

Private Chef, Catering & Cooking Classes

I'd be delighted to help you with any and all of your celebrations.

Join Me Around the Table for an Eat Well-Do Good Dinner!

Support the fight against Alzheimer's Disease & Enjoy delicious food & fun!

Treat Yourself to an Around the Table Chef's Apron

Cook like a chef or just look like one!

You can find lots more information on the web at www.susannye.com and www.susannye.wordpress.com

For cooking tips, recipes and more, connect with me on FaceBook www.facebook.com/swny or follow me on Twitter at twitter.com/susannye Watch me cook on www.youtube.com/susannye

Contact me at susanwnye@gmail.com

For many, Memorial Day is the de facto start of summer. It doesn't matter that school is still in session, the black flies are still buzzing and summer solstice is still a few weeks away. From sea to shining sea, Memorial Day will be celebrated with that all-American, summer tradition: the cookout.

Guest or host, before that first burger is flipped, there are a few things to consider ...

What to wear? A cookout more or less screams casual which by definition is undefinable. You know that your posh friend, the one who always looks like she stepped out of the pages of *Vogue*, will wear a lovely, new sundress. Meanwhile, your cousin will arrive in raggedy shorts and his favorite Grateful Dead t-shirt. Thank goodness, he's charming. As you stand in front of the closet, don't forget that it's a party. It's okay to be festive and even take it up a notch or two.

What to bring? It's always best to ask what you can bring before showing up with a big bowl of potato salad. Yes, we know your spuds are praised and adored in six counties but that doesn't mean they'll be welcome. No matter how delicious, that potato salad is hardly the perfect side dish for the authentic Korean barbeque that your host has painstakingly prepared.

What's on the menu? Foodies ask about the menu because they love to talk about food. Picky eaters ask because they're worried. They are afraid that the food will be weird or too spicy or too who-knows-what. If you're fussy about food, a cookout is a great opportunity to try something new or different. Embrace the experience and enjoy the adventure!

Allergies are another story. Tell your host about your allergy so he or she can steer you away from the pasta salad with the pine nuts or make your burger without cheese. Nothing puts a damper on a party faster than a trip to the emergency room for anaphylactic shock.

And hosts? Are you a nervous wreck juggling vegetarians and carnivores, allergies and picky eaters? Just remember, you will never please all of the people all of the time. Put together a nice variety of delicious dishes, serve them buffet style and relax. Let everyone help themselves to what they like and pass on what they don't. Who knows, that fussy friend might just find a new favorite.

Can I bring a friend? It never hurts to ask because more often than not, the answer will be yes. That said; your three kids with spouses plus the eleven grandchildren and your sister and brother-in-law from Cincinnati might be a few too many plus-ones. What about my dog? Again, it doesn't hurt to ask but be prepared to make a quick exit if Fido even hints at misbehaving. In case you are wondering, pooping on the lawn, chasing the cat, tipping over the grill and stealing a steak, all definitely qualify as misbehaving.

What to do about the neighbors? Ah, do we invite them or not? Living next door, they'll be hard pressed not to notice the mob of people milling around your backyard. Especially if the music is blaring and smoke is billowing. While you are not necessarily obligated to invite the neighbors, if it's a big bash, it's probably a good idea. After all, they are less likely to call the police about the noise if they help make it.

Have a great cookout and bon appétit!




Grilled Balsamic Vegetables

Beautiful, fresh vegetables, grilled to perfection, will make a great addition to your cookout. Enjoy!

A selection of your favorite vegetables – try any of the following:



Asparagus, trimmed
Green beans, trimmed
Red and yellow bell peppers, cored, seeded and cut in wedges
Thin carrots, trimmed, peeled and blanched
Small eggplants, sliced in about 1/2-inch thick rounds
Fennel bulbs, trimmed and cut in wedges
Large mushroom caps, trimmed
Red onion, sliced in about 1/2-inch thick rounds
Red skin potato, sliced in about 1/2-inch thick rounds
Radicchio, cut in wedges
Scallions, trimmed
Summer squash, sliced on the diagonal about 1/2-inch thick

Sweet potato, sliced in about 1/2-inch thick rounds
Cherry, grape and/or pear tomatoes
Zucchini, sliced on the diagonal about 1/2-inch thick

Olive oil
Balsamic vinegar
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
Reduced Balsamic Vinegar (recipe follows)

Preheat a charcoal or gas grill to high.

Place the vegetables in a large bowl or roasting pan, drizzle with just enough equal parts olive oil and vinegar to lightly coat, season with salt and pepper and toss to combine.

Working in batches if necessary, place vegetables, on the grill and cook until tender-crisp and nicely caramelized, 1-3 minutes per side. You may want to use a grill basket for the tomatoes.

Remove the vegetables from grill and artfully arrange on a large platter, drizzle with Reduced Balsamic Vinegar and serve. *If making ahead, cool to room temperature, cover and refrigerate. Remove from the refrigerator about 30 minutes before serving to bring to room temperature.*



*Another recipe from Susan Nye:
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Reduced Balsamic Vinegar

2 cups balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon honey
1 bay leaf
2-3 sprigs fresh thyme
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Put the balsamic vinegar in a heavy saucepan, whisk in the honey and add the bay leaf and thyme. Bring the vinegar to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for about 30 minutes or until the vinegar is syrupy and has reduced to 2/3-3/4 cup.

Discard the bay leaf and thyme and pour the reduced vinegar through a fine mesh sieve into a heatproof bowl. Cool the vinegar, add the mustard and extra virgin olive oil, season with salt and pepper and whisk to combine.

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Susan Nye – Around the Table at www.susannye.wordpress.com

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