

Are you chillin' yet?

There aren't that many things you can absolutely count on anymore but I think we are safe in assuming that July and August will provide us with plenty of sunshine and a bunch of 90 degree plus days. The last thing most people want to deal with is a hot stove in a hot kitchen.

My twin brother, the ex-hippie turned furniture maker, visited me from Boston this past week and I can always count on unique recipes when he comes into town. This trip was a really great one for new ideas and one of the nicest treats he shared was a fresh version of an old "hot weather" favorite, gazpacho.

If you're not familiar with this dish think "cold." This is a soup produced from raw veggies and fruit juice. It is particularly popular in the southwest areas of the United States and it was just one of the great dishes brought in from Mexico that Americans have learned to love. It is a tad spicy as you might expect and filled full of great tastes and textures. It is properly served refrigerator cold to cool.

Brother Mike has an excellent knack for discovering recipes that are delicious and easy to make. This one allows you to keep your kitchen heat down to a minimum while helping you sharpen your skills with a chef knife. Find the very freshest vegetables you can for this dish and feel free to adjust your Tabasco levels to meet your family's personal taste.

An added bonus with this meal is virtually no fat grams if you keep the croutons to a minimum and big points if you're trying to sculpt that body down into a real work of art. My problem is that I'm kind of stuck on the pop art level at this point.

Gazpacho By Brother Mike

1 bottle Clamato Juice
1 can Pineapple Juice (about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a can)
1 Vidalia Onion, large, finely diced
1 Red Bell Pepper, seeded, finely diced
1 Yellow Bell Pepper, seeded, finely diced
1 Green Bell Pepper, seeded, finely diced
2 avocados, seeded, peeled & diced
3 ears of sweet corn, boiled 3 minutes & cut from ears
2 to 3 tablespoons Tabasco
 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 lemon, juice only
Salt & pepper to taste
2 to 3 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro (optional)



Mix all together in a bowl & refrigerate. (Will keep one week.) Serve with toasted cornbread croutons. I simply cut cornbread into small

cubes (about three quarter inch) and lightly toast the cubes in a heavy skillet and hot butter until they are golden brown. If you'd like to keep this recipe "very low cal" substitute Pam spray for the butter and you'll still get super results.

This dish is a perfect accompaniment to summer meals, especially barbecue, or it can stand alone for a light meal. Best served cold to cool! Enjoy and make a ton if serving a group; it will all disappear.

Now after sharing a "let's get healthy" moment I wish to digress. I visited a food booth recently at one of those local summer outdoor events and came upon one of those magical discoveries I love to share with my fellow "foodies" out there in the wilds of Clinton County. Calling this stuff a topping is like calling a Maserati a family car.

Vanilla Heaven is a product from Times Remembered® and my special moment, as I like to call it, came when I warmed it up and poured it over my favorite vanilla bean ice cream. Think "old fashioned butterscotch like your Grandmother lovingly made for you" and you might be in the general neighborhood of the sensation my taste buds were treated to. This is one of those "must have's" if you're serious about taste treats and it can be purchased online from www.seasonsharvest.com. The company will ship and you can call them at 800-621-5075.

Be sure to ask for a catalog. I tasted their other products and they've got a bunch of decadent treats to delight the senses.

As I've mentioned before, good Rieslings are always fun but they really hit the spot when the temperature hits those high spots. The people with the Schloss Zell operation in the Mosel River area of Germany have been making excellent Rieslings for generations and they are still at it. The 2003 Schloss Zell Piesporter Michelsberg Riesling Kabinett really fills the bill and the green apple character of this wine when well chilled is both tasty and refreshing. It is an ideal summer wine on its own or will combine very well with salads and cold seafoods like shrimp cocktail or cracked crab. We have had it served with fruits like cold melon, apple and grapes, an assortment of cheeses and slices of good bread. It was a perfect choice.

On the red wine side, the soft reds from the south of France are produced in a warm climate area so it shouldn't surprise us that they are excellent to enjoy during our summer months. The producer, Mommessin is famous for its country wines and we would recommend the 2004 Mommessin Merlot and the Cabernet Sauvignon as nice selections for that next barbecue celebration. They are very easy on the pocketbook and both provide good fruit, soft tannins and a clean, berry style finish.

The style of wine called Vin de Pays from areas along the Mediterranean bear watching if you enjoy great wines at really desirable prices. There are tons of good producers in this area making superb Vin de Pays if you keep an eye out for them.

Let us know if we can be of assistance with your food or wine questions. We love to hear from you and can be reached at 888-288-0668 or you can visit us on the web at www.winedog.com. Stay cool! Cheers.