

simple summer

a recipe for cooking and entertaining with ease



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IS YOUR BREAD TOO BIG?

With the exception of Jesus, no one ever seems plagued by having too little bread. (And he resolved that issue handily!)

Just look at the myriad recipes created expressly to use up leftover loaves: crostini and croutons, bread pudding and bread crumbs. With all due deference to good bread and skilled bakers, are we simply making our loaves of bread too big?

The simple answer is “no.” Leftover bread is a gift, its value no more apparent than in Panzanella, an Italian salad of stale croutons and tomatoes. The salad is dressed with sharp vinegar and olive oil to soften the bread. Paired with garden fresh tomatoes, the salad is light, not heavy.

You don't even have to wait for the bread to get stale. Grab a fresh, toothy, crusty, country loaf and toast cubes in a little olive oil. You may never have leftover bread again.





party!

bold flavors for bright summer days



too darn hot:

cool cooking for summer's dog days



Tip: I love meaty, heirloom tomatoes in this soup. Try Black Cherokee or Brandywine—with perfectly balanced sweet, acidic flavor.



Tip: How do you pick a ripe watermelon? Sniff? Thump? Weight is a good indicator of a watermelon that is fresh and juicy. My method? I just ask the farmers at the market. With dozens of watermelons passing through their hands each day, they're the experts.



watermelon gazpacho

Serves 6-8

Salt brings out the tomato, and honey makes the watermelon pop. Leave out the watermelon juice, add some cumin and serve this as a salsa over fried fish tacos!

Ingredients:

- 6 cups watermelon diced and separated
- 2 large tomatoes, diced, about 2 cups
- 1/2 red onion, diced
- 1/2 tsp lime zest
- 2 tbs lime juice
- 1/2 jalapeño, seeded and minced
- 2 tbs basil, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 2 tbs honey

Directions:

- Mix together 4 cups of the diced watermelon with the tomato and onion.
- Add lime zest and juice, jalapeño and basil. Stir together.
- Press remaining 2 cups of watermelon through a food mill or purée in a food processor and strain through a fine sieve to remove solids.
- Add watermelon juice, vinegar and honey to soup. Season to taste with salt, pepper and additional honey, if needed.
- If you make this soup ahead of time, check the seasoning again before serving. The watermelon and tomatoes will release more moisture and dilute the salt, vinegar and honey.



WHEN WATERMELON GOES MISSING

Tomatoes and watermelon have become a popular pairing. Developing this recipe, I mixed bright, fresh heirloom tomatoes with sweet, crisp watermelon. A pinch of salt made the tomato flavor robust, but the watermelon was weak, barely there.

Where salt heightens savory flavors, sugar highlights sweet ingredients. A drizzle of honey brought back the sweet watermelon. Fresh basil gave life and depth. A splash of bright vinegar brought it all together. Season to taste!



peaches and blueberries with thai basil whipped cream

Serves 6-8

Sweet peaches and tart blueberries are the perfect combination, warmed with ground cardamom. Hand-whipped, fresh cream infused with the spicy, licoricey taste of Thai basil makes this both light and decadent.

Ingredients:

- 3 peaches, sliced
- 2 cups blueberries
- 1/2 tsp ground cardamom
- 1 tbs sugar
- 2 tbs roughly chopped Thai basil
- 1-2 tbs sugar
- 2 cups heavy or whipping cream

Directions:

- Toss sliced peaches and blueberries together with cardamom and sugar. Let macerate in fridge for 30-45 minutes. If they don't release any liquid after the first 15 minutes, add a squeeze of fresh lemon juice. How liquidy this gets depends on how juicy your fruit is. Just go with it.
- On a cutting board, sprinkle the roughly chopped basil with the sugar and chop together until the basil is broken down almost as finely as the sugar.
- Whisk the cream to soft peaks. Then whisk in the basil sugar just until peaks are stiff, being careful not to over whisk.
- Serve fruit topped with a generous dollop of cream. And by "dollop" I mean "giant spoonful."



BY HAND

Equipment saves time and work, but you really get to know your ingredients when you work them by hand. You may go back to using electric beaters, but whisking cream and egg whites is how you experience that moment when the texture, volume and moisture are just right. It makes the difference between sweet, light, rich, whipped cream and it's poorer, heavy, arid cousin. This is the moment you truly value the company of friends in the kitchen; because you are about to ask them to help.



Tip: Macerating is the process of letting fruit release its natural juices. A sprinkle of sugar or a splash of alcohol helps the process along.

Tip: Not a fan of black licorice? Never fear. The light, licoricey flavor of summer favorites like Italian basil, French tarragon and bulbs of fennel lends a refreshing note to summer dishes that won't offend.