

*Gainesville*

# LIVING

SUMMER 2025

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MEMORIES,  
LEGACIES  
REMEMBERED**

**MOH  
RECIPIENT'S  
SACRIFICE**

**SUMMER  
RECIPES**

**SUMMER  
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# Riding FOR Kauã

**GAINESVILLE BULL RIDER KEEPS HIS BROTHER'S DREAM ALIVE**



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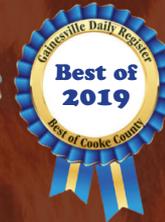
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Sally Sexton

## Preserving their legacies

**R**emembering those we lost, while celebrating the joy they brought us, is a delicate balance. Rising from the deepest despair, however, we can find hope and joy, a celebration of the memories and the legacies of our loved ones.

You'll see two examples of that inside this issue.

The first describes four special students athletes, gone too soon, yet who left a formidable legacy for others to follow.

Skilled players, community servants, coaches, mentors, leaders, academic achievers, friends to all ...

Fiercely dedicated, energetic, hardworking and dedicated, compassionate, kind ...

Their reputation precedes them, just as the memorial erected outside the NCTC softball diamond, or the scholarship in their names.

The impact they left should be something we all strive for, and something to most definitely celebrate.

Inside, you'll also meet a young cowboy pursuing his dream. Only it wasn't originally his.

From Brazil to Gainesville, bull rider Kaua Flora describes his journey, and the the ultimate inspiration behind his drive — his younger brother.

Both stories emphasize the people most important to us, who drive us and who inspire us. And we're honored to be able to tell them.



# Angels IN THE INFIELD

NCTC quartet's memories, legacies remembered,

*By William Kirkpatrick, Special Contributor*

Over a decade later, the town of Gainesville continues to memorialize the deaths of four students from the North Central Texas College campus.

Softball players Brooke Deckard, Jaiden Pelton, Katelynn Woodlee and Meagan Richardson, known not just as talented athletes, but as outstanding friends, family and community members, were killed in a tragic bus accident in late 2014.

On Sept. 26, as the Lady Lions softball team traveled home from Oklahoma, their bus was struck by a semi-truck that had crossed the highway median. The accident left not only Gainesville but Texas as a whole grief-stricken and heartbroken.

Despite the heartache, stories of love and compassion were shared for the young women, expressing just how many hearts they had touched. Across towns and churches, candlelit vigils were held in honor of those lost.

Memorials to the players extended beyond their hometowns, and across the country itself. Softball teams across the U.S. paid their respect to the departed and their legacies. According to online sources, many wore red ribbons or marked "NCTC" on their uniforms in honor of the Lady Lions.

## **Athletes, mentors, family, friends**

The players that passed were not only part of a team, but individuals, each with family and friends who remembered their compassion and kindness.

As stated in online obituaries, while Deckard's passion laid in her newly-formed softball career with NCTC, that was far from her only skillset. She not only excelled at other sports including volleyball, basketball and tennis, but in her commitment to others. She served her community in any way she could, as a coach, mentor and friend to all.

Black and blue ribbons decorated her hometown of Blue Ridge following her passing, as the community held a prayer vigil in her honor.

Pelton had played catcher for both Sam Rayburn High School and the NCTC, and was renowned for her skills on both teams. As stated by her family members, her appreciation for her teammates was unmatched, as was her dedication to fostering a positive environment wherever she went. On her social media, Pelton said that she found her joy in her friends, family, and her boyfriend.

Pelton's coach described her as a hard-working athlete and a leader.

Woodlee, like Deckard, was multitalented in

her sports and passions. According to her obituary, she played volleyball and basketball for multiple years before finding her joy in softball, eventually being awarded a scholarship to play with the Lady Lions. If she wasn't on the field with her team or practicing for the next game, she was enjoying the outdoors. Swimming, shooting and riding four wheelers were her hobbies of choice, with a general love for being active.

Woodlee was described by her coaches as energetic and a natural-born athlete, willing to put in the effort to succeed in all aspects of her life. After she passed, her friends talked lovingly of her bright personality.

Richardson, a pitcher for both her high school and college softball teams, was described by previous teammates as fiercely dedicated to the sport. According to her obituaries, she was not only an integral member of her teams, but her community, with a joyous spirit that could not be rivaled. Hardworking, dedicated and compassionate, there was no shortage of praise on her impact to those around her.

Richardson thrived not only on the team, but in her studies and hobbies. Her family stated that she had just begun her degree to teach special education, and had even been on the President's List for her outstanding academic achievements. Outside of school, she excelled in painting, and had routinely given her art to others to enjoy as well.

The passing of the Lady Lion players was a tragedy that the North Central Texas College had never experienced before, and one that rocked the very core of the campus. Only a year following the accident, NCTC created a memorial in honor of those lost.

Built at Darwin Field, on the college's Gainesville campus, four columns stand to honor the deceased, featuring plaques to each. The Gainesville Police Association also donated four memorial benches for the field, marked with the names and numbers of each player.

Beyond physical memorials, the girls were given a chance to continue helping others after their passing. A year following the tragedy, the NCTC also created the Angels in the Infield Scholarship



Courtesy photo



Courtesy photo

Fund. With donations made from all over the country, the special scholarship managed to raise over \$50,000 for other students of NCTC.

### Seeking justice

Following the accident, many fought that justice be served on behalf of the young women.

Russell Staley, the driver of the semi-truck, was charged with four counts of first degree manslaughter as a result. However, in 2017, just weeks before he

was scheduled to go to trial, he committed suicide.

The deaths of Deckard, Pelton, Woodlee and Richardson, as well as the unfulfilled justice, may have left a wound that will likely never be forgotten.

But, it is important to recognize the impact that the girls left, not only for individuals that knew them, but the community as a whole. Their legacies as players, as friends, and as family will never be forgotten.





# Riding<sup>FOR</sup> Kauā

BY ALEX LOWE, SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR  
PHOTOS BY TONY AVILA

**G**ainesville's own Kaue Flora burst onto the professional bull riding scene with a stunning victory at The Next Gambler competition in Taylor last month. He was one of 33 riders from Texas and around the world hoping to claim a coveted spot on the defending champion Austin Gamblers of the PBR Team Series.

Flora blew the competition away by successfully riding two bulls during the event, the only rider to do so on the day, earning the improbable victory and walking away with \$5,000.

Until three years ago, Flora had never even ridden a bull professionally.

Coming into the event, Flora's name was not well known in bull riding circles. When asked about him, even the man who was there to scout all potential Gamblers was unsure about the winner.

"Whenever you see someone cover two bulls in one competition, it raises your eyebrows," said Austin Gambler head coach and PBR Hall of Famer Michael Gaffney. "You are always looking for someone with that kind of mental toughness and big-time ability to perform under pressure. I didn't know a lot about him coming into the competition, but we are definitely going to take a look and see what we can learn about him."

Flora recently moved to Gainesville from Sao Paolo, Brazil. He has been here for just over six months. But it is the reason why he came to Gainesville that matters most.

It was his younger brother, Kauā, who was the bull rider in the family. And Kauā was a good one at that. The 17-year-old had dreams of coming to the United States to pursue a career as a professional bull rider. But that all changed on a hot summer day



in February of 2022.

“My younger brother Kauá and I were working with buffaloes when, at one point, they crossed the river. Kauá, always so brave and proactive, didn’t hesitate to follow them,” his brother said. “But his body was overheated from the work, and the river water was freezing cold.”

The sudden temperature difference caused Kauá to suffer cold shock and drown.

“We lost someone full of life and courage that day. Without a doubt, that was the worst day of my life,” Kaue said. “But even in the middle of so much pain, I know that without God, nothing would be possible. Witnessing my brother’s death was heartbreaking—but somehow, it also gave me strength. Strength to keep going, and to chase the dream that was once his and is now mine too: to, God willing, become a PBR World Champion one day.”

So, Flora took up bull riding to honor the memory and continue in the path that his younger brother wanted to travel. A natural talent, he competed in Brazil, winning one event, but he knew that to fulfill his brother’s dreams would mean coming to the United States. On the advice of friends and sponsors, he settled in Gainesville with wife Andressa and their daughter. Flora and his wife have been together for nine years after meeting in school back in Brazil.

“We came to Gainesville because we heard it was a nice place to raise a family and for Kaue’s sake, it is in the middle of the bull riding activity,” said Andressa. “It is a short distance from Oklahoma and if you go south, there are a lot of events in that part of the state. We like it here. It is quiet and the people are nice.”

As far as bull riders are concerned, Kaue Flora is as green as grass. Finding opportunities to ride bulls is always a challenge for any aspiring rider. He hasn’t been at it for long but he has found a creative





way to get atop bulls for the practice reps he needs.

“We go to the King’s Trail Cowboy Church in Whitewright,” said Andressa. “They have a program there where they let riders on their bulls for \$10. This allows Kaue to get the practice he needs.”

When asked if watching her husband riding atop 2,000-pound bucking bulls gives her reason to worry, Andressa paused and chuckled before answering.

“It depends on the bull,” she says. “If it is a bull that I know he can han-

dle, then I am fine because he knows what he is doing. But if it is a bull that has hurt someone in the past, then yes, I get worried.”

For now, Kaue is surviving on the money he earns simply from riding bulls. And with a victory at The Next Gambler event, Flora now has a chance to try out for the world champion Gamblers, a team loaded with superstar talent like reigning individual world champion Jose Vitor Leme, Dalton Kasel, Kaique Pacheco and Sage Kimzey.

(For those not familiar with profes-

sional bull riding, that line-up is like a who’s who of world champion level talent.)

It will be a tall order for a rider with just over three years’ worth of experience on the backs of bulls to crack that line-up. But after what Flora has already achieved, do not count him out.

“My wife and I are religious people,” said Flora. “Our faith in God is a big part of who we are and how we live our lives. It guides our decisions, gives us strength and keeps us grounded, especially in challenging times.”

# Ray Roberts Lake State Park a haven for plants and animals

**R**ay Roberts Lake State Park sits where three unique ecoregions meet: Eastern Cross Timbers, Blackland Prairie and Grand Prairie.

Most of the park lies in the Eastern Cross Timbers, a narrow strip of hardwood forest stretching south into prairie ecosystems, with the Blackland Prairie to the east, and the Grand Prairie to the west. The park has land in all three ecoregions.

Because of this, it is a rich and diverse area. More than 300 species of plants grow here. Many animals find food and shelter in the oak woodlands and prairie grasslands of the park.

Geologically, this region is part of the Woodbine formation. This Upper Cretaceous deposit formed about 65 million years ago of mostly sandstone, with some local layers of shale and clay.

## Plants

With land in three ecoregions, you will see different plants depending on where you are in the park. One trail might showcase prairie grasses, while another will lead you through woodlands or along wetlands.

### Eastern Cross Timbers

Most of the park lies in the Eastern Cross Timbers ecoregion, with dense groves of post

oak, blackjack oak, cedar elm and winged elm. Grasses such as big and little bluestem, switchgrass and lovegrass grow in delicate prairie glades throughout the timbered areas. These “pocket prairies” are a signature of the Eastern Cross Timbers, and a testament to its close relationship with the bordering prairies.

A different mix of trees grows in the floodplains: Elms, pecans, oaks and cottonwoods. Willows and sycamores grow along streams. Various fruit-bearing plants grow underneath these trees. With so many wild nuts and fruits, this area has provided food for animals and people for thousands of years.

### Blackland and Grand Prairies

The mostly clay soils of the prairies support tall to mid-size grasses such as little and big bluestem.

Groups of oak trees grow on higher ground, while moisture loving plants thrive along stream banks.

Wildflowers bloom profusely on the prairies: prairie verbena, black-eyed Susan, antelope horns, spotted beebalm, meadow pink, and many more.

## Animals

Many animals roam the Eastern Cross Timbers, especially in the floodplain with its plentiful food sources.

A partial list of the animals that live in or visit the park includes:

- **Mammals:** Deer, raccoon, opossum, rabbit, squirrels (eastern gray and fox), bats (Mexican free-tail and brown), beaver, plains pocket gopher, nine-banded armadillo, mink, striped skunk, gray fox, coyote, bobcat.

- **Fish:** Sunfish, white bass, largemouth bass, spotted gar, catfish.

- **Birds:** Greater roadrunner, wild turkey, painted bunting, scissor-tailed flycatcher, great blue heron, American white pelican, eastern screech owl, great horned owl, and hawks, woodpeckers and ducks. Occasionally, bald eagles will winter on the lake. Within the park, 229 bird species have been recorded.

- **More:** Butterflies, dragonflies, insects, frogs, turtles, lizards, snakes, rodents.

## Wetlands

Look for wetland areas in the park. These provide homes for many animals such as turtles and frogs. Migratory birds also rely on the wetlands for food, shelter and nesting areas. Larger animals such as raccoons mine the mud for food.

— *Information compiled from Texas Parks and Wildlife Division.*



# Heat exacerbates summer garden issues for Texans

BY SUSAN HIMES, TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION



Firebush does well in extreme heat and can bloom for 6 months. (Texas A&M AgriLife)

**T**exas gardeners usually sing the same tune this time of year — the heat is oppressive, and moisture is in short supply. Some gardens have received rain from tropical storms, but many Texans are humming through the second verse with continued high temperatures and a lack of moisture.

“When it comes to moisture, Texas continues to be the place for the haves and have nots,” said Larry Stein, Ph.D., Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service horticulture specialist at Uvalde and professor in the Texas

A&M College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Department of Horticultural Sciences. “Some places have received way too much rain and others not near enough.”

Since either extreme can kill plants, Texas gardeners need to keep their moisture conditions in mind during the hot summer months.

## How to help your plants endure the heat

Proper moisture helps plants deal with extreme heat.

Weeds compete with your garden plants for moisture, so stay on top of removing them. You may also need to pull plants that just aren’t doing well. In other words, you “gotta know when to hoe them and know when to throw them.”

“It is the number of leaves on a plant that dictate how much water the plant uses,” Stein said. “Plants can take intense heat and light if they have sufficient water. But it would be best not to try to establish plants at this time, regardless of your water situation.”

## Watch for garden pests

Pest populations also usually flare up during summertime when conditions are hot and dusty.

“Be on the lookout for spider mites, aphids, white flies; these are best discouraged as opposed to treating once you have them,” he said. “Populations can become so great that the plants must be eliminated so that you can prepare for a fall planting.”

Stein said using a spray with seaweed extract alternating with a soapy solution seems to discourage such pests. Spraying should commence when the plants begin setting fruit and continue on a 10-day to two-week schedule.



Mulch does double duty in a garden, preserving moisture while helping to keep weeds down. (Sam Craft/Texas A&M AgriLife)

### Watch moisture levels as temperatures rise

Stein said vegetation and trees have prospered in many locations with moisture, but many may be entering “a world of hurt” due to drying conditions. And while he is hopeful Texas won’t experience a heatwave as intense as last year, we know Mother Nature has her own plans.

“Remember, if you do have newly planted plants they will need at least an inch of water a week, but never apply water daily or plants will not be deep rooted,” he said. “Water should be applied either once a week or perhaps every three or four days. Established plants can go three weeks or so before a watering.”

### Mulch can help protect soil moisture

Don’t forget the importance of mulch. A thick layer of mulch will help

maintain soil moisture and reduce weed competition.

Stein said the heat is taking a toll on fruit set, so it may be time for some gardeners to pull the plants — such as tomatoes — and wait for more favorable conditions if they just don’t have the moisture needed.

“You can’t allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture,” Stein said. “Summer watering and care for fruit and fall nut production is especially critical to ensure quality.”

### Provide enough moisture for lawns

Evaluate the volume of water delivered from lawn sprinklers to ensure healthy, stress-free grass during the heat of the summer. Stein said one thorough watering, which delivers 1 inch of water at a time, is better than several shallower sessions.

The amount of water available through flower bed sprinklers can be checked by placing several shallow pans among shrubs or flowers the next time your sprinklers are on to measure the amount of water received.

### Top garden tips for summer

- Raise your mower height to insure deep-rooted grass.
- Stay up on the harvest of cantaloupes, tomatoes, peppers, okra, etc. to ensure quality produce and to encourage subsequent production.
- Prune dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning from now until midwinter. Severe pruning at this time will only stimulate tender new growth prior to frost.
- A late-summer pruning of rosebushes can be beneficial. Prune out dead canes and any weak, brushy

growth. Cut back tall, vigorous bushes to about 30 inches. After pruning, apply fertilizer, and water thoroughly. If a preventive disease-control program has been maintained, your rose bushes should be ready to provide an excellent crop of flowers this fall.

- Picking flowers/seed heads frequently encourages most annuals and perennials, crape myrtles, pride of Barbados, etc. to flower even more abundantly.

- It is not too late to set out another planting of many warm-season annuals, such as marigolds, zinnias and periwinkles. They will require extra attention for the first few weeks, but should provide you with color during late September, October and November.

- Sow seeds of snapdragons, dianthus, pansies, calendulas and other cool-season flowers in flats, or in well-prepared areas of the garden, for planting outside during mid-to-late fall.

- It is time to divide spring-flowering perennials, such as iris, Shasta daisy, oxeeye, gaillardia, cannas, day lilies, violets, liriope and ajuga.

- Caladiums require plenty of water at this time of year if they are to remain lush and active until fall. Fertilize with 21-0-0 or a slow-release nitrogen fertilizer at the rate of one-third to one-half pound per 100 square feet of bed area, and water thoroughly.

- Make your selections and place orders for spring-flowering bulbs now so they will arrive in time for planting in October and November.

- Establish a new compost pile to prepare to accommodate the fall leaf accumulation.

### Firebush can handle the heat, attracts hummingbirds

Texas gardeners looking to add color to their garden might want to consider incorporating firebush into their garden or landscape.

Firebush, sometimes called hummingbird bush, thrives in the heat and is a designated Texas Superstar.

“The original one was found, as they love to say, blooming its brains out, in

Laredo, Texas, one of the hottest and driest places in the state,” Stein said. “It will have to be grown as an annual in the colder areas of the state, but it will be a perennial in many areas.”

Firebush is a tropical plant with tremendous heat tolerance with showy tubular flowers. It also has good pest resistance, which makes it an easy plant to grow organically. It can bloom from June to November and is attractive to hummingbirds and pollinators. An occasional light shearing will encourage blooms as well as result in a denser plant with closely spaced flower clusters. The blooms fade and don't require removal.

It will grow in almost any soil, including those highly alkaline and heavy clays, as long as well drained. It can grow in partial shade, but really loves full-sun locations. It can also be grown in containers with good drainage.

Too much water however will kill a firebush. Once the plant is established, only water when the top inch of the soil is dry, typically a week to 10 days.

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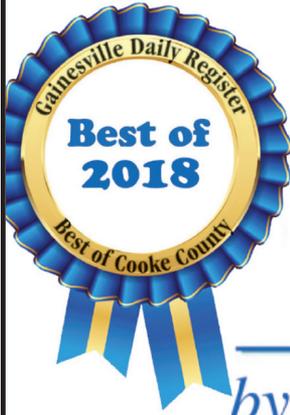
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# ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

*By Ken Bridges, Texas historian*



**Travis Watkins**

**I**t has been said that heroism is defined as holding on for one moment longer. A moment can save a life or change the destiny of a nation. Travis Watkins, a native Texas resident, was one such hero who took charge and held on against overwhelming odds, saving the lives of his men in the process and receiving the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions.

Travis Watkins was born in Waldo, a small community in southern Arkansas in 1920. The family would stay in Waldo for only a few years more before leaving for Texas, finally settling in Troup, a small town near Tyler. In 1939, he enlisted in the army.

At Guadalcanal in the South Pacific, American forces went on the offensive against Japan for the first time in the war, determined to turn the tide of the fighting. In August 1942, American forces launched an attack on Japanese positions. Watkins served with distinction in the battle and was awarded the Bronze Star for his bravery.

He served with distinction in many campaigns until the Allied victory in 1945. Watkins continued to serve in the army in the peacetime years that followed and rose through the enlisted ranks to Master Sergeant. In 1948, he married Madie Sue Barnett, with whom he had two daughters.

In June 1950, the peace was shattered when North Korea launched a massive, unprovoked attack on South Korea. Watkins was called back into action with the Ninth Infantry and sent to shore up their failing defenses. By the end of August, American, South Korean, and United Nations forces had been pushed into a small pocket of the southeastern corner of South Korea that came to be called the Pusan Perimeter. Allied forces were facing total defeat.

On August 31, Watkins and his detachment of 30 men were completely cut off from their regiment. Near Yongsan, he organized his small group into defensive positions, deciding to fight it out. As they ran low on ammunition, Watkins would charge out of their foxholes to retrieve ammunition from fallen North Korean troops. Though he was shot, he continued to fight for the lives of his men for three more days.

Watkins and his men deflected wave after wave of attacks. In one wave, North Korean troops charged his foxhole with grenades. Critically wounded in the attack, Watkins killed all of his attackers, preventing his position from being overrun.

But he realized he had been paralyzed from the waist down by his injuries. He knew he would not survive the battle but kept directing his men to give them their chance to break out and rejoin their regiment. Over the next days, he insisted the men take his share of their dwindling food supply, and on September 3, after seeing an opening, ordered them to make their escape without him, telling them his injuries would only slow them down. According to his men, he wished them luck and then died. The remaining troops made it back safely after a battle that took out 500 enemy troops.

Watkins died two days before his thirtieth birthday. He was later buried in Gladewater.

A few months after his death, the army awarded Watkins the Congressional Medal of Honor for his service above and beyond the call of duty. President Harry Truman gave Watkins's posthumous award to his widow in a ceremony at the White House. Watkins would be one of 33,000 Americans to lose their lives in the Korean War and one of 146 men to receive the Medal of Honor during the conflict. His sacrifice was not forgotten. In 1961, a housing complex at Fort Sam Houston was named for him. In June 2000, the navy launched the USNS Watkins, a 950-foot cargo ship named in honor of Watkins, which has been in service ever since.



It has been said  
that heroism is  
defined as holding  
on for one moment  
longer. A moment  
can save a life or  
change the destiny  
of a nation.

SUMMER RECIPES



# Summer Recipes

## LEMONGRASS CHICKEN

Author: Sam Hu | Ahead of Thyme  
Total Time: 1 hour 25 minutes  
Yield: 3-4 servings  
Diet: Gluten Free

Pan-fried Lemongrass Chicken is a healthy, flavorful, and gluten-free dinner that is quick and easy to prep and cook in less than 25 minutes! This Vietnamese chicken is perfect for busy weeknights when you need something delicious on the table fast. But when you have a recipe this good, you will want to make it over and over again — any night of the week.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 5 pieces of chicken thighs, boneless
- 2 stalks lemongrass, finely chopped (approximately 1 cup)
- 5 cloves of garlic
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- cilantro, chopped (optional, for garnish)

### INSTRUCTIONS

In a ziploc bag, combine chicken, chopped lemongrass, garlic, soy sauce, sesame oil, sugar, pepper, and cayenne pepper, if using. (Note: To make things easy, I chopped up the lemongrass in a food processor). Seal and shake ziploc bag to evenly disperse marinade with the chicken. Place in refrigerator for at least 1 hour, but preferably for 2 hours.

### TO PAN-FRY LEMONGRASS CHICKEN:

In a large skillet, heat vegetable oil over medium heat. Place chicken on the skillet and cook for 7 minutes per side, or until each side is nicely browned and the internal temperature of the thighs is 165°F (75°C) as read on a meat thermometer.

Slice into strips and serve over a bowl of Steamed Rice and sprinkle some sesame seeds on top, if desired. Garnish with chopped cilantro.

### TO GRILL LEMONGRASS CHICKEN:

Preheat the grill to medium-high heat and grill for about 6-7 minutes per side, or until the internal temperature in the thickest part of the chicken reads 165 F as read on a meat thermometer.

## TANDOORI CHICKEN SKEWERS

Author: Sam Hu | Ahead of Thyme  
Total Time: 1 hour 30 minutes  
Yield: 6 skewers  
Diet: Gluten Free

### FOR THE SHRIMP:

- 2 pounds boneless and skinless chicken breasts or thighs, cut into 1-inch thick cubes
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- ½ tablespoon ginger, freshly grated
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon curry powder or garam masala
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil

### FOR THE YOGURT SAUCE:

- ¼ cup plain yogurt
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon fresh dill, finely chopped
- ¼ teaspoon salt (or to taste)
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper (or to taste)

### MARINATE THE CHICKEN:

Cut the chicken breasts into 1-inch thick pieces and set aside in a large mixing bowl or Ziploc bag.

Add garlic, ginger, paprika, curry powder, cumin, salt, and pepper. Rub the seasoning all over the chicken to coat it evenly.

Stir in yogurt, tomato paste and oil. Toss well until evenly coated.

Cover the bowl with plastic cling wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour (or overnight for the best results).

### GRILL THE CHICKEN:

Preheat grill over medium high to 450F, about 6-8 minutes.

Thread 6-8 marinated cubed chicken breasts onto each skewer. I used bamboo skewers.

Place the skewers evenly apart on the grill and grill for 5-7 minutes on each side until the edges are nicely charred. The internal temperature for the chicken should reach 165 F as read on a meat thermometer. Do not overlap the skewers at any time to ensure even cooking.

### MAKE THE YOGURT SAUCE:

Make the yogurt sauce by whisking together yogurt, oil, lemon juice, garlic, dill, salt, and pepper in a small mixing bowl until smooth. Refrigerate the sauce until ready to use.

Serve warm with a drizzle of yogurt sauce on top or on the side for dipping.



## MEXICAN CHICKEN CAESAR SALAD

Author: Sam | Ahead of Thyme

Total Time: 45 minutes

Yield: 4 servings

Mexican chicken Caesar salad is a classic recipe with a twist! Combine your favourite Mexican ingredients to create a salad so tasty and refreshing!

### FOR THE CHICKEN::

- 2 boneless and skinless chicken breasts
- 1 tablespoon olive oil, divided
- ½ tablespoon lime juice, freshly squeezed
- ¼ teaspoon garlic, minced
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon paprika
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper

### FOR THE SALAD::

- 2 heads romaine lettuce, chopped
- 1 cup corn, cooked and drained
- 1 cup black beans, cooked and drained
- 1 medium avocado, sliced or cubed
- 1-2 cups tortilla strips (or crumbled tortilla chips)
- lime wedges (optional, for serving)
- For the dressing:
  - ½ cup Caesar salad dressing
  - juice of 1 lime
  - 2 teaspoons fresh cilantro, finely chopped
  - pinch of cumin
  - ¼ teaspoon dried chilli flakes (optional)

### COOK THE CHICKEN:

In a large mixing bowl, combine chicken breasts with ½ tablespoon oil, lime juice, garlic, and all seasoning including chili powder, cumin, paprika, oregano, salt, and pepper. Toss well to coat. Let it marinate for at least 20 minutes or overnight in the fridge. You can also combine everything into a large Ziploc bag and press the seasoning around the chicken to coat.

When ready to cook, heat the remaining ½ tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat until the hot oil sizzles, about 1 minute. Add chicken breasts and cook until golden brown, about 6-8 minutes per side. The internal temperature for the chicken should reach 165F as read on a meat thermometer.

Air fryer instructions: You can also cook the chicken breasts in the air fryer at 350F for 30 minutes until the internal temperature reaches 165F as read on a meat thermometer.

Oven instructions: You can bake in a preheated 375F oven for 30-35 minutes until the internal temperature reaches 165F as read on a meat thermometer.

Remove from heat and transfer chicken breasts to a cutting board. Slice each breast into small strips of cubes.

### MAKE THE SALAD:

In a large serving bowl, add romaine lettuce, corn, black beans, avocado, tortilla strips, and sliced chicken.

In a small mixing bowl, combine Caesar salad dressing, lime juice, cilantro, cumin, and dried chili flakes (if using). Stir well until combined. Pour dressing over salad and toss to coat. Season with salt and pepper to taste, if needed, and serve with lime wedges on the side.



## WATERMELON SORBET

Author: Sam | Ahead of Thyme  
Total Time: 8 hours 5 minutes  
Yield: 4 servings  
Diet: Vegan

### INGREDIENTS:

- 4 cups watermelon, seeds removed and cubed
- 1 tablespoon lime juice, freshly squeezed
- 1-2 tablespoons water
- maple syrup or honey (optional, if needed)
- watermelon slices (optional, for serving)
- basil or mint leaves (optional, for serving)

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Line a large half sheet baking pan with parchment paper. Place cubed watermelon on the prepared pan spaced evenly apart. Freeze for 1-2 hours, then transfer to a freezer bag to freeze completely overnight.

Combine frozen watermelon and lime juice in a food processor. Pulse mix to puree. Add water 1-2 teaspoons at a time, to get the sorbet to a smoother and scoop-able consistency.

The sorbet should be sweet enough if using ripe watermelon. If it is not sweet, add a little maple syrup or honey until desired sweetness is achieved.

Serve immediately with small watermelon slices and/or basil or mint leaves (optional).

Store any leftovers in a covered loaf pan in the freezer. Note that the longer it is in the freezer the harder it will get. If it is too hard to scoop, set the pan on the kitchen counter for 10-20 minutes until scoop-able.



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*Photos by Tony Avila*

**T**his year's Summer Sounds concert series, hosted by the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce, featured The Spazmatics, Josh Weathers, King Cabbage Brass Band, James Cook Band and more, drawing visitors to the Gainesville Farmers Market.













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