THE LAST TOUCH

Catch Some Z's Don't fret if you have zucchini coming out of your ears. There are many ways to handle the surplus green and yellow squash that rule your garden.

LINGUINE AND ZUCCHINI WITH BAGNA CAUDA SAUCE

SERVES 6

ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 25 MIN

- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 7 flat anchovy fillets, rinsed, patted dry, and minced
- 3 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup heavy cream
- ½ tsp fresh lemon juice
- 1 lb linguine
- 2 lb zucchini, cut into ⅛-inch matchsticks

▸Cook garlic with anchovies in oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium heat, stirring, until golden, about 2 minutes. Add cream and simmer, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Stir in lemon juice and season with salt and pepper.

▸Meanwhile, cook linguine in a pasta pot of well-salted boiling water until al dente, adding zucchini 2 minutes before pasta is ready. Drain, then toss with sauce.

GRILLED ZUCCHINI PEPPER SALAD

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 20 MIN START TO FINISH: 1 HR

- 1½ lb zucchini, cut lengthwise into ¼-inch-thick slices
- 2 red bell peppers, quartered
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 2 tsp packed light brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp chopped basil

▸Prepare grill for direct-heat cooking over medium-hot charcoal (medium-high heat for gas); see "Grilling Procedure," page 112, or heat a 2-burner grill pan over medium heat until hot.

▸Toss vegetables with 2 Tbsp oil, ½ tsp salt, and ¼ tsp pepper. Grill, turning occasionally, until tender, 6 to 8 minutes total. If using grill pan, grill in batches, 10 to 15 minutes per batch. Transfer peppers to a bowl and let stand, covered, 10 minutes. Peel peppers and cut into 1-inch pieces. Cut zucchini crosswise into 1-inch pieces.

▸Whisk together vinegar, brown sugar, ¼ tsp salt, ⅛ tsp pepper, and remaining 2 Tbsp oil in a large bowl. Stir in vegetables and basil. Let stand 15 minutes for flavors to blend.

CHOCOLATE CHIP ZUCCHINI CUPCAKES

MAKES 12 CUPCAKES

ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 1½ HR (INCLUDES COOLING)

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 Tbsp unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ¼ tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp salt
- ¾ cup plus 2 Tbsp sugar
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 1 large egg
- ½ tsp pure vanilla extract
- ½ lb zucchini, coarsely grated (1 cup)
- 1 (6-oz) package semisweet chocolate chips

EQUIPMENT: a muffin pan with 12 (½-cup) cups with paper liners

▸Preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle. ▸Whisk together flour, cocoa, cinnamon, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Beat together sugar, oil, egg, and vanilla in a large bowl with an electric mixer until thick and creamy, 2 to 3 minutes. At low speed, mix in flour mixture until just incorporated. Stir in zucchini and chocolate chips. Divide among lined muffin cups and bake until tops spring back when lightly pressed, 30 to 35 minutes. Cool in pan 5 minutes, then turn out to cool completely.

ZUCCHINI WITH LEMONY CRUMBS

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 20 MIN START TO FINISH: 40 MIN

- 2 lb zucchini, coarsely grated
- ¾ stick unsalted butter, divided
- 1½ cups coarse bread crumbs (from a day-old baguette)
- 1½ tsp grated lemon zest
- 1 tsp chopped thyme
- 2 garlic cloves, minced

▸Toss zucchini with ¾ tsp salt in a colander set over a bowl and let drain 20 minutes. Squeeze handfuls of zucchini in a kitchen towel to remove excess moisture.

▸Melt 3 Tbsp butter in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium heat, then cook bread crumbs, zest, thyme, and ⅛ tsp salt, stirring, until crumbs are golden, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a bowl and wipe out skillet, then cook garlic in remaining 3 Tbsp butter over medium-high heat, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add zucchini and sauté until softened slightly, 2 to 3 minutes. Serve zucchini topped with bread crumbs.

RECIPES BY RUTH COUSINEAU

BEEFSTEAK TOMATO, BUTTERHEAD LETTUCE, AND BACON WITH BLUE CHEESE DRESSING

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 20 MIN START TO FINISH: 20 MIN

BLT, hold the bread (you won't miss it). Big chunks of sun-ripened tomato and soft leaves of butterhead lettuce—Boston or Bibb, for instance—are topped with a creamy blue cheese dressing (fine-tuned with a wizardly touch of bacon fat) and plenty of crisp homemade bacon bits. It is a familiar yet striking kickoff to a bucolic meal seriously focused on produce.

- **6 bacon slices, chopped**
- **½ cup sour cream**
- **3 Tbsp whole milk plus additional if necessary**
- **2 Tbsp cider vinegar**
- **1 scallion, chopped**
- **1 cup crumbled blue cheese (¼ lb), divided**
- **1 (½-lb) head Bibb or Boston lettuce**
- **1 large beefsteak tomato, cut into wedges**

▸Cook bacon in a 10-inch skillet over medium heat until crisp. Transfer to paper towels to drain, reserving fat in skillet.
▸Whisk together 1 Tbsp hot bacon fat, sour cream, milk, vinegar, and ¼ tsp each of salt and pepper until smooth. Stir in scallion and ⅔ cup blue cheese. Thin with additional milk if desired.
▸Quarter lettuce lengthwise (through stem) into wedges, then remove core and arrange each wedge on a plate with tomato wedges. Stir dressing and spoon over top. Sprinkle with bacon, remaining ⅓ cup blue cheese, and pepper to taste.

BLACK PEPPER SPICE-RUBBED BEEF TENDERLOIN

SERVES 4 TO 6

ACTIVE TIME: 25 MIN START TO FINISH: 1¼ HR

Here, handsome and crowd-pleasing beef tenderloin is first rubbed with an Indian-inspired combination of spices—cardamom, mustard, and others work in concert with the nuanced heat of black peppercorns—and then seared to form a fragrant, inviting crust. Finishing it in a moderate oven results in a roast that is evenly rosy, juicy, and as delicious as it is beautiful. Like the bulgur with herbs and the bevy of beans and basil (recipes follow), it can be served at room temperature.

- **1½ tsp black peppercorns**
- **1½ tsp coriander seeds**
- **1½ tsp cumin seeds**
- **1½ tsp mustard seeds (preferably brown)**
- **½ tsp whole cloves**
- **½ tsp fennel seeds**
- **4 green cardamom pods, crushed, reserving seeds and discarding pods**
- **1 (1½-inch) cinnamon stick, broken into small pieces**
- **1¼ tsp coarse sea salt or kosher salt**
- **1 (2-lb) trimmed and tied center-cut beef tenderloin roast, at room temperature 30 minutes**
- **1½ Tbsp vegetable oil**

EQUIPMENT: **an electric coffee/spice grinder**

▸Toast spices with salt in a dry 10-inch heavy skillet over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until mustard seeds begin to pop, 3 to 5 minutes. Cool completely, then grind in grinder.
▸Preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle.
▸Pat beef dry, then rub spice mixture all over it (including ends). Heat oil in same skillet over high heat until it shimmers. Brown beef on all sides, about 10 minutes total.
▸Transfer beef to a small roasting pan and roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted diagonally 2 inches into center of meat registers 120°F for medium-rare, 25 to 30 minutes. Transfer beef to a cutting board and let stand 10 minutes (internal temperature will rise to about 130°F).
▸Cut off string and slice beef. Serve warm or at room temperature.

COOKS' NOTE: **Beef can be rubbed with spice mixture 1 day ahead and chilled. Let stand at room temperature 30 minutes before browning.**

BULGUR WITH HERBS

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 20 MIN

Nothing says "garden fresh" like a handful of aromatic herbs, and while you may be tempted to take bulgur down the well-traveled tabbouleh road, a little deviation can be an excellent thing. In this case, cilantro steps up to the plate, replacing parsley (typical of tabbouleh) and adding distinct flavor to an already intoxicating amount of mint. Toasting almonds in olive oil and then adding both to the mix enhances the nuttiness of the whole grain.

- **1 cup bulgur**
- **2 cups boiling-hot water**
- **2 Tbsp olive oil**
- **¼ cup sliced almonds**
- **1 cup chopped scallions (from 1 bunch)**
- **½ cup chopped cilantro**
- **½ cup chopped mint**
- **1 Tbsp store-bought roasted-almond oil or olive oil**
- **1 tsp fresh lemon juice, or to taste**

▸Put bulgur in a bowl, then pour hot water (2 cups) over it and cover bowl with plastic wrap. Let stand until tender, about 10 minutes.
▸Meanwhile, heat olive oil in a small heavy skillet over medium heat until hot, then cook almonds, stirring, until golden, about 1 minute.
▸Drain bulgur in a medium-mesh sieve, then return to bowl and stir in scallions, herbs, store-bought roasted-almond oil (or additional olive oil), 1 tsp lemon juice, ½ tsp salt, ¼ tsp pepper, and almonds (with oil). Season with salt and more lemon juice if desired. Serve at room temperature.

BEVY OF BEANS AND BASIL

SERVES 4 TO 6

ACTIVE TIME: 20 MIN START TO FINISH: 40 MIN

This textural celebration of legumes includes those that are both in and out of pods. You'll find crisp-tender Romano beans and green beans, as well as droves of firm yet creamy fava beans (also called broad beans), which have been a staple in places like Egypt, China, and the Mediterranean for millennia. The beans are all cooked in one pot and then warmed in a skillet, where verdant shreds of basil join them at the last minute for extra oomph. Sound easy? That's because it is. **RECIPES CONTINUE ON PAGE 108.**

HEIRLOOM TOMATO AND HERB PASTA SALAD

Spontaneity is the key to this pasta salad; it's not something you can make ahead and chill. The main ingredients can be harvested from a backyard plot or balcony pot, or simply be a reward for your produce-shopping prowess at the farmers market.

SERVES 6 TO 8 ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 45 MIN

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ⅓ cup crème fraîche
- 1 Tbsp white-wine vinegar
- 1 to 1½ tsp sugar (optional)
- 2 lb mixed heirloom tomatoes
- 2 Tbsp finely chopped shallot (from 1 medium)
- 1 lb fusilli or other short spiral pasta
- ¾ cup chopped mixed herbs such as basil, parsley, thyme, oregano, and tarragon

▸Whisk together oil, crème fraîche, vinegar, sugar (if using), 1 tsp salt, and ½ tsp pepper in a large bowl. Coarsely chop tomatoes and toss with shallot and dressing. Marinate until ready to use, at least 10 minutes.

▸While tomatoes stand, cook fusilli in a pasta pot of well-salted boiling water until al dente. Drain in a colander and immediately add to tomato mixture, tossing to combine. Cool to warm or room temperature (do not chill), tossing occasionally, then stir in herbs.

ROMULO YANES RECIPE: IAN KNAUER FOOD STYLING: PAUL GRIMES

ITALIAN PARSLEY AND BEET SALAD

Italian parsley isn't usually valued as a salad green. But when it's tempered by earthy, juicy raw beets and a citrus vinaigrette, the mineral-tinged flat leaves will be the talk of the table.

SERVES 6 (FIRST COURSE) ACTIVE TIME: 30 MIN START TO FINISH: 1 HR

- ¼ cup fresh orange juice
- 1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil plus more for drizzling
- 2¼ lb assorted beets with greens (such as Chioggia, white, golden, and red; 1½ lb if already trimmed)
- ¼ small red onion
- 1¼ cups Italian (flat-leaf) parsley leaves (from 1 bunch), torn if desired

EQUIPMENT: an adjustable-blade slicer

ACCOMPANIMENT: fresh ricotta or farmer cheese, or grated ricotta salata

▸Whisk together juices, oil, and ½ tsp each of salt and pepper in a large bowl. ▸Trim beets, leaving 1 inch of stems attached, then peel. ▸Using stems as a handle, slice beets paper-thin (less than ⅛ inch thick) with slicer (wear protective gloves to avoid staining hands), then cut slices into very thin matchsticks. ▸Thinly slice onion with slicer. ▸Toss beets, onion, and parsley with dressing and season with salt. Let stand, tossing occasionally, 30 minutes to soften beets and allow flavors to develop. ▸Toss again and season with salt and pepper before serving drizzled with additional oil.

ROMULO YANES RECIPE: KAY CHUN FOOD STYLING: PAUL GRIMES

pesto, stirring gently to coat. Transfer to a serving dish to cool quickly (so pesto doesn't separate).

COOKS' NOTE: **Pesto can be made 2 days ahead and chilled, its surface covered with plastic wrap.**

PICKLED COLLARD GREENS WITH PINEAPPLE

SERVES 8

ACTIVE TIME: 30 MIN START TO FINISH: 1¾ HR

Sweet-tart pineapple is wonderful with pork, as are collard greens. The two together, plus a healthy dose of vinegar, morph into something that's utterly surprising and utterly delicious. It both complements and cuts the richness of the meat.

- **½ cup white-wine vinegar**
- **½ cup cider vinegar**
- **1 medium onion, thinly sliced**
- **4 garlic cloves, finely chopped**
- **1 Tbsp sugar**
- **¼ tsp cayenne**
- **1 Turkish or ½ California bay leaf**
- **4½ lb collard greens (about 3 bunches), stems discarded and leaves cut crosswise into 1-inch-wide strips**
- **1 cup chopped (⅓ inch) fresh pineapple**

▸Bring vinegars, onion, garlic, sugar, cayenne, bay leaf, and 1½ tsp salt to a simmer in a small saucepan, then remove from heat and let steep 15 minutes. Discard bay leaf.

▸Meanwhile, cook collard greens in a large pot of well-salted boiling water until just tender, 6 to 8 minutes. Drain well in a colander, pressing to squeeze out excess water.

▸Transfer greens to a large bowl, then add pineapple and vinegar mixture and toss to coat. Cool to room temperature, tossing occasionally, about 1 hour.

COOKS' NOTE: **Pickled collard greens can be made 4 days ahead and chilled. Serve cold or at room temperature.**

PERSIAN CUCUMBER AND PURPLE RICE SALAD

SERVES 8

ACTIVE TIME: 20 MIN START TO FINISH: 2½ HR (INCLUDES COOLING)

Juicy, crunchy cucumbers lighten the starch in a rice salad, and lemony coriander accentuates the citrus in the vinaigrette. So-called Persian cukes seem especially beautiful against a background of exotic purple jasmine rice. This is a party dish for which, no doubt, you will become justly famous.

- **1 cup purple jasmine rice (see Kitchen Notebook, page 107, and Shopping List, page 112)**
- **1¼ cups water**
- **1½ tsp coriander seeds, toasted (see Tips, page 112)**
- **1 lb Persian cucumbers (also called mini cucumbers; about 6; see Kitchen Notebook, page 107) or other cucumbers, quartered lengthwise and sliced crosswise ¼ inch thick**
- **1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced**
- **3 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil**
- **2 tsp grated lemon zest**
- **2 tsp fresh lemon juice**

▸Bring rice, water, and ¼ tsp salt to a boil in a small heavy saucepan, then reduce heat to low and cook, covered, until rice is tender and water is absorbed, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand, covered, 10 minutes. Spread rice evenly in a lightly oiled 4-sided sheet pan and cool completely.

▸Coarsely smash coriander seeds with side of a large knife.

▸Toss rice with coriander, remaining ingredients, and ¼ tsp salt in a large bowl and let stand at room temperature 1 hour.

COOKS' NOTE: **Rice, without other ingredients, can be cooked 1 day ahead and chilled.**

POPPY SEED POUND CAKE WITH PLUM PLUOT COMPOTE

SERVES 8

ACTIVE TIME: 25 MIN START TO FINISH: 3½ HR (INCLUDES COOLING)

Plums and pluots—a hybrid that blends the color of plums with the flavor and soft texture of apricots—have a natural tartness that flatters the accompanying pound cake (which tastes even better if made a couple of days ahead).

FOR POUND CAKE

- **2 cups sifted cake flour (not self-rising; sift before measuring)**
- **¼ cup poppy seeds**
- **¾ tsp baking powder**
- **½ tsp salt**
- **½ vanilla bean**
- **1¾ sticks unsalted butter, softened**
- **1½ cups sugar**
- **3 large eggs, warmed in very warm water 10 minutes**
- **½ cup half-and-half at room temperature 30 minutes**

FOR COMPOTE

- **2 lb firm-ripe plums and pluots, peeled and cut into ½-inch wedges**
- **¾ cup sugar, or to taste**
- **1 tsp grated lemon zest, divided**
- **1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice**
- **½ tsp grated nutmeg**

ACCOMPANIMENT: **lightly sweetened whipped cream**

MAKE POUND CAKE: Preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle. Butter and flour a 9- by 5-inch loaf pan.

▸Whisk together flour, poppy seeds, baking powder, and salt.

▸Scrape seeds from vanilla bean with tip of a paring knife into a bowl, then add butter and sugar and beat with an electric mixer at medium-high speed until pale and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add eggs 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. At low speed, add flour mixture in 3 batches, alternating with half-and-half, beginning and ending with flour, and mixing until just incorporated. ▸Spoon batter into loaf pan, smoothing top.

▸Bake until golden-brown and a wooden pick inserted into center comes out with crumbs adhering, 1 to 1¼ hours. Cool in pan 30 minutes. Run a knife around edge of cake to loosen, then invert cake onto a rack. Cool completely, right side up.

MAKE COMPOTE: Stir together fruit, ¾ cup sugar, ½ tsp zest, and lemon juice in a heavy medium saucepan. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until fruit begins to fall apart and liquid is slightly syrupy, about 30 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in remaining ½ tsp zest, nutmeg, and more sugar if desired. Transfer to a bowl to cool. Serve warm or at room temperature.

COOKS' NOTES: **Pound cake can be baked 3 days ahead and kept in an airtight container at room temperature.**

- **Compote can be made 1 day ahead and chilled.**

THE PECAN PRALINE POPCORN TREATS RECIPE IS ON PAGE 112.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 98

▸Whisk together flour, remaining ⅓ cup parmesan, ¼ tsp salt, and seltzer in a small bowl.
▸Heat ½ inch oil to 375°F in a 10-inch heavy skillet. Meanwhile, dip half of blossoms in batter to thinly coat. Fry coated blossoms, turning once, until golden, 1 to 2 minutes total. Transfer with tongs to paper towels to drain. Coat and fry remaining blossoms. (Return oil to 375°F between batches.) Season with salt. Serve with tomato sauce.
COOKS' NOTE: **Tomato sauce and ricotta filling can be made 1 day ahead and chilled. Reheat sauce before serving.**

T

TOMATO AND TOMATILLO GAZPACHO

SERVES 6 (FIRST COURSE)
ACTIVE TIME: 20 MIN START TO FINISH: 1½ HR (INCLUDES CHILLING)

Celebrate the last of the hot weather with a spirited, chunky gazpacho in the Mexican mode. Tomatoes give the soup their characteristic rich, rounded flavor, and tomatillos—an Aztec and Mayan staple—lend fruity tartness and great body.

- **½ lb fresh tomatillos, husked, rinsed, and quartered**
- **1½ lb tomatoes, chopped, divided**
- **½ cup chopped white onion, divided**
- **1 fresh serrano chile, coarsely chopped, including seeds**
- **1 garlic clove, quartered**
- **2 Tbsp red-wine vinegar**
- **1 cup water**
- **2 Tbsp olive oil**
- **½ cup chopped cilantro**

▸Purée tomatillos, half of tomatoes, and half of onion with chile, garlic, vinegar, and 1¼ tsp salt in a blender until smooth.
▸Force through a medium-mesh sieve into a bowl, discarding solids. ▸Stir in remaining tomatoes and onion, water, oil, and cilantro. Chill until cold, at least 1 hour and up to 4 hours.

U

SORBETTO DI UVA

Concord Grape Sorbet
MAKES ABOUT 1 QT
ACTIVE TIME: 10 MIN START TO FINISH: 5¾ HR (INCLUDES CHILLING)

Although uva means "grape" in Italian, Concords are native to North America. A velvety sorbet brings out their inky, foxy intensity. It will, in fact, swing you right into autumn.

- **2 lb Concord grapes (about 2 qt), stemmed, divided**
- **¾ cup superfine granulated sugar**

EQUIPMENT: **an ice cream maker**

▸Purée half of grapes in a blender until smooth, then force through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl, discarding solids. Repeat with remaining grapes to yield 3 cups purée. Whisk in sugar until dissolved. Chill until very cold, 3 to 6 hours.
▸Freeze in ice cream maker, then transfer to an airtight container and put in freezer to firm up, at least 2 hours.
COOKS' NOTE: **Sorbet keeps 1 week.**

V

LEMON VERBENA AND SUMMER FRUIT GELÉE

SERVES 8 (DESSERT)
ACTIVE TIME: 20 MIN START TO FINISH: 4¾ HR (INCLUDES CHILLING)

Brush against a lemon verbena plant and its long, narrow leaves will release a transcendently clean, lemony scent. A little of the herb goes a long way, and it plays well with both ripe summer fruit and the light dryness of rosé. All the elements come together here in a suave gelée.

- **8 (4-inch) leafy lemon verbena sprigs plus 4 medium leaves, divided**
- **2 cups dry rosé wine**
- **1 cup sugar, divided**
- **3 cups mixed summer fruit such as berries and thinly sliced nectarines or peaches**
- **¼ cup fresh lemon juice, divided**
- **4½ tsp unflavored gelatin (two ¼-oz envelopes)**
- **⅓ cup water**

EQUIPMENT: **a 1½-qt nonreactive (see Tips, page 112) baking pan, loaf pan, or bowl or 6 (8-oz) glasses**

▸Rub verbena sprigs in your hands to bruise leaves and stems, then combine sprigs with wine and ¾ cup sugar in a heavy medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring until sugar has dissolved, then simmer 1 minute. Remove from heat and let steep, covered, 1 hour.
▸While verbena mixture steeps, finely grind verbena leaves with remaining ¼ cup sugar in a food processor or an electric coffee/spice grinder. Gently toss fruit with verbena sugar and 2 Tbsp lemon juice in a bowl. Let stand while verbena syrup finishes steeping.
▸Sprinkle gelatin over water and let soften 1 minute. Meanwhile, reheat verbena syrup until hot, then stir in gelatin mixture until dissolved. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl. Stir in macerated fruit with juices and remaining 2 Tbsp lemon juice. Chill in an ice bath, stirring occasionally, until cool and thickened (the texture of raw egg whites) but not set, 8 to 10 minutes.
▸Very lightly oil baking pan with vegetable oil (not necessary if pan is nonstick or if using individual glasses).
▸Pour gelée into baking pan and chill in refrigerator until set, at least 3 hours.
▸To unmold, dip pan in a larger pan of hot water 5 to 10 seconds to loosen. Invert onto a serving plate (do not unmold if using individual glasses). Let stand at room temperature 15 minutes before serving.
COOKS' NOTE: **Gelée can be chilled up to 3 days (before unmolding).**

W

WATERMELON AND CUCUMBER MINT TSATSIKI SALAD

SERVES 6 (FIRST COURSE OR SIDE DISH)
ACTIVE TIME: 20 MIN START TO FINISH: 20 MIN

Watermelon and yogurt may sound like unlikely bedfellows, but this refreshing dish deliciously disproves that assumption. Flaky shards of sea salt, added just before serving, highlight both the melon's sweetness and the sauce's savory tang.

1 small garlic clove
2 medium cucumbers (1 lb total), divided
1½ cups plain Greek-style yogurt
⅔ cup chopped mint, divided
1 (3-lb) piece watermelon, rind removed and fruit cut into 1-inch chunks (6 cups)
2 Tbsp fresh lime juice
Flaky sea salt such as Maldon

▸Mince and mash garlic to a paste with a pinch of salt and transfer to a bowl.
▸Peel 1 cucumber, then halve lengthwise and seed. Coarsely grate into bowl with garlic paste. Stir in yogurt, ⅓ cup mint, and ¾ tsp salt to make *tsatsiki*.
▸Peel remaining cucumber and halve lengthwise. Cut crosswise into ⅓-inch-thick slices.
▸Toss sliced cucumber with watermelon, remaining ⅓ cup mint, and lime juice in a large bowl.
▸Serve fruit with *tsatsiki*. Sprinkle with sea salt to taste.
COOKS' NOTE: ***Tsatsiki* can be made 3 hours ahead and chilled.**

X

XUXU AND SHRIMP WITH CHILE AND LEMON

SERVES 4 TO 6
ACTIVE TIME: 30 MIN START TO FINISH: 40 MIN

Crisp chayote goes by a raft of different names, but its Brazilian one, xuxu, *was the inspiration for this quick stir-fry. The dish's vivid good looks echo its primal shout of flavor. After the shrimp,* xuxu, *and hearts of palm are cooked, they're tossed with a raw sauce of garlic, onion, jalapeño, and lots of lemon juice, which keeps everything sparkling and very fresh-tasting.*

6 garlic cloves
¾ cup chopped white onion
2 to 3 Tbsp chopped fresh jalapeño, including seeds
⅓ cup fresh lemon juice
3 medium *xuxu* (chayote; about 1¾ lb total)
1½ lb large shrimp, peeled and deveined
¼ cup olive oil, divided
1 (14-oz) jar or can hearts of palm, rinsed well, patted dry, and cut into ½-inch pieces
⅓ cup chopped cilantro

▸With motor running, drop garlic into a food processor and finely chop. Stop processor and add onion, jalapeño (to taste), lemon juice, and ¼ tsp salt, then pulse until finely chopped. Let stand at room temperature 30 minutes for flavors to develop.
▸Peel *xuxu* if skin is tough. Cut *xuxu* off pit in slices, then cut into ¼-inch-thick matchsticks.
▸Toss shrimp with 1 tsp salt. Heat 3 Tbsp oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Sauté shrimp until just cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to a plate.
▸Sauté *xuxu* in remaining Tbsp oil in skillet until crisp-tender, about 3 minutes.
▸Return shrimp to skillet, then add hearts of palm and sauté until just heated through. Remove from heat and stir in chile-lemon sauce and cilantro.
SERVE WITH: **steamed rice**

Y

YELLOW SQUASH AND BELL PEPPER TORTE

SERVES 6 (SIDE DISH)
ACTIVE TIME: 40 MIN START TO FINISH: 8 HR (INCLUDES CHILLING)

What you have here—sun-gold bands of decoratively arranged vegetables and clear, immediate flavors enriched with Parmigiano-Reggiano—is an absolute stunner. And, because the torte must be made ahead and weighted (to release excess liquid), it's ideal for entertaining. Serve it with anything grilled (fish, chicken, or lamb, for instance) and your guests will be over the moon.

4 yellow bell peppers, halved lengthwise, stemmed, and seeded
5 to 6 Tbsp olive oil, divided
6 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
2 lb yellow squash (4 medium), sliced diagonally ½ inch thick, divided
1 lb red onions (2 medium), cut crosswise into ⅓-inch-thick rounds
3 Tbsp red-wine vinegar
½ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
⅓ cup chopped basil
EQUIPMENT: **an 8- to 9-inch springform pan**
GARNISH: **Parmigiano-Reggiano shavings and basil leaves**

▸Preheat oven to 425°F with rack in middle.
▸Toss bell peppers with 1 Tbsp oil, ½ tsp salt, and ¼ tsp pepper in a 17- by 11-inch 4-sided sheet pan. Roast, turning once, until softened, 25 to 30 minutes.
▸While bell peppers roast, heat 3 Tbsp oil with garlic in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium heat until oil is hot. Add one third of squash with ¼ tsp each of salt and pepper and cook, turning once, until just tender (do not overcook), 6 to 8 minutes total. Transfer cooked squash with garlic to a tray using a slotted spoon. Cook remaining squash in 2 batches with salt and pepper in same manner, using another Tbsp oil if necessary and transferring squash to tray.
▸Add 1 Tbsp oil to skillet and cook onions with ½ tsp each of salt and pepper, stirring occasionally, until just tender, 16 to 18 minutes. Add vinegar and briskly simmer until liquid has evaporated. Cool to room temperature.
▸Flip bottom of springform pan so lip is facing down (to make torte easier to slide off), then lock in place. Lightly oil pan. Layer one third of squash with garlic in pan, slightly overlapping. Sprinkle with some of grated cheese and basil. Layer half of bell peppers over squash, then half of onions and more cheese and basil. Repeat with half of remaining squash and all of remaining onions, then all remaining bell peppers, sprinkling with remaining cheese and basil. Arrange a final layer of squash on top.
▸Put springform pan in a small baking pan and cover springform with plastic wrap. Place a small plate (to just fit inside springform) on top of vegetables, then weight with 2 or 3 heavy (15- to 19-oz) cans. Chill until cold, at least 6 hours (torte will release liquid).
▸Remove weights, plate, and plastic wrap. Remove torte from pan and put on a plate. Blot any excess moisture. Bring torte to room temperature and cut into wedges.
COOKS' NOTE: **Torte can be chilled in pan up to 2 days (remove weights after 12 hours).**