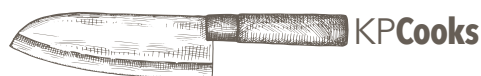


No-Recipe Summer Recipes



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My cookbook shelf is overwhelmingly full. There are the tried and true staples, the vintage community cookbooks, the bread and sourdough specific cookbooks, and the cookbooks featuring recipes from places I have never been, which are usually more about fueling my wanderlust than setting the scene for a meal.

This is to say: I love cookbooks and I will probably always buy more cookbooks. But I don't always follow or even want to follow recipes.

Certainly, there are recipes that I pay attention to and they help guide me. Baking in particular is not very friendly if you entirely avoid recipe guidance. But for me, the cookbook shelf is most often a shelf of ideas—a place to go when I need a little inspiration. An interesting combination of ingredients will catch my eye and that will be the base for a new creation.

I don't think I am alone in this. There are recipes everywhere, not just in books, but on the internet, in videos, on social media. We are swimming in a glut of recipes, but I have started to notice a shift in food media. I see more articles about how to cook without recipes, and even The New York Times came out with an entire cookbook this year dedicated to “no-recipe recipes.”

To those of us who are food curious, this is a call to come back to trusting ourselves. It's about making food a little more intuitive. It's about using what we have available in our kitchen and our pantry. It's about infusing the process of making food with a little more lightness, a little more fun.

In these warmer days we are craving fresher, lighter foods, so I have rounded up a few of my go-to seasonal no-recipe recipes. These are simple recipes that embrace summer but don't require exact measurements. They are a jumping off point, an entryway into enjoyable summer days when it's less about the food prep and more about sitting down with friends to enjoy time together.

Salty Watermelon Juice

Because of its sweetness and texture, watermelon easily lends itself to a very simple and tasty drink. Just find a blender and mix away.

Ingredients: Watermelon and salt

Cut up a bunch of watermelon (compost the rinds!) and pop it in the blender. Purée. Add a pinch or two of salt. Taste. Mix in anything else, like freshly squeezed lime, or a sprig of mint or basil leaves. Drink right away or store in a glass jar or bottle in the refrigerator.

Good on its own, mixed with sparkling water, or with the addition of tequila or mezcal.

Strained Yogurt with Fresh Herbs

Want an easy appetizer dip? Use a coffee filter to **strain yogurt for a few hours. Mix finely chopped garlic, shallots, fresh herbs, olive oil, and salt and pepper** into the thickened yogurt. Great as a dip, great as a white pizza sauce, and also works well served with roasted vegetables and fish.

Summer Squash Salad

Have an abundance of summer squash? This recipe is for you. It works with any assortment of fresh herbs you have, and you can make it as garlicky as you wish.

Ingredients:

A little lemon juice

A few tablespoons of olive oil

A couple of garlic cloves, minced

(or thinly sliced shallot or a little onion)

Handful fresh basil and mint (chives are nice too), chopped

1 or 2 summer squash

Salt and black pepper

Sunflower seeds or chopped hazelnuts (optional)

Nasturtium blooms for a pop of color

In a bowl, mix together the lemon juice, olive oil and chopped garlic. Peel the summer squash into thin strips directly into the bowl. Add the freshly chopped herbs and toss together. Want a spicy version? Add some crushed red pepper flakes. Serve immediately.

We'd love to feature a dish from your KP kitchen that friends and family ask for. Email the details to editor@keypennews.org with your phone number; we'll be in touch. (Don't worry, we do most of the writing.)