

Grilled Fruit— It's Hot!

3 surprising ways to sneak the goodness of fruit onto your summer table

By Laura Pensiero

Summer's coming, and it's time to fire up the grill. This year, try something different: fruit! Turn nature's cool, refreshing treat into a sizzling-hot crowd-pleaser. Now, as the season's luscious fruits are nearly ripe for the picking, chef and dietitian Laura Pensiero—who's made a career of wrapping good nutrition in great taste—offers three recipes tailor-made for an early summer's evening. ♣

Chicken and Grilled Stone Fruit Barley Salad

Hulled barley lends a chewy texture and toasty flavor that contrast beautifully with the sweetness of the grilled fruit. The chicken makes this a salad that eats like a meal. Diced pork, even salmon, can be substituted, or, omit all the meat and make it vegetarian.

Makes 4 to 6 servings

1½ cups hulled barley (can substitute pearl barley*)
8 cups water
2½ tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 tablespoons fresh orange juice
1½ teaspoons grated ginger zest
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
Sea salt, to taste
Ground pepper, to taste

2 ripe nectarines, halved and pitted
2 ripe peaches, halved and pitted
2 cups (¾-inch) cubed cooked chicken breast (about 10 ounces)
¼ cup thinly julienned red onion
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro

*If substituting pearl barley, there is no need to soak it. Decrease the cooking time to forty to forty-five minutes.

In a medium saucepan, soak the barley in the water for at least two and up to twelve hours. Bring water to a boil, cover, and reduce heat. Simmer until the barley is tender, about one hour to one hour and ten minutes. Drain, then transfer to a large bowl and cool to room temperature; set aside.

In a small bowl, whisk together two tablespoons of the oil, lemon and orange juices, ginger, and Dijon mustard. Season to taste with salt and pepper, then toss into the barley salad, stirring to combine well.

Clean and heat the grill or a grill pan set over medium-high heat. Evenly brush the remaining oil over the fruit. Cook for three minutes on each side or until slightly softened and well marked; let cool. Cut the fruit into cubes. Add the fruit, chicken, onion, and cilantro to the barley, tossing gently.



Cheese and Grilled Fruit Antipasto Plate With Honey-Orange Sauce

The natural sugars of ripe fruit caramelized by the heat of the grill are the perfect match for tangy, slightly salty cheese. The colorful antipasto can be served in the traditional sense, as a first course, or lend to a perfect sweet and savory ending to a summer meal.

Makes 8 servings

HONEY ORANGE SAUCE:
 1/3 cup unsweetened orange juice
 2 tablespoons lemon juice
 1 1/2 tablespoons honey

1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
 Dash of nutmeg

FRUIT:
 1 pound firm black plums, halved and pitted
 1 pound firm peaches, halved and pitted
 1 pound firm nectarines, halved and pitted
 Cooking spray

CHEESE:
 8 1/2- to 1-ounce pieces of firm aged cow's milk cheese such as Caciocavallo or Parmigiano Reggiano
 8 1/2- to 1-ounce pieces of medium aged sheep's milk cheese such as

Manchego
 8 1/2- to 1-ounce pieces of young goat's milk cheese

GARNISH:
 Mint sprigs

Clean and heat grill.
 To prepare dressing, combine all ingredients for sauce and mix. Set aside.
 To prepare fruit, place it on a grill rack coated with cooking spray; grill three minutes on each side. Remove from grill. Move fruit to cooler portions of the grill, if necessary, to prevent charring. Arrange the grilled fruit on serving plates along with one piece of each cheese. Drizzle fruit and cheese with dressing. Garnish with mint sprigs, if desired.

Grilled Strawberries With Vanilla Gelato and Aged Balsamic

This simple dessert has great depth in flavor and elegance. It is perfect for any summer evening but especially for gatherings with friends. If you cannot find aged (at least five years) balsamic vinegar from Modena, Italy, which is available in most gourmet stores, enjoy the berries and gelato on their own.

Makes 4 servings

Wooden skewers for grilling
 2 teaspoons lemon juice
 2 teaspoons canola oil
 2 teaspoons sugar

1 pint large ripe (but firm) strawberries
 1 1/2 cups vanilla gelato or frozen yogurt
 4 teaspoons excellent quality aged balsamic vinegar from Modena

Clean and heat the grill or grill pan. Soak the wooden skewers in water to prevent burning.

In a medium bowl, combine the lemon juice, oil, and sugar; whisk with a fork to combine. Add the strawberries and turn to evenly coat. Thread the strawberries onto the soaked wooden skewers and place on the grill. Turn frequently and cook until they're just warmed and grilled

marked, about two minutes. Remove the berries from the skewers and cut in half. Serve warm with gelato or frozen yogurt and a drizzle of aged balsamic vinegar.

For more information about Laura Pensiero's culinary creations, visit www.chef4life.com or www.gigitrattoria.com.

