

Don't Heat Up the Kitchen

Cool food for hot days / BY KARLA JONES SEIDITA

Everyone's hungry. The kitchen is calling but no one's answering. It's just too hot to cook. Need some cool ideas? How about this yummy little menu of no effort recipes so easy you won't break a sweat. A delicious way to enjoy the lazy days of summer without turning on the stove. Let's get into the kitchen!



Chilled Red Pepper Soup

Creamy and delicious, this gorgeous cold soup tastes like you labored in a hot kitchen for hours. But in reality it's just a jar of roasted red peppers (also called "fire roasted" peppers) blended with a little milk. Not a smidge of cooking required. You'll pay a bundle for a soup like this at trendy restaurants and bistros.

MAKES 4 (1/2-CUP) SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

1 (12 to 16 oz.) jar roasted red peppers (packed in water or brine but not vinegar – drained)
1 Tablespoon brown sugar
3/4 cup half & half (or more to taste)

DIRECTIONS

Puree everything together in the food processor or blender. Chill.

COOK'S TIP

You can sub one 12-oz. can of evaporated milk for the half & half. Any dairy or non-dairy milk works well, too, but the soup will be thinner.

Pickle Juice Slaw

Got left over pickle juice? You've got slaw!

MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS

INGREDIENTS

1 small head cabbage (thinly shredded – about 6 cups)
The juice from a jar of your favorite pickles (any type – 1 to 2 cups – a little more or less doesn't matter)
Optional – 2 carrots peeled and shredded
Optional – 1 small Vidalia onion cut in half and sliced paper thin.

DIRECTIONS

Put cabbage (plus carrot and/or onion if using) into a container with a tight fitting lid. Pour on the pickle juice and any spices in the jar. Cover the container and shake to distribute the juice. Refrigerate for several hours, shaking occasionally.

Cool Kitchen Pulled Chicken

Put a chicken in the slow cooker and you have an easy, summer meal that doesn't heat up your kitchen. The slow cooker is so forgiving that you can take another dip in the pool without worrying about when the chicken has to come out of the oven. Easy summer eating starts with chicken and there's dozens of ways to beat the heat. Here's one.

SERVES 4 TO 6

RECOMMENDED SLOW COOKER SIZE – 6 QUARTS OR LARGER

INGREDIENTS

1 whole chicken – about 4 pounds
BBQ sauce to taste (your fav – about 1 cup)

DIRECTIONS

Mist slow cooker with cooking spray. Put the chicken in the cooker – breast side up. Cover. Turn cooker to high. Cook till the meat falls off the bones – about 4 hours. Remove the meat from the bones and shred. Toss the shredded chicken with BBQ sauce to taste. Microwave to reheat if necessary. Serve with slaw on crusty or soft rolls.



About the Home Economist

Karla Jones Seidita has cooked up a very tasty life. She has been a restaurant and bakery owner, award-winning food writer, lifestyle radio host, cookbook author, country inn proprietor, and farm-to-table teacher. Currently she spends her days at her laptop and in her garden in Sumerduck. Find her at cheesecakefarms.com

No Bake Pistachio Cream Pie

Surprise everyone with this make-ahead dessert that's cooler than a cucumber!

MAKES ONE 9-INCH PIE

EQUIPMENT - 9-INCH PIE PAN, FOOD PROCESSOR OR HEAVY DUTY MIXER

INGREDIENTS

1 graham cracker crust (recipe follows)
6 Tablespoons sugar
1 (8-oz.) package cream cheese - softened
2 Tablespoons milk (any type - dairy or non-dairy)
1 teaspoon vanilla
teaspoon salt
3 cups plain Greek yogurt
1 (3 ¼ oz.) package instant pistachio pudding mix
2 teaspoons almond extract

DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare graham cracker crust.
2. For filling, blend sugar and cream cheese together in food processor or mixer till smooth. Blend in milk, vanilla and salt.
3. In a large bowl, combine yogurt, dry pudding mix and extract. Fold in cream cheese mixture.
4. Spread evenly into crust. Garnish with reserved 2 Tablespoons crumbs from crust recipe.
5. Lightly cover. Chill several hours or overnight.

Graham Cracker Crust

Nothing beats a homemade graham cracker crust. You can sub a purchased crust but it's not nearly as good.

INGREDIENTS

1 inner package graham crackers from a 14.4 oz. box (about 15 5x2 inch crackers)
1 stick butter (melted)
3 Tablespoons sugar

DIRECTIONS

Crush graham crackers. You should have about 2 cups of crumbs. Mix crumbs with the butter and sugar. Reserve 2 Tablespoons for pie garnish. Mist pie pan with cooking spray. Press remaining crumb mix evenly into pan using a flat bottomed glass or measuring cup. Refrigerate till needed.

COOK'S TIPS

Pie slices should lift easily from the pan but if they stick, dip the bottom of the pie pan into shallow hot water for about 30 seconds to soften the butter so the crust releases.

Limeade

Limeade is a summertime treat that tickles lemonade lovers with its unexpected zing. If you have mint in your garden, adding a small sprig teases the taste without making it overly mint-y. They're gonna LUV this!

MAKES 6 CUPS

INGREDIENTS

½ cup sugar
1 cup warm tap water
5 cups cold tap water
5 Tablespoons lime juice (6 to 8 limes or bottled juice)
Optional - 1 (3-inch) sprig of fresh mint

DIRECTIONS

In a pitcher, stir sugar and warm water until the sugar melts. Add the cold water, lime juice and sprig of mint, if using. Chill.



Cold Brew Coffee

Iced, cold brew coffee is an indulgent luscious coffee shop splurge that is easy (and economical) to make at home.

MAKES ½ GALLON

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ cups dry, ground coffee (your fav)
8 cups tap water

DIRECTIONS

Mix coffee and water in a large jar or pitcher. Cover. Refrigerate 24 hours. Strain through a coffee filter. Serve cold over ice - either black with a twist of lemon peel or with cream and sugar. L

