

GREAT BITES

SUMMER FLAVORS BRING WARMTH & FUN TO THE TABLE

—BY SEAN-PATRICK M. HILLMAN—

Summer in New York is a feast for the senses, and nothing says summertime quite like the food that comes with it. This time of year is incredibly delicious, filled with smells and tastes that sets the heart on fire. From rooftop rosé pairings to beachside bites, the season is bursting with vibrant flavors, fresh ingredients, and nostalgic indulgences that turn every meal into an experience. As smell and taste are the two biggest, and strongest, contributors to memories, I think it's safe to say that summer foods are the most memorable.

At farmers markets across the city, roadside markets and co-ops in the Hudson Valley, Hamptons and Jersey, summer produce takes center stage. Juicy heirloom tomatoes, crisp cucumbers, sweet corn, and plump berries offer endless inspiration for seasonal salads, light pastas, and refreshing desserts. It's the time of year when less is more—simple ingredients, expertly prepared, deliver the biggest impact.

Grilling, of course, is the summer staple, and my personal favorite. Whether it's a backyard barbecue blowout in the Hudson Valley or a beachside gathering on the Jersey Shore, fire-kissed meats, grilled vegetables, and charred seafood define warm-weather dining. Think stunningly racks of St. Louis-style ribs, basic burgers loaded with all the fixings, shrimp skewers with citrus glaze, and even grilled pineapples. Check out the *Summer Grilling* story in this issue to see some fired up recipes, product suggestions and tips and tricks to ensure the best BBQ experience.

During the summer, New Yorkers also embrace international flavors. From fish tacos with mango salsa at a Long Island food truck to Mediterranean mezze spreads shared over a picnic in Central Park, global cuisine adds a delicious twist to seasonal dining.

And for dessert? Soft-serve ice cream, Italian ices, and artisan popsicles never go out of style. Whether from a Brooklyn food fair or a roadside stand in Montauk, a frozen treat is the perfect finale to a sun-drenched day. And let's not forget the ever nostalgic and appropriate s'mores over a stunning summer night's campfire or the ice cream bars of the past like Strawberry Shortcake, Fudgsicle and Toasted Almond!

Summer food isn't just about what's on the plate—it's about the setting, the company, and the joy of slowing down. It's a rooftop toast at golden hour. A lobster roll at the boardwalk. A grilled corn cob under fireworks. Even a casual walk along a city-side park with an ice cream cone. It's a celebration of sunshine, shared bites, and the simple pleasures that define the season.

RECIPES:

HEIRLOOM TOMATO SALAD

An heirloom tomato salad to me is the iconic salad of summer. The juicy sweetness of *real* heirloom tomatoes (tomatoes that haven't been genetically altered) is balanced by the red onion and stunning aroma of basil and mint, all complimented by a very simple EVOO and white balsamic dressing.

Ingredients

2 lbs Heirloom Tomatoes (you want a variety of shapes and colors to really make this salad stunningly tasty and beautiful)
 1 Pint of Cherry Tomatoes
 1 or 2 Red Onions depending on their size
 Fresh Basil
 Fresh Mint
 Fresh Oregano
 Extra Virgin Olive Oil
 White Balsamic Vinegar
 Drop of Honey
 Sea Salt
 Black Pepper

Instructions

Slice your heirloom tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, and red onion. Tear your herbs in a volume that is, in total, about 1/4 of the size of the sliced tomatoes so that they complement the heirlooms, not overpower them. Each herb should have even volume of leaves, though you can increase or decrease each depending on your palate.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the extra virgin olive oil, white balsamic vinegar, drop of honey, sea salt, and freshly ground black pepper. Add the tomatoes and fresh herbs to the bowl and gently toss. Allow the salad to rest and marinate for at least 15 minutes.

Give it one last toss to liven up and activate those flavors, then put the salad into a glass or wooden serving bowl and enjoy!





SHRIMP TACOS WITH CILANTRO-LIME CREAM

Whoever first came up with the idea of Shrimp Tacos must have been a summer worshiper. They are literally the perfect fare for the season. And if you make this recipe correctly, using the fresh ingredients it calls for, my Shrimp Tacos with Cilantro-Lime Cream will become your new favorite summer dish.

Ingredients

2 lb Large Fresh Peeled & Deveined Shrimp	A Pinch of Salt and Fresh Ground Black Pepper
1 1/4 Teaspoon Minced Garlic	1/4 Teaspoon Ground Coriander
1/2 Teaspoon Grated Orange Zest	1/2 Teaspoon Garlic Powder
2 Tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil	A Pinch of Garlic Powder
2 Tablespoons Sour Cream	1 lime, Zested
1 1/4 Teaspoons Chili Powder	1 Lime, Juiced
1/2 Teaspoon Paprika	1/2 Bunch Fresh Cilantro, Chopped
1/4 Teaspoon Ground Cumin	1 Vidalia Onion, Diced
1/2 Teaspoon Onion Powder	1 Red Onion, Diced
1 Teaspoon Salt	2 Avocados, Thinly Sliced
1 Teaspoon Fresh Ground Black Pepper	1 1/2 Jalapeño Pepper, Diced
	2 Limes, Cut Into Wedges
	15 – 20 Corn Tortillas (6")

Instructions

Place shrimp, chili powder, garlic, paprika, cumin, onion powder, salt, fresh ground black pepper, coriander, and orange zest in a bowl. Mix well.

In a nonstick pan, heat the EVOO over high for 3 minutes. Turn heat to medium-high and add shrimp, cooking until the outside is bright pink, about 4 minutes on each side (the meat will be opaque).

You can prepare the cream while the shrimp is cooking. Whisk together sour cream, zest and lime juice, 1.5 teaspoon of the fresh chopped cilantro, garlic powder, and a pinch of salt and fresh ground black pepper.

Most people overthink the tortillas. In a pan, heat them over low heat, about 1 to 2 minutes per side. If you want to use a griddle or flattop, that works as well. Be careful not to let them burn. Set aside.

To put everything together, drizzle 1 tablespoon of the cream across each tortilla. Add 3 or 4 shrimp (depending on the size of the shrimp), 2 slices of avocado, a sprinkle of fresh vidalia and red onion, fresh chopped cilantro to taste, and jalapeño. To heighten the olfactive from the cream, squeeze the lime wedges on top of the tacos and serve with extra cream on the side.



IS IT TUNA FISH OR SALMON SANDWICHES NOW?

When I was a kid, tuna fish sandwiches were always a summer favorite. But given the recent supply chain issues, quality of product and costs, the key ingredient in one of my favorite summer picnic sandwiches, tuna fish, was becoming more of a game of whack-a-mole in trying to find the right product. Recently, a friend recommended Tonnino. YOWZA! I was stunned. The quality of their tuna fish, and the variety of formats, is incredible. The brand is known for their commitment to sustainability and quality with products like jarred tuna, and gourmet dips. BUT they also just launched the first-ever jarred salmon! So, if tuna is your game, maybe give this a shot. I was shocked at how good it was! Their products are available at Whole Foods, Walmart, Fairway, and Amazon. It's perfect for anyone looking for a ready-to-eat seafood brand that prides itself on quality. To learn more about Tonnino, visit tonnino.com.



SUMMER PASTA CHICKEN SALAD

Sometimes you just can't help but crave carbs. Yet you still want to make sure that, especially in the summer, you are being at least a little healthy. This recipe I came up with a few years ago has a decent balance to help you get your carb fix and still feel healthy.

Ingredients

SALAD

1 lb Fusilli Pasta (you can also use bow ties)
1 lb Boneless, Skinless Chicken Breasts
3 Slices Bacon, Baked and Crumbled
1 Tablespoon Extra Virgin Olive Oil
2 Cups Spring Salad Mix (or you can use spinach)
1/2 Red Onion, Sliced
1 1/2 Cups Halved Cherry Tomatoes
1/4 Cup Feta, Crumbled
2 Tablespoons Fresh Dill, Chopped
1 Tablespoon Garlic Powder
Kosher Salt
Freshly Ground Black Pepper

DRESSING

1/4 Cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil
3 Tablespoons Red Wine Vinegar
1/4 Teaspoon Dried Basil
1/4 Teaspoon Dried Oregano
1/4 Teaspoon Dried Onion
1/4 Teaspoon Garlic Powder
1/2 Clove Garlic, Minced
1 Tablespoon Dijon Mustard
1/2 Teaspoon Honey
Kosher Salt
Freshly Ground Black Pepper

Instructions

First, season the chicken breasts with salt, pepper and garlic powder and set aside.

If using packaged pasta, make sure you follow the instructions on the package to make your pasta al dente. Drain the pasta and set aside in a large bowl.

Heat EVOO in a large skillet over medium heat. Sear and cook chicken until golden and cooked through, 7 – 8 minutes per side. Remove from heat and let rest for about 10 minutes. Cut into 1" cubes.

For the dressing, whisk together oil, vinegar, spices, garlic, honey and mustard in a medium mixing bowl. Then season with salt and pepper to taste.

In the large bowl with pasta, toss in spring mix with the remaining ingredients. Pour dressing over salad, toss a few times until fully coated. Serve and enjoy!

The summer season is all about fresh ingredients delivering the most delicious flavors. Usually that freshness can be found at local farms, butchers and fish mongers, so shop at those places as often as you can!

Here's to a delicious summer season for all! Bon Appetit!

SPIRITS OF THE CITY

You can always find something delicious to quench that cocktail thirst in the City That Never Sleeps. This month, I wanted to take you down a bit of a different road to celebrate summer. And what better way to do that than with a couple of cocktails featuring everyone's favorite warm-weather spirit, rum; as well as an incredible gin and a couple of beautiful tequilas!

RUM:

It is undeniable that rum is the official spirit of summer. Has been for centuries. So, when I was looking around for a couple of rum recipes, these caught my eye as a little different than the mundane same old cocktails, and certainly more fun!



QUEENS PARK SWIZZLE

Most rum drinkers go the Puerto Rico or Cuban route. But I must tell you, as someone who has worked with the biggest rum makers in the world from the aforementioned countries, you can't go wrong with a Trinidadian rum. Especially one that was originally commissioned by the folks at the legendary Death & Co. A brilliant sommelier, Hudson Austin, sent this one to me. These days, Hudson can often be found hosting numerous classes and wine events around the Philadelphia area. To learn more about him, visit theverydaysommelierinpa.com

Ingredients

8-10 Mint Leaves
2 oz The Scarlet Ibis Trinidad Rum
0.75 oz Demerara Syrup (2:1)
1 oz Lime Juice
Angostura Bitters
Mint Sprig

Instructions

Put mint leaves in a collins or pilsner glass. Fill half-way with crushed ice and add The Scarlet Ibis Trinidad Rum, demerara syrup, and lime juice. Swizzle. Top with 4 dash Angostura Bitters. Garnish with a mint sprig.



THE DEATHBED DAIQUIRI

I love fun cocktail names – the irreverence, the intellect and, often, the humor. This one stood out to me amongst a sea of hundreds sent in over the last couple of days. Of course, the runaway line on it is “The last drink you’ll ask for on your deathbed.” Now THAT is a cocktail I need! The recipe comes from a Mexican rum brand called Pa'lante whose entire technique is Cuban. After all, their Master Distiller has over 40 years of experience as an official Cuban Maestro Ronero. That's far more authentic than I can say for some big box brands that claim authenticity. Utter brilliance.

To learn more, please visit palanterum.com

Ingredients

1.5 oz Pa'lante Reposado
0.75 oz Fresh Lime Juice
0.5 oz White Vermouth (e.g., Lillet Blanc)
0.5 oz 2:1 Raw Cane Syrup
0.25 oz Orange Curaçao (e.g., Alma Finca)

Instructions

Add the ingredients to a shaker with ice. Shake until well-chilled then strain into a chilled coupe glass. Garnish with a lime twist.

GIN:

Leave it up to two incredible music OGs like Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg to come up with a brilliant gin for you to celebrate World Gin Day on June 14th; **Still G.I.N. by Dre and Snoop**. They're literally redefining smooth with this stunning spirit whose botanicals are perfectly balanced. And they gave us their take on a classic cocktail recipe for you to celebrate with, or you can check out one of their Cold-Pressed Classic Cocktails! To learn more, visit dreandsnoop.com



50/50 MARTINI

This variation calls for equal parts gin and dry vermouth, yielding a drink that is lower in alcohol and far less dry than most recipes.

Ingredients

1.5 oz Still G.I.N.
1.5 oz Dry Vermouth
1 Dash Orange Bitters

Instructions

Place your serving glass (martini) in the freezer to chill (ideally 10+ minutes before making drink). Add gin, vermouth, and bitters to a mixing glass. Fill mixing glass with moderate size/up to 1"x1" cube ice cubes. Stir gently for 30-45 seconds (until very well chilled). Remove serving glass from freezer. Strain into the chilled glass using a julep strainer. Garnish with a lemon twist.

I promise you, this cocktail will leave your palate satisfied in ways you never dreamed of.



TEQUILA:

Anyone who has met me knows my affinity for tequila. Having spent as much time as I have at various tequila distilleries and houses over my life, this spirit will always have a special place in my heart. While some may argue this point, in my personal opinion, summer is the best time of year to enjoy this spirit. So, check out these two recipes that will certainly bring warmth and flavor to your palate for a brilliant cocktail experience.



EL BANDIDO MOJITO

I love cocktail recipes from one spirit category that riffs off another. A classic rum cocktail that was way overused and abused by rum brands that's given new life from a fun tequila brand with their specific twist on it is always appreciated. This one in particular I felt has a really smooth, yet beautiful and refreshing vibe to it. To learn more, visit elbandidoyankee.com

Ingredients

2 oz El Bandido Blanco
2 oz Orange Juice
2 oz Cream of Coconut
1/2 oz Lime Juice
1 oz Triple Sec
5-8 Mint Leaves
Club Soda

Instructions

Pour triple sec and lime juice into a highball glass. Add mint leaves and press with a barspoon or muddler to release mint oil. Add orange juice, cream of coconut. Fill glass halfway with crushed ice. Add El Bandido Yankee Blanco and stir. Then top with crushed ice and club soda. Garnish with a lime and mint leaf.



AGAVE LIMONADA

My friends at Milagro sent me their reposado (which means rested) to play around with. When I saw this recipe, I just had to make it. Brilliant, flavorful and balanced perfectly for that afternoon at the pool. To learn more, visit milagrotequila.com

Ingredients

1.5 oz Milagro Reposado
3/4 oz Agave Lemonade*
1 Pinch Micro Cilantro
Lemon Wheel

Instructions

Build in a Collins glass over ice and stir. Garnish with micro cilantro and lemon wheel.

*Combine 2 parts fresh lemon juice, 1 part light agave nectar and 6 parts filtered water in a small saucepan over medium heat. Stir until sugar is dissolved.

SNACK BITES

SWEET DREAMS

Do you remember the line, “Sweet dreams are made of these...” from the iconic Eurythmics song, *Sweet Dreams*? That is the only way I can describe Maryellen’s who creates these sinfully divine cake pops. I featured Maryellen Derr and her cake pop business on the cover of the March 2024 issue of NYLM. She sent me a ton of samples before I wrote the story, and I think I should have paid a visit to sugarholics anonymous because I just couldn’t get enough of them!

Her publicist, my friend Sarah Doheny of Your Unfinished Business PR, sent me the sweetest (see what I did there?) note updating me about three new product lines that Maryellen’s just released; First up is the We Scream For Ice Cream set which is all about those blissfully delicious summer memories including flavors like Strawberry Shortcake, Sundae, Chocolate Éclair and Orange Creamsicle. My stomach is already growling. Then you have Lil Bites which are the same size as her popular cake pops, sans stick for a little more upscale presentation. Lastly, and here comes the kicker, she just launched these behemoth size versions called MegaPOPs which are equal to five cupcakes. OMG my need for a cake pop fix just skyrocketed. Seriously, I love Maryellen’s Cake Pops as they truly are the stuff sweet dreams are made of. And you will too. Check out maryellenscakepops.com to learn more.



TASTY GIVING

Throughout my life, I have always known the culinary community to support the homeless and underserved populations. Chef Larry Forgione, a friend and culinary hero of mine who is known as the Godfather of American Cuisine and James Beard’s protégé, was one of the first to get behind City Harvest. Many now do and even have their own foundations that help feed the underserved. Then there are the food companies. One in particular, The Cookie Department, has a delicious, nutritious, and philanthropic snack called Buy A Bar, Give A Bar.

With each bar purchased, The Cookie Department donates the same number of bars to Feeding America Member food banks. If someone buys a box of 12 Buy A Bar, Give a Bar, then 12 bars will be donated. These 12-ounce treats come in four flavors, Apple Cinnamon, Blueberry Pomegranate, Oatmeal Chocolate Chip, and Strawberry. Now get this – they clearly thought this one through because they are applicable to everyone; the bars are nut-free, vegan, and certified kosher. Beginning this month, the bars will be available in the first-class snack basket of a top domestic airline. To learn more, or purchase a 12-bar box, please visit buyabargiveabar.com

CHOCOLATE THAT’S GOOD FOR MOTHER EARTH AND YOU TOO

Normally I am a milk chocolate kinda guy. Yeah, I know, it’s not good for you at all. But it sure is tasty as hell. I’ve often fought eating dark chocolate. I love using it to bake and for certain sauces I will make. But eating it was never a real thing for me. Now no one can say I won’t try anything new – especially since I am more than happy to try anything at least once. At the behest of a dear publicist friend who left New York almost nine years ago, I tried out Alter Eco’s chocolates.

In the infamous words of Janice from Friends, “OH. MY. GAWD!” (admit it, you said it out loud in that Queens accent, didn’t you!?!?). First off, their flavors are YUMMO – both traditional and unique. The quality of the organic dark chocolate is just bananas. And their mission just made them hit the trifecta in my heart. According to their website, “Alter Eco is deeply rooted in practices that restore and improve the environment, and all the people involved, from the cocoa bean to the moment you open the compostable wrapper of that irresistible chocolate truffle.”



Alter Eco Foods has dark chocolate bars, truffle thins (bars), chocolate truffles and granola. To learn more, visit alterecofoods.com