

May 11, 2016

Strawberries

Sweet, plump, juicy and red, strawberries are synonymous with summer. While we can get strawberries at the grocery store year round, nothing compares to fresh, ripe local berries in the summer. We can easily devour pints by themselves (sometimes with a little bit of whipped cream), but they are excellent to cook with as well, pairing with ingredients like balsamic vinegar, black pepper, cream cheese, almonds and rhubarb.

Add some freshness to your next barbecue with our Strawberry Kale Salad, as featured in our new From the Grill cookbook. Tender baby kale and juicy strawberries are tossed with buttery avocado, toasted walnuts and tangy goat cheese in a sweet vinaigrette made with cider vinegar, grainy mustard and maple syrup. This salad pairs particularly well with grilled chicken, or saucy ribs.

If you're looking for something a little more creative, try our Chilled Strawberry Rhubarb Soup, which is infused with Thai flavours like lemongrass, kaffir lime leaves and ginger. The soup gets a bit of a spicy kick from fresh jalapeño and a pinch of cayenne, but the creamy coconut milk helps to mellow the heat. This flavourful soup will definitely fire up the appetite for the meal ahead.

STRAWBERRY KALE SALAD

Ingredients:

4 tsp apple juice
2 tsp apple cider vinegar
2 tsp finely chopped shallot
1 tsp maple syrup
1 tsp whole grain mustard
¼ tsp salt
¼ tsp freshly ground pepper
3 tbsp grapeseed oil or canola oil
1½ cups sliced strawberries

1 pkg (5 oz/142 g) baby kale
1 ripe avocado, sliced
¼ cup chopped toasted walnuts
¼ cup crumbled soft goat cheese

Method:

1. To prepare dressing, whisk together apple juice, vinegar, shallot, maple syrup, mustard, salt and pepper until combined. Gradually whisk in oil until blended.
2. Combine strawberries, kale, avocado, walnuts and cheese in a bowl.
3. Add dressing and toss to combine. Serve immediately. Serves 6.

***Cook's Note:** Baby kale is more tender and mild in flavour than mature kale. It is often used as a salad green. Look for it in the produce section of grocery stores where packaged greens are sold.*

CHILLED STRAWBERRY RHUBARB SOUP

This sweet summer soup makes a lovely appetizer for a small group.

Ingredients:

1 can (400 mL) coconut milk
1 1/2 cups chopped strawberries
1 cup fresh or frozen sliced rhubarb
1/2 cup water
1/4 cup liquid honey
2 tbsp fresh lime juice
1 tbsp finely chopped fresh ginger
2 kaffir lime leaves or 1 tsp grated lime peel
1 piece lemon grass stalk (2 inch), bruised
1/2 jalapeno pepper, seeded
1/8 tsp salt
Pinch cayenne pepper



Method:

1. Combine all ingredients in a medium non-reactive saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat.
2. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes. Remove from heat; remove and discard lime leaves, lemon grass and jalapeno.
3. Purée mixture in batches in a blender, filling blender no more than half full for each batch.
4. Transfer to a heatproof bowl and cool to room temperature, stirring occasionally. Cover and refrigerate until cold or for up to 24 hours.
5. Stir before serving. *Serves 4 as a starter.*

***Cook's Note:** Kaffir lime leaves are dark green and uniquely shaped. A single leaf looks like two leaves attached together. They can be found fresh, frozen or dried. Look for them in Asian grocery stores.*

Hot peppers cause severe skin and eye irritation. Wear disposable gloves when handling hot peppers and avoid touching any exposed skin.