

# An Unusual Culinary Column: Summer Picnic Foods

By Karen Kain

I love summer and all the things that go along with it; the warmer weather, longer days, and the summer fruits. Nothing beats a warm evening sitting on the porch with the sun still shining after 8 pm. As the days get warmer the desire to spend time in the kitchen lessens and meals get lighter. I thought this would be the perfect time to share some fun and easy picnic style recipes with you.

I really enjoyed playing in the kitchen to prepare for this column. I started out by making antipasto summer skewers. This was a super easy recipe to assemble. People love finger foods and this is a hearty and playful recipe, perfect for parties and picnics. I used mozzarella cheese but you can use most any kind. If you are a vegetarian, omit the salami, and add pepperoncinis, and or zucchini. This is a great recipe that can be made ahead of time.

To keep up with the fresh and light theme, I made this Orzo & Shrimp Salad recipe. This is another great dish. You can serve it hot, at room temperature, or cold. This is another perfect party dish than can be prepared ahead of time.

My next share is a super colorful, pleasing to the eye, sweet and spicy summer salsa recipe that is made with those gorgeous strawberries you are seeing at the markets and stands. This is quick to put together. Your guests will fully enjoy the summer freshness tasted in each bite.

I invited some friends over to taste test the orzo and shrimp salad dish. I wanted to end the evening with a simple light dessert but I happened to be in a bit of a crunch for time. I picked up some fresh berries at the market and soaked them in Frangelico for about 30 minutes. Then I served them over angel food cake with a topping of whipped cream. I made my own whipped cream, but you can use canned or frozen. This dessert is super easy to put together and I find that most everyone enjoys it. Of course, you can leave the Frangelico out, but I personally think it makes the dish.

I hope you are all enjoying the change of season, and of course I would love to hear what you are packing in your picnic basket.

## Antipasto Summer Skewers

### Ingredients:

20 Wooden skewers

1 9-Ounce package of cheese tortellini, cooked per the directions  
 ½ Cup zesty Italian salad dressing  
 ½ - ¾ Teaspoon Tabasco  
 1 Can artichoke hearts  
 1 Can of black olives  
 Package of grape tomatoes

Salami, sliced thin or cut into cubes

Mozzarella cheese, cut into cubes

Fresh basil leaves

### Directions:

Put the tortellini into a large ziplock plastic bag. Add the salad dressing, Tabasco, and artichoke hearts. Using your fingers, thoroughly mix the salad dressing into the tortellini. Marinate in the refrigerator for 30 minutes to 4 hours. Assemble on the skewers in any order you prefer. If you are vegetarian omit the salami and add some zucchini and/or pepperoncini.

## Orzo & Shrimp Salad

### Ingredients:

2 Tablespoons olive oil

2 Shallots, diced

4 Cups fresh corn kernels

4 Cloves garlic

3 Cups raw shrimp with the tails on

1 Package orzo, cooked per directions

1 Pint of cherry tomatoes, cut in half

¼ Cup chopped basil

2 Tablespoons chopped parsley

5 Pepperoncinis, chopped

½ Cup olive oil

2 Teaspoons Pepperoncini juice

3 Tablespoons red wine vinegar

1 Large lemon, juiced

½ Teaspoon salt

1 Teaspoon pepper

### Directions:

In a large skillet on medium high heat, add the 2 tablespoons oil. Once heated add the corn, shallots and sauté for 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 2 more minutes. Add the shrimp and cook until they are done, bright pink in color. In a large salad bowl, combine the cooked orzo, tomatoes, basil, parsley, pepperoncinis, and shrimp mixture. Stir together to combine all the flavors. In a smaller mixing bowl, add the ½ cup olive oil, pepperoncini juice, vinegar, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Whisk together and pour over the salad and toss to fully coat. Serve hot, at room temperature, or cold.



## Strawberry Salsa

### Ingredients:

1 Pint of strawberries, hulled and diced

1 Jalapeno, stemmed, seeded, finely diced

¼ Cup of red onion, diced

½ Cup cilantro, chopped

Juice of 1 lime

Dash of salt and pepper

### Directions:

Mix all the ingredients together and serve with chips.

## Summer Berry Dessert

### Ingredients:

Blueberries, blackberries, and raspberries

Frangelico, optional

1 Container of heavy whipping cream

1 Teaspoon vanilla

Angel food or pound cake

### Directions:

Wash the berries and cover with Frangelico, set aside and let soak. Using a hand or stand-alone mixer, beat the heavy whipping cream and vanilla together until soft peaks form. Cut the pound cake into slices and

put it onto a plate or in a bowl. Spoon the fruit over top of the cake allowing the juices to soak into the cake. Top with the whipped cream and serve.

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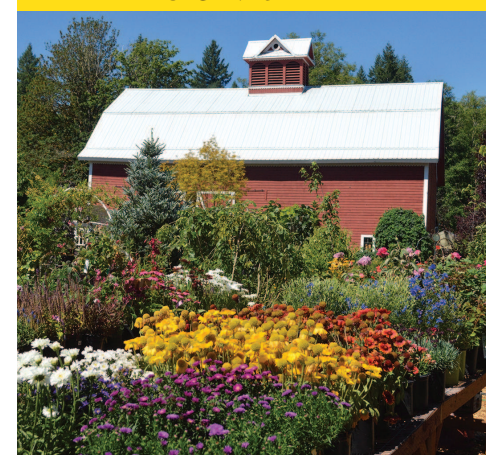
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