

GUILT FREE ENTERTAINING

BY SIMONA STEPANCIC

Summer is here, which means barbeque season. We love to spend time outdoors with family and friends, and being outside on a deck under the sunny blue sky is relaxing for the body and the mind.

It is hard not to get tempted with juicy steaks and burgers on the grill. But beware! Grilling meat forms harmful carcinogens, and if you don't want to be exposed to these risky chemicals then fruits and vegetables, meatless burgers, soy patties and meatless hot dogs are the way to go.



GRILLING VEGGIES

Grilling veggies can be joyful and safe, especially during the summer harvest when they are in abundance. Asparagus, zucchini, red peppers, tomatoes, onions, fennel, sweet potatoes, butternut squash, also pineapples, peaches etc. are all fabulous fruits and vegetables for grilling.

ASPARAGUS: delicious with its delicate flavour and texture. It contains folic acid, vitamin C, and glutathione, which have antioxidant and anti-carcinogenic properties.

RED PEPPERS: sweet and juicy with an abundance of vitamin C, and are a good

source of Beta carotene, fibre and B6.

TOMATOES: a source of vitamin C, E, Beta carotene, calcium, magnesium and lycopene, which has a cancer fighting properties. Our body absorption of lycopene is higher when tomatoes are cooked.

ONIONS: contain Allyl sulfides, a sulphur compound that may lower blood pressure. Onions contain quercetin, a potent antioxidant that may lower cholesterol and discourage tumour growth. Onions are anti-viral and anti-bacterial and the good thing is that

they do not lose potency when cooked.

SWEET POTATOES: my favourite! They are high in Beta carotene, and carotenoids such as lutein and zeaxanthin. They are an excellent source of fibre, vitamin C, B6 and manganese.

BUTTERNUT SQUASH: rich in beta-carotene, fibre, vitamin C, and magnesium. Grilling brings out the sweetness. Butternut squash is easy to prepare: scoop out the seeds and cut the squash into squares or chunk size pieces.

WHITE BEAN DIP

White Bean Dip is delicious with all grilled vegetables. Beans provide low fat protein, fibre, magnesium, and iron. Beans lower blood cholesterol, reduce the risks of heart disease and stroke and are excellent for the relief of constipation.

INGREDIENTS:

1 can white Haricots beans
(including water)

2-3 cloves garlic, minced
½ cup fresh parsley, finely chopped
2 tbsp extra virgin oil
½ tsp fresh basil, finely chopped

PREPARATION:

1. Using a blender, mix beans, garlic, parsley and basil until smooth.
2. Add extra virgin olive oil and blend.



QUINOA RISSOTO WITH GRILLED VEGETABLES

Quinoa is an ancient grain-like seed. It contains protein, iron, and high levels of potassium, B vitamins, magnesium, zinc, manganese, some folic acid and copper. Quinoa has a delicate taste and can be substituted for almost any other grain.

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups organic quinoa
4 cups water
½ tsp extra virgin coconut or olive oil
5 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
4 cloves garlic, grilled
½ tsp dry oregano
1 tsp fresh basil, finely chopped
1 tsp fresh rosemary
2 medium zucchini, chopped
2 red peppers, chopped

1 onion, chopped
1 bulb fennel, chopped
Pinch of Celtic sea salt

PREPARATION:

1. Bring quinoa, water and salt to a boil in a non-stick saucepan.
2. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 20 minutes or until the water evaporates.
3. Let stand covered for an additional 10 minutes. Do not open the lid!
4. Preheat the grill.
5. Place chopped zucchini, red peppers, fennel, onions, and garlic in a heavy-duty foil, sprinkle with extra virgin oil, basil, rosemary, and oregano. Grill until soft but not mushy. You can also add some salt for better taste.
6. Mix grilled vegetables with a quinoa.

GRILLED FRUIT

You can place vegetables in a heavy-duty foil, sprinkle with olive oil and your favourite herbs. Dry Oregano, Basil, Marjoram and Rosemary are my favourites. You can also use bamboo skewers, and thread vegetables onto them. They are colourful and fun to make.

Grilled vegetables can be mixed with quinoa or brown basmati rice as a risotto dish, or mixed with brown or wild rice pasta. You can serve grilled vegetables with your favourite dip, or marinate them in lots of garlic and cold pressed extra virgin olive oil for a salad.

If you like having fruit on your barbeque then peaches are delicious. Peaches are a symbol of longevity in China. They are rich in vitamin C and beta-carotene. Just peel, halve and pit peaches and place them on the grill. Brush them with your favourite juice or sauce and sprinkle with cinnamon. You can top with whipped cream or ice cream.

PINEAPPLES: Pineapples are loaded with vitamin C, beta carotene, folic acid and contain the antibacterial enzyme bromelain, which aids digestion of protein and has anti-inflammatory properties.

I encourage you to buy organic fruits and vegetables that are grown in nutrient-rich soil, free of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. Organic food still contains live enzymes, is unprocessed and natural, and does not contain genetically modified organisms. Studies show that organic food produces higher levels of vitamins and minerals and that using chemicals, pesticides and herbicides deprives our foods of vitamins, minerals, enzymes, and the macronutrients.

Enjoying summer parties does not have to be a challenge for healthy eating. Try these suggestions and appreciate the gifts that nature provides for us.