



LET'S GET COOKING

Because every great gathering starts with food



Whether you're heading out to a campground or just the backyard, there's just no better way to celebrate America's birthday than by firing up the grill, enjoying a beverage and putting on some patriotic tunes while gathering with friends.

Fun, sun, fireworks ... and food

FOURTH OF JULY RECIPES

THE BEST HOT DOG CHILI SAUCE

Perhaps no food says the Fourth of July like a hot dog. And one of the best ways to serve a hot dog is with sauce on top. This hot dog chili is full of flavor and has a nice little bite to it. It takes a while for the chili to cook down and for the flavors to mingle but it is well worth the wait. It's great to smother hot dogs in, but we think you'll be finding other ways to serve this — like on french fries!

INGREDIENTS:

4 pounds good lean ground beef
1 large sweet onion chopped
Two 6-ounce cans tomato paste
1 teaspoon garlic powder
46-ounce can tomato juice
2 teaspoons black pepper
4 teaspoons salt (adjust as needed)

6 bay leaves
6 teaspoons chili powder
6 teaspoons paprika
2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar
½ cup sugar or Splenda
1 tablespoon red pepper flakes
32-ounce can tomato sauce

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a large heavy pot, add chopped onions and hamburger. Separate hamburger as fine as possible while cooking until browned.
2. Add remaining ingredients.
3. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to a low simmer. Cook uncovered for 3-4 hours.
4. Turn heat off and let sit for 15 minutes.
5. Use a stick mixer to break up sauce and make smoother. This is a very important step as you do not want any lumps or chunks.
6. Grill or boil hot dogs as desired and serve on buns with sauce.



STRAWBERRY SALSA

There's nothing better than fresh chopped salsa and you will not be disappointed by this flavor-packed recipe. It's sweet, savory and has a little kick. Make sure to use fresh squeezed orange juice. It gives that fresh pop of acidity you want in salsa. Cilantro and fresh citrus are a great combo and add freshness to the salsa. Perfect for summer!

INGREDIENTS:

½ medium red onion, chopped
1 jalapeno pepper, de-seeded and minced
½ medium red bell pepper, chopped
½ medium green bell pepper, chopped
½ medium yellow bell pepper, chopped
½ medium orange bell pepper, chopped
⅓ cup fresh cilantro, finely shredded
2 cups fresh strawberries, hulled and sliced
¼ cup orange juice, fresh squeezed if possible
2 tablespoons lime juice, fresh squeezed if possible
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Few dashes of salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS:

1. Chop and dice onion, peppers, cilantro and strawberries.
2. Mix all ingredients and refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving. This salsa is exceptional the day after, so if you have patience, make it the night before you plan to serve.
3. Serve with pita or tortilla chips, or stuffed into wheat pitas with grilled marinated chicken and fresh baby spinach.

RIDE 'EM BAKED BEANS

Sweet, tangy and hearty, these baked beans will be a fantastic addition to a summer cookout including the Fourth of July. We used bacon and ground meat, so they were filled with meat. Adding different beans gives the baked beans many textures.

INGREDIENTS:

1 large onion, diced
1 pound lean bacon, uncooked and diced
28-ounce can Bush's baked beans
15-ounce can butter beans, drained
Two 15-ounce cans dark kidney beans, drained
1 cup ketchup
1 cup light brown sugar, firmly packed
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
2 teaspoons liquid smoke flavoring
Salt and pepper, to taste

OPTIONAL INGREDIENTS:

1 pound lean ground beef
1 large jalapeno pepper, diced

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a large skillet, brown together the bacon and onions until bacon is crispy and onions are soft. Be careful not to burn either as it will alter the taste of your beans.
2. If desired, add the ground beef and jalapeno peppers. Drain off the drippings.
3. Add all the beans together in a slow cooker.
4. Add all remaining ingredients and stir well to blend all the flavors together. Add salt and pepper as needed.
5. Heat on a low setting for 6 hours in slow cooker. Turn off and let rest for 15 minutes. Enjoy.



SUMMERTIME CORN SALAD

This wonderful summertime corn salad is full of fresh veggies. The shoepeg corn is slightly sweet and a nice contrast to the tangy dressing, and we love the crunch from the cucumber and green pepper. Using yogurt makes the dressing a little different than other creamy salads, but very good.

INGREDIENTS:

Three 11-ounce cans white shoepeg corn, drained
1 cucumber, peeled and chopped
1 tomato, seeded and chopped
1 bunch green onion, chopped
1 green pepper, chopped
4-ounce jar diced pimiento, drained and rinsed

FOR THE DRESSING

⅓ cup plain or vanilla yogurt
2 tablespoons mayonnaise
2 tablespoons vinegar
½ teaspoon dry mustard

DIRECTIONS:

1. After preparing the vegetables, combine them in a mixing bowl with corn and pimentos. Make sure to drain the corn and seed the tomatoes so this does not get too watery after chilling.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the ingredients for the dressing.
3. Pour dressing over corn. Stir.
4. Chill for several hours for the best flavor and serve.



THE HISTORY OF AMERICA'S INDEPENDENCE DAY

Few summertime holidays elicit as much excitement as Independence Day. Each year, family, friends and revelers anticipate the arrival of the holiday so they can host barbecues, enjoy the sun, listen to their favorite summertime tunes and commemorate the freedoms afforded by the monumental events that led to the holiday's establishment.

Independence Day became a federal holiday in 1941, but July 4 has stood as the birth of American independence for much longer. July 4th marks a pivotal moment in the American Revolution. The colonies were forced to pay taxes to England's King George III despite having no representation in the British Parliament. "Taxation without representation" became a battle cry and was one of several grievances colonists had with Great Britain.

Conflict between the colonies had been going on for at least a year before the colonies convened a Continental Congress in Philadelphia in June of 1776. On July 2, the Continental Congress voted in favor of independence from England. Two days later, on July 4, delegates from the 13 colonies adopted the Declaration of Independence.



The Declaration of Independence is an historic document drafted by Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson was considered the strongest and most eloquent writer of the declaration writing committee charged with putting the colonies' sentiments into words. Richard Henry Lee of Virginia was one of the first people to present a resolution for American independence, and his commentary was the impetus for the formal Declaration of Independence. A total of 86 changes were made to Jefferson's original draft until the final version was adopted. The signing of the document helped to solidify independence and eventually led to the formation of the United States of America.

A total of 56 delegates signed the document. Although John Hancock's signature is the largest, it did not hold more weight than the other signatures. Rather, rumor has it, Hancock signed it so large so that the "fat, old King could read it without his spectacles." However, the National Archives says it was also customary that, since Hancock was the president of the Continental Congress, he be the first person to sign the document centered below the text.

The Pennsylvania Evening Post was the first newspaper to print the Declaration of Independence on July 6, 1776. The first public readings of the Declaration were held in Philadelphia's Independence Square on July 8.

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