

Compliments of Jodee Harris

essential living

404

Get Lost in a
Sea of Color



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The gentle warmth of spring has arrived, bringing with it the opportunity for new adventures and discoveries. Get ready to embark on an enchanting journey through a sea of colors as we wander through the country's best flower fields. From serene valleys to vibrant alpine meadows, each stop promises to rejuvenate your spirit and dissolve the remnants of winter's chill.

Bring the invigorating sense of renewal back home as you discover home improvement projects that will upgrade your living space and elevate your everyday life (and your pet's life too)!

While you're busy transforming your home, don't forget about your winged neighbors. Explore our guide to birdhouses to discover which one would be a welcome addition to your neighborhood.

Lastly, take a moment to savor the sweet delights of our fruity desserts, where each tasty bite celebrates the season of spring.

— From the Publisher



What's your top fruit-flavored dessert?

Scan the QR code to cast your vote!



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THE POWER OF POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

Affirmations can help rewire your thought patterns, boost your confidence and reduce your day-to-day stress! Getting started is easy:

1. **Morning Ritual:** Begin each day with affirmations, integrating them into your morning routine.
2. **Visual Reminders:** Place affirmations in visible spots — on mirrors or screensavers — to reinforce positive thoughts throughout the day.
3. **Consistent Practice:** Set regular times for affirmation sessions, incorporating them during breaks or as a wind-down routine to reinforce positivity.

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Bet You Didn't Think to Kebab This!

When you think of kebabs, you might picture grilled chicken or shrimp with veggies. While these are tried and true classics, there are so many ways to experiment with different flavors, making the possibilities for kebab recipes truly endless.

While the classic kebab is always an easy go-to, there's more to kebabs than just the traditional protein and veggie stacks. When it comes to kebab recipes, the possibilities are truly endless. There are so many ways to play around with different flavors. You can even take your favorite recipes and transform them with only a skewer, you'll never look at kebabs the same way again.

Gumbo Kebabs

It's time to take this classic Southern dish to the next level! This easy recipe is packed with flavors and surprisingly easy to make.

Ingredients

- 1 lb. large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 12 oz. Andouille sausages, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 yellow bell pepper, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 green bell pepper, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 white onion, cut into 2-inch pieces
- ¼ c. olive oil
- 2 tbsp. Cajun seasoning
- 3 tsp. garlic powder
- 2 tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2-3 c. cooked rice, for serving

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400° F and grease a large baking dish. Soak the skewers in water for at least 30 minutes to prevent them from burning.
2. Cut the sausages and vegetables accordingly, then begin layering them with the shrimp on wooden skewers.
3. Lay the stacked skewers in a large baking dish.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil and seasonings. Then, pour over the skewers and roast in the oven for 15 minutes.
5. After the allotted time, serve the skewers over the cooked rice and enjoy!



Prep Time: 20 Minutes
Cook Time: 15 Minutes
Yield: 10 Servings

Chicken & Waffle Kebabs



Prep Time: 30 Minutes
Cook Time: 40 Minutes
Yield: 6-8 Servings

Ingredients

For the Waffles

- 2 c. all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp. cane sugar
- 1 tbsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 eggs, room temperature
- 1½ c. whole milk
- ½ c. unsalted butter, melted

For the Chicken

- 4 large skinless chicken breast tenders

- 3 c. vegetable oil, for frying
- ½ c. all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- ¾ c. buttermilk

For the Kebabs

- 6-8 pieces of bacon, uncooked
- Maple syrup, for serving

Turn this breakfast classic into a brunch kebab in your household! This recipe features homemade waffles and fried chicken for the perfect breakfast bite.

Instructions

For the Waffles

1. In a medium-sized bowl, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder and salt.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs with the milk and melted butter.
3. Combine the dry and wet ingredients.
4. Grease a waffle iron, then add the batter, cooking until golden.
5. Repeat with the rest of the batter and cut into four equal pieces.

For the Chicken

1. Add the vegetable oil to a large pot and heat to 375° F.
2. Allow the chicken tenders to come to room temperature, then pat dry with paper towels.
3. In a large bowl, combine the flour, garlic powder, salt and pepper.
4. In another bowl, combine the buttermilk and Dijon mustard.
5. Dredge each piece of chicken in the dry ingredients first, then the buttermilk mixture before dredging in the flour mixture again.
6. Place one piece at a time in the oil and cook until golden brown, about 5-7 minutes.
7. After the chicken has been fried, place on a paper towel-lined plate and repeat with the other pieces.
8. Cut the chicken into 4-inch pieces.

For the Kebabs

1. Soak wooden skewers in water for 30 minutes and preheat the oven to 400° F.
2. Line a large baking sheet with foil and place a large wire rack on top.
3. Take one skewer at a time and start by threading one piece of bacon at the end of the skewer with the chicken and waffle pieces between the uncooked bacon. Thread through while continuing to place the chicken and waffle between until you've reached the end. Repeat with each skewer.
4. Brush the chicken and waffles with maple syrup, then cook for roughly 7 minutes until the bacon is cooked through and crispy. Serve with more maple syrup and enjoy!



Grilled Peach and Halloumi Kebabs

Prep Time: 10 Minutes

Cook Time: 5 Minutes

Yield: 4 Servings

Ingredients

- 3 peaches, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- ½ red onion, cut into 2-inch pieces
- ½ tsp. pepper
- 8 oz. halloumi cheese, cut into cubes
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 6 large fresh basil leaves
- 2 c. arugula, for serving

Instructions

1. Preheat the grill to medium heat and lightly oil the grates. Soak the wooden skewers for at least 30 minutes to prevent them from burning.
2. Layer the sliced peaches, red onion and cheese on four skewers.
3. Mix the olive oil, dried oregano, pepper and salt together before pouring over each skewer.
4. Grill the skewers peach-side down (skin-side up) for 5 minutes on low heat.
5. Serve over a bed of arugula with fresh basil leaves.



These unique kebabs with peaches, cheese and red onions are packed with fresh flavor! Serve over a bed of arugula and fresh basil for the perfect alternative salad.

Philly Cheesesteak Kebabs

Turn your favorite sandwich into kebabs! This delicious recipe served alongside a provolone cheese sauce is about to become your new obsession.

Prep Time: 15 Minutes
Inactive Time: 30 Minutes
Cook Time: 12 Minutes
Yield: 8 Servings



Ingredients

For the Kebabs

- 1 lb. steak, cut into 2-inch cubes
- 1 ½ c. baby bella mushrooms, washed
- ½ white onion, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 green pepper, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 2 hoagie rolls, cut into 2-inch pieces
- ¼ c. olive oil
- 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. salt

For the Cheese Sauce

- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 2 tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 c. milk
- 6 oz. provolone cheese, shredded
- 1 tsp. garlic powder

Instructions

For the Kebabs

1. Preheat the grill to medium-high heat and brush the grates with the other half of the white onion to clean and season the grill.
2. Soak the wooden skewers in water for at least 30 minutes or grease metal skewers.
3. Allow the steak to come to room temperature, then pat dry with paper towels.
4. Cut the steak into cubes, then place in a greased baking dish with 2 tablespoons of olive oil, the Worcestershire sauce and garlic powder. Marinate for 30 minutes.
5. Next, thread the steak, vegetables and bread onto the skewers.
6. Combine the rest of the olive oil, pepper and salt before brushing over the skewers.
7. Grill for 6 minutes on each side before wrapping in foil until ready to serve.

For the Cheese Sauce

1. Melt the butter over medium heat, then whisk in the flour.
2. Once the sauce has thickened, slowly add the milk (half at a time), whisking constantly.
3. When the sauce is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon, fold in the cheese.
4. Finally, add the garlic powder and stir to combine.
5. Remove from heat and allow to cool before serving with the Philly cheesesteak kebabs.

Edgy E-Bikes

E-bikes are becoming an increasingly popular choice for getting around town. Equipped with integrated motors and batteries, these bikes make hill climbing and covering longer distances easy, allowing riders to reach their destinations faster without breaking a sweat.



E-Bike Classification

E-bikes are divided into classes which are determined by how powerful the motor is, and whether the motor requires a rider to pedal for it to provide assistance. Understanding your e-bike's class is vital, as federal and local rules might restrict specific classes from certain riding areas.

Class 1 E-Bikes:

These have a motor that boosts your pedaling speed up to 20 miles per hour.

Class 2 E-Bikes:

These bikes also have a motor, and they can go up to 20 mph even if you're not pedaling.

Class 3 E-Bikes:

Also known as "speed pedelecs," these have a motor up to 750 watts and can help you up to 28 mph.



Parts of an E-Bike

The Controller

The controller is how you interact with the e-bike system. It has buttons for turning the system on/off, adjusting assistance and navigating the display. Some systems offer more controls, such as battery status, lights or ride data.



The Motor

Motors can vary in power, weight and efficiency. Most e-bikes either have mid-drive or hub-drive motors.

- Mid-drive motors are located in the middle of the bike, providing a stable center of gravity that feels more natural when pedaling.
- Hub-drive motors are encased inside the hub of the rear wheel. These motors tend to be more affordable and lightweight than mid-drive motors.





The Frame

E-bikes start out with a base frame with similar features and functions as traditional bikes. However, e-bike frames are designed to optimize battery and motor placement.

The Battery

All e-bikes are powered by batteries, which vary in size, shape, wattage and where they are located on the bike. The watt-hours (Wh) that a battery holds determines the speed and distance you can ride with assistance.



4 Edgy E-Bikes Under \$4K

PropeLLa 9S Pro

\$1,399

PERFECT FOR EVERYDAY CITY LIFE

WWW.PROPELLA.BIKE

- Class 1
- Range: 45 miles max
- Top speed: 20 mph
- Hub-motor
- Battery: 350 Wh
- 5-level pedal assist
- Hydraulic brakes
- 9 speed



Blix Ultra

\$2,099

DESIGNED TO GO WHEREVER YOU DESIRE

BLIXBIKE.COM

- Ability to switch between Class 2 & 3
- Range: 80 miles max
- Hub-motor
- Battery: Dual batteries totaling 1,334 Wh
- Hydraulic disc brakes
- 8 speed

EXTRA FEATURES:

- Bluetooth display — Blix app provides ride data and firmware updates
- Able to customize with Blix accessories
- Front LED light



RadWagon 4

\$1,999

RIDE IN STYLE

WWW.RADPOWERBIKES.COM

- Class 2
- Range: 45 miles max
- Hub-motor
- Battery: 672 Wh
- 5-level pedal assist
- Mechanical disc brakes
- 7 speed

EXTRA FEATURES:

- Elongated frame
- Add-on options include a child seat, caboose, deckhand, running boards and more
- Reflective stripping on tire sidewalls
- LED headlight
- Low center of gravity for balanced rides

Optibike Argon

\$2,795

HIGH QUALITY WITHOUT THE HIGH PRICE TAG

OPTIBIKE.COM

- Ability to switch between Class 1 & 2
- Range: 50 miles max
- Hub-motor
- Battery: 518 Wh
- 5-level pedal assist
- Hydraulic brakes



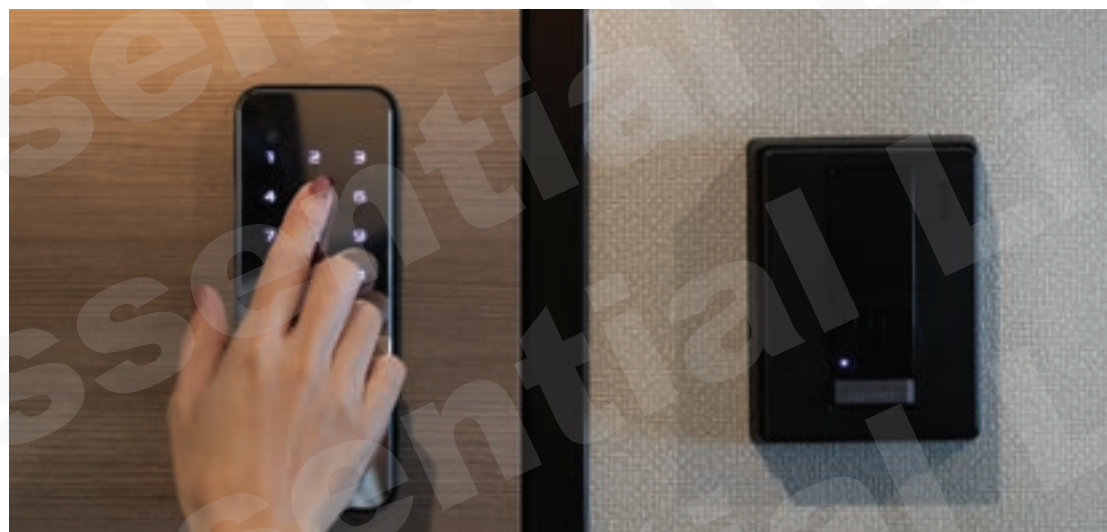


upgrade your home, upgrade your life

With these 11 upgrades, you'll streamline both your life and your home, leaving you to question why you didn't do them sooner. So, grab your tool bag and prepare to elevate both your living space and your life.

1. keyless entry

No more fumbling for keys — with a keyless entry, you simply enter your code, and you're in. Systems can range from simple, ready-to-use devices to those offering smart-home integrations with home security features and remote access, so you never have to spend another vacation worrying whether or not you locked your door.





2. soft-closing drawers

Installing soft-closing drawers is a DIY and budget-friendly upgrade that you'll wish you did years ago. Enjoy a quiet and gentle closing every time, protecting both your cabinetry and your peace of mind.



3. dual under-the-cabinet trash system

Maximize storage space and bid farewell to unsightly bins in the kitchen with a dual under-the-cabinet trash system that offers separate compartments for trash and recycling.

4. pot filler

Upgrade your kitchen with a pot filler and transform the way you cook. This elegant addition above your stove allows you to fill pots with water directly at the cooking area, sparing your back from heavy lifting and your floor from splashes and spills.



5. pet wash station

Show your furry companions some extra love with a dedicated pet wash station. This upgrade provides a convenient spot to clean your pets without creating a mess inside your home. From custom-made showers to ready-to-use baths, you can choose from a variety of styles and features to fit your home.

6. hanging tool rack

This upgrade is so quick and simple, it's almost too easy. Installing a hanging rack takes just a few minutes and keeps your cleaning tools within reach while freeing up floor space. Plus, it will help to preserve the longevity of your cleaning essentials. There are multiple styles to choose from that can hang just about anything, from brooms to shovels.



7. zero-threshold shower

The seamless design of a zero-threshold shower not only adds a contemporary aesthetic with a touch of luxury, but also makes it easy for everyone to access the shower. A slight decline makes sure that the water stays in the shower area, and no curtain or glass door means one less thing to clean!



8. smart home features

With a range of devices and smart home systems available, you can effortlessly control various aspects of your home using your smartphone or voice commands. Adjust lighting to set the perfect mood, fine-tune your thermostat to maintain an ideal temperature, monitor security cameras from anywhere and even automate routine tasks, giving you unparalleled control over your living environment.



9. mesh wi-fi

Say goodbye to Wi-Fi dead zones and buffering frustrations with the power of a mesh Wi-Fi system that will turn your home into a seamless network, ensuring strong and reliable connectivity in every corner. Stream, work and play without interruption, and revel in a well-connected digital oasis.



10. pot & pan organizer

A cluttered kitchen can quickly become a source of frustration, especially when it comes to storing pots and pans. Enter the pot and pan organizer, a simple yet effective solution that optimizes and organizes space. With designated slots and compartments, this organizer streamlines your kitchen by neatly arranging your cookware, making it easily accessible without the hassle of searching through stacked pans.

11. couch slip covers

Couch slip covers offer a versatile solution to protect and extend the life of your beloved seating. These covers not only shield your couch from spills, stains and pet hair but also allow for easy cleaning, helping you maintain a fresh and inviting living room. With a variety of colors and styles available, you can effortlessly refresh your decor while adding an element of practicality to your space.

From quick and easy DIY projects to more involved custom installations, home upgrades can improve your life by enhancing efficiency and organization with style and comfort.

Explore the
*Breathtaking
Wildflower Fields*
of the U.S.A.

Nothing compares to the enchanting beauty of wildflower fields, where nature unfolds a mesmerizing kaleidoscope of colors and scents. From coast to coast, the United States boasts some of the most awe-inspiring locations for witnessing these floral spectacles. Whether you're a wildflower enthusiast or simply seeking an unforgettable outdoor adventure, pack your camera and wander through these captivating fields that burst with life.





Sugar Hill

New Hampshire

Peak Season: Early to Mid-June

Nestled amidst the rolling hills and scenic fields of New Hampshire, the charming town of Sugar Hill often goes unnoticed by most tourists. However, all of that changes come June when this hidden gem of New England bursts into life, becoming a stunning tapestry of colors adorned with beautiful purple and pink lupines that blanket the countryside. Both visitors and locals flock to the large field along Sugar Hill Road, seeking the best views of these blooming wonders. The lupine season lasts only for a few weeks and is celebrated with festive activities all month long.





Colorado

Peak Season: July

Fondly known as the “Wildflower Capital of Colorado,” Crested Butte beckons you with its alpine meadows adorned with a dazzling array of wildflowers, including sunflowers and the iconic state flower, the columbine.

Crested Butte boasts more than 60 trails waiting to be explored. Among them, the Rustler’s Gulch Trail stands out during the summer months as its fields come alive with brilliant yellow sunflowers along with fiery touches of scarlet gilia and the mesmerizing purples of larkspur sprinkled throughout.

The town also hosts an annual 10-day wildflower festival in mid-July with over 200 workshops to celebrate these colorful blooms.



Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve



California

Peak Season: Mid-March to Mid-April

As spring arrives, a magnificent sea of orange emerges in the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve, courtesy of the California poppies. A myriad of other wildflowers can be found as well, creating a picturesque canvas of colors across the desert floor. Along the eight miles of trails there is a diverse range of wildlife to keep an eye out for including gophers, scorpions and, if you are lucky, bobcats and coyotes.



Ennis

Texas

Peak Season: Third Week in April

As the official Bluebonnet City of Texas, Ennis is the perfect place to witness the captivating beauty of the Texas bluebonnets. The city has mapped out 40 miles of driving trails that are open to the public for the entirety of April. Before heading off to see the flowers, it's highly recommended to check bluebonnettrail.org for the current bloom status of the trails.

Peak season is celebrated with a three-day festival during the third week of April. Visitors can find arts and crafts, children's activities, performances and all things bluebonnet-related.



Anza-Borrego Desert State Park

California

Peak Season: Late February to Early March

When the conditions are just right, the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park transforms from a desert oasis into a colorful burst of wildflowers. The arid landscape blossoms with brilliant blooms like desert sunflowers and yellow desert dandelions swaying in the gentle breeze. Drive along Borrego Springs Road to catch a breathtaking glimpse of the burst of colors. Don't forget to keep an eye out for desert wildlife like bighorn sheep and roadrunners, which also call this desert paradise their home.



Wildflower Tips & Etiquette

- Be cautious of snakes: Humans aren't the only ones who enjoy the beautiful blooms. Snakes, especially rattlesnakes, love wildflowers. Don't step where you can't clearly see the ground. If you run into a snake, move quickly away from it and warn others who are nearby.
- No picking: Admire wildflowers in their natural habitat and then let them be. Picking wildflowers is disruptive to the environment and in some states, it's even illegal.
- Stay on trails: Stick to designated trails and paths to avoid trampling on delicate wildflowers and their surrounding habitats.
- Predicting peak bloom is tricky due to varying conditions for each wildflower species. When planning a trip, stay updated on the area's bloom status.

UNBOX JOY

Whether you have someone on your list who seems to already have it all or you want to gift yourself (or your pet) something special, subscription boxes are a fun way to add to a special collection, try global flavors or explore new styles.



FOR GROWING MINDS **KIWICO**

WHAT'S INSIDE: They offer multiple options for gifts including a subscription, bundle pack of three themed boxes or the option to choose a specific crate like the Crystal Chemistry Garden or Hydraulic Claw.

KiwiCo offers nine subscription lines tailored to various age groups. From the Panda crate for infants to the Maker crate for teens and even adults, each box is full of activities that make learning fun for any age.

FOR THE LITTLE EXPLORER **LITTLE GLOBAL CITIZENS**

WHAT'S INSIDE: Contents of boxes vary but can include books, activities, crafts, recipe cards, souvenirs and treats from around the globe.

Subscriptions can be purchased for 12 months or bi-monthly. Sibling kits are also available and come with two sets of supplies in each box. You can also purchase specific country boxes as well.

FOR THE GLOBAL FOODIE **UNIVERSAL YUMS**

WHAT'S INSIDE: This box delivers the tastiest snacks around the world right to your doorstep. Depending on the size of box you choose, you'll receive 5–20 snacks from a different country each month, plus extras like a booklet with trivia and games to learn more about the country.

You can choose between 1, 3, 6 or 12-month prepaid subscriptions starting at \$19.

FOR THE BOOKWORM **BOOK OF THE MONTH**

WHAT'S INSIDE: Book lovers will choose one book from a lineup of five to seven choices featuring new and early releases and books by debut authors, all of which have been vetted for quality.

You can choose between 3, 6 or 12-month prepaid subscriptions starting at \$60.



FOR THE GREEN THUMB **MY GARDEN BOX**

WHAT'S INSIDE: There are multiple boxes to choose from that range from the House Plant Box, which features a single plant, to the My Garden Box, which features a collection of indoor and outdoor plants, containers, a hand-illustrated care booklet and fun extras. Air plant and succulent boxes are also available.

You can choose between 1, 3, 6 or 12-month prepaid gift subscriptions starting at \$25.



FOR THE TEA LOVER **THE REPUBLIC OF TEA**

WHAT'S INSIDE: Every box includes an assortment of premium teas and herbal blends to try each month. The first box also includes a mug with a lid and stainless steel infuser.

You can choose between 6 or 12-month prepaid subscriptions starting at \$109.

FOR THE PET PARENT

Whether the person on your list is on team cat or team dog, these two subscription boxes will delight both the pet and the owner — earning you double points.

BARKBOX

WHAT'S INSIDE: Each month your pup will receive a themed box with toys and treats. Boxes can be tailored to food sensitivities, chew styles, play styles, durability, size, breed and more.

You can choose between 1, 3, 6 or 12-month prepaid subscriptions starting at \$35.

KITNIPBOX

WHAT'S INSIDE: Each box is filled with kitty toys and treats, keeping feline friends entertained and happy.

Subscriptions start at \$23 a month or \$33 for multi-cat households. Treat preferences can also be selected.



FOR THE ARTIST **ARTSNACKS**

WHAT'S INSIDE: Every three months, you'll receive everything you need to create a masterpiece right out of the box, including full-size art supplies, a full-size surface and access to 3-4 livestream tutorial sessions.

Subscriptions are quarterly and start at \$70.

FOR THE SNAZZY MAN **SPREZZABOX**

WHAT'S INSIDE: Each month, you'll have the option to choose from an array of packages that feature fashion, lifestyle and grooming items like suspenders, socks, ties, cufflinks, money clips and more.

You can choose between 1, 3, 6 or 12-month prepaid subscriptions starting at \$28.



FOR THE SWEET TOOTH **JACKIE'S CHOCOLATES**

WHAT'S INSIDE: A delicious assortment of artisan milk, dark and white chocolates that feature crunchy nuts, chewy caramels, fluffy marshmallows and creamy, fruit-filled centers.

You can choose between 3, 6 or 12-month prepaid subscriptions starting at \$150.

However, if you really want to impress, you can gift a three-year subscription!



Spring Forward

with these fruity desserts

While there are a million reasons to jump for joy at the start of the new season, the long list of fresh produce is number one on our list.

This spring, take full advantage of all the seasonal fruits that April has to offer. There are endless ways to utilize these juicy fruits, and our favorite way to do so is in desserts!

We've cultivated three sweet treats that will reimagine the way you bake with berries, cherries and citrus — oh my! So, let's embrace (and devour) the new season with these fruity desserts.

Cherry Pie Bars

Prep Time: 15 Minutes

Cook Time: 60 Minutes

Yield: 9 Servings

Ingredients

For the Bars

- 1 c. cane sugar
- 2 tsp. orange zest
- ¼ c. brown sugar
- 1 c. unsalted butter, softened
- 2 eggs, room temperature
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 3 c. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. cinnamon
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 21-oz. can of cherry pie filling

For the Glaze

- 1 c. powdered sugar
- 1 tbsp. milk
- ½ tsp. almond extract





All of the delicious flavor of the classic cherry pie, in individual bite-sized bars!

Instructions

For the Bars

1. Preheat the oven to 375° F and grease a 9 x 9 inch baking dish with nonstick spray. Then lay two sheets of parchment paper across and press into the baking dish.
2. Add the sugar to a large mixing bowl with the orange zest and use your fingers to combine before pouring in the brown sugar and butter.
3. Cream together on medium-low speed for 2 minutes, or until smooth and creamy
4. Add the eggs and vanilla extract. Mix well to combine.
5. Combine the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and salt in a medium-sized bowl.
6. Sift in half of the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients, beating between to incorporate before adding the rest.

7. Press about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the dough into the baking dish, then bake for 15 minutes. Allow to cool for 5 minutes before spreading the cherry pie filling over the bottom crust.
8. Spoon the rest of the dough over the cherry filling; do not spread.
9. Bake for 45 minutes, then allow to cool in the pan for 15 minutes.
10. Carefully remove and cool on a wire rack for one hour.

For the Glaze

1. Combine the powdered sugar, milk and almond extract in a small mixing bowl. Whisk until smooth.
2. Once the bars are cool, drizzle the glaze over the cherry pie bars. Then, cut into squares and enjoy!

Blood Orange Loaf

Prep Time: 15 Minutes
Cook Time: 50 Minutes
Yield: 8 Servings

Ingredients

For the Loaf

- 1½ c. all-purpose flour
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ c. cane sugar
- 2 tbsp. blood orange zest
- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 2 eggs, room temperature
- ¾ c. sour cream
- ¼ c. blood orange juice
- 1½ tsp. vanilla extract

For the Glaze

- 1 c. powdered sugar
- 2 tbsp. blood orange juice
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

Instructions

For the Bars

1. Preheat the oven to 375° F and grease a bread pan with nonstick spray.
2. Combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a medium-sized bowl.
3. Add the sugar and orange zest to a large bowl. Then, use your fingers to combine before adding the softened butter.
4. Use an electric mixer to cream together for 2 minutes on medium speed. Then, add the eggs one at a time, beating between each addition.
5. Next, add the sour cream, blood orange juice and vanilla extract. Mix again before sifting in the dry ingredients and combining with the electric mixer.
6. Use a spatula to transfer the batter to the prepared bread pan and bake on the middle rack for 50 minutes.
7. Allow to cool in the pan for 20 minutes. Then, run a clean knife along the edges to release the bread and cool on a wire rack for another 40 minutes.

For the Glaze

1. Sift the powdered sugar into a small bowl. Whisk in the orange juice and vanilla extract until combined.
2. Pour over the cooled bread. Allow to cool and harden before slicing.
3. Serve with fresh slices of blood oranges and enjoy!

This loaf utilizes seasonal blood oranges to create a dessert that tastes as vibrant as it looks.



Lemon Ricotta Cake

This light, fluffy, zesty cake is the perfect dessert for your next gathering. It's so easy to make and has an unbeatable texture!

Prep Time: 15 Minutes
Cook Time: 50 Minutes
Yield: 12 Servings

Ingredients

- 1¼ c. all-purpose flour
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ c. cane sugar
- 2 tsp. lemon zest
- ½ c. unsalted butter, softened
- 3 eggs, room temperature
- 1 c. ricotta cheese
- ¼ c. lemon juice
- 1½ tsp. vanilla extract

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F and grease a 9-inch cake pan before dusting lightly with flour to prevent sticking.
2. Combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a bowl. Then, set to the side.
3. Add the sugar to the bowl with the lemon zest. Use your fingers to work the lemon zest into the sugar. Once combined, add the butter.
4. Next, use an electric mixer on medium speed to cream together the butter and sugar for 2 minutes until light and fluffy.
5. Add the eggs, one at a time, mixing between on medium-low speed to combine.
6. Then, add the ricotta and beat on low speed until smooth (about a minute and a half) before adding the lemon juice and vanilla extract. Mix again to combine.
7. Slowly sift in the dry ingredients, half at a time and mix between to avoid overworking the batter.
8. Transfer the batter to the prepared pan and bake for 50-60 minutes.
9. Allow to cool in the pan for 20 minutes, then run a clean knife along the side to release the cake. Cool on a wire rack for 30 minutes.
10. Dust with powdered sugar and garnish with sliced lemons and fresh raspberries before serving.



AVIAN ARCHITECTURE

BUILDING THE PERFECT BIRDHOUSE

Birdhouses are a great way to invite more nature into your yard. However, just like us, birds can be particular about what features their home does or doesn't have. To create a welcoming haven for nesting birds, it's essential to consider their preferences and needs when designing your birdhouse.

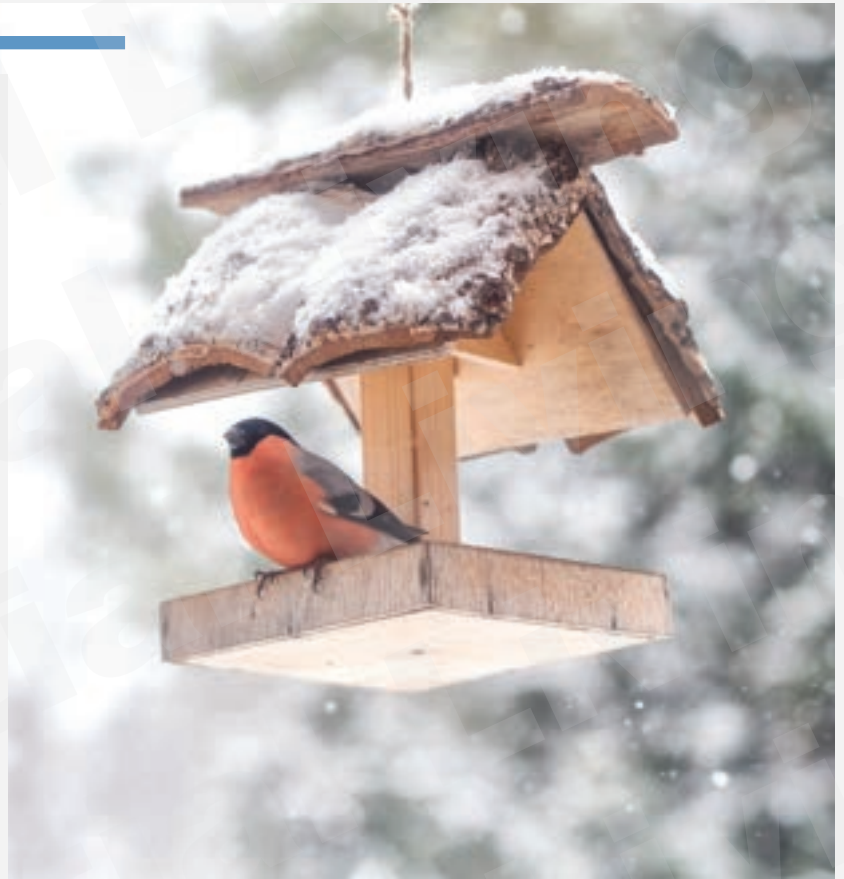
IDEAL LOCATION AND MOUNTING:

- Mount the birdhouse on a pole, post or sturdy tree trunk at least five feet off the ground, keeping in mind the preferences of the species you want to attract.
- Select a location away from high-traffic areas, including feeders and bird baths, to provide privacy and protection.
- Orient the entrance away from prevailing winds and direct sunlight for optimal comfort.




BIRD-FRIENDLY FEATURES:

- To assemble the house, use cedar, redwood or exterior-grade plywood at least $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick and galvanized screws.
- Drill $\frac{1}{4}$ " drainage holes in the floor and a few $\frac{1}{8}$ " to $\frac{1}{4}$ " ventilation holes through each side of the house just below the roof.
- Skip the perch. Birds don't need one and it can provide convenient access for predators.
- Add a flip-top roof or a side panel for easy access for nest removal and cleaning.
- Extend the sides of the house past the floor to prevent water from leaking in.
- Angle the roof slightly and extend it over the entry to allow rainwater to run off.
- Roughen the inside of the nest box below the entrance hole to help fledglings climb out.
- Use a baffle to deter predators.



MAINTENANCE:

- Remove the nest after each brood. Use a toothbrush to scrub the house with a mild bleach solution, making sure to clean the entrance, drainage and ventilation holes of any debris. After it's cleaned, let it dry in the sun for a few hours.
- Repair protruding nails, screws or splinters that could harm the birds.



To attract nesting birds, build a birdhouse with the right entry and size for the species you want. Research cavity-nesting birds in your area and pick one to attract. Find plans or kits that match the specific requirements for that species.

OTHER HELPFUL TIPS:

- Be patient! It takes time for birds to notice and inhabit a new birdhouse.
- After cleaning the house, leave it up for birds to roost in during the colder months.
- Make small piles of natural twigs and grasses nearby to help attract nesting birds.
- Go all natural with a gourd birdhouse.





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→ YOUR GARAGE: NOT THE CATCH-ALL STORAGE SOLUTION!



While your garage is a handy storage spot, certain items shouldn't call it home. Protecting your valuables and possessions outside of the garage ensures their longevity.

- Electronics and valuables
- Sensitive documents like passports and birth certificates
- Canned and packaged food
- Chemicals and paints
- Clothing and fabrics

Brie + Prosciutto + Fig Jam Crostini

This classic cheeseboard pairing is rolled into one tasty bite!

PREP TIME: 10 minutes | COOK TIME: 20 minutes | YIELDS: 8 servings

INGREDIENTS

For the Fig Jam

- ½ c. black figs
- 2 tsp. almond milk
- 2 tsp. coconut oil

- ¼ c. water
- 2 tbsp. cane sugar
- 2 tsp. lemon juice
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract

For the Crostinis

- 1 French baguette
- 1 wheel Brie cheese
- 6-8 slices prosciutto

- Honey, for garnish
- Micro arugula, for garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Fig Jam

1. Add the figs and almond milk to a food processor.
2. Pulse on high for one minute, then scrape the edges and pulse again on low for one minute.
3. Add the coconut oil to a small saucepan, then add the fig mixture.
4. Next, add the water, sugar, lemon juice and vanilla extract.
5. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally for five minutes.
6. Remove the fig jam from heat, then pour it into a bowl to cool for at least 10 minutes.

For the Crostinis

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F and line one large baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Slice the baguette into eight pieces, then spread a spoonful of fig jam on each piece.
3. Next, slice the cheese into eight long pieces.
4. Place the Brie on top of the crostinis and bake for 5-7 minutes until the cheese has melted and the bread is slightly crunchy.
5. Wrap the crostinis in thin prosciutto pieces.
6. Drizzle honey over the crostinis and finish with micro arugula.



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7 ENERGY-SAVING TIPS



1. **DEFROST THE FREEZER** – Ice can interfere with the temperature sensors and cause the freezer to work harder.
2. **REPLACE FILTERS** – Check the guidelines for your HVAC system, water heater, refrigerator and dryer.
3. **SWAP OUT LIGHT BULBS** for energy-efficient LEDs.
4. **UNPLUG DEVICES** when not in use.
5. **FIND AND SEAL AIR LEAKS** – Check doors, windows and places where utilities enter your home.
6. **UPGRADE TO A SMART THERMOSTAT** to closely control the temperature.
7. **INSTALL ENERGY-SAVING SHOWERHEADS**, faucets or flow restrictors to reduce the amount of hot water being used.



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