, about 20 minutes. Drain the water and then use your hands to squeeze any additional water out from the tomatoes. Finely chop and transfer to a small bowl.

Add the butter, paprika, and salt. Stir together until a strikingly colored compound butter is formed with swirls of scarlet color from the paprika and tomatoes and yellow-white streaks from the softened butter.

Place the bread in a toaster and toast until golden brown. Let cool to room temperature so the butter doesn't melt.

Spread all 4 slices of bread with the butter. Divide the tomatoes over the top of each, then top with slices of the cheese and a small mound of microgreens. Serve immediately.



GRILLED CHICKEN AND SWEET POTATO STREET TACOS WITH RADISH, PICKLED RED CABBAGE, AND BLACK BEANS

SERVES 4 | ACTIVE TIME: 45 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 45 MINUTES

Street tacos are smaller than your average taco and typically served open-faced on soft corn tortillas with the fillings exposed, two to three on a plate. This format facilitates quick cooling and makes for a portable, on-the-go meal, since each taco can be folded and eaten in a few hearty bites. Traditionally sold from carts or food trucks, street tacos often arrive “two-ply,” i.e., with a secondary, extra soft taco (usually corn) stacked under the first to help prevent messy accidents resulting from tortilla collapse or implosion. My own preference is for a single tortilla (in full disclosure, because it means I can eat more tacos before I get full), but the solo vs. dual tortilla decision is a personal one that each of us must make. The sweet and savory tacos in this recipe are filled with smoky slices of dry-rubbed, dark meat chicken, thinly sliced sweet potatoes, cold and creamy black beans, fresh herbs, Garlicky Pickled Red Cabbage (see page 219), crunchy sliced radishes, and salty, crumbly cotija cheese. Cotija cheese can be found in Mexican markets, gourmet markets, or cheese shops. Add a fresh squeeze of lime and let the celebración begin!

4 boneless skinless chicken thighs
(1 to 1¼ pounds total)

1 medium sweet potato (about 10 ounces),
peeled, halved lengthwise, and cut into
¼-inch-thick slices

1 tablespoon light brown sugar

2 teaspoons smoked paprika

1 teaspoon chipotle chile powder

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1½ teaspoons ground cumin, divided

½ teaspoon ground coriander

Sea salt

Freshly ground black pepper

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided,
plus more for the grill

1 (15.5-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed

½ cup chopped fresh cilantro, plus fresh cilantro
sprigs for serving

2 teaspoons fresh lime zest

8 to 16 small corn tortillas

1 cup Garlicky Pickled Red Cabbage (next recipe)

8 radishes, thinly sliced

½ cup crumbled cotija cheese for serving

Lime wedges for serving (optional)

recipe continues on page 142

Place the chicken thighs in a large baking dish and the sweet potatoes in another. Set aside.

In a small bowl, stir together the brown sugar, paprika, chile powder, garlic powder, 1 teaspoon of the cumin, the coriander, 2 teaspoons salt, and 1 teaspoon pepper.

Sprinkle half of the spice mixture onto the chicken and the other half onto the sweet potatoes. Drizzle each with 2 tablespoons olive oil and toss each to coat in the spice mixture. Let sit for 15 minutes at room temperature.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, combine the black beans with the ½ cup cilantro, the lime zest, remaining ½ teaspoon cumin, and ¼ teaspoon salt. Stir to combine.

Preheat a grill or grill pan to medium-high and oil the grates of the grill. Place the sweet potatoes on the grill (in batches, if necessary) and cook, flipping once halfway through, until tender and grill marks have formed on both sides, about 4 minutes per side.

Place the chicken on the grill and cook, flipping once halfway through, until the chicken has an internal temperature of 165°F and grill marks have formed, about 7 minutes per side. Transfer to a cutting board and let rest for 5 to 10 minutes, then slice across the grain into strips.

Warm up the tortillas by putting them directly on the gas burner of a stove or on the grill pan with the heat on medium. Use tongs to turn and flip them until soft and pliable and slightly charred in parts, about 1 minute per tortilla.

Divide the tortillas among 4 plates. Top each with chicken, sweet potatoes, beans, pickled cabbage, radishes, and cotija cheese. Garnish with cilantro sprigs and a squeeze of lime, if desired.

GARLICKY PICKLED RED CABBAGE

MAKES 2½ CUPS PICKLES, PLUS BRINE | ACTIVE TIME: 10 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 1 HOUR

Brightly flavored, briny, and garlicky, these magenta-colored pickled cabbage strands make a perfect addition to anything crying out for an extra bit of flavor, acid, and/or crunch. They're great on top of salads, for example—and will add pizzazz to grain bowls, sandwiches, and tacos of any stripe. The observant may notice that this item is featured in two other recipes in this book, the better to take advantage of its vinegary, bright notes and—full disclosure—its photogenic color. They also make a delicious snack on their own, eaten with a fork straight out of the jar, not that you'd find me indulging in such barbaric behavior, at least not in front of company.

2 cups shredded red cabbage
(about ½ medium head of cabbage)

2½ teaspoons sea salt

¾ cup unseasoned rice vinegar

2 teaspoons coriander seeds

3 cloves garlic, peeled and thinly sliced

1 tablespoon sugar

Place the cabbage in a large nonreactive bowl. Sprinkle with the salt and massage the salt into the cabbage. Set aside.

In a small saucepan, stir together the vinegar, coriander seeds, garlic, and sugar. Bring to a boil over high heat, about 3 minutes.

Pour the vinegar mixture over the cabbage and stir to combine. Let sit, stirring occasionally, until the pickles are room temperature, then store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 month, until ready to use.



RED GRAPEFRUIT-ROSE SORBET

MAKES ABOUT 1 QUART | ACTIVE TIME: 20 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 5 HOURS 20 MINUTES

Rosewater, a popular flavor found in many Middle Eastern dishes and desserts, is made—no surprise—by steeping rose petals in water. Its potent flavor should be used judiciously, but in moderation provides a welcome and unexpected exotic dimension to many dishes. I like rosewater with grapefruit—the bright, summery flavors complement (and can stand up to) each other. Wine adds complexity and depth and continues the rosy theme. The grapefruit peel performs double duty, first cooked along with the other ingredients to draw out the lovely, tart citrus oils, then strained out and (while the mixture freezes) thinly sliced and coated in sugar to create a crunchy candied topping.

1½ cups sugar, divided

1½ cups dry rosé wine

**Fresh peel (peeled using a vegetable peeler)
from 1 whole ruby red grapefruit**

1½ cups fresh unstrained ruby red grapefruit juice

2 tablespoons rosewater

Combine 1 cup of the sugar, the wine, and grapefruit peel in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, about 6 minutes, and continue to cook until the alcohol scent subsides, about 4 more minutes. Transfer the mixture to a large pitcher or medium bowl and refrigerate until cold, about 1 hour.

Strain the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer over a large pitcher or another bowl. Reserve the grapefruit peel and set aside.

Stir in the grapefruit juice and rosewater. At this point, if desired, the mixture can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 day.

Run the mixture through an ice cream machine according to the machine's instructions. Transfer the sorbet to a freezer-safe container and freeze until solid, 3 to 4 hours.

Meanwhile, pour the remaining ½ cup sugar into a small bowl. Thinly slice the reserved grapefruit peel and toss in the sugar to coat. Transfer to a parchment paper-lined plate to dry, about 2 hours. The candied grapefruit peel can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 week.

Serve the sorbet topped with the candied grapefruit. The sorbet can be stored in the freezer for up to 1 week.



CHAMOMILE, STRAWBERRY, AND NECTARINE PALETAS

MAKES 10 | ACTIVE TIME: 10 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 5 HOURS 10 MINUTES

As an LA kid, frozen treats on a hot day didn't mean soft serve, Italian ice, or red, white, and blue rocket pops. Instead, we'd head for the local bodega or market and pick out a selection of *paletas*—naturally sweetened (usually) Mexican ice pops. These came in a wide variety, from your basic 101-level flavors (strawberry, banana, lemon) to your more advanced ones (tamarind, horchata, blood orange). I missed paletas after leaving LA, but later in life I discovered that making them from scratch is a cinch. This recipe originally came about when I accidentally made too much iced chamomile tea and needed to do something with the surplus. Happily, my hunch paid off: the chopped fresh strawberries and nectarine and mild and sweet chamomile flavor fit each other to a tea (for further material of this caliber, keep your eye out for my upcoming late-night streaming comedy special).

1 lemon

2½ cups water

¾ cup sugar

**⅛ ounce loose-leaf chamomile tea
(about 2 tablespoons or 4 tea bags)**

1 cup sliced ripe strawberries

1 ripe nectarine, pitted and thinly sliced

Use a vegetable peeler to peel the skin off the lemon, leaving the white pith. Then slice the lemon in half crosswise and juice the lemon. Reserve 3 tablespoons juice and set aside.

In a small saucepan, bring the water, sugar, and lemon peel just to a boil over high heat, about 4 minutes. Turn off the heat add the tea bags. Transfer to a large measuring cup or pitcher and refrigerate until cold, about 1 hour.

Once cold, remove the tea mixture from the refrigerator and stir in the lemon juice, then pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into another spouted container. Set aside.

Divide the strawberries and nectarine evenly among 10 ice pop molds. Then pour the tea mixture over the top of each and top with an ice pop stick. Freeze for at least 4 hours or overnight. Unmold and serve. The paletas can be stored in the molds in the freezer for up to 1 week.



MELON AND LIME AGUA FRESCA

SERVES 4 TO 6 | ACTIVE TIME: 15 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 15 MINUTES

Agua fresca, a sweet, non-carbonated drink popular in Mexico, translates to “fresh water”—and it lives up to this name nicely, thanks to its thirst-quenching properties. Somewhat reminiscent of lemonade, agua fresca comes in a variety of flavors, being made with a combination of fruits, flowers, and sometimes even seeds and pods. Some variations are dusted with chile powder. In this particular variation, the sweet floral flavor of melon costars with bright citrus notes of lime, resulting in a lovely, light green nonalcoholic concoction you’ll wish you could dive into on a humid day.

7 cups chopped ripe green melon, such as honeydew, honey globe, or bailan, from 1 large melon

¾ cup sugar

1 tablespoon fresh lime zest

¾ cup fresh lime juice

4 cups water

Lime wedges for garnish

Place the melon, sugar, lime zest, and lime juice in a blender and blend until smooth.

Use a rubber spatula to push the melon mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into the bottom of a large pitcher or bowl. You should have about 3 cups melon juice mixture. Discard any remaining pulp. Add the water to the melon juice and stir to combine. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

To serve, fill glasses with ice, then ladle the agua fresca over the top. Garnish with lime wedges. Serve immediately or store in a large pitcher in the refrigerator for up to 2 days (garnish just before serving). Stir a few times before serving.



MEXICAN COFFEE FRAPPÉ

SERVES 4 TO 6 | ACTIVE TIME: 10 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 10 MINUTES

A fine illustration of the “necessity is the mother of invention” principle, this recipe came about one day when certain unexpected pests—I mean guests—dropped by, and I needed to whip up something quickly, on the fly. I happened to have about a half-pitcher of cold-brew coffee sitting around (for lots more on cold brew, see page 30)—not enough to serve my visitors, but a start. I sized up my fridge and cupboard for ingredients that a) could extend the beverage’s volume sufficiently and b) would combine to form a harmonious outcome. Happily, this was one of those times when all the planets aligned and inspiration struck. Thus was born the Mexican Coffee Frappé, which received raves from all involved, thanks to its triad of traditional Mexican flavors: cocoa, vanilla, and cinnamon. As a treat for hot days, it is simple to blend up, sweet, and super-frothy. Perhaps most important, the jolt of caffeine it delivers is potent enough to propel the average person through a blazing day without damage to their batteries, tires, or cooling systems. This recipe was originally developed to use up leftover (room temperature) coffee, but cold also works; if using freshly brewed hot coffee, let it cool first.

3 cups brewed coffee or cold brew, at room temperature or chilled

½ cup sweetened condensed milk

2 tablespoons instant espresso powder

1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon, plus more for serving

2 cups ice cubes

Whipped cream for serving

Combine the coffee, condensed milk, espresso powder, cocoa powder, vanilla, cinnamon, and ice in a blender. Blend on high speed until smooth and very frothy.

Divide among glasses. Spoon some of the froth over the top of each glass. Top with whipped cream and a sprinkling of cinnamon, if desired. Serve immediately.



PEACH PLUM PEAR SANGRIA

SERVES 6 TO 8 | ACTIVE TIME: 12 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 2 HOURS

Isn't it about time that sangria—traditionally a dark red beverage made with red wine, brandy, and perhaps citrus fruit—is allowed a glimpse of the lighter side of life? This recipe provides just such an opportunity, with its foundation of rosé and summer fruits topped with fruity liqueurs and white grape juice. The result is a light pink sangria busting out all over with floral, fruity, and fragrant flavors. With respect to the fruit, I've used peach, plum, and pear here, but I grant you full license to play around based on your personal preference and whatever's in season. As with all sangrias, the longer the fruit sits, the more the flavor develops, so consider making this one at least a few hours before serving—better yet, a day.

Note: When cutting any soft, ripe fruit, using a serrated knife will save you a world of heartache.

2 tablespoons sugar

2 ounces Japanese plum wine

2 ounces pear vodka

2 ounces peach liqueur

1 cup white grape juice

**1 peach (white or yellow), pitted and thinly sliced,
plus more for garnish**

**1 plum, pitted and thinly sliced,
plus more for garnish**

**1 Anjou pear, pitted and thinly sliced,
plus more for garnish**

2 sprigs fresh thyme, plus more for garnish

1 (750-ml) bottle rosé

Ice cubes for serving

In a small measuring cup, stir together the sugar, plum wine, pear vodka, peach liqueur, and white grape juice until the sugar dissolves.

Add the fruit and thyme to a large pitcher or bowl. Add the liqueur mixture and rosé and stir to combine. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours, overnight, or even up to 2 days. The longer the sangria sits, the more flavorful it becomes.

Serve the sangria over ice garnished with sliced peaches, plums, pears, and sprigs of thyme.



PINEAPPLE, THYME, AND COCONUT WATER WHIP

SERVES 4 | ACTIVE TIME: 5 MINUTES | TOTAL TIME: 5 MINUTES

If you like piña coladas and getting caught in the rain (as the song goes), this recipe may not be for you. True, it may be reminiscent of the piña colada in some ways, but its primary emphasis is on pineapple and fresh thyme, the latter of which gives the drink an unexpected herbal twist. Additionally, unlike the super-rich coconut crème (or crema de coco) typically used in the piña colada, my drink uses mildly sweet coconut water, which is far less fatty—a distinct plus during a heat wave (and a good source of natural electrolytes, to boot).

Overall, this recipe boasts many of the colada assets (frothiness, smooth and creamy texture, tropical feel) while avoiding some of its liabilities (calorific heaviness, nap-inducing quality). True, you may not wind up making love at midnight, in the dunes of the cape, but is that really desirable when the tick population is exploding and the thermometer is pushing 100? Call me unromantic, but personally, the escape I'm looking for under such conditions is from the heat itself.

Note: You can buy frozen pineapple in the freezer section of your local supermarket. Better still, if you have the time and the fruit, freeze your own (see page 168) in advance—just remember it takes the freezer a few hours to do its thing.

2 cups chopped frozen pineapple (see headnote)

1 cup coconut water

3 ounces white rum

5 tablespoons fresh lime juice

2 tablespoons sugar

½ teaspoons fresh thyme leaves, plus sprigs for garnish

Pineapple wedges for garnish

Combine the frozen pineapple, coconut water, rum, lime juice, sugar, and thyme leaves in a blender and blend on high speed until very frothy.

Divide the whip among 4 glasses. Garnish with a fresh thyme sprig and a wedge of pineapple. Serve immediately.