

A top-down view of a large, roasted chicken in a black cast-iron skillet. The chicken is cut into pieces and garnished with fresh green herbs. The skillet sits on a blue and white polka-dot placemat on a wooden table. Surrounding the skillet are various items: a glass of red beverage with a lime wedge, a small bowl of colorful salad, a white plate with blue floral patterns, and a small glass of water. The word "Flav" is overlaid in large white letters at the bottom right.

Flav



IN OREGON,
JICAMA AND
JALAPEÑOS
MEET SAMBAL
AND SOY
SAUCE IN A
FEAST THAT'S
AS AMERICAN
AS APPLE PIE.

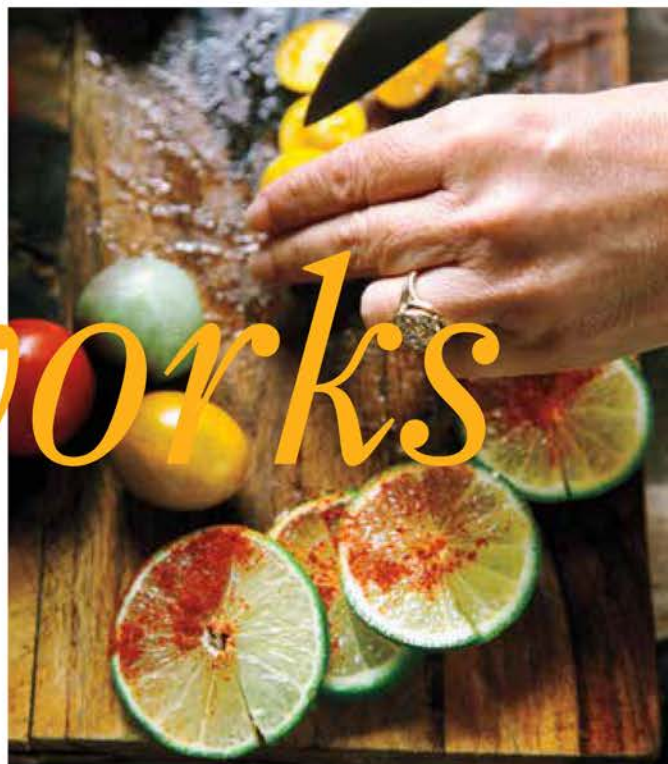
BY MEG J. MATEO

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
AMY DICKERSON



O r

fireworks





Isabel Cruz

collects sweet and spicy peppers for dinner in her nearly 4,000-square-foot greenhouse.



“Some cilantro?”

Isabel Cruz calls out to one of her guests. Cruz can't find the herb she needs for showering over her sizzling, skillet-roasted chicken, just out of the oven. She's unfazed. “Check the field,” she says. “But it's okay if we don't have any.” The self-taught, self-reliant chef of Puerto Rican descent has already harvested basketfuls of other produce—shiny heirloom tomatoes, cucumbers, green onions, chiles—today. Here at Stargazer Farm, a 60-acre property she co-owns in Sandy, Oregon, not far from Mt. Hood, the bounty usually gets trucked to local restaurants, including her own, Isabel Pearl in Portland. But tonight it's going straight into an Independence Day dinner for family and friends.

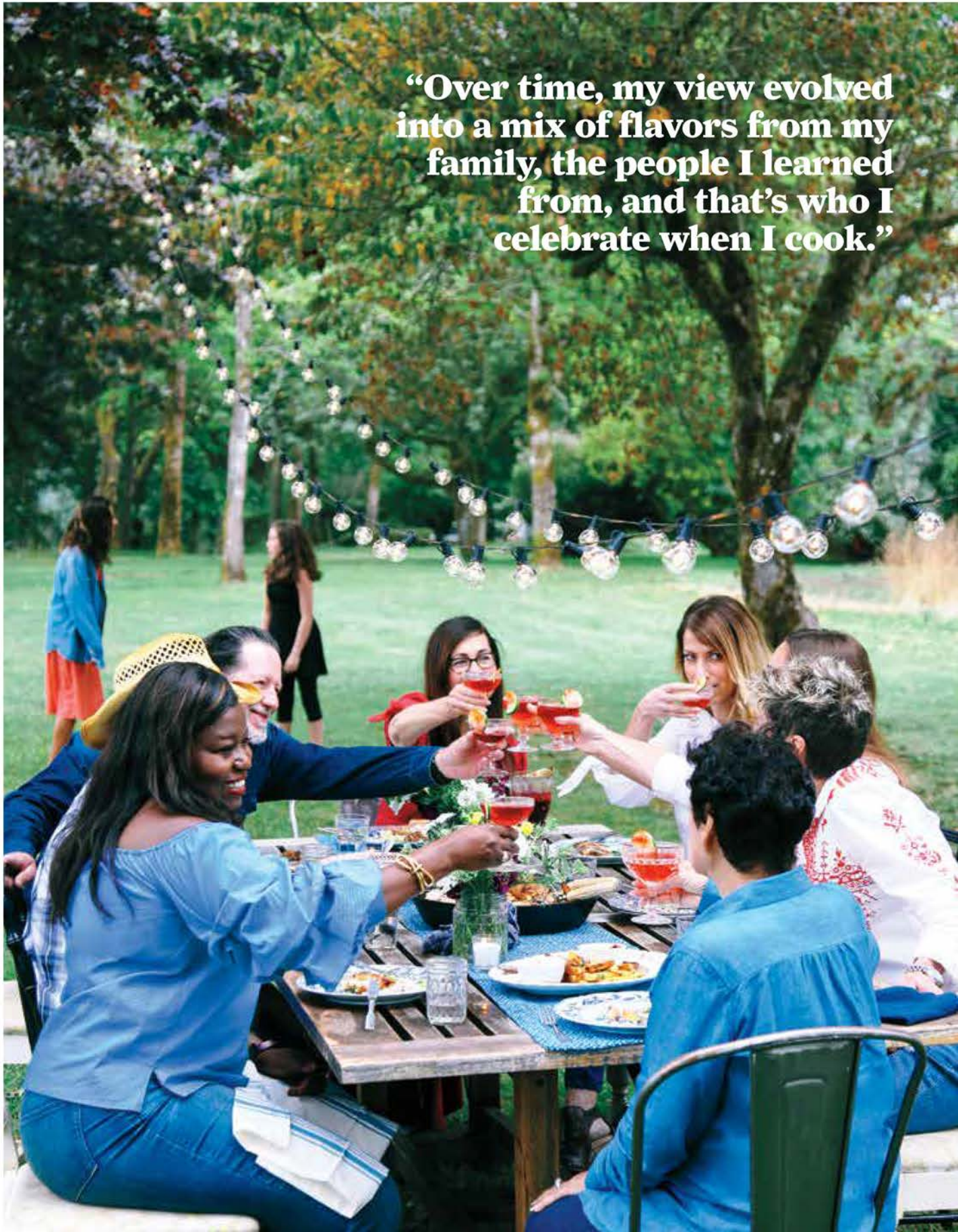
Although Cruz regularly visits the farm, her home base is the San Diego area. She currently has two other restaurants there, Coffee Cup Cafe and Isabel's Cantina. Cruz started her foray into the restaurant business with Mission Cafe when she was 29, using money borrowed from one of her brothers. A single mom with two kids, she threw herself into the business and discovered what she loved best: Latin-Asian fusion. “Growing up in Los Angeles, I had a lot of Asian-American friends, kids who were first-generation like me,” Cruz explains. “I loved going to their homes and eating their food. It felt very natural for me to combine flavors from my home and theirs.”

She started cooking early with minimum fuss, learning from her mother and grandma and making meals for the whole family by the time she was 14. Today, her laid-back approach permeates everything she does, from a just-released cookbook, *The Latin Table*, to this intimate feast. Instead of micromanaging every detail tonight, for instance, she's invited her guests to help pull off the party: Brother Erik Guzman cuts up the chickens, and Maria Hunt, friend and journalist, works on the mezcal cocktails. Pretty soon they're all grabbing plates, votive candles, glasses, chairs, and platters of food



Above: The carriage house at Stargazer Farm, with squash plants in foreground. Previous pages: Sichuan peppercorn roast chicken; Isabel Cruz's niece, Ava Guzman (in red); prepping lime wheels for hibiscus cocktails.

“Over time, my view evolved into a mix of flavors from my family, the people I learned from, and that’s who I celebrate when I cook.”





HIBISCUS MEZCAL COCKTAIL

MAKES 1 / 5 MINUTES

Dried hibiscus flowers (*jamaica* in Spanish) give this drink its gorgeous ruby glow and extra tang.

- 3 to 4 tbsp. Hibiscus Syrup** (depending on how sweet you like it; recipe below)
- 3 tbsp. mezcal** (preferably silver, such as Xicaru Silver)
- 3 tbsp. fresh lime juice**
- 1 lime or small orange, sliced thinly** crosswise into wheels
- Tajín*** (Mexican chile-lime seasoning; optional)

- 1.** Put hibiscus syrup, mezcal, and lime juice in a shaker and top with ice. Shake; strain into a coupe glass.
- 2.** Garnish with a lime wheel, sprinkled with Tajín if you like.

* Find Tajín at Mexican markets and online.

PER COCKTAIL 274 Cal., 0.1% (0.3 Cal.) from fat; 0.2 g protein; 0 g fat; 39 g carbo (0.6 g fiber); 5.1 mg sodium; 0 mg chol.

HIBISCUS SYRUP

MAKES ABOUT 2½ CUPS / 20 MINUTES, PLUS TIME TO COOL

This makes enough for 10 to 12 Hibiscus Mezcal Cocktails (recipe above) and is also good diluted with water, for a classic Mexican *agua de jamaica*. Prepare in a medium pot, combining 2 cups *each* water and **sugar** with 1 cup **dried hibiscus flowers**. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to a simmer, and cook until flowers soften and sugar is mostly dissolved, about 4 minutes. Strain through a fine-mesh strainer into a jar, pressing flowers with a wooden spoon to release all the liquid. Discard flowers and let syrup cool.

PER 3-TBSP. SERVING 141 Cal., 0% from fat; 0 g protein; 0 g fat; 36 g carbo (0.5 g fiber); 3.7 mg sodium; 0 mg chol.

and walking down to the outdoor table, where Cruz's boyfriend, Chris Stephens, has just finished hanging lights in the surrounding trees.

Everyone settles in, then all raise their glasses for a toast. "Isabel is one of the coolest people I know," says Carla Renee Gravley, Cruz's longtime friend. "There could be a hurricane around her, and she'd say, 'Hey, we've got a cake to bake!'"

The atmosphere may be low-key—in keeping with the relaxed feel of the Latin gatherings she grew up with, she says—but the food is bright, bold, and exciting. The menu spans from Mexico to Indonesia: shrimp cocktail with pineapple, jicama, mint, and ginger sambal; plantain fries served with a "Chino Latino" ketchup spiced with sambal oelek and smoky chipotle chiles; and the main event, roast chicken with Sichuan peppercorns and rich, crisp curls of Mexican chicharrónes.

For Cruz, it makes total sense as a Fourth of July gathering. "When I was young, American food meant TV dinners and canned goods," she says. "Over time, my view evolved into a mix of flavors from my family, the people I learned from, and that's who I celebrate when I cook. All these cultures contributing to a larger whole—to me, that's America."



For a Latin-Asian outdoor celebration, Cruz's guests include mixologist Maria Hunt (at left in blue), Cruz's boyfriend, Chris Stephens (top left), and chef Maylin Chavez (top right) of Portland's Olympia Oyster Bar.



GINGER SAMBAL SHRIMP COCKTAIL

SERVES 8 TO 10 (MAKES ABOUT 7 CUPS) / ABOUT 1 HOUR

Colorful and bold, this dish shows how seamlessly Latin and Asian flavors can blend. To make the prep faster, buy precut pineapple. The sambal is quite spicy, and the chiles add to the fire—so seed them if you want to moderate the heat of the dish.

SHRIMP

1½ lbs. peeled deveined shrimp (31 to 40 per lb.)

1¼ lbs. pineapple, peeled and cut into ½-in. dice (to yield 2½ cups)

8 oz. jicama*, peeled and cut into ½-in. dice (to yield 1½ cups)

⅓ cup thinly sliced red onion
1 to 2 red jalapeño chiles or red serrano chiles, thinly sliced
⅓ cup chopped cilantro (leaves and tender stems)
⅓ cup chopped fresh mint leaves
Kosher salt

GINGER SAMBAL

¼ cup each sambal oelek (Indonesian chile paste)* and rice vinegar
2½ oz. fresh ginger, peeled and coarsely chopped (about ¼ cup)
2 tbsp. each sugar and toasted sesame oil

VINAIGRETTE

2 tbsp. lime juice
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1. Bring a medium pot of water to a boil, add shrimp, and poach until curled and pink

Creative combos

In the Disney movie *Ratatouille*, the protagonist, Remy, melts into bliss when he eats a strawberry with cheese for the first time. Isabel Cruz also mixes disparate flavors for delightful results. She suggests starting small, with ingredients you already know. Using seasonings from Cruz's recipes, try any of the pairings below—and you, too, might discover some favorite combinations.

GINGER

bananas, berries, coconut, dates, figs, oranges, plums

SESAME SEEDS

chickpeas, eggplant, spinach

DRIED CHILES

chocolate, pomegranate, pumpkin, sweet potatoes

A top-down photograph of a Tomato and Avocado Salad in a white, ornate, scalloped-edge bowl. The salad consists of sliced cucumbers, cherry tomatoes (red and yellow), and avocado slices, all coated in a light dressing and topped with white sesame seeds. A silver serving spoon is visible on the left side of the bowl. The bowl sits on a rustic wooden surface, with a blue and white checkered cloth partially visible on the right. A red vertical bar is on the far right edge of the image, with a yellow triangle pointing towards the text.

**Tomato
and
Avocado
Salad**

(page 74)



Relaxing around the table (from left): chefs Maylin Chavez and McCauley Tawpash, as well as Carla Renee Gravley.

About ¼ cup chopped cilantro (leaves and tender stems)

1. Dry chickens inside and out with paper towels, then carefully loosen breast and thigh skin with a butter knife and your fingers. Rub chickens inside and out and under skin with salt (about 1 tbsp. per chicken). Chill chickens, uncovered, on a rack set in a rimmed baking pan, 2 days. Let chickens come to room temperature before roasting, about 1 hour. If at all moist, dry with paper towels. Put 1 large or 2 smaller cast-iron skillets, or a heavy roasting pan with a flat rack inside, in oven and preheat to 450° (475° for roasting pan).
2. Meanwhile, toast peppercorns: Discard any leaves or loose twigs from peppercorns. In a frying pan (not nonstick) over medium-low heat, toast peppercorns, shaking and stirring occasionally, until fragrant and slightly darker, 4 to 6 minutes (if they start smoking, lower the heat). Pour into a bowl and let cool completely, then grind to a coarse powder in a spice or coffee grinder.
3. Sprinkle chickens all over, inside, and under skin with most of Sichuan pepper (about 1½ tbsp. per chicken).
4. Place chickens breast side down in skillet or pan. The chickens should have plenty of room around them for hot air to circulate. Roast chickens until skins begin to brown, about 20 minutes. Using 2 spatulas, carefully turn chickens over and sprinkle with remaining Sichuan pepper. Roast another 20 minutes.
5. Reduce heat to 350° if using cast iron (400° for roasting pan). Roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted into thigh joint registers 165°, 10 to 20 minutes. Remove from oven and let rest 10 minutes.

and just barely opaque in center (cut one to check), 2½ to 3 minutes. Drain and pour into a bowl of ice water. When cool, drain again and chop into ½-in. dice. Chill until using.

2. Make ginger sambal: Purée sambal ingredients in a blender or food processor (add water as needed to make it pourable), then chill until using.
3. Make vinaigrette: In a small bowl, whisk together lime juice and oil.
4. Just before serving, put shrimp, pineapple, jicama, onion, chiles, cilantro, and mint in a large bowl. Toss gently with lime vinaigrette and add salt to taste.
5. Divide shrimp cocktail among 8 to 10 small bowls or glasses and drizzle sparingly with ginger sambal. Serve with extra sambal on the side.

*Jicama, a juicy, crunchy, slightly sweet tuber, is best when small (bigger ones tend to be dry and starchy). Buy them from a place that has high turnover, like a Mexican market or farmers' market. Find sambal oelek at well-stocked grocery stores, Asian markets, and online.

PER SERVING 207 Cal., 42% (87 Cal.) from fat; 11 g protein; 10 g fat (1.5 g sat.); 18 g carbo (2.5 g fiber); 911 mg sodium; 95 mg chol. GF

SICHUAN PEPPERCORN ROAST CHICKEN with CHICHARRONES

SERVES 8 TO 10 / 3 HOURS, PLUS 2 DAYS TO AIR-DRY CHICKENS

Spicy, tingle-inducing Sichuan peppercorns mingle with rich chicken juices to produce fantastic flavor here. But it's about texture too: crunchy pork rinds (*chicharrones*) and extra-crisp chicken skin against the tender meat of the bird. To get that crackling skin, let the seasoned raw chickens sit, uncovered, in the fridge for 2 days to dry. Bonus: The advance seasoning also makes the meat flavorful and juicy.

- 2 whole 4- to 4½-lb. chickens, preferably organic and free-range
- About 2 tbsp. kosher salt
- 5 tbsp. Sichuan peppercorns*
- 2 oz. fresh chicharrones (fried pork rinds)*, sliced or broken into small chunks (about 2 cups)

6. Tip juices from chickens into skillet or pan, then transfer chickens to a cutting board. With a chef's knife or poultry shears, cut out back and trim wing tips (save for stock if you like). Cut each chicken into 8 to 10 bone-in pieces (cut breasts in half if they're big). Return cut-up chickens to skillet or roasting pan to serve, and top with chicharrónes and cilantro. Serve remaining chicharrónes on the side.

*Find Sichuan peppercorns at well-stocked grocery stores, specialty markets, and online. Find chicharrónes at Mexican markets, some grocery stores, and online.

PER SERVING 756 Cal., 65% (488 Cal.) from fat; 62 g protein; 54 g fat (16 g sat.); 1.2 g carbo (0.4 g fiber); 1,747 mg sodium; 297 mg chol. GF

PLANTAIN FRIES

SERVES 8 TO 10 (8 CUPS) / 1½ HOURS

Plantains look like bananas but are a lot starchier; they're also rich in vitamins (especially A and C), potassium, and fiber,

and can be eaten either green, semi-ripe, or fully ripe. Green plantains are usually cooked and eaten like potatoes—as in these fries. They need to be soaked in salt water first to make their clingy skins easier to peel.

5 green plantains

Canola or safflower oil, for frying

Kosher salt

About 2 tbsp. chopped cilantro (leaves and tender stems)

Chino Latino Ketchup and Lime Crema (recipes at right)

1. Cut tops and bottoms off plantains and score skin vertically along entire length of plantain, scoring 3 or 4 times and being careful not to cut fruit underneath. Soak plantains in warm salted water at least 20 minutes and up to an hour. Peel skins off in strips.
2. Meanwhile, pour enough oil into a large pot to come 2 in. up the sides. Insert a deep-fry thermometer and heat over

medium-high heat until oil registers 380°. Preheat oven to 200°.

3. While oil is heating, slice plantains: Blot them dry with paper towels, then cut each in half crosswise. Halve those pieces lengthwise, then slice into ½-by-¼-in. strips.
4. Frying in small batches (about 6 batches total), ease plantains into oil. Cook, stirring occasionally, until golden and slightly crisp on edges but not too brown, 3 to 4 minutes per batch, letting oil return to 380° between batches. Lift each batch as done to a paper towel-lined baking sheet. Immediately season well with salt, tossing gently to coat, and keep warm in oven as you fry the rest.
5. Pile plantain fries on a platter, sprinkle with cilantro, and serve with Chino Latino Ketchup and Lime Crema.

PER ¾-CUP SERVING OF FRIES 194 Cal., 39% (76 Cal.) from fat; 1.3 g protein; 8.6 g fat (0.8 g sat.); 32 g carbo (2.3 g fiber); 4.1 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. GF/LC/LS/VG

CHINO LATINO KETCHUP

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP / 10 MINUTES

In a food processor, purée ¼ cup *each* **chipotle chiles in adobo sauce** and **sambal oelek** (Indonesian chile paste; find at well-stocked grocery stores, Asian markets, and online), 2 tbsp. chopped **yellow onion**, ¼ cup **distilled white vinegar**, and 2 tbsp. *each* **sugar** and **canned tomato paste**.

PER TBSP. 14 Cal., 5% (0.7 Cal.) from fat; 0.2 g protein; 0.1 g fat (0 g sat.); 2.3 g carbo (0.2 g fiber); 229 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. GF/VG

LIME CREMA

MAKES ABOUT 1¼ CUPS / 7 MINUTES

On a cutting board, mince 1 large **garlic clove**, sprinkle with ½ tsp. **kosher salt**, and mash to a paste with the back of a spoon. Scrape into a serving bowl and whisk in 3 tbsp. freshly squeezed **lime juice**, followed by 1 cup **sour cream**.

PER TBSP. 20 Cal., 85% (17 Cal.) from fat; 0.3 g protein; 1.9 g fat (1 g sat.); 0.7 g carbo (0 g fiber); 27 mg sodium; 5.7 mg chol. GF/V



SICHUAN PEPPERCORN RICE with GREEN ONIONS

MAKES ABOUT 10 CUPS / 1 HOUR

This rice soaks up all the delicious chicken juices. It could also jazz up simple roasted fish or even store-bought rotisserie chicken. To toast and grind the peppercorns, see step 2 of the Sichuan Peppercorn Roast Chicken recipe (page 72).

3 cups medium-grain rice (such as jasmine)
1 tbsp. toasted ground Sichuan peppercorns
1 tsp. kosher salt
3 tbsp. butter
½ cup thinly sliced green onions

1. Rinse rice in a pot filled with cold water to release starch. Drain, rinse, and repeat until water is clear (about 3 times).
2. Return rice to pot and stir in 5½ cups water, peppercorns, salt, and butter. Bring to a boil over high heat, covered; reduce to simmer and cook, covered, about 20 minutes. If grains are still a little hard, sprinkle with ¼ cup water. Let sit, covered, 10 minutes. Fluff with a fork, add onions, and fluff again to mix.

PER SERVING 187 Cal., 14% (26 Cal.) from fat; 3.1 g protein; 2.9 g fat (1.8 g sat.); 36 g carbo (1.8 g fiber); 186 mg sodium; 7 mg chol. GF/LC/LS

TOMATO and AVOCADO SALAD with SOY VINAIGRETTE

SERVES 8 TO 10 / 30 MINUTES

Adding soy sauce to salad dressing gives simple summer vegetables an umami depth.

- 5 Persian cucumbers, sliced ¼ in. thick (to equal 3 cups)
2 medium heirloom tomatoes, cut into wedges

¾ pint cherry tomatoes, thickly sliced
2 small avocados, cut into thin wedges
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
¼ cup each soy sauce and rice vinegar
2 tsp. toasted sesame seeds
¼ cup chopped cilantro (leaves and tender stems)
Kosher salt

1. Arrange cucumbers and tomato wedges on a serving platter, followed by small tomatoes and avocado slices.
2. Whisk together olive oil, soy sauce, and rice vinegar and drizzle over salad.
3. Sprinkle with sesame seeds, cilantro, and salt to taste.

PER SERVING 190 Cal., 81% (153 Cal.) from fat; 2.1 g protein; 18 g fat (2.5 g sat.); 9.2 g carbo (3.2 g fiber); 504 mg sodium; 0 mg chol. GF/LC/VG

MANGO STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKES

MAKES 12 / 1 HOUR 15 MINUTES

Mangoes and strawberries taste and look good together, especially when united in a tender, lime-scented dessert.

SHORTCAKES

2 cups flour
¼ cup sugar
1 tbsp. each baking powder* and lime zest
¼ cup plus 2 tbsp. cold unsalted butter, cut into chunks
½ cup each whole milk and whipping cream

TOPPING

1 lb. strawberries
½ cup sugar, divided
1 firm-ripe large mango (about 18 oz.)
1 to 2 tsp. lime juice (optional)
¾ cup heavy cream
Chopped mint leaves (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350°. In a large bowl, using a mixer with the paddle attachment, mix flour, sugar, baking powder,

and lime zest on low speed. Beat in butter on medium speed until mixture looks like cornmeal. Drizzle in milk and cream; mix just until incorporated, a few seconds.

2. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Drop dough by generous 2-tbsp. portions onto sheets to make about 12 shortcakes. Bake until golden brown, about 25 minutes. Slide parchment with shortcakes onto racks and let cool until warm or completely cool.
3. While shortcakes are baking, make toppings: Hull strawberries, slice thinly, and put in a large bowl. Mix gently with ¼ cup sugar. Let sit until very juicy, 20 to 30 minutes. Pour half of berries into another bowl with about half of liquid and crush lightly with a fork or wooden spoon.
4. Peel mango and cut fruit off pit. Slice fruit thinly, put in a bowl, and toss gently with 3 tbsp. sugar and, if fruit is bland, the lime juice.
5. Whip cream with remaining 1 tbsp. sugar into soft peaks.
6. To serve, slice tops off shortcakes and spoon crushed strawberries and a bit of the juices over bottom halves, followed by mangoes and some sliced strawberries. Set tops in place. Finish with a dollop of whipped cream, a strawberry slice or two, and a sprinkle of mint if you like.

**Not all baking powders are created equal. Widely available Clabber Girl leavens mainly in response to heat. Rumsford baking powder responds most strongly to liquid, and has less sodium. If you use it, add ½ tsp. kosher salt to the recipe and bake the dough right after mixing with the milk and cream, before the rising action slows.*

MAKE AHEAD Shortcakes, cooled completely and stored airtight, up to 4 days (re crisp if needed in a 350° oven for 5 to 7 minutes). 🍰

PER SHORTCAKE 305 Cal., 46% (139 Cal.) from fat; 3.9 g protein; 16 g fat (9.6 g sat.); 39 g carbo (2 g fiber); 135 mg sodium; 45 mg chol. LC/LS/V

S DIGITAL BONUS Find recipes and DIY decor ideas for your Fourth of July party at sunset.com/july4th.

A top-down view of three strawberry shortcakes served on white ceramic plates with a red floral pattern. The shortcakes are topped with whipped cream, fresh strawberries, and a slice of mango. The plates are arranged on a rustic wooden surface. A blue and white striped napkin is visible in the bottom right corner. A red vertical bar is on the far right edge of the image, with a yellow triangle pointing towards the text.

**Mango
Strawberry
Shortcakes**