

MY ART OF ENTERTAINING

Recipes and Tips from
MISS MAGGIE'S
— KITCHEN —

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SUMMER VACATION AND GARDEN PARTIES

What a joy it is to get together with family and friends during summer vacation! I have such wonderful memories of my childhood, when there would be about twenty of us staying—and often thirty around the lunch or dinner table. As you can no doubt tell, I love regional, market-fresh produce, cooking, and large gatherings. Of course, these moments with my family are precious, but—let's be honest—they can

also easily turn into a nightmare. If you're the only one overseeing meals and looking after guests, these occasions will quickly lose the fun factor and you'll need a second vacation by the end of the summer. I'd like to help you truly enjoy these moments without experiencing any stress, by sharing a few humble suggestions with you. Many of these tips will come in handy throughout the year.

FLOWERS

Hydrangeas, gladiolas, zinnias, dahlias, lavender, yarrow, sunflowers, cosmos, daisies.

TABLE DECOR

Repurpose vintage pillowcases into small tablecloths or placemats. Decorate with seasonal fruits. Line vases with lemon slices. Add touches of wood, linen, shells, and/or hand-painted glasses.

PLACE CARD AND GIFT IDEAS

Sparklers to kick off the festivities; sachets filled with lavender from the garden; flat

peaches tied with pretty ribbons; herb bouquets; jars of homemade jam.

PARTY IDEAS

Fill large pitchers or drink dispensers with fruit- or herb-infused water. Set up a self-service bar. Line the dance floor with outdoor string lights and bales of hay. Ask musician friends to bring their instruments. Place lots of candles on the tables, along with baskets or bowls filled with fresh fruit. As a surprise, treat your guests to a tango or salsa lesson.

MAKE A WEEKLY MEAL PLAN

It feels good not to have to think too hard when you're on vacation, so give your brain a rest. Write down the week's meals (lunches and dinners) on a piece of paper and hang it up in the kitchen where everyone can see it. That way, you won't have to hear the question "What's for dinner?" incessantly, and if you're out for a walk, or immersed in a good book or hot bath, someone else can make the meal you've planned. As a double bonus, a weekly meal plan helps reduce food waste. Think to include a buffet-style "leftovers" meal, where everyone serves themselves. Not only does less food end up in the trash, but it also gives you more time to do something else or simply to relax. This is a great tradition for every Sunday evening of the year!

Other tips

I always keep two packages of dried pasta in the pantry, in case I'm feeling particularly lazy or need to improvise a meal for friends who've dropped by unannounced. That way I can continue to relax in my deckchair while I come up with a sauce using the vegetables I have on hand.

MAKE A SHOPPING LIST

See page 18 for my personal method.

During the summer vacation, this method allows you to divide the list up easily among the family members or friends who are with you at the market: in my case, Jule takes care of the fruit and vegetable stand, Paloma visits the cheesemonger, and Marco heads to the fishmonger. Before you know it, all that'll be left to pick up is the bread, a newspaper, and some flowers, which means you can leisurely sip a cool drink under the plane trees, on the terrace of a local café, as you wait for the others. Not bad, right?

ORGANIZE TEAMS AND ROLES

The house in which I spent most of my vacations when I was growing up is tucked away in the mountains of the Pyrénées-Orientales region, in the south of France. For thirty-five years, there was no electricity: we had to cut and burn wood for hot water, so there was no dishwasher. But even with twenty or thirty guests (imagine all the dishes!), this wasn't a problem, because we worked in teams: one team set and cleared the table, another helped prepare the meal, and another washed the dishes (one person washed, one rinsed, and the

others dried the dishes and put them away), and these tasks were always carried out to the sound of music, singing, and laughter. Today, my friends and cousins all have happy memories of these special times. If you have younger children, you can make mixed-age teams—this creates wonderful bonds. Depending on the length of your stay, you can rotate teams and roles as you wish, noting them on the meal plan hanging in the kitchen.

LET GUESTS PARTICIPATE AND GO WITH THE FLOW

We all want our guests to relax, of course, but just because we're hosting doesn't mean we have to prepare the meals by ourselves. At least one guest, if not all, will likely ask at some point if there's anything they can make, bring, or help with. Don't send them away with a cocktail—accept their offer. Ask one friend to take charge of the aperitif and another to man the grill. Or invite your friends to take over at the stove and share their specialties with you. From time to time, it feels good to be served in your own house, and friends are often delighted to participate.

RECIPES

With a few exceptions (such as birthday parties, weddings, etc.), you should not embark on complicated dishes that take all day to prepare.

- Choose recipes that are quick to make, can be popped into the oven and left to cook, or can be prepared in advance and reheated. For example, soups, lasagnas, roast chicken, and tians.
- Opt for recipes you can serve in large dishes, either family style or as part of a buffet. Guests will naturally serve those sitting next to them and the children, and this is easier and more convivial than serving one plate at a time.
- It's often easier to make two different cakes rather than one big one. This not only gives guests two choices, but it is also a safer bet in case the oven is too small for a large cake pan.
- When making a tart, double or triple the quantity of dough and store what's left in the refrigerator (or freezer), covered in plastic wrap, for another day. That's one less step to worry about the next time!
- Prepare jars of spice blends like dukkah, za'atar, etc., to add variety to your vegetable dishes. You can serve raw cauliflower with a yogurt-herb sauce one day, then make roasted cauliflower with Parmesan and dukkah a couple of days later. Varying the flavors in this way will ensure it doesn't feel like you're eating the same thing again.

Enjoy and savor these moments—they're precious and will remain in your heart forever.



SUMMER BITES

Serves 3–4

ACTIVE TIME

15 minutes

COOKING TIME

About 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1 zucchini

1 golden zucchini

2 peaches

3 apricots

4 figs

Extra-virgin olive oil

Fleur de sel

Freshly ground pepper

A few fresh rosemary and thyme sprigs

5–7 oz. (150–200 g) feta, cut into cubes

Tiny sprigs assorted fresh herbs (rosemary, thyme, lavender, dwarf basil, etc.), to garnish

1. Wash the zucchini, golden zucchini, and fruits. Trim the ends off both types of zucchini and cut each one lengthwise into thin slices, ideally using a mandoline (but watch your fingers!).
2. Heat a little olive oil in a large skillet or grill pan over high heat. Add the vegetable slices in a single layer. Season with fleur de sel and pepper and cook until the slices are golden and scorched on both sides. Remove from the pan.
3. Cut the peaches and apricots in half and remove the pits. Cut the figs in half. Brush the cut sides with a little olive oil.
4. Set the fruits cut side down in a skillet over high heat, with rosemary and thyme sprigs scattered around for extra flavor. Cook for about 2 minutes until lightly golden.
5. Place a cube of feta on one end of each zucchini slice and roll the slices up around the cheese. Secure with toothpicks. Top each fruit half with a feta cube.
6. Warm the summer bites in a skillet over medium heat for 2 minutes. Arrange on a serving plate, garnish with tiny sprigs of fresh herbs, season with pepper, and serve.



HONEYDEW MELON AND TARRAGON JUICE

Serves 3

ACTIVE TIME

10-15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1¼ lb. (550 g) honeydew melon,

rind and seeds removed

½ tsp honey

Juice of 1 lime

4-5 sprigs fresh tarragon, divided

12 large ice cubes, divided

Lime slices, preferably organic, to decorate

1. Cut the melon into pieces. Place in a blender with the honey, lime juice, and leaves of 3 tarragon sprigs.
2. Add half the ice cubes to the blender and blend until smooth.
3. Divide the remaining ice cubes between 3 large glasses. Pour in the juice. Decorate each drink with small tarragon sprigs and lime slices. Serve immediately.

KITCHEN NOTES: This delicious, refreshing juice is perfect for a hot summer's day! You can also experiment with other fruit and herb combinations, such as watermelon and mint, peach and basil, or strawberry and verbena. Or try vegetable juices like cucumber and rosemary.



GRILLED PEACH AND AVOCADO SALAD WITH GOAT CHEESE

Serves 6

ACTIVE TIME

20 minutes

COOKING TIME

15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

4 yellow peaches

Extra-virgin olive oil for
drizzling, plus 3 tbsp for
the dressing

4 ripe but firm avocados

2 figs, quartered

Finely grated zest and juice
of 1 lemon, preferably
organic

7 oz. (200 g) fresh goat
cheese

1-2 shallots, finely chopped

2 tbsp apple balsamic
vinegar (see Kitchen Note)
or regular balsamic
vinegar

1 handful toasted almonds,
roughly chopped

Assorted fresh herb leaves
(arugula, basil, oregano,
etc.)

1 pinch piment d'Espelette
Salt and freshly ground
pepper

1. Heat a grill to medium (if you don't have a lower-heat grill, use a grill pan or skillet).
2. Wash the peaches, remove the pits, and cut them, unpeeled, into $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -in. (2-3-cm) slices. Place in a large bowl, drizzle with olive oil, and gently stir until the slices are coated.
3. Cut the avocados in half, remove the pits and skin, and cut each half lengthwise into three slices. Drizzle with olive oil and gently turn to coat evenly.
4. Grill the peach and avocado slices for 3-4 minutes on each side, until charred in places. Check them regularly to ensure they do not burn.
5. Arrange the peach and avocado slices with the fig quarters on a serving dish. Sprinkle with the lemon zest. Crumble the goat cheese over the top.
6. To make the dressing, whisk the shallots, 3 tbsp olive oil, vinegar, and lemon juice together in a bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Drizzle over the salad.
7. Scatter over the almonds and herbs, sprinkle with the piment d'Espelette, and serve.

KITCHEN NOTES: I use La Pommée, an artisanal apple balsamic vinegar made by Maison Le Paulmier in Normandy.



FROSTED PISTACHIO CAKE

Serves 10	2 cups (9 oz./250 g) shelled pistachios	1 tsp bitter almond extract Scant 1 cup (240 ml) low-fat milk
ACTIVE TIME 25–30 minutes	2¼ cups (10 oz./280 g) all-purpose flour 1 scant tbsp (11 g) baking powder	<i>For the frosting and decoration</i> 1 cup (9 oz./250 g) cream cheese, at room temperature
COOKING TIME 40–45 minutes	2 pinches baking soda 1 generous pinch fleur de sel	7 tbsp (4 oz./110 g) unsalted butter, diced, at room temperature
COOLING TIME 25–30 minutes	1½ sticks (6 oz./180 g) unsalted butter, diced, at room temperature	3 cups (14 oz./400 g) confectioners' sugar
CHILLING TIME 15 minutes	¾ cup (5 oz./150 g) superfine sugar	Shelled pistachios, roughly chopped
INGREDIENTS <i>For the cake</i> Butter and flour, for greasing	⅔ cup (5¼ oz./150 g) brown sugar 4 egg whites ½ cup (4¼ oz./120 g) crème fraîche	Assorted berries and fresh herbs

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C/Gas Mark 4). Grease a 9½-in. (24-cm) springform pan with butter and dust with flour.
2. Pulse the pistachios into fine crumbs using a food processor. Place in a mixing bowl and stir in the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and fleur de sel until combined.
3. In a separate large bowl, beat together the butter, superfine sugar, and brown sugar. Using an electric beater, whisk in the egg whites one at a time, then whisk at high speed for 2–3 minutes until light and creamy. Stir in the crème fraîche and almond extract. Gradually fold in the dry ingredients. Stir in the milk.
4. Transfer the batter to the pan. Bake for 40–45 minutes, or until the tip of a knife inserted into the center comes out clean. Let cool for about 10 minutes before removing from the pan. Transfer to a serving plate and let cool for 15–20 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, prepare the frosting. Stir together the cream cheese and butter until smooth, then gradually stir in the confectioners' sugar. Chill for about 15 minutes.
6. Spread a thick layer of frosting over the top of the cake and decorate as you wish with pistachios, berries, and herbs.

KITCHEN NOTES: The undecorated frosted cake can be stored for 2–3 days in the refrigerator; take it out about 30 minutes before serving and decorate.