



July 22, 2015

Patio Dinner: Al Fresco

In Alberta, dining al fresco is an act of defiance. As soon as it's warm enough, we will inhabit our patios and decks as much as possible, knowing that you-know-what is on its way in a few months. We know we should enjoy summer while it lasts.

Here we have a meat and potatoes meal for a patio dinner, easy and bursting with flavour to impress your guests.

For our protein, we have a zippy variation of barbecue, but in place of a tomato-y sauce, we're using mustard as our base and maple syrup for sweetness. The meat is baked in the oven in the liquid, letting the sauce marinate the meat.

The sweet scent of sage evokes the Mediterranean in this recipe for Summer Sage Potatoes. And it cooks in foil on the grill, making cleanup easy -- more time with your refreshing Summer Sipper, a citrusy minty beverage that you can drink straight or with a shot of vodka.

SUMMER SAGE POTATOES

4 cups (1 L) red potato chunks (1 inch/2.5 cm)
1/4 cup (50 mL) sliced green onion
1/2 tsp (2 mL) sage, crumbled
1/2 tsp (2 mL) paprika
1/4 tsp (1 mL) garlic powder
1/4 tsp (1 mL) salt
1/4 tsp (1 mL) freshly ground pepper
2 tbsp (25 mL) butter

Combine all ingredients except butter in a bowl. Place potato mixture in centre of a large piece of heavy-duty foil. Dot with butter. Bring edges of foil together to form a packet; close all edges with tight double folds. Cook over medium heat on natural gas barbecue, turning packet over frequently, for 45 - 50 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Serves 4 - 6.



CHICKEN THIGHS WITH MAPLE MUSTARD GLAZE

1/3 cup (75 mL) maple syrup
1/4 cup (50 mL) coarse grain mustard
1/4 cup (50 mL) chopped green onion
2 tbsp (25 mL) oil
8 skinless chicken thighs

Combine all ingredients except chicken. Arrange chicken in a single layer in a greased baking dish. Pour syrup mixture over chicken. Bake at 425°F (220°C), basting occasionally, for 45 - 50 minutes or until chicken is cooked through. Serves 4.

SUMMER SIPPER

3 cups ice cubes
1/2 cup fresh mint leaves
1/4 cup yuzu juice or fresh lemon juice
12 dashes angostura bitters (about 1/2 tsp)*
8 cups (2 L) ginger ale

Layer ice cubes and mint leaves in a large pitcher. Gently stir ice mixture 6 times to bruise mint leaves. Add yuzu juice and bitters; stir to combine. Add ginger ale and stir to combine. Serve immediately. Serves 10.

Cook's Note: A yuzu is a Japanese citrus fruit. Look for yuzu juice in Asian grocery stores. This drink is also great with vodka. If desired, stir some in before serving.

Angostura bitters were first used as a digestive aid. Today, they are more commonly used for flavouring beverages and foods, and they are also an important ingredient in many cocktails. When added to a beverage or dish, they do not add bitterness but instead act as a flavour enhancer for the other ingredients. Angostura bitters are sold in a small bottle and usually found in the aisle where beverages or carbonated beverages are sold in grocery stores.