

Compliments of Jodee Harris

essential living

406

Sunset Showdown



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June arrives, ushering in a season of endless possibilities. This issue mirrors that vibrant spirit with ideas to ignite your summer. Embark on a captivating journey through America's breathtaking sunsets, painting the sky in fiery hues from Washington to Florida. Channel that energy inward and revisit childhood dreams by discovering just how easy it is to get into gymnastics, even as an adult!

Fuel your acrobatic energy into home improvement with 10 budget-friendly projects under \$100, transforming your space into a masterpiece. After cartwheels and makeovers, treat yourself with oven-free desserts, beating the summer heat. Indulge in our no-bake delights that make you forget the heat wave.

Consider fueling your adventures by climbing the caffeine ladder. Every sip brings you closer to pure caffeine bliss, ready to propel you through your summer escapades.

— From the Publisher



What's your go-to music for relaxation?

Scan the QR code to cast your vote!



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REVIVE THE
JOY OF FAMILY
BONDING
WITH A
**CLASSIC
GAME
NIGHT!**



Strengthen connections and
create lasting memories as you
enjoy **quality time together.**

PICTIONARY: Unleash your artistic
skills in this drawing and guessing
game. It's a hilarious way to bring out
creativity and teamwork.

UNO: A classic card game that's easy
to learn and guarantees hours of
entertainment for all ages. Watch out
for those tricky wild cards!

CODENAMES: Exercise your word
association skills in this strategic and
suspenseful game.

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No-Bake Desserts

No-bake desserts are often overlooked, but they are truly underrated gems. They are a delicious way to satisfy your sweet tooth without having to turn on the oven. Plus, most recipes only need a handful of ingredients and are easier to prepare than traditional baked goods, making them perfect for hot summer days or busy weeknights.

From an indulgent chocolate tart to a refreshing mango treat, we've whipped up four decadent desserts that will hit the spot without you having to break a sweat.

Chocolate Tart

A crunchy chocolate crust with a silky ganache filling makes this chocolate tart truly irresistible.

Prep time: 20 minutes

Chill time: 4 hours

Yield: 12 slices

INGREDIENTS

For the Crust:

- 32 Oreo cookies
- 6 tbs. unsalted butter, melted

For the Filling:

- 1 c. bittersweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 1 c. milk chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 1 c. heavy cream
- ¼ c. unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Crust:

1. In a blender or food processor, pulse Oreo cookies, with filling, until finely ground.
2. Transfer crumbs to a medium bowl, add melted butter and mix until combined and moistened. Press the mixture onto the bottom and up the sides of a 9" tart pan or springform pan. Place it in the fridge for 30 minutes to firm up.

For the Filling:

1. Place chopped chocolate in a medium microwave-safe bowl and set aside.
2. In a small saucepan, heat the cream and butter over medium-low heat until tiny bubbles just start to form around the edges of the pan. Remove from the heat and pour mixture over the chocolate. Using a rubber spatula, slowly stir the mixture until melted and smooth.
3. Pour mixture over chilled crust and refrigerate until set, at least four hours.

Prep time: 15 minutes

Chill time: 2 hours

Yield: 20 squares

INGREDIENTS

For the Base:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ c. salted butter, melted
- 2 c. pretzel twists, finely crushed
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c. powdered sugar
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ c. creamy peanut butter

For the Topping:

- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c. semi-sweet chocolate chips
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. creamy peanut butter
- 1 tbsp. shortening

Optional Toppings:

- Chopped peanuts
- Mini pretzels
- Chocolate drizzle
- Sea salt

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Base:

1. Line a 9×13" pan with foil and spray with cooking spray.
2. Place melted butter, pretzels, powdered sugar and one cup peanut butter in a large bowl. Mix by hand until combined. Firmly press into prepared pan.

For the Topping:

1. Place chocolate chips, the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup peanut butter and shortening in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat in microwave on HIGH in 20-second increments, stirring between each, until melted and smooth. Pour over bars and spread with a spatula to evenly coat.
2. Garnish with toppings, place in refrigerator and let set for at least two hours before cutting into bars.



Sweet & Salty Bars

These no-bake peanut butter bars are the perfect combination of salty peanut butter and sweet chocolate!



Strawberry Pretzel Bars

Layers of creamy, crunchy, sweet and salty make this refreshing dessert a hit for any occasion!

Prep time: 30 minutes | Chill time: 3.5 hours | Yield: 12 servings

INGREDIENTS

For the Crust:

- 2½ c. pretzels, crushed
- 3 tbsp. white sugar
- ¾ c. butter, melted
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract

For the Filling:

- 1 8-oz. package cream cheese, softened
- ¾ c. white sugar
- 1 8-oz. container Cool Whip, thawed

For the Strawberry Topping:

- 2 3-oz. packages strawberry flavored Jell-O
- 2 c. boiling water
- 2 10-oz. packages frozen strawberries

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Crust:

1. In a large bowl, stir together the crushed pretzels, sugar, melted butter and vanilla extract until well combined. Press into the bottom of a 9×13" pan. Chill in fridge until completely cooled.

For the Filling:

1. Mix cream cheese and sugar with a hand mixer on medium until fluffy. Gently fold in Cool Whip until no streaks of cream cheese remain.
2. Spread mixture over cooled pretzels, spreading to the edges of the dish to prevent Jell-O from soaking through. Refrigerate for at least one hour.

For the Strawberry Topping:

1. In a large mixing bowl combine Jell-O and boiling water until the powder is dissolved. Allow mixture to sit until it reaches room temperature.
2. Stir in still-frozen strawberries to room temperature Jell-O. Slowly pour and spread over cream cheese layer and refrigerate until Jell-O sets, at least two hours.



Mango Cheesecake

INGREDIENTS

For the Graham Cracker Crust:

- 7 oz. graham cracker crumbs
- 6 tbsp. butter, melted

For the Cheesecake Filling:

- 2 c. heavy whipping cream, chilled
- 16 oz. cream cheese, room temperature
- 1¼ c. powdered sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 c. mango pulp
- 5 tsp. gelatin powder
- ½ c. water, room temperature

For the Mango Jelly:

- ¾ c. mango puree
- ¾ tsp. gelatin powder
- ¼ c. cold water
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice

Optional Toppings:

- 1 mango, cubed
- Mint leaves



A mousse-like cheesecake that is sure to brighten your day.

Prep time: 30 minutes | Chill time: 7 hours | Yield: 12 servings

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Graham Cracker Crust:

1. Line the bottom of a 9" springform pan with parchment paper. Butter the sides and the top of the parchment paper.
2. In a bowl, mix graham cracker crumbs with the melted butter until well combined. Press the mixture firmly down into the base of the pan. Chill the base until firm.

For the Cheesecake Filling:

1. In a microwave-safe bowl, sprinkle the gelatin over the surface of the water. Stir lightly to partly dissolve and let sit for 5-10 minutes. After the gelatin has absorbed, microwave until completely melted. Set aside.
2. In a chilled large bowl, whisk the heavy cream with ½ cup powdered sugar and one teaspoon vanilla extract until it thickens and stiff peaks form. Be careful not to over mix.
3. In a separate bowl, beat the cream cheese for 2-3 minutes until smooth. Add one teaspoon of vanilla extract, ¾ cup of powdered sugar and mango pulp. Mix until well combined.
4. While the mixer is running add in the gelatin mixture and beat until everything is well mixed.

5. Fold in the whipped cream mixture into the mango filling in 3-4 additions, mixing gently and making sure to keep as much air as possible.
6. Pour the cheesecake filling evenly over the base. Chill for 3-4 hours.

For the Mango Jelly:

1. Sprinkle the gelatin powder into the water in a microwave-safe bowl. Stir lightly to partly dissolve and let sit for 5-10 minutes. After the gelatin has absorbed, microwave until completely melted.
2. Whisk in the mango pulp and lemon juice and pour mixture over the cooled cheesecake layer. Refrigerate for 2-3 hours or until the mango jelly has set.

Unmolding and Decorating:

1. Release the spring form. Transfer the cake onto a serving platter and peel off the cake collar.
2. Decorate with cubed mango and mint leaves, then serve.

Wallet-Smart Renovations

Home improvements can do wonders for your living space, making it more comfortable and functional while also boosting the overall look. And the best part? Enhancing your home doesn't have to cost a fortune. These 10 affordable home upgrades can each be done under \$100, so you can enhance your living space without breaking the bank.

1

GIVE YOUR FANS A FRESH SPIN

Ceiling fans are a great way to circulate air, keeping your home cool in the summer and warm in the winter. But over time, they can start to look dated and dusty. A fresh coat of paint on the blades can make a big difference. For an even more dramatic update, consider adding new fan pulls or stylish light kits.

2

KEEP THE COLD OUT

Seal doors and windows with self-adhesive weather stripping around the edges of the openings to help reduce drafts and make your home more energy-efficient and comfortable.





3

DIY A FRAME

If you have some spare wood and know how to cut a 45-degree angle, you can easily DIY a frame around your builder-grade bathroom mirror. This is a simple project that can make a big difference in the overall look of your bathroom.



4

STOP THE SLAM

Doorstop hinge pins are a quick and easy way to prevent doors from closing on their own. The pins fit easily into door hinges and can be set to your desired resistance.

5

CARPET CLEANING

Give your home a breath of fresh air by deep cleaning your carpets. Removing dirt, stains and allergens not only enhances indoor air quality but also refreshes your entire space.



6

MAKE AN ENTRANCE

Boost your home's curb appeal by repainting your front door. Choose a bold color to make a statement or opt for a timeless classic shade.

7

OUTLET AND SWITCH PLATE UPDATE

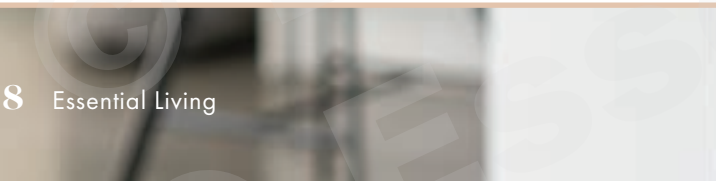
Default beige outlet covers often look outdated and dirty. Luckily, you can find a variety of styles and finishes to match your décor for a quick update.



8

RE-CAULKING THE BATHROOM

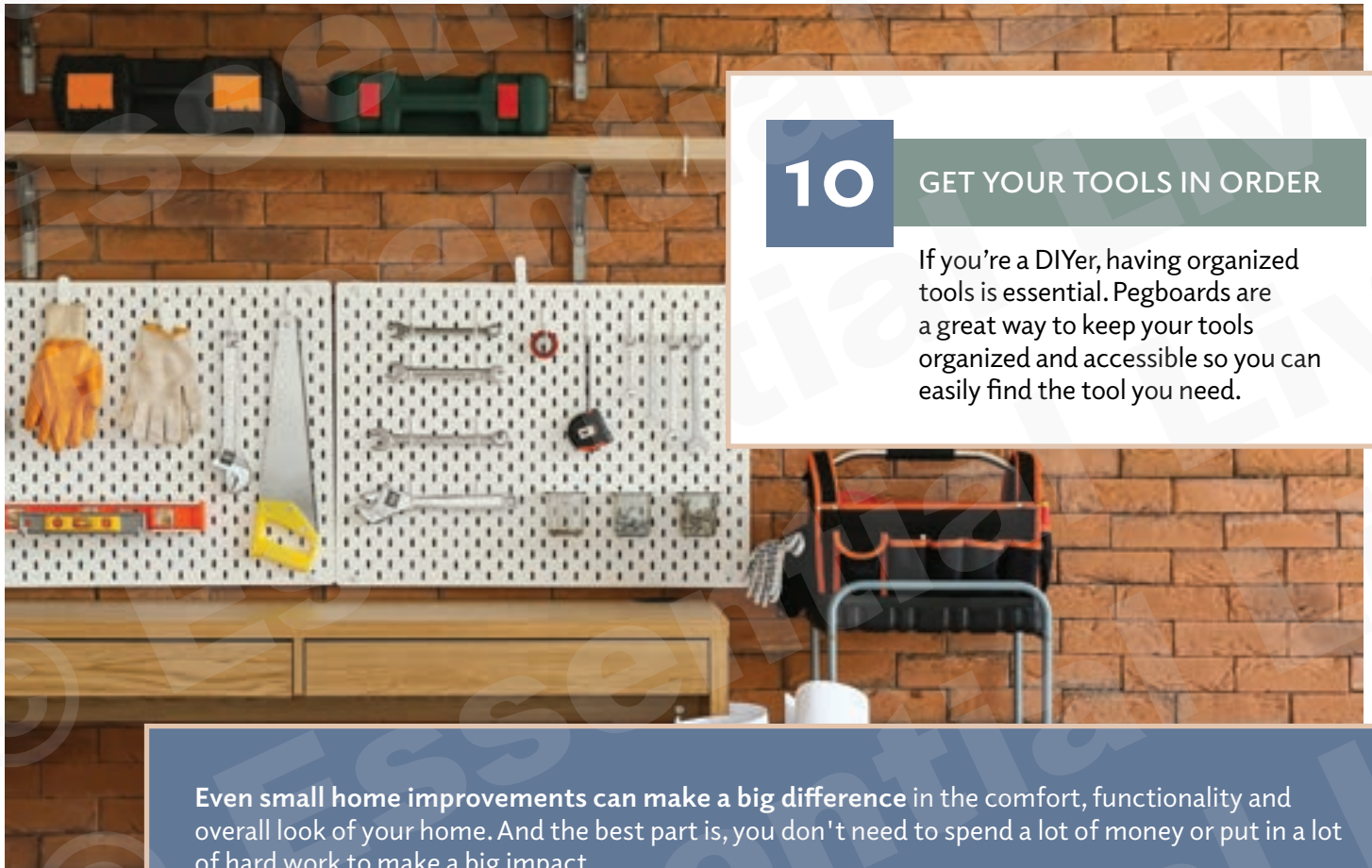
Over time, caulk can crack and mold. Re-caulking not only safeguards against water damage but also gives your bathroom a polished appearance.



9

ELEVATE YOUR ADDRESS

If your house numbers are small, faded or difficult to see from the street, consider upgrading to larger, more reflective numbers. You can also choose a contrasting color to make your house numbers stand out against your home's exterior. There are a variety of house number styles and finishes available to choose from, so you can find the perfect ones to match your home's décor.



10

GET YOUR TOOLS IN ORDER

If you're a DIYer, having organized tools is essential. Pegboards are a great way to keep your tools organized and accessible so you can easily find the tool you need.

Even small home improvements can make a big difference in the comfort, functionality and overall look of your home. And the best part is, you don't need to spend a lot of money or put in a lot of hard work to make a big impact.

Don't Let the Sun Ruin Your Fun



Sunshine is essential for life, but too much exposure can do more harm than good. Here are a few quick tips for protecting your skin from the sun:

- 1. Wear clothing that covers your skin** as much as possible, such as long sleeves and pants. Choose clothing made from tightly woven fabrics that block UV rays.
- 2. Wear a wide-brimmed hat.** A wide-brimmed hat will shade your face, neck and ears from the sun.
- 3. Wear sunglasses.** Sunglasses protect your eyes from UV rays and reduce your risk of cataracts and other eye conditions. Choose sunglasses that block 99–100% of UVA and UVB rays.
- 4. Seek shade.** Stay in the shade as much as possible, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are strongest.
- 5. Apply sunscreen liberally.** Choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher and reapply it every two hours, or more often if you are swimming or sweating.

6. Don't forget your lips! Your lips are just as susceptible to sunburn as the rest of your skin, so be sure to apply lip balm with an SPF.

7. Choose the right sunscreen. In addition to wanting an SPF of at least 30, there are a few other factors to consider when choosing a sunscreen:

- **BROAD SPECTRUM:** Opt for "broad spectrum" sunscreens to safeguard against both UVA and UVB rays.
- **WATER RESISTANCE:** If swimming or sweating, go for a water-resistant sunscreen, which will be labeled for either 40 or 80 minutes of protection.
- **SKIN TYPE:** For sensitive skin, choose hypoallergenic sunscreens with physical blockers like zinc oxide or titanium dioxide.



SUNSCREEN VS. SUNBLOCK

Sunscreen and sunblock are both used to protect the skin from the sun's UV rays. However, there is a slight difference between the two. Sunscreen works by absorbing or reflecting UV rays, while sunblock works by creating a physical barrier that prevents UV rays from reaching the skin.

In general, sunscreen is more popular than sunblock because it is easier to apply and does not leave a white cast on the skin. However, sunblock may be a better option for people with sensitive skin or who are prone to allergies.



PAINTED SKIES

Discovering the best sunsets across the USA

The United States is home to some of the most breathtaking sunset spots in the world. From the majestic peaks of the Rocky Mountains to the pristine beaches of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, there is no shortage of places to witness the natural beauty of a setting sun.

MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK



WASHINGTON



For a sunset experience unlike any other, head to Mount Rainier National Park in Washington. The mountain's majestic presence is accentuated as the sun sets behind it, casting an alpenglow on its snow-capped peaks. Reflection Lakes and Sunrise Point offer prime locations to capture this breathtaking spectacle.

KEY WEST

 FLORIDA

Known as the southernmost point in the continental United States, Key West offers some of the most awe-inspiring sunsets in the country. Head to Mallory Square, where street performers and local vendors create a festive atmosphere, all set against the backdrop of the vibrant sunset. The sky here transforms into a kaleidoscope of warm oranges and pinks, creating a truly unforgettable sight.



GRAND

CANYON

 ARIZONA

Watching the sun dip below the horizon at the Grand Canyon is an experience that words can scarcely capture. The towering rock formations and the vastness of the canyon provide a dramatic canvas for the setting sun. Mather Point and Yaki Point are particularly popular spots to take in the mesmerizing hues of red, orange and purple.



MONUMENT VALLEY

Monument Valley's iconic red sandstone buttes and mesas are a quintessential symbol of the American Southwest. As the sun sets, these natural wonders take on an ethereal quality, casting long shadows and creating a surreal desert landscape. The View Hotel and Artist's Point are excellent spots to take in this cinematic sunset.



UTAH/ARIZONA

CHARLESTON



SOUTH CAROLINA

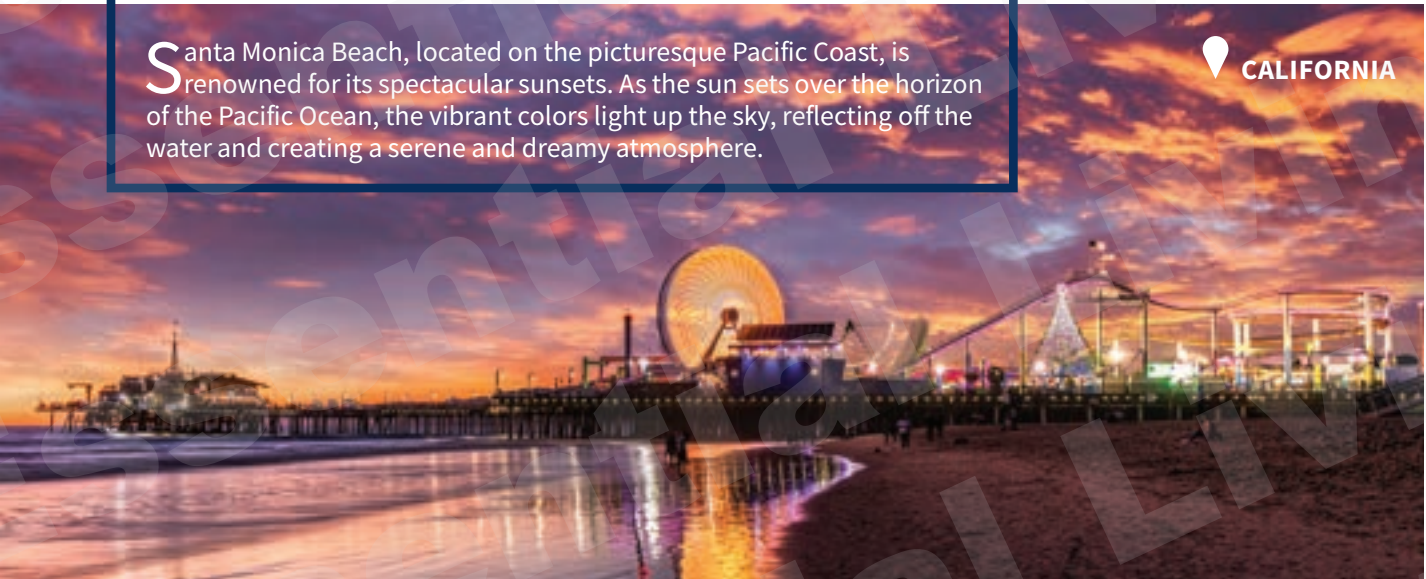


Charleston's historic waterfront and cobblestone streets provide a charming backdrop for sunset enthusiasts. The Battery and Waterfront Park offer fantastic views of the sun setting over the harbor, illuminating the pastel-colored antebellum homes and the Ravenel Bridge in a warm glow.

SANTA MONICA

Santa Monica Beach, located on the picturesque Pacific Coast, is renowned for its spectacular sunsets. As the sun sets over the horizon of the Pacific Ocean, the vibrant colors light up the sky, reflecting off the water and creating a serene and dreamy atmosphere.

CALIFORNIA



Acadia National Park on the rugged coast of Maine offers a captivating coastal sunset experience. One of the best places to witness this natural spectacle is at the Bass Harbor Head Lighthouse. As the sun dips below the horizon, the iconic lighthouse stands tall, silhouetted against the warm, fading light, creating a truly magical atmosphere.

MAINE



ACADIA NATIONAL PARK



 CALIFORNIA

PFEIFFER BEACH BIG SUR

Pfeiffer Beach is a secluded beach in Big Sur with stunning natural beauty. The beach is known for its purple sand, towering rock formations and dramatic sunsets. As the sun sets, the sky and the ocean are transformed into a canvas of vibrant colors, creating a truly unforgettable sight. The best place to watch the sunset at Pfeiffer Beach is from the beach itself, but there are also several hiking trails in the area that offer elevated views.

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

Glacier National Park is home to some of the most stunning scenery in the United States, and one of the best places to experience this beauty is at Wild Goose Island Viewpoint. This spot offers stunning views of St. Mary Lake and the surrounding mountains. As the sun sets, the sky is covered in a vibrant array of colors, reflecting off the lake and the island. The result is a truly breathtaking sight. The viewpoint is a popular spot for photographers and tourists alike, and it is easy to see why.



 MONTANA

Caffeine Ladder

Caffeine drinks are a popular choice for people who need a pick-me-up, whether it's to get through a long workday or to power through a workout. Caffeine can help to improve your energy levels, alertness and focus. It can also improve your mood and cognitive function.

From a little energy boost to a jolt of pure caffeine, these drinks will get you through whatever the day brings.

Iced Matcha Latte

Indulge in a refreshing and invigorating delight.

Level: About 70 mg/serving – just enough to rev up your day.

Prep time: 5 minutes | **Yield:** 2 servings

Ingredients

- 2 tsp. matcha powder
- 2 tbsp. hot water (not boiling)
- 2 c. milk of choice
- 2 tbsp. honey or sweetener of your choice
- Ice cubes

Instructions

1. Sift the matcha powder into a small bowl and add the water. Whisk vigorously to combine until there are no clumps.
2. Prepare two glasses with ice cubes. Set aside.
3. Combine milk, matcha mixture and sweetener of choice in a cocktail shaker. Shake until well combined. Pour over the prepared glasses, dividing it evenly.



Coffee Soda



Who says you can't have your coffee and soda at the same time?

Level: About 100 mg/serving — a sudden surge in power, perfect for those who want a bit more pep in their step.

Prep time: 10 minutes

Inactive time: 12 hours

Yield: 2 servings

Ingredients

For the Cold Brew:

- 1 c. whole coffee beans
- 4 c. water

For the Coffee Soda:

- ½ c. cold brew coffee
- ½ c. sparkling water or soda water
- 1-2 tbsp. simple syrup
- Ice cubes
- Fresh lemon or lime slices for garnish (optional)

Instructions

For the Cold Brew:

1. Grind coffee beans on the coarsest setting on your grinder, until grounds look like coarse cornmeal.
2. Transfer the coffee grounds to the container you're using to make the cold brew. Pour the water over top. Stir gently with a long-handled spoon to make sure the grounds are thoroughly saturated with water.
3. Cover container with a lid and steep in the refrigerator for about 12 hours.
4. After steeping, line a strainer with a cheesecloth and place it over a large measuring bowl. Pour the coffee into the strainer. Set aside strained coffee.

For the Coffee Soda:

1. Prepare two glasses with ice cubes.
2. Divide and pour ½ cup of cold brew coffee into each glass.
3. Add ½ cup of sparkling water or soda water to each glass.
4. Add in the simple syrup and stir until fully combined.
5. If desired, garnish your coffee soda with fresh lemon or lime slices.

Caramel Macchiato

Treat your taste buds to a symphony of rich espresso, velvety steamed milk and a luscious caramel drizzle!

Level: About 130 mg/serving – cruise control – a little nudge to set you cruising smoothly into your tasks.

Prep time: 10 minutes | **Cook time:** 3 minutes | **Yield:** 2 servings

Ingredients

For the Caramel Sauce:

- 1 tbsp. butter
- 2 tbsp. heavy cream
- 2 tbsp. brown sugar
- ¼ tsp. vanilla

For the Coffee:

- 1 tbsp. vanilla syrup
- 4 shots espresso
- 1¼ c. milk, steamed
- Whipped cream (optional)

Instructions

For the Caramel Sauce:

1. Melt the butter in a small saucepan over medium heat.
2. Stir in heavy cream and brown sugar until well mixed.
3. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for 2-3 minutes until thickened, stirring occasionally.
4. Remove from heat and mix in vanilla.

For the Coffee:

1. Pour the vanilla syrup into the bottom of a glass.
2. Steam or froth the milk and pour it over the espresso or coffee.
3. Pour the espresso through the foam.
4. Top with whipped cream and a drizzle of caramel sauce.



Red Eye Coffee

A bold and eye-opening caffeine kick!

Level: About 165 mg/serving – Nitro overdrive – get ready to be launched into the stratosphere!

Prep time: 5 minutes

Yield: 2 servings

Ingredients

- 2 c. freshly brewed coffee
- 2 espresso shots

Instructions

1. Start by brewing a cup of coffee to desired strength.
2. While the coffee is brewing, prepare a shot of espresso using an espresso machine or a Moka pot.
3. Once the coffee is ready, pour it into a cup or mug.
4. Immediately add the shot of espresso to the brewed coffee. Give it a quick stir to combine the two coffee elements.





Flipping Fantastic

A gentle intro to
gymnastics for grown-ups

When most of us hear the word "gymnastics" we immediately think about gold-winning Olympic gymnast Simone Biles flying through the air, flipping and twisting more times than we can count.

Luckily, you don't need to be an elite-level athlete fearlessly launching over vaults and swinging around bars to participate in the sport. The core foundations of gymnastics — balance, strength, flexibility and mental focus — are skills that can be learned, practiced and mastered even as an adult. In fact, over the last couple of years, amateur adult gymnastics has become increasingly popular as a challenging full-body training method.



The International Gymnastics Federation identifies eight official disciplines of gymnastics. Here's a quick look at each.



Women's Artistic Gymnastics:

This is one of the most popular types of gymnastics and is a feature sport in the Olympics. Women compete on four apparatuses — vault, uneven bars, balance beam and floor exercise — while showing flexibility, strength, balance and, of course, artistry.

Men's Artistic Gymnastics:

Male gymnasts compete on six apparatuses — floor exercise, pommel horse, still rings, vault, parallel bars and horizontal bars — in this widely popular discipline. Like the women's competition, men must also show strength, precision, balance and artistry while flying through the air.

Rhythmic Gymnastics:

An apparatus such as a hoop, ball, club, ribbon or rope is thrown into the air while the gymnast performs acrobatic moves before catching the object. The routine is set to music and requires extreme concentration and precise timing.

Trampoline:

This discipline became part of the Olympics in 2000 and is all about high-flying, thrilling moves as athletes launch themselves as high as possible into the air.

Tumbling:

Athletes jump, twist and flip down a 25-meter long track as they are judged on the difficulty and form of their routine.

Acrobatic Gymnastics:

A team of two to four gymnasts performs routines that consist of incredible balance, strength and trust.

Parkour:

Participants (or traceurs) use elements in an environment to move from one point to the next in the most efficient and fastest way possible. Moves can include climbing over fences and jumping over obstacles.

If those all sound a little too daunting, don't worry, the last type is made for anyone curious about becoming a gymnast.

Gymnastics for All:

As the name implies, this type provides opportunities for all ages and skill levels. Gymnastics for All focuses on the general skills needed for the sport including important movement patterns, as well as overall health and fitness.



Back to Basics

Before you go for the round-off back handspring, it is important to master the foundational exercises and skills. Gymnastic exercises are focused on making the body as strong and flexible as possible. Here is a quick overview of some of the common exercises to get you in tiptop shape.

Warmup — Foam rolling, kneeling rockers and bridges

Stretching — Pike stretch, straddle stretch and inverted leg stretches

Core — Hollow body hold, arched body hold and v-ups

Strength — Calf raises, pull-ups and chin-ups

Though advanced skills will vary depending on your goals, some foundational skills include handstands, backbends and forward/backward rolls. Splits and handstands are also critical foundational moves as you move on to more advanced levels.

If you plan on doing somersaults or flips in the future, you can begin to work on perfecting your tuck too!

Just remember, to master any of these skills properly and safely, find a coach to help guide you.

“... amateur adult gymnastics has become increasingly popular as a challenging full-body training method.”

Getting Started

Taking an in-person class is the best way to get started. Most adult gymnastic classes are just as much about having fun as they are about learning and can be a great way to make new friends! A major bonus to classes is the access to proper equipment and a knowledgeable coach to guide you along the way.

And don't worry, leotards aren't typically required, so shorts or leggings with a t-shirt will work just fine!

Gymnastics Centers

Use the USA Gymnastics finder tool to locate a club in your local area. usagym.org/pages/find/gym.html

CrossFit Gyms

Gymnastics is one of the three foundational modalities of CrossFit. Check out your local CrossFit gym and try booking a class that's focused on the gymnastics aspect of this training method.

The YMCA

Some YMCAs may offer foundational gymnastics courses for adults. Though they may not have the big foam pit, they'll still have other equipment and can help you build a strong foundation for success.

If you can't find any in-person opportunities in your area, online classes can be a great resource for helping you understand the basics and giving you a general framework for exercises.

Simone Biles' MasterClass: Gymnastics Fundamentals
www.masterclass.com/classes/simone-biles-teaches-gymnastics-fundamentals

Gymnasticbodies offers free workout samples for beginners. You can also subscribe to the premium version to access different series based on your skill and fitness level. Gymnasticbodies.com

Competition

With the popularity of adult gymnastics growing, there are more opportunities to compete. Like the classes, most are geared towards the recreational side of gymnastics, making meets much more attainable and enjoyable for participants. Who knows, maybe you'll come home with the gold!





A Counterintuitive Guide to Boosting Your Mood

Sometimes, a simple shake-up in your routine can do wonders for your mood. The good news is, unexpected ways to add feel-good moments to your day-to-day life abound.



Listen to Sad Music

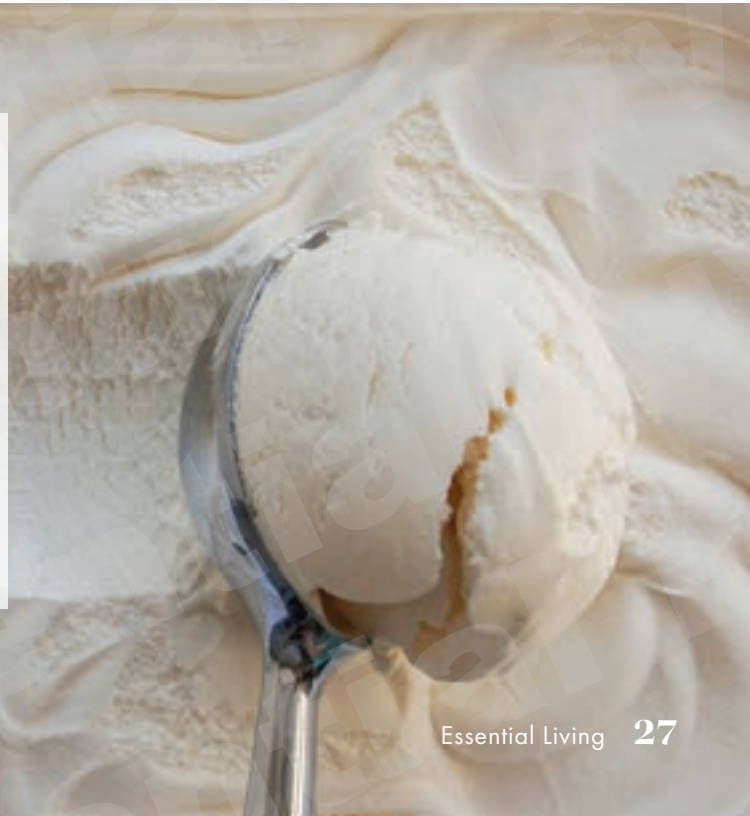
You might think that listening to sad music would only drag you down into melancholy, but surprisingly, it can have the opposite effect. Sad music can serve as a cathartic release, allowing you to connect with your emotions, ultimately giving you a little mood boost. Haunting melodies and poignant lyrics can be a comforting companion!

Schedule Time to Contemplate

Spending some time alone with your thoughts may seem like the LAST place you want to be for a little mood boost. However, setting aside dedicated alone time, outside the world of clamoring obligations not only lets you put in some work on yourself, it also can add pep to the rest of your day.

Get Into Your Feels

Suppressing your emotions is a recipe for discontent. So even if you're NOT feeling super chipper, an unexpected approach to improving your mood is to simply: Go with it. Whether it's wallowing in your favorite pint of ice cream or shouting into a pillow, letting your feelings wash over you in a (somewhat) constructive way helps you clear the decks and can boost your mood.





Stop Chasing Perfection

The relentless pursuit of perfection will inevitably lead to disappointment. Chasing that fairy-tale life you see on Instagram can lead to unmet expectations, unfair social comparisons and overall lameness. Try to appreciate your current circumstances and acknowledge how far you've come. Looking for happy moments is great, but a relentless need for perfection will lower your mood.

Take a Break From Your Favorite Things

Have you ever noticed how much more you appreciate something after being separated from it for a while? Whether it's that daily cup of coffee or binge-watching your favorite show, taking a break from your favorite things can rekindle your appreciation. By temporarily stepping away, you'll rediscover the joy these simple pleasures can bring.





Learn to Say “No”

In our eagerness to please others, we often overcommit ourselves, leading to stress and burnout. Learning to say “no” when necessary is a powerful act of self-care. Setting boundaries and prioritizing your well-being allows you to create a more balanced and fulfilling life.



Challenge Yourself

Venturing beyond your comfort zone to learn a new skill or confront your fears might not immediately elicit joy; in fact, it can be daunting. However, by persevering through challenges, you’ll cultivate a profound sense of achievement and personal development, paving the way for enduring contentment.

Finding ways to uplift your mood doesn’t always require grand gestures; sometimes, it’s the small, unexpected changes that make the biggest difference.

NOTE: This article does not contain medical advice and is intended for informational purposes only. It isn’t a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment.

VISUAL GUIDE TO

DRAGONS

For centuries, dragons have captured our imaginations, reigning supreme in folklore and fantasy realms. Although fire-breathing behemoths of myth may not exist, there are some creatures that fully live up to the dragon name they carry. These extraordinary creatures blur the lines between myth and reality, captivating us with their unique features and enchanting abilities.

KOMODO DRAGON

DIET: Carnivore

AVERAGE LIFE SPAN: Up to 30 years

LENGTH: 10 feet

WEIGHT: 330 pounds

Komodo dragons, the largest lizards in the world, are native to Indonesia. These patient carnivores wait in tall grass and bushes for unsuspecting victims to pass by. After delivering a lethal dose of venom through their razor-sharp bite, they use their tongues to sniff out the fallen prey, which may take up to 24 hours to succumb to the venom.



GILA MONSTER (PRONOUNCED HEE-LUH)

DIET: Bird eggs, small mammals

AVERAGE LIFE SPAN: Up to 40 years

LENGTH: 20 inches

The Gila lizard, the largest native lizard in the United States, spends about 95% of its time underground, only coming out to catch a meal and some sun.

Despite being one of the few poisonous lizards in the world, their lethargic pace makes them more prone to use their venom as a defense mechanism against predators rather than for hunting prey.



DRACO LIZARD (FLYING DRAGON)

DIET: Ants and termites

LENGTH: Up to 8.4 inches (including tail)

AVERAGE LIFE SPAN: Up to 8 years

There are over 40 species of flying dragons, all of which have elongated ribs that unfurl into wings when they need a quick escape or are trying to impress a potential mate. Using their long, slender tails to steer themselves, they can glide up to 30 feet across the jungles of Southeast Asia and Southern India.



REGAL HORNED LIZARD

DIET: Ants and other small insects

LENGTH: 5 inches

AVERAGE LIFE SPAN: 5-10 years

You do not want to get on the bad side of this lizard, whose menacing appearance is just the beginning. Their disappearing act is second to none, with the ability to blend right into their surroundings with a quick change of color. If that doesn't throw their predator off, they can inflate themselves like a balloon in hopes they will make themselves look too big to eat.

If all else fails, they unleash a nightmarish surprise – squirting blood from their eyes directly into the mouth of their enemy, creating a taste so repugnant that even the most vicious hunters lose their appetite.



LEAFY SEADRAGON

DIET: Plankton

ESTIMATED LIFE SPAN: 7-10 years

LENGTH: Up to 14 inches

The leafy seadragon is an enchanting marine species that hails from the coastal waters of southern and western Australia. Unlike the traditional image of a dragon, the leafy seadragon more closely resembles a piece of drifting seaweed. Their leaf-like appendages, which cover their body, help them blend seamlessly into their underwater surroundings, making them almost invisible to predators and prey alike.



FRILLED LIZARD

DIET: Carnivore

AVERAGE LIFE SPAN: Up to 20 years

SIZE: 3 feet

Frill-necked lizards spend most of their days hanging out in trees, occasionally venturing down to snack on insects and even small lizards. When threatened, they open their mouths and unfurl the pleated skin flap around their heads, hissing and snapping their jaws to intimidate their attacker. If this fails, they turn and run, their frills still flared, until they reach the safety of a tree.



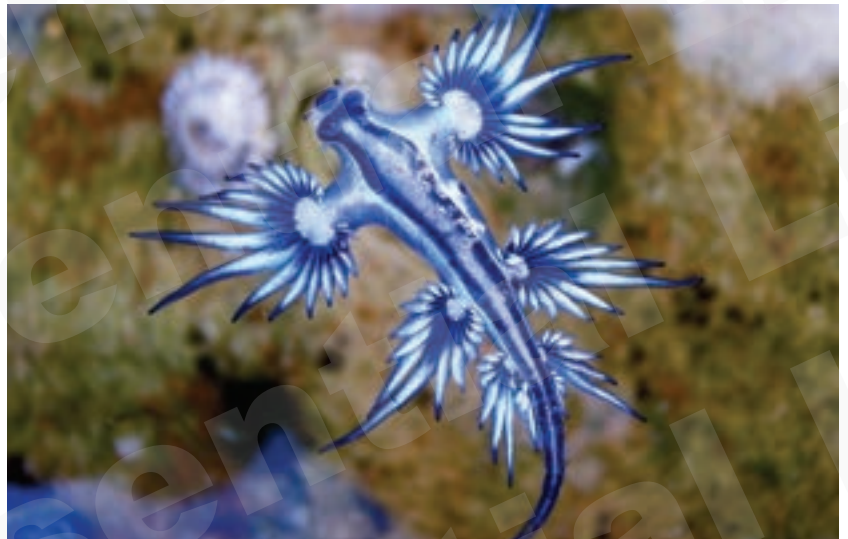
BLUE DRAGON SEA SLUG

DIET: Venomous organisms

LENGTH: Less than 3 cm

ESTIMATED LIFE SPAN: 1 year

The blue dragon sea slug is a tiny, marine creature that looks like something out of a fairy tale. Despite its tiny size, these sea slugs are carnivorous and even feed on the deadly Portuguese Man o' War. Their finger-like structures store the stinging cells of their prey to use for their own defense, making them dangerous to handle.





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Describe a
moment from
your day that
**brought you
joy** and explore
why it had that
impact on you.

Write your thoughts below.

OVERLOADED S'MORES POPCORN



COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

YIELD: 10 CUPS

TWO CLASSIC TREATS IN ONE!

INGREDIENTS

- 10 c. caramel popped popcorn, homemade or store-bought
- 2 c. Golden Grahams cereal
- 2 c. mini marshmallows
- 1 c. chocolate chips, melted + ½ cup for add-ins

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large bowl, combine the popcorn and Golden Grahams cereal.
2. On a large piece of parchment paper, drizzle the melted chocolate chips. Immediately spread the popcorn mixture over top, making a single layer. Let harden.
3. Break the mixture into pieces and add in mini marshmallows and chocolate chips.
4. Transfer to a bowl and serve!



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NO-BAKE PEANUT BUTTER OAT SQUARES



INGREDIENTS

- 2 c. creamy peanut butter
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c. honey
- 3 c. rolled oats

Prep time: 10 minutes

Chill time: 1 hour

Servings: 16

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a medium saucepan, melt peanut butter and honey together over medium heat.
2. Remove from heat and stir in oats until fully combined.
3. Press into an 8x8 pan lined with parchment paper.
4. Place in refrigerator until firm, about an hour. Slice and serve!



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