

THE BOSTON PHOENIX

Summer Guide

CONCERTS, BEACHES, FESTIVALS, DRIVE-INS, AND DIVES: WE'RE GOING ON A ROAD TRIP. YOU COMING?



DIY Summer food

SIX LOCAL CHEFS SERVE UP QUICK SUMMER RECIPE TIPS

BY CASSANDRA LANDRY

Know what the best part about the next three glorious months is?

A grill is always a grill, whether you rock a two-foot kettle charcoal number or a gas-fueled beast with more knobs than an airplane cockpit. Gardens everywhere — even the one hanging off your fire escape — produce drool-worthy organic vegetables. And, since we're spoiled rotten with the quality of our local sea creatures, you're perfectly able to host monster cookouts every weekend without hemorrhaging your whole paycheck.

It's true, most chefs are working with a pimped-out kitchen when they're off the job:

think high-end tools, lots of space, and those extra stand mixer attachments that you lust after at Williams-Sonoma. But when the dinner table is permanently outside and you can spill all you want, kitchen bling doesn't have to be a factor.

Even the best chefs chow down like — gasp! — normal people, and when they're not garnishing plates, they're wolfing down backyard corn on the cob with the rest of us. We caught up with six of them to find out how and what they eat when turning on the oven is the quickest way to turn your kitchen into a sweat lodge.

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Grilled Pineapple & BBQ Trick

MARK GOLDBERG, executive chef, Park

The fare at newly opened Park in Harvard Square is very good about highlighting the base essence of each ingredient, which is why it's no surprise that executive chef Mark Goldberg knows when not to overcomplicate things.

"Something I just recently fell back in love with is grilling pineapple," he says. "I know, so late '90s. Next I'll be making mango salsa."

The father of three girls, Goldberg adds that the pineapple also acts as a sneaky bait-and-switch: "They think they're eating candy and getting away with it." We can get behind that. All you have to do is peel a pineapple, slice into rings, and grill a few minutes on each side.

"The best part about it is you can put anything on the grill if you know how to do it," says Goldberg, citing a good foil pouch as an easy trick. Simply place your ingredients — cut potatoes, or what have you — on a sheet of foil, fold over one edge, then neatly fold the three open edges to form a "pillow" out of the foil. Throw the pouch on the coals over moderate heat for a few minutes, and you've got a summer version of a microwave: everything steams, roasts, bakes, and grills at the same time.

"I love being able to produce an entire meal on the grill in the summer," Goldberg says. "We usually dine outside on the patio, so clean-up is just a hose away."

● **PARK** | 59 JFK St, Cambridge | 617.491.9851 | parkcambridge.com



Italian Tuna Niçoise Salad

JOANNE CHANG, pastry chef/owner, Myers + Chang, Flour Bakery & Café

She's renowned for her guilty-pleasure desserts and breakfast concoctions (unless you're like us, who snarf them down with no guilt whatsoever), but pastry chef Joanne Chang's go-to summer treat is a little greener.

"My favorite summer food is, by far, a riff on a tuna niçoise salad that I had in Venice for my honeymoon a few years back," she says. "We went to this amazing Italian restaurant and the salad was incredible. Now I make it whenever I can."

Get your hands on the best quality canned tuna you can, and serve it with capers, grape tomatoes, hard-boiled egg, Persian cucumber, and boiled potatoes over chopped romaine. Top it all off with lots of lemon juice, olive oil, and fresh ground salt and pepper. Now you may join the ranks of salad geniuses everywhere.

"The key is to get the best tuna you can buy. And, of course, super-ripe tomatoes," says Chang. "I eat this three times a week in the summer!"

● **MYERS + CHANG** | 1145 Washington St, Boston | 617.542.5200 | myersandchang.com ● **FLOUR BAKERY** | 12 Farnsworth St, Boston (Fort Point); 1595 Washington St, Boston (South End); 190 Mass Ave, Cambridge (Central Square) | flourbakery.com



Loobster|Garden Snacks

DOUGLAS RODRIGUES, chef de cuisine, Clio

"My favorite summer food has to be boiled lobster and grilled corn, covered in butter and sea salt — simple things that were always around growing up," says Douglas Rodrigues, a Scituate native who found himself surrounded by lobster fishermen and fresh corn from his grandfather's farm as a kid.

To become a lobster boss, it takes about eight minutes. That's it. Just make sure your water is salted and at a rolling boil before you drop in your lobsters, head first, to cook. And relax: those high-pitched squeals aren't little lobster screams, it's just steam escaping the shell. Have lemon wedges and melted butter on hand for drenching, and you're golden.

Though it doesn't get much easier than that, Rodrigues's off-the-clock tastes run even simpler. "Garden cucumbers are my number-one food of all time," he says. "I don't think I've gone a day in twenty years without eating one."

"And ripe tomatoes with salt," he adds. "I typically let them sit for a minute until they sweat. They taste juicier!"

● **CLIO** | 370A Comm Ave, Boston | 617.536.7200 | cliorestaurant.com



Xìngrén Dòufǔ, a/k/a Almond "Tofu" Dessert

MICHAEL WANG, chef/owner, Foumami

Chef Michael Wang, the mastermind behind Foumami, the Financial District's must-have Asian sandwich spot, is more traditional than innovative in his off-hours. His favorite summertime dessert? Chilled almond gelatin topped with fruit.

"The name of this dessert is kind of misleading since there is no tofu in this dish," he says. "Canned fruit cocktail makes a wonderful combination, but you can certainly use freshly cut fruit."

To make xìngrén dòufǔ, mix two packets of unflavored gelatin with, depending on your sweet tooth, one-half to three-quarters cup sugar. Pour one and a half cups boiling water over the mix, and stir until everything is completely dissolved. Now, add two and a half cups of whole milk, two teaspoons of pure almond extract, and stir well. Pour everything into a shallow pan, cover, then refrigerate for about four hours. To serve, just scoop a few pieces of "tofu" into a small bowl, and top with assorted fresh fruit or canned fruit cocktail. Easy.

"My mother used to make large bowls of this dessert and place it in the refrigerator so anyone in my family could have some whenever we wanted," says Wang. "This has always been, and still is, one of my favorite desserts."

● **FOUMAMI** | 225 Franklin St, Boston | 617.426.8858 | foumami.com



Grilled Whole Fish Filet

JASON BOND, executive chef/owner, Bondir

"I learned this recipe at the Inn at Little Washington, where we used salmon," says chef Jason Bond. "It's all about a simple idea done perfectly."

Bondir, his 28-seat Cambridge restaurant — against whose windows you may have pressed your nose while wishing for a reservation — is the ultimate representation of just that: simple things done perfectly.

After checking your large salmon filet (emphasis on large, it should be big enough for a few people) for pin bones, place the fish skin-side down on a rack. Then, coat the flesh liberally with salt, pepper, yellow mustard seeds, and herbs of your choice. Place a second rack on top of the filet, and holding both racks, invert the fish — now skin-side up — into a super-hot grill. ("Half of the stuff you put on your fish will fall off and smoke," Bond says. "The rest will be there for crunch later.")

Close the grill and let the filet cook for about 20 minutes; after that, check for doneness to just when the flesh flakes. Peel off the charred herbs and serve it with fresh green vegetables, a cucumber salad, yogurt dressing, or more fresh herbs.

"If this sounds complicated . . . trust me, it's not," Bond says. "It's delicious and it makes a beautiful presentation. It'll make you a legend."

● **BONDIR** | 279A Broadway, Cambridge | 617.661.0009 | bondircambridge.com



Indian Pudding/Bluefish tip

DAVE BECKER, chef/owner, Sweet Basil

Dave Becker, a Newburyport native, grew up fishing out of the Merrimac River off of Plum Island. He's always been a fan of the maligned bluefish — unfairly scorned by some diners for its overt fishiness, but usually just a product of poor preparation.

"Most of the time, the fish is just thrown in a burlap bag or a cooler with no ice," he says. "But, if you double bleed your catch," — drain it from the head and the tail — "and put it on ice, it won't have that fishy taste people object to."

On the vegetable side of things, Becker's personal favorite is called "Indian Pudding," a savory, produce-driven take on rice pudding. Using a saucepan, bring one quart of milk to a boil. Slowly whisk in three-quarter cup cornmeal. Lower the heat and stir for about 10 minutes, depending on the coarseness of the cornmeal. Add one tablespoon of molasses and add salt and pepper to taste. Right before serving, grate fresh corn (about one cup) onto the pudding using a box grater.

"If you omit the black pepper this can be used as a dessert. Add some blueberries and it's breakfast, too," says Becker. "I don't even mind a little corn silk. It's kind of like spitting watermelon seeds."

● **SWEET BASIL** | 942 Great Plain Ave, Needham | 781.444.9600 | sweetbasilneedham.com

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