Summer

The Most Delicious Season

Summer is about great food. And great food is about delicious flavors and aromas. And delicious flavors and especially aromas are about memories. And fond memories have a lot to do with summer.

Summer evenings we spent as kids with grandparents or parents who may now be gone live on in our memories along with the foods we ate then. I remember my grandfather Hardebeck, my mom's dad, who always wore a bow tie, visiting us at our home in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. I can see my dad in the backyard cooking steak on the grill during one of Grandpa's visits, with my mom standing by (ready with criticism if the meat wasn't done to the absolute turn). Her station was in the kitchen, making the best darn hash browns anyone ever tasted. Dad's steaks always turned out great, to me—with a smoky aroma and a crusty char-grilled exterior and pink juicy interior. The smell of the browned potatoes and onions, and the bacon grease used to make the hash browns, mingled with the steak. I loved grandpa, and memories of my family flood back easily

when prompted by memories of the aromas of grilled sirloin steak and hash browns. Without the food associations, what would I remember of those long-ago days when I made sure my dog, Debbie (named after the grade school cutie I had a crush on), got a piece of the steak?

But I digress—in a way I'm sure all of us can digress: back to the summers of our youth, the swimming holes and swimming pools, the skinned knees, the trips to the beach and the mouthfuls of saltwater, the camping out in the mountains, the soda pop and ice cream, the wild fruits, and all the rest of the goodness life showers on us when we are new and unsuspecting.

American summer cooking is as exotic and important as the cuisines of cultures we may think of as exotic. I'll put a dish of Southern fried chicken up against a salmon *coulibiac* any day. Our American cuisine reflects the ever-growing melting pot we have become. Once upon a summer afternoon, we drank Cuban frozen daiquiris on the veranda. A decade later, we downed British gin and tonics on the patio. And today, we're back to Cuba for *mojitos* on the deck. Where once we nibbled on clams casino (mmm—rich with bacon) and later ate spicy Buffalo wings, now we bite into steak *satay* dipped in *chimichurri* sauce.

No matter where our summer recipes are from, they all come back to darn good eatin'—that's what summer means now. These sunny days and balmy nights not only improve our own spirits, but they also call forth nature's version of a broad smile: summer-luscious fruits and vegetables. And these fruits and vegetables never taste better than when they're grown close to home, because they're fresher and because local farmers can plant varieties with the best taste rather than ones that are hard and ship well.

Using Summer's Incredible Bounty

The three months of summer ride in on waves of fresh vegetables and fruits, especially the summer staples. Fresh ears of corn, of course, and tomatoes, but also summer squash, green beans, okra, local peppers sweet and hot (like a first sum-

mer love), cucumbers, beets, and eggplant. And the summer fruits! Apricots, cherries, peaches, nectarines, melons . . . and now is when you can find all this bounty grown locally and organically, with incomparable flavor and freshness. One can just imagine how our ancestors felt when the cold, lean days of the off-seasons faded into the time of sun-warmed days and shirtsleeve evenings, and the wonderful staples of summer appeared. We can feel something of that same thrill enjoying nature's gifts from our local gardens and farms.

There was a time in America when summer meant work—and lots of it. Planting crops, cultivating them, harvesting them, drying and baling hay, cutting corn and turning it into silage, putting up food for the cold months, and taking the harvest to town to sell. It wasn't that long ago, in the scheme of things, that most Americans were farmers.

Today, most Americans are no longer farmers, but 30 percent of us are gardeners—even if we just grow a few tomato plants. Or roses. Or herbs. Gardening, even a little of it, is grounding and relaxing. I knew an L.A. cop, a young woman, assigned to South Central L.A., a high-crime area. She told me that when she got home, her first 45 minutes were always spent alone in her garden. Only then had the reservoir of tension from her job drained away enough for her to be inside with her family.

Summer is the season of fecundity. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the season by growing something to eat. If that's impossible, visit one of the pick-your-own farms where you can gather strawberries, blueberries, and brambleberries right from the plants. It puts you in touch with that strong, vibrant force of summer and the positive and valuable regenerative effects it has on a person.

Most of the vegetables grown in the temperate parts of America are either tropical plants like tomatoes and peppers, or annual plants that spend the winter as seeds, such as corn and beans. That means they can only be grown in most of America during the frost-free summer months. So when the weather turns warm, that's the time to take advantage of the rich diversity and high quality of

our foodstuffs. Do that by following the recipes that fill this book, and also by preserving the great flavors of summer by freezing, canning, and drying.

And because summer is the time when we're active and spending more time out of doors, which affords us less time in the kitchen, we need recipes that are quick and easy to make. You'll find them here as well.

Locally grown summer fruits and vegetables are easy to find these days. They're in supermarkets, specialty stores, farmers' markets, roadside stands, and available directly from the farm and pick-your-own operations. And we're growing them ourselves: remember that 30 percent of American families grow some type of vegetable garden, about a third of all meals eaten in this country are provided by restaurants, and more and more chefs—and even some fast food outlets—are using locally grown ingredients in season. The very best chefs may spend their mornings at the farmers' markets selecting ingredients for that evening's meals.

Besides the huge variety of vegetables that come to our markets in summer, the best varieties of our favorite fruits appear in summer, too: Sparkle strawberries, Bing cherries, Santa Rosa plums, Royal Blenheim apricots, Red Haven peaches, Northland blueberries. They're there for a few weeks at most—and then, sadly, they're gone. Oh, but when they're "in," what a time we can have! Prices plunge as the crop swamps our local markets, even as the quality is hitting its seasonal highs.

We wait all year for those big, fat, juicy Bings to show up in the stores, refusing to buy the expensive substitutes from the southern hemisphere, refusing to buy the inferior early varieties, biding our time. Then, suddenly, there they are. We buy a bag for fresh eating. "Life is just a bowl of cherries" runs through our minds as we set a sumptuous bowl of them on our kitchen counter. What else can we do with them? What can we make out of them? How can we preserve their goodness for the off-season?

Hence this book.

Summer is a time when we can capture peak flavor and nutrition, not just in

fruits and vegetables, but also in other foods. For instance, summer is the season when pastures are green and lush, and the cows and sheep are grazing and the goats browsing. This verdancy has a profound effect on their milk, and cheesemakers know that summertime is when milk is at its best. It's also when grass-fed beef is at its best, for the meat animals are enjoying the benefits of fresh, green pasture—exactly the food that nature has designed their digestive systems to eat. In summer, chickens—at least those raised as free-range birds—can eat their natural diet, which includes worms and insects, and lay the finest eggs. And the hot, hard light of the summer sun calls forth the most aromatic esters and volatile oils from fresh herbs.

The greatest variety of fruits and vegetables is available to us during the height of the growing season. Foods in season taste best and can be vine-ripe, meaning they contain more flavor components and nutrients than out-of-season foods picked green. Far from being a new idea, eating seasonally is the way most people on earth have eaten since time immemorial, out of necessity not choice.

There are many good reasons to look for locally produced food during the summer. It's not hard to find, no matter where you shop. Then, the supply line from the farm to your table is as short as possible, ensuring that the food is at its peak of quality and nutrition. Supporting local agriculture means preserving local farmland, and that strengthens local communities.

There is an important environmental ethic that develops on family farms. Family farmers care not only about the bottom line, but also about the life on the farm: the human beings and their pets, farm animals, the life in the soil, and the wildlife that lives there or passes through. There may be some foods that are literally only available locally at some time during the summer. Here in Sonoma County, that would be the Crane melon. Long ago, a family named Crane discovered a choice melon on their farm that came true to seed—that is, planting the seed of a Crane melon produces more Crane melons. The melons are light yellow and extremely sweet and aromatic, and we locals look forward to them every year. They appear at the end of the summer season and are sold in selected stores and

at the Crane Melon Barn on a side road between Petaluma and Santa Rosa. You won't find them anywhere else. But many areas of the country have such local gems. Look for them in your region and you're very likely to find them.

If you can find it and afford it, choose organically grown food. Organic agriculture is clean agriculture, using no toxic chemicals or other agricultural products or medicines that endanger the soil, the local ground water and streams, the local wildlife, the farmer and his family, or the people who eat the food.

Many of the foods of summer these days, whether found at a supermarket or farmers' market, are artisanal—that is, they are grown or produced by someone who cares about the craft of creating the best possible foods from the ground up. I recently saw a summer vegetable stand with a display of zucchini—one of the most common of vegetables. The display was beautiful: each squash a perfectly formed, unblemished cylinder the same length as the others. I didn't measure them with a ruler; they may have been four to four and a half inches long. Each still had its rich yellow-orange flower attached to the blossom end. That indicated the zucchinis were picked that day and were as fresh as they could be. Some of the cylinders were green and some yellow, and the colors alternated in the display. I couldn't resist and bought eight squashes. At home, I made Zucchini Quiche. (See the recipe on page 33.)

In other words, what looks really good at the market will probably be really good on the plate, if you have good techniques and recipes for preparing it. That's what this book is for.

What's in Season?

The United States is a large country with many climates—the U.S. Department of Agriculture lists 11 climate zones ranging from Zone 1, where winter lows are 30 to 40 degrees below zero Fahrenheit (Alaska), to Zone 11, which never experiences frost (Hawaii). And so you may find local, fresh corn and green beans in Florida at times of the year when the ground is frozen solid in Minnesota. Summer fruits

and vegetables show up about a month earlier in northern California than they do in New York.

The following list of what's in season in the summer months represents a median—accurate for the broad swath of the country that falls into Zones 6 and 7. In colder areas, the local, fresh foods will show up later and disappear earlier. In warmer regions, they'll arrive earlier and stay later.

Be aware that most fruits and some vegetables have early-, mid-, and late-season varieties. Mid-season varieties tend to be the highest quality because they are original or heirloom types that were the proven standard of quality years ago, before breeding programs developed early and late varieties to extend the season. The fruits, vegetables, and herbs listed on pages 10–12 are what you can expect to find at your markets during the summer months.

calling all iphone users

If you're like me, you think you'll never download all those apps for your iPhone. But you might consider downloading Locavore. This application handily pulls together lots of information on what's in season in your area, where to find farmers' markets (that information could come in handy if you're traveling), and has links to the Epicurious Web site for recipes that use the foods you'll find at the markets.

And Zeer (www.zeer.com), a leading supplier of consumer information about groceries and ingredients, has launched a "Food Reviews" app for the iPhone. The app lists product reviews as well as complete nutrition facts, ingredient information, and allergy warnings for more than 110,000 grocery items.

SUMMER SEASONALITY CHART

	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
FRUITS				
Apples			●	●
Apricots	●	●		
Blackberries	●	●		
Blueberries	●	●		
Boysenberries		●		
Cherries	●	●		
Figs		●	●	
Grapes			●	●
Loquats	●			
Marionberries		●		
Melons		●	●	●
Nectarines	●	●	●	
Peaches	●	●	●	●
Pears			●	●
Plums	●	●	●	●
Pluots	●		●	●
Raspberries	●	●		
Strawberries	●	●		
VEGETABLES				
Arugula	●	●		
Beets	●	●		
Bok choy	●			
Broccoli	●			●
Cabbage	●	●		●
Carrots	●	●		
Chard	●	●		

SUMMER SEASONALITY CHART
continued

	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
Collards				●
Corn			●	●
Cucumber	●	●	●	●
Eggplant			●	●
Endive	●	●		
Fava beans	●			
Fennel	●	●		
Garlic	●	●		
Green beans	●	●		
Kale	●			
Kohlrabi	●			
Leeks			●	
Lettuce	●	●		
Mesclun	●	●		
Mizuna	●			
Okra			●	
Onions		●		
Onions, green			●	
Onions, red			●	
Onions, sweet			●	
Peas	●			
Pepper cress	●			
Peppers			●	
Potatoes		●	●	●
Radishes	●			
Spinach	●	●		●
Summer squash	●	●	●	●
Tat-soi	●			

Marjoram			●	
Mint	●	●	●	
Oregano	●	●	●	●
Parsley	●	●		
Rosemary	●			
Sage	●			
Savory		●	●	●
Summer & winter savory	●	●	●	●
Thyme	●	●	●	●

Stocking Your Summer Kitchen

PANTRY POWER

One of the most important elements of your kitchen is the pantry. When yo
short on time (or energy!), what you need is a low-fuss meal. The only wa
achieve that is to have a fully stocked pantry at the ready so you can pull toge
a quick, delicious meal in no time flat.

Be sure to properly store your ingredients, and be mindful of expiration d
on perishables. You'll find a variety of homemade summer staples on page 2

IN THE PANTRY

- Arborio rice
- Balsamic vinegar
- Basmati rice
- Beef stock
- Cannellini beans
- Canola oil
- Chicken stock
- Extra virgin olive oil, for cooking
- High-quality extra virgin olive oil, for dipping or salads
- Honey
- Kosher salt
- Molasses
- Orzo
- Quinoa
- Red kidney beans
- Rice wine vinegar
- Sea salt
- Sesame oil
- Sherry vinegar
- Small pasta (farfalle, rigatoni, fusilli, penne)
- Soy sauce
- Whole black pepper in a pepper mill

PERISHABLES

- Capers
- Dijon-style mustard
- Dill pickles
- Garlic
- Ketchup
- Lemon juice
- Mayonnaise
- Olives (green and black)
- Onions
- Shallots
- Whole grain brown mustard
- Worcestershire sauce

IN THE FRIDGE

- Crème fraiche or sour cream
- Eggs
- Greek yogurt or plain yogurt
- Milk
- Parmesan cheese

HERBS AND SPICES

- Basil
- Chili powder
- Chives
- Dry mustard
- Fennel seeds
- Herbes de Provence
- Mustard seeds
- Oregano
- Parsley
- Red pepper flakes
- Rosemary
- Sage
- Savory
- Sesame seeds
- Tarragon
- Thyme

Equipment at the Ready

A well-equipped summer kitchen doesn't require a cook's catalog full of doohickeys, but the equipment you do have should be high quality, with features that make it a pleasure to use. Whenever something can be done better by hand, or with simpler equipment, that's the direction I choose.

WASHING AND SCRUBBING—For scrubbing I use a natural-bristle vegetable brush with a wooden head and handle. It cleans up root vegetables that have accumulated dirt on their journey from farm to your kitchen. Farm workers', wholesalers', and retailers' hands have touched them all along the way. I'm not a germophobe. In fact, there's good evidence that exposure to microorganisms in the environment helps our immune systems to develop properly. But human hands are vectors for a variety of diseases, and a good scrubbing of carrots, turnips, rutabagas, parsnips, and such under cold running water simply makes sense.

CHOPPING, DICING, AND MINCING—You'll need what's called a chef's knife. These come in different sizes—because chefs' hands come in different sizes—and you need one that will fit comfortably in your hand. They have a wide blade and a slight curve to the sharp edge.

Look for a knife with a full tang, that is, the blade and extension to which the handle is attached are all one piece. Stainless steel knives are hard to sharpen. High-carbon steel is a much better material, and just a few swipes on the steel, as the sharpening rod is called, returns the blade to razor sharpness. Incidentally, the proper way to sharpen a knife on a steel is to hold the knife so that the sharp edge is against the steel and the top of the blade leans out about 5 degrees, then draw the knife swiftly down the steel so the sharp edge is swiped from the tang end toward the tip. Now repeat on the other side of the steel with the other side of the blade, swiping down one side and then the other five or six times each.

SUMMER MEMORY: the fourth of july

Here in Kenwood, a little town of just a few hundred people, the Fourth of July is all about community and ritual and food.

The day starts with 3K and 10K foot races—the latter quite a feat given the area's hilly terrain. After the race, there's a pancake breakfast down at the nondenominational church, where we get to see people we haven't seen since the last Fourth of July. Most of the town turns out and there's a big mash-up in front of the church: sweaty runners cooling down after their exertions and those who came straight from bed. After the breakfast, everyone lines both sides of Warm Springs Road—Kenwood's unofficial Main Street—for what must be the nation's cutest Fourth of July parade. It consists of a handful of VFW and American Legionnaires who receive the dutiful applause of the crowd, kids in carts, cute and snappy little dogs on leashes, a few classic cars like the Studebaker Sky Hawk and the behemoth 1959 Cadillac, and a couple of local fire trucks. Tom Smothers, who lives nearby, often sits on the reviewing stand and does some of his fancy yoyo tricks. And that's about it.

Then, a beer truck shows up in the town park, along with all sorts of stands selling barbecued chicken, pork and beef ribs, corn dogs, cold soft drinks, ice creams, and homemade cookies and cakes. The real culinary star of the Fourth of July party in Kenwood is the chili con carne stand in the park. It's deeply flavored, rich, meaty, smoky, and just what those runners need to replenish their energy.

Adults paint children's faces, and kids have a climbing tower and air-inflated jumping room.

There's a bandstand where a local blues-and-rock band covers popular hits much too loudly and some of the folks who've had enough beer to loosen up get up in front of the bandstand and dance solo.

In the evening, when it turns dark, thoughts turn to the fireworks displays. Kenwood is too small for fireworks, so Kenwoodians go into the town of Sonoma for a solid hour of rockets that explode into gorgeous varieties of colorful blossoms, often punctuated by booms that make the town's dogs slink under their front porches and quiver.

All across America, towns small and large are having similar celebrations, sometimes with surprising results. About a century or more ago, Charles Ives, a youngster in Connecticut, sat in the Danbury town square, listening to his father's marching band, but also to other bands on other sides of the square simultaneously. Instead of producing a cacaphony in young Ives, it enthralled him and led him to compose some of his most famous music, combining disparate melodies into one piece. And it's for these compositions that he's remembered today.

Country kids in the Midwest and East mark the Fourth of July as the very day when the wild black raspberries turn ripe.

And many years ago, one of my mother's friends told me about the quality of being intimate when you're older. "It's less like the Fourth of July and more like Thanksgiving," she laughed.

BLENDING AND PUREEING—Food processors are fine if you have a lot of blending or pureeing to do, but for most home kitchen work, a simple blender is enough. Get one with several buttons that pulse as long as you hold them down, but stop when you release pressure. That saves you from having to flip each button off and on. Ignore the labels that say things like whip, chop, grate, puree. The blender simply whizzes more or less slowly—if you grate long enough, you'll be pureeing. Just know what texture you're after and stop when you get there.

MARINATING AND CHILLING—Many recipes call for marinating and chilling meats and other ingredients for an hour or so, or overnight. Gallon-size food storage bags are useful, but I prefer sturdy plastic containers with lids. The big advantage is that they are stiff and stack, and if your fridge is like mine, stackability is essential. There are glass and ceramic dishes, but usually these have lids with knobs on top as handles, and that prevents stacking. Also, plastic doesn't break when the dish slips out of your hand and crashes to the floor.

FREEZING—The most useful pieces of equipment for freezing in my home are a roll of masking tape and a permanent marker. That's because when I make broth from leftover chicken bones, or freeze demi-glace cubes, or store anything else of a perishable nature in the upright freezer in the garage, I slap a piece of masking tape on the freezer container or bag and write the contents and the date on the tape. Otherwise, you end up with a freezer full of mystery containers and a thousand questions: "Is this pie from last blackberry season or the one before?" "What *is* the stuff in this plastic bag, anyway?" "When did I freeze this sausage—and what kind of sausage is it?"

Some things don't need this treatment—that bottle of Stoli will be long gone before it ever goes bad. I keep the tape and marker right on top of the freezer and am religious about marking every container. Who has time to memorize the contents and provenance of everything in the freezer?

Other than a load of ice cube trays and freezer bags, the only other piece of

freezer equipment I use frequently is the Krups Glaciere ice-cream maker. I keep the bowl of the unit in the deep freeze until needed. Then it sits up on a platform that turns it, covered with a top that has a projection that turns the mixture the way a moldboard plow turns the earth. I fill the bowl with the ice cream or sorbet mixture, turn it on, and in about 25 minutes or so, I have soft ice cream. I turn this into a freezer container and immediately put it into the deep freeze to harden. The bowl cleans up quickly.

Once upon a time I had a hand-cranked ice-cream maker, but soon decided that using it to make ice cream is a version of purgatory I don't want to revisit. There are versions with electric motors to turn the dashers, but I'm satisfied with the Glaciere unit.

GRILLING—I'm sure I'm not the only one whose first attempt at using a charcoal grill resulted in chickens aflame, burnt black on the outside and bloody at the bone. We learn to tame the intensity of our Webers by letting the charcoal burn down to white ash before putting on the meat, and by adjusting the air holes on the lid and in the bottom of the unit, but only after much trial and error have resulted in imperfect results.

The biggest improvement in my grilling technique on a charcoal-burning grill came when I put aside the charcoal lighter fluid and started using a canister-style charcoal starter. Put the briquettes in the top of the can, stuff two sheets of crunched up newspaper in the bottom, light the newspaper, and soon the can is shooting red fire out the top. The briquettes have started to burn and are ready to be spread across the steel rods in the bottom of the grill's bowl, where their ferocious heat subsides into a steady, white-ashed burn. Once I moved to the can, no longer did my chicken and steaks taste and look like burnt petroleum waste.

But the biggest improvement of all came when my wife bought me a gas grill for my birthday. This unit allowed me to adjust the heat with the turn of a dial—or several dials, since it has four dials, one for each of four gas tubes. With the heat on low and the top up, meat and vegetables will grill slowly and gently.

With the top down, the food will grill but also bake. The grill includes an electric motor that turns a spit in the top, for rotisserie meats. I turn the two outside burners to high, center a drip pan between them, and place the skewered and tied chicken onto the spit over the drip pan, which revolves as it cooks; then I close the top. In an hour and a quarter, I have a perfect spit-roasted chicken, basted all the while in its own juices.

Other essential equipment for the grill is a stiff steel brush for cleaning up the grill surfaces. Grill baskets are useful—they allow you to flip them over to grill both sides of the food without having to pry the food off the grill bars. However, whether for meat or fish, they have long handles that prevent the grill's lid from closing all the way. I've stopped using them because they stop me from adjusting the heat exactly as I want it.

I have found other grill matrices are useful. Some have closer spacing of their grill bars or perforations in a stainless steel plate for the heat to come through. These prevent small items like shrimp or zucchini slices from falling through.

The best grilling advice I ever got was to let the burners blast away on high for a full 10 minutes before using the steel brush on the grill bars and placing food on them. This keeps the bars free of grease—it burns away—and also makes the grill extremely hot, which prevents meats from sticking. The worst thing you can do is to place cold meat on cold, greasy grill bars and then turn on the heat. That process literally welds the meat to the bars and when you go to pry it off, all the browned, flavorful goodies stick to the bars and are left behind.

I used to do the annual full cleaning of the grill by hand, but it was a long, slow, tedious, and dirty job that I resented. That all changed when I got a power washer that fires thin jets of water with such force that crud like grease and discoloration are lifted off and washed away. It's still a tedious, dirty job, but it takes far less time than it used to. For daily grill cleaning, I use a simple hand tool called the Grilldaddy that has both steel brushes and a water reservoir for creating steam on the hot grills.

SERVING DISHES AND PLATTERS—Someone once told me that it's wise to spend money on quality for the things we use and live with every day. So it's good to have serving platters we really love. Big colorful Italian bowls for salads, a Limoges platter, a really good paella pan, big wooden cutting boards for cheeses and appetizers—they add an artistic touch to even ordinary meals and are a pleasure to use.

PICNICKING—The equipment can be as simple as a paper bag or as elaborate as a picnic basket with its own silver, dishes, glassware, and compartments for wine and food. Whatever it is, you need a cloth to lay on the ground or over a picnic table. My favorite way to have everything on hand for a picnic is to get out my German Army–issue rucksack, or backpack as we call it here in the United States. There's plenty of room for the cloth, the food and drink, napkins, plates, and utensils.

If you use a backpack, adjust the straps so the weight rides high on your back, even up on your shoulders. You want the weight pressing down on your shoulders, not pulling back on them by having the pack halfway down your back. You'll be much more comfortable for a longer hike that way. I learned that little trick on 20-mile hikes in basic training. I can't envision a picnic extending to a 20-mile hike, but packing in five miles to a pristine spot for lunch is within reason.

SUMMER MEMORY: **swimming**

The strongest appetite stimulant I know is swimming. After a morning or afternoon of playing in the water, hunger turns ravenous. Swimming, because it uses just about every muscle in the body, quickly drains one's fuel tank.

I learned to swim at Pop Pierce's Day Camp in Manhasset, Long Island—about as suburban a place as you'll find—when I was six. And I practiced my technique at the Village Bath Club at the east end of town during the next two summers. The venues were, as they sound, safe and very suburban, and I was just one of the gaggle of kids who frolicked there. Because it was close to home, I wasn't far from the food I needed to recharge. Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches were prime refuelers then, and they still are. They take no cooking—a plus in the summer. Even a kid can make them, or maybe especially a kid can make them, and they are just as delicious now as when I came home from swimming.

Except that while the idea of the peanut butter and jelly sandwich is the same, the actual sandwich these days is far different from the ones that slaked the swimming hunger in my childhood. Then it was sliced white bread, hydrogenated peanut butter from a jar that became a milk glass after it was empty, and supermarket grape jelly made from Concord grapes.

Now, the bread is whole grain, from Nancy Silverton's La Brea Bakery in Los Angeles—bread packed with flavor and a variety of seeds and grains, the kind of bread one would have had to go to Europe to find back in the days of Wonder Bread. The peanut butter I grind myself from a machine in my local Whole Foods. The tub is warm from the heat of crushing and pulverizing the organic peanuts into butter. No salt. No hydrogenation. No nothin' but peanuts. And the jelly? Red raspberry or strawberry jam from Kozlowski Farms here in Sonoma County, made from their own stands of brambleberries or strawberry beds.

When I was eight years old, my life changed—drastically. Dad quit his job as art director of a company in Manhattan and moved us to the wilds of the Pocono Mountains of eastern Pennsylvania. And it *was* wild in those days.

One fall, someone shot a 700-pound black bear about 12 miles from my house. I could look out our back window and see deer, bobcat, pheasant, wild turkey, and ruffed grouse—all game I would learn to hunt and eat with relish in future years.

But summer was still for swimming. A creek meandered through pastures in the valley below our house. The creek banks were made of clay, riddled with holes where muskrats made their dens. We kids carried rocks to one end of a wide area in the creek to make a low dam so we could swim behind it. We smeared clay on our bodies and faces, thinking we looked like Indians. I had another swimming hole about two miles away, in the hemlock-draped hills, where a clean stream coursed down through a series of five waterfalls before flowing away through meadows of wildflowers and grasses. This was my secret place. The water was spring-fed, ice cold, and so pure and clear you could drink it.

There were no peanut butter and jelly sandwiches in the woods. But the woods and fields were bursting with food. Wild berries grew everywhere. Wild grapes hung from the sassafras trees in the fence rows. By the time I was in my early teens, my friends and I knew all about fishing and cooking trout over a small campfire. We all had .22s and shot the occasional rabbit, gutted and skinned it, split it in half, and cooked it on green branches set over and above a small fire.

Now that I look back on my early years and the places I swam, I realize that the sunny, chlorinated pools of the suburbs and the wild, natural pools of my country swimming holes were a universe apart. From the suburban pools I learned about relationships with other kids. From the country swimming holes, I learned about my relationship with the natural world.

And my relationship with nature was as hunter and gatherer to nature's abundance. I was much better fed—nutritionally and spiritually—after working up a great hunger in nature's swimming holes than I ever was in suburbia.

SUMMER MEMORY: what's summer without an outdoor concert?

"If music be the food of love, play on," Duke Orsino famously said in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. And he was right, in that sharing an outdoor musical experience with someone and something edible you care about can strengthen the bonds of love.

It helps if the music is romantic and the food and drink summery. It was only a few years ago that the Russian National Symphony played Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* at Chalk Hill Winery in Sonoma County and had everyone swooning as we ate hors d'oeuvres and drank chilled Chalk Hill Chardonnay.

How romantic it gets depends mostly on whom you're with. There was one unforgettable event that took place on the lawn outside Packer Chapel on the campus of Lehigh University one summery day many years ago. Each year, the Bethlehem Bach Choir—a dedicated group of very talented townspeople—sings Bach's *Mass in B Minor* in the chapel. Tickets are expensive, and we were impoverished college students, but the day was warm and the stained glass windows of the chapel were thrown open so air could circulate. And so I and several friends—including student nurses from the nearby nurses' training program at St. Luke's Hospital—opened a blanket on the lawn and sat ourselves down with a basket full of cherries and chicken sandwiches, and a cooler of daiquiris.

I still remember the warmth of the sun, the smell of the grass, the filling sandwiches and tangy daiquiris, the contentment of lying back with my head on my girlfriend's lap, and the heavenly feeling when the choir's hundred voices, accompanied by the chapel's thunderous tracker organ, swelled and spilled through the windows to surround us. We ate and drank and sat transfixed by the music. We were wrapped in pleasure for a good hour and a half.

Speaking of outdoor concerts and good summer food, there's a band shell in Healdsburg here in northern California where a local band that specializes

in Sousa marches happened to be playing early one afternoon while I was in that town. I ducked into the Downtown Bakery and Creamery for some of its homemade gelato and a cinnamon twist. The counterperson and I were talking and I asked if the twists were a new item. She said the *San Francisco Chronicle* had written about the bakery and mentioned how good the cinnamon twists were. "But we didn't make cinnamon twists," she laughed. "So many people were asking for them that we came up with a recipe and here they are."

Outdoor concerts are even better, if that's possible, when they're under the summer stars. New York City has been providing free classical concerts at the Naumburg Bandshell in Central Park for a hundred years. If you live in Southern California, the Hollywood Bowl and its natural hillside amphitheater makes for a dreamy evening of music al fresco. And all across this land, cities and towns are home to concerts of every kind of music you can think of, where food stores and carts sell local specialty foods. Beignets in New Orleans. Cheese steaks and hoagies in Philadelphia. Loose meat sandwiches in the Midwest. Oyster po'boys in Seattle. Lobster rolls in Maine.

If music be the food of love, let's eat!