

**PRODUCE SECTION** menu up with strawberries



# MENU UP WITH strawberries

Discover 15 creative ways your colleagues use the popular berry sans dessert.

BY JODY SHEE

**S**pring strawberries. Everyone is ready for them. While the red, sensuous berry grows rampant nearly everywhere in May, National Strawberry Month, contrary to musical legend, strawberry fields aren't forever. Make the most of the fragile fruit while it lasts.

The popular berry has a place anywhere imaginable on the menu and can even be bottled, jarred, pickled, preserved and eaten at all color stages. To get your creative fruit juices flowing, examine these 15 ways to use strawberries that have nothing to do with dessert.

## 1 Barbecue sauce

Surprise guests with a sweet-and-sour strawberry barbecue sauce. Some of the main ingredients are Worcestershire sauce, apple cider vinegar, brown sugar and lemon juice. George Geary, Los Angeles-based author, educator, recipe developer and consultant, developed the recipe for one of his cookbooks. For 10 years, he was chef spokesman for Driscoll Strawberry Associates, Inc., Watsonville, Calif. For the sauce, he cooks all the ingredients together, turns off the heat, adds hulled and crushed strawberries, stirs and cools. "The strawberry flavor isn't strong, but you know it's there, though people can't figure out what it is," he says.

## 2 Cold fruit soup

The pink color of strawberry/passion fruit/basil soup makes it ideal for guests to purchase by the quart or gallon for baby showers and serve in a champagne coupe or white wine glass, says Marjorie Druker, cookbook author and chef/owner of New England Soup Factory, Brookline, Mass., and The Modern Rotisserie, Newton, Mass. Combine apple juice, white wine, fresh strawberries and dark-brown sugar. Bring it to a boil, simmer for about 10 minutes and take it off the stove. Add fresh basil, puree it and add a little light cream. Finish with passion fruit extract or fresh passion fruit.

## 3 Tomato and strawberry gazpacho

Ever experimenting with soup, Druker started a tweaked gazpacho with the expected tomatoes and cucumber, but she added both pureed and sliced strawberries. "I still add tomato juice, fresh lime and extra virgin olive oil, but rather than use red tomatoes, which would clash with the red strawberries, I use yellow tomatoes, instead," she says. Some of the soup flavor comes from adding various V8 Splash juice drinks, which are not overly sweet and are high in vitamins. Green onions and yellow peppers also lend flavor to the soup.

## 4 Strawberry pizza

For a sweet pizza special, consider serving strawberry pizza drizzled with dark chocolate and topped with fresh baby arugula. Andrew Deuel, executive chef of Tesori, Chicago, offered it the first time

### STRAWBERRY BBQ SAUCE

George Geary, Author/Educator/Recipe Developer/Consultant // Los Angeles // From *500 Best Sauces, Salad Dressings, Marinades & More* (Firefly Books Ltd., 2009), by George Geary

YIELD: 2 CUPS

1 cup warm water  
½ cup Worcestershire sauce  
½ cup apple cider vinegar  
½ cup lightly packed brown sugar  
⅓ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice  
¼ cup canola oil  
2 T. corn syrup  
2 t. sea salt  
1 t. garlic salt  
½ t. black pepper  
1 cup strawberries, hulled, slightly crushed

**Method:** In saucepan on medium-high heat, cook water, Worcestershire sauce, vinegar, brown sugar, lemon juice, oil, corn syrup, salt, garlic salt and pepper until lightly boiling, about 5 minutes. Turn off heat. Add berries; stir. Cool.

Opposite: This tomato strawberry salad, created by Dean James Max, chef/partner at Asador in the Renaissance Dallas Hotel, Dallas, gets some of its flavor from cayenne olive oil, crispy walnuts, local farm cheese smear and pickled strawberry vinaigrette.



## PRODUCE SECTION menu up with strawberries

for Valentine's Day. He combined mascarpone and béchamel for the pizza sauce and covered the pie with strawberry slices caramelized with a bit of sugar and cracked black pepper. He topped it with mozzarella and Parmesan cheese, over which he drizzled chocolate. It was such a hit with the staff and guests that he plans to bring it back as a special in season.

### 5 Beets and berries salad

Combine earthiness and sweetness with a small beets and berries appetizer salad. CJ Jacobson, executive chef of Girasol, Studio City, Calif., created such a salad. He previously was a spokesman for the California Strawberry Commission, Watsonville. Goat cheese is used as the base of the salad, to which he adds beets, hazelnuts and various berries, including strawberries. He tops it with such herbs as parsley, chervil, New Zealand spinach leaves and chrysanthemum. "It's like a garden on top," he says. He dresses it with olive oil, sea salt and a little lemon juice. He likes the salad's combination of acid, sweetness and creaminess.

### 6 Strawberry salad with chocolate vinaigrette

Customers can easily see the sense of chocolate vinaigrette when drizzled over strawberry salad. The salad is simple enough, says Desmond Fannin, director of culinary services for Gaithersburg, Md.-based Sodexo's Offer Development Center, working from the Atlanta area. Combine spring mix with red quinoa and top with fresh strawberries, julienned red onions, toasted almonds and a chiffonade of fresh mint. For the vinaigrette, combine orange

juice, balsamic vinegar, olive oil, sugar and a bit of Dijon mustard. Finally, add unsweetened cocoa powder and emulsify in the blender.

You can refrigerate it; it will hold and not solidify. "It's not a rich chocolate, but you get the balance of chocolate and acidity," he says.

### 7 Sweet and savory jam

Tomato and olive jam spread on biscuits as breakfast fare becomes even more interesting with the addition of strawberries, Fannin says. He combines balsamic vinegar, sugar, cumin, tomatoes and strawberries, and reduces it to the consistency of jam, then adds chopped black olives at the end with a little parsley. The jam also can be slathered on sandwiches.

### 8 Fish relish

Consider strawberries as a relish or salsa ingredient. Geary suggests reducing strawberries, mango or papaya and herbs, salt and pepper as a relish to top a piece of white fish. He made



a similar salsa to top a baguette for a television morning show on National Strawberry Day, Feb. 27, 2014. He combined hulled and diced strawberries with seeded and diced papaya, honey, chopped Italian parsley and sea salt. Simply refrigerate for 1 hour before use, he advises.

### 9 Fried green strawberries

The flavor of fried green strawberries isn't far from the flavor of fried green tomatoes, and they are appropriate for any dish to which you want to add an acidic, says Jacobson. After all, tomatoes and strawberries are both fruits. He slices them thin on a mandoline and uses a classic fry batter of buttermilk and flour. You can put them on a tray, salted gently, or include four or five slices as a garnish on skate wing, for example.

### 10 Duck glaze

Many guests consider crispy skin the prize of a duck dish. Deuel delivers with his Rohan duck breast with spicy strawberry/ginger jam glaze. He makes the glaze with lemon juice, sugar, fresh ginger, cinnamon stick, ground cloves, fresh strawberries, red chili pepper flakes and fresh jalapeño. It takes the mixture 2½-3 hours cooked at a low temperature to reach a jam consistency. When he brushes the jam on the duck breast and gratins it under the salamander, lets it rest and slices it, the result is a sweet and spicy flavor from the first crispy bite.

### 11 Faux crackers

If you find large, flat strawberries, cut them into about five slices and use them as appetizer "crackers." You can top them with a smoked salmon pâté, for example, Geary says. The salmon color goes well with red. For contrast, add a little dill on top.



Left: Desmond Fannin, director of culinary services for Gaithersburg, Md.-based Sodexo's Offer Development Center, developed strawberry salad with chocolate vinaigrette. Top: This beets and berries salad created by CJ Jacobson, executive chef of Girasol, Studio City, Calif., combines goat cheese, beets, hazelnuts and various berries, including strawberries, and is topped with various herbs. Opposite, top to bottom: 1) Marjorie Druker's Savory Strawberry and Yellow Tomato Gazpacho. 2) Hull large strawberries, stuff them with blue cheese and top with mint leaves. 3) This Strawberry Mist drink simply combines strawberry, mint, ice, strawberry vodka and soda water.

## 12 Pickled strawberries

Pickled strawberries is a great way to use not-yet-ripe berries that still have some green or white on them, says Dean James Max, chef/partner at Asador in the Renaissance Dallas Hotel, Dallas. Starting with 4 cups of water, he adds strawberries and either serrano or jalapeño peppers, shallots, garlic and an herb such as thyme, mint or basil. He boils it down to about 2 cups, then adds that much vinegar, brings it to a boil again and pours it over quartered strawberries. He marinates them for two days or longer. “I use them with a lot of dishes where I’m looking for a fruity sour flavor as a component,” he says. One example is halibut, on which he drizzles some of the pickling liquid and tops with extra virgin olive oil, salt, pepper and herbs. He adds a few of the pickled strawberries to the plate, and for crunch, he adds grated deep-fried yuca root, like mini chips.

## 13 Pickled strawberry vinaigrette

The process for making pickled strawberry vinaigrette is different than that for making pickled strawberries, Max notes. He juices fresh strawberries, adds cayenne pepper, a garlic clove and a shallot, reduces the juiced mixture to half, then strains it. He whisks in extra virgin olive oil, champagne vinegar, salt and pepper. The salad to which he especially likes to apply the vinaigrette is deep-fried tempura maitake mushrooms mixed with salad greens, sliced radish and goat cheese.

## 14 Stuffed strawberry appetizers

The idea is so simple, yet elegant. Remove the hull from a large strawberry and fill it with something savory, such as crabmeat or cheese from the blue family, says Geary. He especially likes blue cheese, as the bitterness complements the sweet strawberry flavor, which makes a sweet and savory appetizer bite.

## 15 Strawberry infusions

Infuse vinegar with strawberries for six weeks and use the vinegar in salad dressings or drizzled on top of goat cheese, Geary suggests. Or, drizzle it over strawberries and mozzarella instead of tomatoes and mozzarella as a first-course appetizer topped with fresh herbs. But stay away from basil; it is too strong for strawberries, he believes. Or, infuse clear white vodka with strawberries. Remove the vodka from the bottle and pack it with strawberries. Then add the vodka back in, close the bottle and let it sit for six weeks. Strain it and use for drinks such as vodka and sparkling water or champagne. Or, smash some berries and fresh mint and top it with vodka, ice and bubbly of any kind. ■



### SAVORY STRAWBERRY AND YELLOW TOMATO GAZPACHO

Marjorie Druker, Cookbook Author, Chef/Owner // New England Soup Factory, Brookline, Mass. // The Modern Rotisserie, Newton, Mass.

YIELD: 12-14 SERVINGS

2 lbs. freshly diced strawberries  
1 golden sweet pineapple, finely diced  
½ cup fruity extra virgin olive oil, divided  
3 garlic cloves, freshly chopped, divided  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
2 large English cucumbers, diced  
4 large yellow tomatoes, diced  
3 yellow peppers, diced  
2 bunches scallions, sliced  
2 T. balsamic vinegar  
Juice of 2 limes  
1 T. ground coriander  
2 t. chopped habanero pepper  
5 cups V8 tropical fruit juice  
6 cups V8 vegetable juice  
½ cup plain breadcrumbs  
2 T. freshly chopped cilantro  
2 T. freshly chopped basil  
8 dashes Worcestershire sauce  
Fresh lime wedges, avocado slices, fresh cilantro leaves, for garnish

1) In large bowl, combine strawberries, pineapple and ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil. Add a bit of garlic; season with salt and pepper. Add cucumbers, yellow tomatoes, yellow peppers and scallions. Add remaining ¼ cup olive oil, balsamic vinegar and lime juice; season with remaining garlic, ground coriander, habanero pepper, salt and pepper. Stir to evenly combine. Add V8 juices. Stir in breadcrumbs and fresh herbs.

2) Remove 1 quart soup; blend 6-8 seconds. Pour mixture back into gazpacho; season with Worcestershire sauce. Taste; add salt and pepper, if desired.

3) Chill at least 4 hours before serving. Serve in chilled glasses. Garnish with wedge of lime, sliced avocado and cilantro leaves.

JODY SHEE, AN OLATHE, KAN.-BASED FREELANCE WRITER AND EDITOR, PREVIOUSLY WAS EDITOR OF A FOODSERVICE MAGAZINE. SHE HAS MORE THAN 20 YEARS OF FOOD-WRITING EXPERIENCE AND WRITES THE BLOG WWW.SHEEFOOD.COM.