

Stone fruits are one of my favorite things of summer, and fresh peaches are divine. Especially when you can get them directly from the orchard. In my recent radio program, KSRO Good Food Hour, we spoke with Gayle Okumura Sullivan with Dry Creek Peach, located here in Sonoma County, in Healdsburg, CA. The farm is a treasure here, surrounded by world-renowned vineyards, it is one of the last remaining peach orchards in this area. They are family owned and their peaches are hand-picked, hand-sorted and hand-packed; a real labor of love!

As you know there is a short window to get fresh peaches. They bruise easily, so when you buy them from the store or farm market, they will be underripe. To ripen, simply place them in a single layer at room temperature until they yield to gentle pressure near the stem. Placing them in a brown paper bag will speed up the process.

PEACHES

PEACH-OPAL BASIL LEMONADE

Serves 6 to 8

This of course is a drink for summer when both ripe peaches and basil are available. I'm using opal basil here but you could use any other variety of basil you wanted. One of my other favorites is a variety called *Mexican Spice*, which has hints of cinnamon, cumin and coriander in its flavor. I've also made this drink with other fruits such as mango, papaya and nectarine. I love to use a spritz of seltzer with this. Seltzer bottles are again available through good cookware stores and restaurant supply houses.

2 cups water
2 cups loosely packed opal basil leaves
3 cups peeled, chopped dead ripe peaches
3 tablespoons chopped fresh ginger
2/3 cup or so fragrant honey such as orange blossom
3/4 cup fresh lemon juice
2 cups fruity white wine such as Riesling or Gewurtztraminer

Garnish: Opal basil sprigs, slices of fresh ripe peach and a little sparkling water or seltzer if desired.

In a saucepan add water, basil, peaches, ginger and honey and bring to a boil. Lower heat, cover and simmer for 5 minutes or until peaches are very soft. Off heat and let mixture cool. Strain through a very fine mesh strainer, pressing down on solids. Stir in lemon juice, adjust sweetness level with more honey if desired and chill. To serve: Add wine, pour over ice cubes and garnish with basil sprigs, peach slices and a little sparkling water or seltzer.

PEACH AND PROSCIUTTO BRUSCHETTA

Makes 12

12 slices grilled sourdough baguette
6 ounces goat cheese
12 slices thinly-sliced prosciutto
2 ripened peaches, sliced thin
Good-quality olive oil, to taste
Flaky sea salt to taste

Spread each slice of grilled bread with a dollop of goat cheese. Drape the prosciutto over the goat cheese and top with two peach slices. Drizzle the bruschetta with good-quality olive oil and a pinch of sea salt. Serve immediately

SPICY COLD PEACH SOUP WITH PEEKYTOE CRAB

Serves 4 as a first course

The soup base is inspired by the *liquados* of Mexico and Central America. These are basically fruit purees often made with the addition of milk and spices and are a refreshing drink on a hot day. The peekytoe crab story is an interesting one. These are Maine rock or sand crabs which were pretty much a throwaway by-product of lobster fishing before a brilliant marketing move changed their name to "peekytoes" around 1997. They are much prized today for their sweet delicate flavor. They can't be shipped live but the fresh picked meat is available during the summer. Fresh Dungeness crab can be substituted.

1-1/2 pounds (3 medium) dead ripe yellow peaches or nectarines, pitted
3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1/3 cup thick Greek style yogurt
1/4 teaspoon chopped chipotle in adobo or to taste
1/4 cup fresh orange juice
1 small fresh Persian cucumber (3 ounces)
Fine Sea salt
6 ounces fresh peekytoe crab meat carefully picked over to remove any shell
1 tablespoon crème fraîche, if desired

In a blender add the peaches, lime juice, yogurt, chipotle and orange juice and puree. Strain thru a medium mesh strainer to remove any bits of skin and chill. Can be made 2 hours ahead. Adjust seasoning to your taste.

With a mandolin or knife slice the cucumber very thinly lengthwise and lightly salt. Ladle the soup into flat soup plates. Mix the crab and crème fraîche together if using and mound in the center. Artfully arrange the cucumber around and serve immediately.

Note: Can be made a few hours ahead.

ARUGULA SALAD WITH GRILLED PEACHES, MORTADELLA AND ROBIOLA

Serves 6

Robiola is considered by many to be Italy's best cheese. It comes from the Piedmont in the north and is a blend of cow, goat and sheep's milk. True Mortadella is sublime. It hails from Bologna. Seek out the real versions of both the meat and the cheese for this recipe. It will make all the difference in the world!

12 thin slices of mortadella
12 ounces fresh robiola
12 basil leaves
3 ripe peaches; halved, peeled and pitted
2 tablespoons or so fruity extra-virgin olive oil
4 cups packed baby arugula leaves
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar, or to taste
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

On a work surface, lay out the slices of the mortadella. Divide the robiola in the center of each one and top it with a basil leaf. Fold the mortadella over the cheese and then fold in the sides to form a neat packet. Secure with toothpicks.

Light a grill or preheat a grill pan. Lightly coat the peaches with olive oil and grill until nicely marked. Slice each half attractively and set aside.

Grill the packets over high heat for about 1 minute per side, until they are lightly marked and the cheese has softened. Discard the toothpicks.

In a bowl, toss the arugula with olive oil and vinegar and season to your taste with salt and pepper. Arrange peaches and dressed arugula attractively on 6 plates. Top with warm packets and serve right away.

"FIRE AND ICE" PEACH SALAD WITH FETA, FIGS AND PROSCIUTTO

Serves 8

This is a perfect summertime dish to start a lunch or dinner. The heat of the serrano chiles contrasts with the cool, refreshing fruit and the aromatic mint, tart lime and salty proscuitto add interesting flavor counterpoints.

1/3 cup sugar or honey
1/4 cup white wine or water
1 teaspoon seeded and minced serrano chiles or to taste
1 tablespoon each finely diced red and yellow bell peppers

1/4 cup fresh lime juice
1 tablespoon minced fresh mint
8 firm ripe peaches
4 ounces fresh feta cheese, cut into 8 attractive pieces
8 fresh ripe figs, fanned
8 paper thin slices of proscuitto or other salumi of your choice

Garnish: Edible flower petals such as nasturtium, borage and/or day lily, if desired

In a small saucepan, combine the sugar and wine and over moderate heat stir until the sugar is dissolved. Add the chiles and peppers and cool. Stir in the lime juice and mint just before serving. Syrup can be stored covered and refrigerated for up to 3 days.

To serve: Peel peaches if desired, cut in half and remove seeds. Cut each half into thirds and arrange along with feta attractively on chilled plates. Spoon chile syrup over peaches and arrange figs and proscuitto artfully around. Sprinkle with edible flower petals, if using.

FRISEE SALAD WITH PEACHES, CRISPY PROSCUITTO, POINT REYES ORIGINAL BLUE AND MAPLE VINAIGRETTE

Serves 4

Any stone fruit that is nicely ripe could be used here. Point Reyes is a favorite blue cheese but any creamy blue that you like is OK.

4 gently packed cups of tender frisée, creamy colored centers only
Maple vinaigrette (recipe follows)
2 large ripe peaches, pits removed, peeled if desired and sliced into wedges
4 ounces Point Reyes Original Blue cut into 4 nice slices
8 thin slices prosciutto, crisped in the oven (method follows)
2 tablespoons fresh chives cut into 1/4-inch batons

Toss the frisée with some of the vinaigrette and place on 4 plates. Arrange the peaches, cheese, prosciutto attractively around. Drizzle with additional vinaigrette to your taste with a scattering of chopped chives.

Maple vinaigrette
Makes 1/2 cup

2 tablespoons maple syrup
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
2 teaspoons finely chopped shallot
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
5 tablespoons toasted walnut oil
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Heat the maple syrup slightly in the microwave or on top of the stove and then whisk in the mustard, shallot and vinegar. Continue to whisk and slowly drizzle in the walnut oil to form a light emulsion. Season with salt and pepper. Store covered in refrigerator for up to 3 days.

Crispy prosciutto

Lay the prosciutto in a single layer on a parchment lined baking sheet and place in a preheated 375 degree oven for 3 – 4 minutes or until cooked and crisp. Remove, cool and set aside.



SHRIMP BURGERS WITH PEACH AIOLI

Serves 4

1 pound peeled and deveined shrimp (any size), finely chopped
1 large egg white, lightly beaten
5 tablespoons mayonnaise
1 tablespoon minced parsley
1 tablespoon minced green onion
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce, white preferred
Salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste
Drops of hot sauce to taste
1/2 cup or so coarse dry breadcrumbs (panko preferred)
Clarified butter or olive oil for sautéing
4 soft brioche or Hawaiian rolls

Peach aioli (recipe follows)

Toppings: Tomato slices, crisp lettuce leaves, Kirby cucumber slices

In a large bowl add the shrimp, egg, and mayonnaise and combine with the next 7 ingredients. Stir in 1/2 cup of the breadcrumbs. Don't overmix. You want the cakes to just hold together and be delicate in texture. Mix in additional crumbs if the mixture is too moist. (Cook a small tester to make sure).

Form into cakes. Lightly dust both sides with additional breadcrumbs. Can be made ahead and stored in the refrigerator for up to 3 hours. In a large skillet over moderate heat, sauté the burgers in clarified butter or oil until lightly browned on both sides, about 3 minutes per side.

Lightly toast the halves of the brioche buns if desired and spread generously with the aioli. Add the cooked shrimp burger to the bottom half, then the toppings. Cover with the roll tops.

Peach Aioli

Makes 3/4 cup

1 cup peeled and sliced ripe peaches
1 teaspoon chopped ginger
1 teaspoon chopped garlic
1 tablespoon fresh lime or lemon juice
1 teaspoon honey or to taste
Salt and drops of hot sauce to taste
1/3 cup mayonnaise
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Place all ingredients in a blender and blend till smooth. Correct seasoning to your taste.

BARBECUED SHRIMP WITH FRESH PEACH CHUTNEY

Serves 4

This may seem like a complicated recipe but it's really not and brings together two of my favorite accompaniments for the summer barbecue: Peach chutney and coffee barbecue sauce. Make both of these a day or two ahead and store refrigerated. You'll have more than enough for this recipe so keep on hand to use next time with grilled chicken or pork. A glass or two of chilled Sonoma Cutrer chardonnay would be just the ticket here to celebrate the 4th of July.

For the shrimp:

12 large shrimp (at least 16 -20 or larger)
2 tablespoons olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste
4 metal skewers

For the chutney:

Makes a generous 2 cups

1/2 cup cider vinegar
1/2 cup dry white wine
1/2 cup loosely packed brown sugar
1/2 cup sweet red pepper, seeded, diced 1/4 inch
1/2 white onion, peeled and diced, about 1/2 cup
1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes, or to taste
1/3 cup golden raisins
1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
2 tablespoons finely chopped ginger
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 pounds firm ripe peaches, blanched to remove the skin, pitted and cut into 1/2-inch dice

For the barbecue sauce:

Makes 2 cups

1/2 medium Spanish onion, minced (about 1/2 cup)
1/2 tablespoon unsalted butter
1/4 chipotle pepper (canned, in adobo sauce), minced
1/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup sherry vinegar
1/2 cup strong brewed coffee
1 cup ketchup
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
Water as needed

To prepare the chutney, season the pineapple with salt and pepper and grill each slice evenly on both sides. Cool, dice, and reserve. In a medium sauté pan, cook onions in olive oil over medium-low heat for 5 minutes or until they are soft and transparent. Add the sugar and the vinegar and simmer until the mixture has the consistency of syrup. Add the pineapple, cardamom, and cumin, and cook for 5 minutes. Remove the chutney from the heat and add the red peppers and the cilantro.

To prepare the barbecue sauce, sauté the onions in butter in a medium saucepan, until they are brown. Add chipotle pepper, vinegar, and sugar. Cook until thick and add the coffee. Boil until reduced by half. Add ketchup and mustard and simmer for 15 minutes. If the sauce is too thick, add water.

To serve: Heat the grill and warm the barbecue sauce. Brush the shrimp with olive oil and season with salt and pepper and place three on each of the metal skewers. Grill shrimp on both sides until they are opaque. On a hot grill, this should take about 1 minute on each side. Remove the shrimp from the skewers. Place a heaping tablespoon or so of the chutney in the center of

each plate. Arrange three shrimp around and drizzle barbecue sauce over them. Serve immediately.

THE EASIEST BABY BACK RIBS WITH PEACH BARBEQUE SAUCE

Serves 4

These ribs are mostly cooked in the oven before finishing on the grill. The oven part can also be done a day or two ahead and the ribs refrigerated until you are ready to grill. As the recipe notes you can use your favorite bottled barbecue sauce but the peach version included below is mighty tasty.

2 slabs (about 3 1/2 pounds total) baby back ribs
2 large onions, sliced
2 cups dry white wine such as Sonoma Cutrer Chardonnay
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 cups peach barbecue sauce (recipe follows) or your favorite bottled sauce

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

Remove the membrane from the back of the ribs by slipping the tip of a small, dull knife, such as a table knife, in between the membrane and bone anywhere along the edge of the slab of ribs. Lift the knife to separate the membrane from the bone, then grab the membrane with a paper towel (the towel helps keep the membrane from slipping) and pull it off.

Spread the onion slices evenly on a rimmed baking pan just large enough to hold the ribs. Place ribs bone side down on the onion. Pour the wine over the ribs, season generously with salt and pepper, and cover pan tightly with foil. Bake, undisturbed, for 2 hours or until meat is tender but still holding to the bone.

Prepare a medium hot grill. Brush both sides of the ribs with the barbecue sauce and place the ribs, meat side down, in clean, oiled grill. Cook the ribs, basting the top side several times, until lightly charred, about 10 minutes. Turn the slab of ribs and liberally baste the cooked side. Close the lid of the grill and cook the ribs, basting often for 10 to 15 minutes longer. Cut the slabs into individual ribs, pile them onto a large platter, and serve warm.

Peach Barbecue Sauce

Makes about 2 cups

2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
3 tablespoons finely chopped peeled ginger
2 large cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
1/2 cup dry white wine such as Sonoma Cutrer Chardonnay
1/3 cup peach preserves
3 cups peeled, seeded and chopped ripe peaches
3 tablespoons ketchup

Big pinch ground cinnamon

1/4 cup cider vinegar

1 teaspoon bottled hot sauce of your choice (I like Tapatio), or to your taste

Kosher or sea salt to taste

Heat olive oil in a heavy bottomed sauce pan and sauté onion, ginger and garlic over moderate heat until just beginning to color. Add remaining ingredients and bring to a simmer. Cook uncovered adjusting heat so that mixture just simmers for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Carefully puree in a blender and add salt to taste. Can be stored covered and refrigerated for up to a week.

DESSERTS

SIMPLE FRUIT DESSERTS: COBBLERS, CRISPS, GRUNTS, BUCKLES, PANDOWDIES AND CLAUFOTIS.

The colorful names for these fruit desserts are nearly as much fun as eating them. Mostly American in origin, they no doubt evolved from the more difficult to make pies and pastries of Europe. Perhaps the mostly widely known of all of these is the “cobbler” which probably got its name because the top crust resembled the cobblestone streets of colonial America. There is also a theory that it got its name from bakers who “cobbled” together whatever they had on hand to quickly make it. Depending on your family, part of the country and regional history each of these were pretty fluid as to ingredients and techniques.

Here is a general lexicon derived from several sources (no two of which absolutely agree!):

Cobbler : baked fruit topped with a batter or biscuit crust. The topping is often "cobbled" rather than smooth; the topping is generally dropped or spooned in small clumps over or under the fruit, allowing bits of the filling to show through. John Mariani in his *“Encyclopedia of American Food and Drink”* aptly describes how regional variations apply to this and other dishes: “The dish is called Bird’s Nest Pudding in New England; it is served with a custard but no topping in Connecticut, with maple sugar in Massachusetts and with a sour sauce in Vermont”. Whew!

Crisp : baked fruit topped with a streusel topping. Usually a mixture of some combination of flour, nuts, cereal (especially oatmeal), butter, and sugar. It can also be made with crushed cookies or even bread crumbs in place of the oatmeal. It generally completely covers the fruit. Also sometimes called a crumble.

Grunt or Slump: Got its name supposedly from the sound the fruit makes as it cooks on top of the stove. Topped with a biscuit dough it is cooked covered so that the biscuits steam and form dumplings. Not unlike English steamed pudding. Best eaten warm. Great to make on a hot day. No oven required.

Buckle : Has a cake batter poured in a single layer with berries added to the batter. Usually made with blueberries which sink yet keep their shape in the batter. Once baked the cake has a “buckled” appearance. Also, sometimes called a crumble.

Pandowdies: According to the “*Oxford Companion to Food*” by Alan Davidson this is an old-fashioned deep-dish New England fruit dessert. Often made with apples, topped with a biscuit-like dough and baked. Partway through the baking time, the crust is broken up and pressed down into the fruit, so it can absorb the juices. This technique is called “dowdying”.

Claufouti: The clafoutis comes from the Limousin region of France. Black cherries with the pits are traditional. The pits are thought to add a bit of almond flavor. Best to probably pit the cherries so that you don’t incur any dental bills. Other fruits can be used such as red cherries, plums, prunes, apples, pears, cranberries or blackberries. Basically, a pancake batter to which fruit is added early in the baking.

MY GRANDMOTHER’S PEACH COBBLER

Serves 6

My Grandmother made the most awesome fresh Peach Cobbler. Before she passed she confessed that the recipe came from a Bisquick box. This is such a simple and quick recipe that there’s no reason not to make and serve a fresh fruit cobbler regularly. You can use the commercial Bisquick or make your own which I prefer.

4 cups sliced fresh peaches
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon lemon zest
1 cup homemade Bisquick mix (recipe follows)
1 cup milk, any kind
1/2 cup melted butter
2 tablespoons brown sugar, packed
Vanilla ice cream or whipped cream

Preheat oven to 375 F. In a bowl, combine peaches, 1/2 cup granulated sugar, cornstarch, nutmeg, cinnamon and lemon zest.

Mix together the bisquick, milk, butter and brown sugar. Add mixture to a 7 or 8-inch (4 cup volume) baking pan. Pour fruit on top of the bisquick mixture, do not stir.

Bake for 50-60 minutes or until crust is golden brown and fruit bubbling. Crust will mostly rise to the surface. Serve warm or cold, with vanilla ice cream or whipped cream.

Homemade Bisquick

Makes 7 cups

6 cups all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons baking powder
1 tablespoon salt
1 cup vegetable shortening (non-hydrogenated)

Sift flour, baking powder and salt three times into a large bowl. Cut in shortening with a pastry blender until mixture resembles fine crumbs. Alternately pulse a few times in a food processor. Store mixture in airtight container in the refrigerator up to 4 months. Use whenever your recipe calls for "Bisquick mix".

DRY CREEK PEACH COBBLER

Serves 6

This is from Gayle Sullivan of Dry Creek Peach Company. It is based on Lindsey Shere's recipe from Chez Panisse Desserts Cookbook. A different approach, more like peach short cake.

1 cup flour
1 tablespoon sugar plus more for sprinkling
1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
Dash salt
Dash cinnamon
Dash freshly grated nutmeg
4 tablespoons softened butter
1/2 cup heavy cream
3 – 4 cups sliced peaches
Vanilla bean ice cream

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Whisk all the dry ingredients together. Add the butter and mix until the consistency of coarse corn meal. Add the heavy cream and mix until it just comes together.

Divide into 6 hockey puck sized disks about 1/2 inch thick. Sprinkle with sugar.

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes until golden brown. Serve with peaches and a small (or large) scoop of ice cream.

PEACH GALETTE

Serves 8

You can use the same dough and method to make galettes of all kinds — peaches, plums, apricots, cherries, apples and more. Serve with a scoop of vanilla bean ice cream or crème fraîche.

The Dough:

Makes enough for two 12 – 14 inch galettes.

1-3/4 cups all purpose flour
1/4 cup fine corn meal
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1 tablespoon sugar
2/3 cup well chilled butter cut up in teaspoon size pieces
1/3 – 1/2 cup ice water

The Filling:

3 pounds or so pitted, peeled if desired and sliced peaches or other stone fruits such as, nectarines or apricots
1 - 2 tablespoons flour
4 tablespoons sugar, or to taste

To Finish:

Melted butter for brushing
Sugar for sprinkling on crust
Vanilla ice cream or crème fraîche

To make the dough: Add the flour, cornmeal, salt, and sugar in food processor. Cover and pulse just until combined. Add the chilled butter and cover and process with several pulses until butter is pea-size. Add 1/3 cup ice water while pulsing the machine (don't turn on machine and let it run). Dough should just start to come together. (Sometimes dough needs more water; sometimes less.) It should be crumbly not sticky.

Turn dough onto work surface and quickly bring together into flattened ball. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill for at least 30 minutes to relax gluten and make dough easier to handle. To form galette, roll out on lightly floured work surface into a circle (it doesn't have to be perfectly round). If butter gets warm and soft, pop the dough back in the refrigerator for 15 minutes. Transfer the dough to a parchment-lined pizza pan or baking sheet. Cover with plastic and refrigerate.

To finish the galette: Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Remove the dough from the refrigerator. Leaving a 2-inch border, sprinkle the surface of the dough with 2 tablespoons or so flour and 1 tablespoon of the sugar. Place the fruit slices on the dough. You can arrange them artfully or place them helter-skelter; either way, it will look lovely.

Carefully draw up the dough from the sides and fold it over to form the rim. Make sure there are no cracks where juices can run out during baking. Brush the rim of the dough with melted butter and sprinkle generously with sugar.

Sprinkle the fruit with the remaining 3 tablespoons sugar, or more, depending on sweetness of the fruit.

Bake until well-brown and bubbly, about 40 minutes, rotating as needed so the tart browns evenly. Transfer to a cooling rack so the bottom crust doesn't get soggy. Serve the galette warm with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.



GRILLED PINEAPPLE AND PEACH SUNDAES

Serves 4

Any firm fruit can be grilled successfully. Grilling adds a delicious smoky flavor and the heat of the coals caramelizes both the natural sugars in the fruits as well as the sugar in the honey glaze.

1 small pineapple
Rum-lime glaze (recipe follows)
4 firm ripe peaches, halved and pitted
Vanilla Bean ice cream
1/2 cup shredded sweetened coconut
Mint sprigs for garnish

Cut the pineapple in quarters and remove the core and outer shell. Brush with the glaze and grill over medium low coals, brushing as you turn the pineapple. Depending on the heat this will take 6 - 8 minutes or so. After about 4 minutes, brush the peaches generously with the glaze and grill cut side down until lightly charred but still firm. Cut the fruits into attractive bite size pieces.

In a medium skillet toast the coconut over moderate heat stirring until golden, about 3 minutes. Set coconut aside to cool. Scoop the ice cream into bowls and top with the grilled fruits, a sprinkle of coconut and a drizzle of any left over glaze. Garnish with mint sprigs and serve immediately.

Rum-lime glaze

2/3 cup fragrant honey
1/2 cup dark rum
3 quarter size coins of fresh ginger
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

Combine honey, rum and ginger in a small saucepan, bring to a simmer over moderate heat and reduce by half, about 4 minutes. It will look syrupy. Off heat stir in lime juice. Can be stored covered and refrigerated for up to a week.

John Ash 2025