



# A Celebrate the Summer Solstice & Gravlax with Tarragon-Caper Mustard Sauce

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**Saturday, June 21**  
**Sunrise: 5:25 am**  
**Sunset: 8:31 pm**

**15 hours and 6 minutes of sunlight!**

**Oh, how we dreamed of this day back in November, December and January.** Back when gray skies made the dark days of early- and mid-winter even darker. The sun was slow to rise but fast to set. It felt like the day had barely started before the sun slid down behind the hills. Finally, the long wait is over. This Saturday marks the summer solstice. It's the first day of summer and longest day of the year.

**The summer solstice may not be a national holiday**, heck we don't even capitalize it, but it is cause for celebration. Particularly for those of us who live more north than south. Yes, yes, I know that New Hampshire can't really compare to the far reaches of Alaska, Russia or Scandinavia. Except for Alaska, I've been there and, believe me, those guys have my sympathy.

**Spend a few dark December days in Stockholm or Oslo and you'll understand** the joy and excitement that greets June and the white nights of summer. The summer solstice is arguably Sweden's biggest holiday. Some say bigger than Christmas. Unable to limit the festivities to a single day, the Swedes celebrate the solstice with a week of singing, dancing, games and bonfires. Sweden or New Hampshire, after a long, dark winter, it's time to make a little merry in the long light-filled evenings.

**So what does a summer solstice party look like?** Well, it's your party and you can do what you want to ... but I have a few fun ideas! Living in the country, I can't think of a better way to celebrate the start of summer than with a long, lazy picnic.

**Enjoy some of the magic that comes with the longest day.** Let's hope the weather cooperates and you can take your party to the beach. The backyard or deck will also do. Singing, dancing and bonfires are all part of the summer solstice tradition. Before a giant bonfire gets you in trouble, consider a modest fire pit or check with the fire department. Get out the guitars and harmonicas or unearth that old boom box, sing along and dance. Don't let the setting sun drive you indoors. Light votive candles or lanterns and gather around the fire to share tall tales of summers past.

**Think of the sea when you work on your menu.** Forget the all-American hotdogs and hamburgers; prepare a smorgasbord of Scandinavian delicacies. On beaches up and down the coasts of Norway, Sweden and Denmark, merrymakers will be picnicking with North Sea shrimp, herring and gravlax. They'll add lovely salads of baby greens and new potatoes.

**With just a little bit of luck, the first strawberries of summer will be ready.** The season is short so don't hold back! Nibble fresh strawberries with cocktails or whip them into a festive drink and, by all means, include them in dessert. Whether you make a fabulous pie or drizzle them with a little cream, fresh strawberries are a reminder of just how delicious summer is.

Make merry during the long days of summer and bon appétit!



## Gravlax with Tarragon-Caper Mustard Sauce

*At least for foodies, mention Scandinavia and gravlax is one of the first things that comes to mind. I've switched out the more traditional dill for tarragon so feel free to switch back. Enjoy!*

Serves 6 as a main course, 12 or more as an appetizer

1/3 cup brown sugar  
1/4 cup kosher salt  
1 tablespoon freshly ground pepper  
1 tablespoon ground coriander  
2 tablespoons finely chopped shallot or red onion  
1/4 cup roughly chopped tarragon leaves  
About 2 pounds skin-on, center cut salmon



Put the sugar, salt, pepper and coriander in a bowl and whisk to combine. Add the shallot and tarragon and whisk again.

Put the sugar mixture in a large re-sealable plastic bag, add the salmon, seal the bag and shake to coat. Squeeze the air out of the bag. Put the bag in a pan which more or less just fits the salmon, place a plate or cutting board on top of the salmon and weigh it down with a clean brick or 2-3 (28 ounce) cans.

Turning every 12 hours, marinate the salmon for 48 hours. Remove the salmon from the bag and rinse under cold water and pat dry. Thinly slice against the grain at a 45-degree angle. Serve with a dab of Tarragon-Caper Mustard Sauce.

## Tarragon-Caper Mustard Sauce

2 tablespoons capers  
1 tablespoon finely chopped shallot or red onion  
2 tablespoons dry white wine  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste  
1/2 cup sour cream  
1/4 cup Dijon, spicy brown or whole grain mustard or a mix  
3 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon  
Grated zest of 1 lemon

Put the capers, shallot and wine in a blender or small food processor, season with salt and pepper and process to finely chop and combine. Add the sour cream, mustard, tarragon and zest and process to combine. Transfer to a serving bowl, cover and refrigerate at least 30 minutes to combine the flavors.