

More Summer Foods & Adventures!

Just like great food, some experiences are just too good not to be shared. My wife and I picked up our 12-year-old son from a weeklong church camp adventure this past Friday and I wish you could have been there with us. On Monday we had dropped off a well-scrubbed and highly excited pre-teen ready to dive into a “Safari Camp” program guaranteed to “boost his self-confidence, enhance his spirituality and cultivate friendships and memories he would cherish for a lifetime.”

Keep in mind that our son is something of a neat freak. During the summer he will take two showers a day and would probably go for a third if we didn’t stop him. All contact with dirt is followed by a rush to the bathroom and an enthusiastic hand scrub.

On Friday evening we parked in the designated pick-up clearing and our son came stumbling down the trail with outstretched arms. His hair looked like it hadn’t been combed since Wednesday, he had mud splashed on his clothes and behind one of his ears and the shirt he was wearing was not only someone else’s but about two sizes too small.

We loaded up his clothes bags. They looked and smelled like they had been stored in or near the Love Canal and he settled into the front seat next to me for the one hour ride home with the air conditioner at full blast. (No AC or electricity in the cabins!) His description of his week sounded nothing like the camp brochure and more like he had been through Navy SEAL training or some type of Juvenile Delinquent Boot Camp.

In all fairness, our son is prone to over dramatic descriptions and exaggerations. I could still see my wife in the rear view mirror and she was biting her lip to keep from laughing as he gave us a blow by blow of the harrowing experiences of the last 5 days. I finally was able to slip in a question.

“Scotty, since this was church camp, I’m sure there must have been some spiritual moments during the week. Is there anything you’d like to share?” He thought for a moment, looked at me seriously, and said, “Dad, we did pray when we got a chance to eat but we were mostly concentrating on surviving.”

Bob Hope had nothing over on us when he would sing “Thanks For The Memories.”

Much of our food theme this summer has been based on the great things coming out of the garden and if you’re not up to your neck in summer squash then you’ve obviously ticked off all of your friends with green thumbs. My family loves yellow squash and I’m always looking for new ways to enjoy it along with all of the other treasures grown in our area.

The French produce simple casseroles using a great variety of veggies prepared with a crust produced by topping cooked ingredients with coarse breadcrumbs and sometimes sauces or cheeses. That crust is called a gratin.

Here's a really delicious recipe using squash that can be prepared early and later baked to provide an excellent side dish for a meal or even as a simple main course served with hot bread and a glass of white wine. Be creative and include whatever you have on hand. This specific recipe is just one I came up with that the family enjoys.

Summer Squash Gratin (Serves a family of 4 to 6)

I use yellow squash but this recipe works well with almost any summer squash you have available.

Preheat the oven to 350°F and lightly butter a 10-inch casserole dish. Steam until tender, about 10 minutes:

1 ¼ pounds yellow squash, cut into ½-inch cubes

Next, sauté in a small skillet until nearly cooked through and softened:

1 medium sweet onion, finely diced
2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced
in 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, or olive oil

Mix onions and potatoes into the squash and add in:

2/3 cup diced Monterey Jack or Swiss cheese
1/3 cup light sour cream
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
1 tablespoon dry white wine
1 teaspoon ground coriander
Sea salt and ground black pepper, to taste

Pour all into your prepared casserole dish. Combine and sprinkle over the top:

2/3 cup fresh breadcrumbs
2 tablespoons melted butter

Bake all until golden brown and bubbly, about 35 minutes.

Another simple summer dish that can put your squash to good use is a yummy pasta dish for those of you who enjoy the sweet basil taste of pesto sauce.



Summer Squash and Pasta

(Makes 4 to 6 servings)

Steam until tender:

1 pound summer squash, thick julienne cut or
½-inch diced

Toss in a bowl with:

1 pound cooked and drained mostaccioli or
penne pasta
½ to ¾ cup fresh or prepared Pesto Sauce
Add grated Pecorino Romano cheese, to taste



A mild and fruity Chardonnay is excellent with summer vegetables and the fruit forward style of the California Joliesse Chardonnay is a perfect choice for these dishes and others of this style. I try to avoid overly oaked Chardonnay when dining on foods that offer simple, natural flavors as they have a tendency of overpowering your food flavors and you will find that the oak taste is more the focus than top quality fruit in many of the wines structured in that style.

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