

Food Network gives you the answer

Q What is the correct way to cut a whole chicken in half?

—SUSAN DEHAVEN, SAN JOSE, CALIF.

A Depending on your goal with the chicken, there are a few ways to approach it.

If you're cutting it flat to lie on the grill or roast in the oven (also called spatchcocking), then sit the chicken upright with the breast facing away from you and use a heavy knife or kitchen scissors to cut vertically through the backbone. Press down on the breast with your hand to flatten and break the breastbone; that'll show you where you need to cut. Cut through the breastbone (there's cartilage in the middle between the two breasts) to separate.

If you're carving, it'll be much easier (and neater) if you remove the wishbone before cooking. To do that, reach into the neck cavity with two fingers spread in a v-shape to feel for the small bones near the neck. Use a paring knife to scrape away the meat covering the bones and pull them out with your fingers (or cut them out with a knife).

Or you can simply cut the bird in half vertically down the breastbone, then cut out the backbone as you would if you were spatchcocking.

Q What does the term "confit" mean?

—DEB EAKINS, MORGANTOWN, W.V.

A "Confit" is both a noun and a verb. As a verb, it means to cook something slowly in its own fat. And, as a noun, it is what you get when you do that.

The method originated in the prerefrigeration era as a method of preserving meats—usually fatty ones, like duck or pork. Once they're cooked, confits can be kept for months (if stored properly in fat) and can be served cold or warm, tossed into salads, or added to stews for flavor.

You might also see tomato or lemon confits on menus these days, though they're not really confits at all—the term simply refers to their having been cooked slowly over low heat, probably with added fat in the form of butter or oil.

For more information, visit www.foodnetwork.com. If you'd like to submit a question, write Ask Food Network, c/o Viewer Services Culinary Department, Scripps Networks, PO Box 50970, Knoxville, TN 37950. Letters may be edited for space, and because of the large volume of questions, we cannot reply to every one.

HotSummers

MARC SUMMERS, host of "Unwrapped," on going behind the scenes, the mystery of marshmallows, and his favorite comfort food.

Q: Your show, "Unwrapped," now in its sixth season, is hugely popular. What's the secret of your success?

Marc: It seems to appeal to everyone—no matter what age they are. I think it has to do with the fascination people have about going behind the scenes.

Q: Any particularly memorable experiences on the show?

Marc: We did an episode about hot foods and there were some chocolates made with habanero peppers from Cowgirl Chocolates. Of course, I had to try them. So, I took a teeny bite and everything was fine for the first 15 seconds and then it was like a cartoon ... I felt like steam was going to come out of my ears and my eyes would pop out of my head.

Q: What's ahead on the new season of "Unwrapped"?

Marc: We're doing shows about sweet and salty things, camping food, comfort foods, and pies (everything from apple pies to pizza pies).

Q: You look at the origins of many types of candy on the show. What's your favorite?

Marc: When I was growing up I loved Pearson's Bun Bars—chocolate, peanuts, and marshmallow in the shape of a pie. I hadn't seen or had them in 20 years. Then, we were doing a segment about retro candy and had on a woman from Hometown Favorites, a company that makes limited editions of old-fashioned candy. She gave me a box of goodies and when I opened it, son of a gun, there was a Bun Bar right on top! I freaked out right on camera.

Q: You're producing a new show called "Dinner: Impossible." Can you give us a taste of what to expect?



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Marc: Chef Robert Irvine, the star of the show, has cooked for royalty, presidents, and dignitaries. He's amazing. On the show, he has to pull off amazing feats and has no idea what's going to happen. On one episode, he has to re-create an authentic 18th-century meal; on another, he makes dinner for 150 passengers aboard a luxury locomotive. But he's so good, it's a challenge to stump him.

Q: What are some of the most surprising facts you've learned while hosting "Unwrapped"?

Marc: It's pretty wild—many of the machines that are used to make candy bars are the same ones they've used since the very beginning, around the beginning of the last century. Also, there's no mallow (a sweet, sticky substance from the mallow plant) in marshmallows anymore. They are mostly made from corn syrup, gelatin, and sugar.

Q: What's your favorite comfort food?

Marc: Turkey. In our house, it's not just for Thanksgiving. I am one of those people who make it year-round.

Sacha Cohen

TUNE IN

Watch Marc's new special "Food Network Unwrapped 2" on March 19 at 10 pm ET/PT and "Dinner: Impossible" Wednesdays at 10:30 pm ET/PT.

When you complete your meal, get compliments all around the table.

Savoring Easter has never been more convenient... start with your favorite cake from the Wal-Mart Bakery. Dessert never looked so good!

EASTER CAROUSEL CAKE

Select your favorite frosted layer cake (white or cream icing). Pick out some frosted Easter cookies (bunnies and chicks) to stand around the cake. Top it off with plenty of pastel-colored jelly beans.

EASTER EGG CAKE

Buy your favorite chocolate cake. Top cake with green coconut shaped like a nest and filled with small pastel candy eggs.

EASTER DELIGHT CAKE

Start with your favorite cake. Sprinkle the top and sides with pastel-colored candy sprinkles. Add a few whole strawberries or pansy blooms to finish the look.

POUND CAKE

Choose a frosted platter to hold the cake. Dip fresh whole strawberries about half-way into 1 cup melted white chocolate morsels (follow package directions). Chill on waxed paper-lined baking sheet until firm then place them in the center of the cake (or around the outside edge of the cake) just before serving.



MERRY BROWNIE TORTIE

Recipe provided by Southern Living Cooking School

Makes 8 servings


Hands-on: 25 min., Total: 50 min.

- 1 cup sugar, divided
- 6 Tbsp. butter or margarine
- 1 Tbsp. water
- 1 1/2 cups (9 oz.) semi-sweet chocolate morsels, divided
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 large eggs
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
- 2 cups sliced strawberries
- 2 cups blueberries

1. Stir together 3/4 cup sugar, butter, and 1 Tbsp. water in a small heavy saucepan over medium heat. Bring to a boil, and cook, stirring constantly, until sugar dissolves. Remove pan from heat, and stir in 3/4 cup morsels and vanilla, stirring until morsels melt and mixture is smooth. Add eggs, 1 at a time, stirring well after each addition.
2. Combine flour, baking soda, and salt; stir into chocolate mixture. Stir in remaining 1/4 cup morsels. Pour batter into a greased waxed paper-lined 9-inch round cakepan.
3. Bake at 350° for 20 to 25 minutes (a wooden pick inserted in center will not come out clean). Cool in pan on a wire rack for 15 minutes. Invert brownie onto wire rack; remove waxed paper. Turn right side up, and let cool completely.
4. Beat whipping cream until foamy; gradually add remaining 1/4 cup sugar, beating until stiff peaks form. Cut cooked brownie into wedges, then dollop each with whipped cream mixture. Top with fruit.

Top off your Easter meal with low prices on bakery-fresh desserts.



 **easter** start with

Wal-Mart has the perfect ending to a memorable Easter meal. You'll find delicious cakes, fruit pies and seasonal treats to satisfy every sweet tooth around the table.

All at the Wal-Mart price.

WAL-MART

Before They Were Stars



From grueling apprenticeships to slicing slipups, the road to culinary stardom isn't always glamorous. Here are some surprising facts you may not know about Food Network faves **Mario Batali**, **Tyler Florence**, and **Nigella Lawson**.

MARIO BATALI

When he's not duking it out on "Iron Chef America," clog-wearing chef Mario Batali, host of Food Network's "Molto Mario," creates magic in his many New York City Italian hot spots, including Babbo and Otto.

- Growing up, Mario and his two siblings were each required to plan and prepare a weekly family meal. One of Mario's favorite things to make was tuna haystacks—English muffins topped with tuna salad and melted cheese.
- As a kid, Mario's major cooking influence was his Grandmother Batali. He recalls never having enough of her homemade ravioli: She rationed them, allowing each family member about seven or so at a sitting because they were so much work to make.
- He spent most of his teenage years in Spain, where one of his favorite foods was a squid sandwich.



COURTESY FOOD NETWORK

- His mother tried persuading Mario to go to culinary school after high school, but he refused and instead attended Rutgers University, where he studied finance.
- His first restaurant job was as a dishwasher at a pizza joint near college.
- After college, he enrolled in a London culinary school but soon dropped out because he found the pace too slow.
- One of the seminal experiences of his life was studying cooking at a small restaurant in Italy where he apprenticed without pay for three years.
- He was fired from his first New York City chef job at an Italian restaurant when he attempted to redo the menu.
- While taping the first episode of his Food Network show, "Molto Mario," he cut his finger and tried hiding it from the camera in a bowl of tomatoes.
- He was lucky to survive a brain aneurysm in 1999.
- Mario loves cooking breakfast for his kids.
- He uses his celebrity chef status to help raise money for several charitable organizations, including Food Bank for New York City, which annually procures and distributes food to more than 1,200 emergency food programs in the city's five boroughs.

TYLER FLORENCE

As the host of "Tyler's Ultimate," chef Tyler Florence travels across America helping everyday people with their cooking challenges. He is a champion of uncomplicated recipes, bright flavors, and fresh food, which he believes is the type of cooking that comes from a "real kitchen"—a place dedicated to culinary honesty.

- As a "latchkey" kid, he started cooking out of necessity at age 8. His skateboard buddies loved his souped-up burritos.
- During his school years, he found it difficult to stay focused and complete assignments. Later, Tyler was told the cause: He had attention deficit disorder.
- Having to pay back a car loan led 15-year-old Tyler to his first restaurant job in Greenville, S.C., where he worked as a dishwasher/prep cook.



COURTESY FOOD NETWORK

- His father wasn't crazy about his son "flipping burgers" for a living, so Tyler considered a career in the Coast Guard before ultimately deciding to go to culinary school.
- He found a unique way to taste the flavors of exotic cuisines. In 1993, he worked as a flight attendant in order to eat his way around the globe.
- After 12-hour shifts in New York City restaurants, Tyler often fell asleep on the subway and missed his stop while traveling from Manhattan to his home in Brooklyn.
- He made his television debut in 1996 on a Food Network program, "In Food Today," during which he made a Tuscan bread salad called panzanella.
- As the host of "Food 911," Tyler was asked by his father to help revamp the menu at a weekly church buffet. The new bill of fare proved so popular that attendance at the event doubled.
- He may now be addressed as Doctor Florence. In 2004, his alma mater, Johnson and Wales University, presented him with an honorary doctorate in Culinary Arts.
- Tyler got married in December 2006 to Tolan Clark, a former Miss Wyoming USA.



NIGELLA LAWSON

Nigella Lawson's series, "Nigella Feasts," brings to Food Network for the first time a show about food, family, public holidays, and private passions. Here are a few things you may not know about the British best-selling author and "domestic goddess."



- As a little girl, she cooked with her mother and father and pretended to be a pet cat.
- Britain's spy service tried to recruit her and as a child she was taught by Britain's top spymaster.
- At Oxford University, unlike others who lived on canned beans, Nigella always had a fridge full of food and threw glamorous dinner parties.
- Like her mother, she always has roast chicken in the fridge and is nicknamed "Queen of Roast Chicken."
- The first things she ever cooked were béchamel and hollandaise sauces.
- Before going to university, Nigella worked as a chambermaid in Florence and ate "Pasta à la Medici" (pasta with diced ham and peas) every day.
- Nigella still cooks with her mother's wooden spoons.
- Her favorite meal is fries and roast chicken, and her favorite treat is marron glacé (glazed chestnuts).
- Her father was the Chancellor of the Exchequer to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and therefore was the most powerful man in Britain at that time.
- Her favorite hobby is food shopping.
- Nigella cooked for President Bush on his state visit to Britain—roast pumpkin, radicchio, and feta salad followed by braised ham.
- Her most precious possessions are her children and her books.
- She has more than 3 million books in print in the United States.
- She has appeared on about 100 magazine covers worldwide.

TUNE IN
Learn more about your favorite Food Network chefs on Chefography Week starting March 18 at 8 pm ET/7 pm Central.

Tips for a Successful Easter Dinner:

The whole crowd's coming for an Easter meal that's festive, fun and filled with delicious food for young and old. Well, the place to find the food, of course, is Walmart. As for the fun and festivity, here are some great ideas to make the event more enjoyable for everyone — including you!

- **Keep it simple!** Prepare one or two things from recipes and fill in the rest with purchased items.
- **Place a row of small vases or pitchers down the center of the table with a single fresh flower in each.**
- **Use a sheet or quilt for a table covering.** Then add more color with a variety of pastel napkins... paper or fabric will work.
- **Use bright colored grosgrain ribbons around napkins as napkin rings.**
- **Make easy place cards by using a paint pen to write each person's name on a plastic egg.**
- **Set places for children with small, cuddly stuffed animals.**
- **Set places for adults with a small flowerpot filled with transplants.**

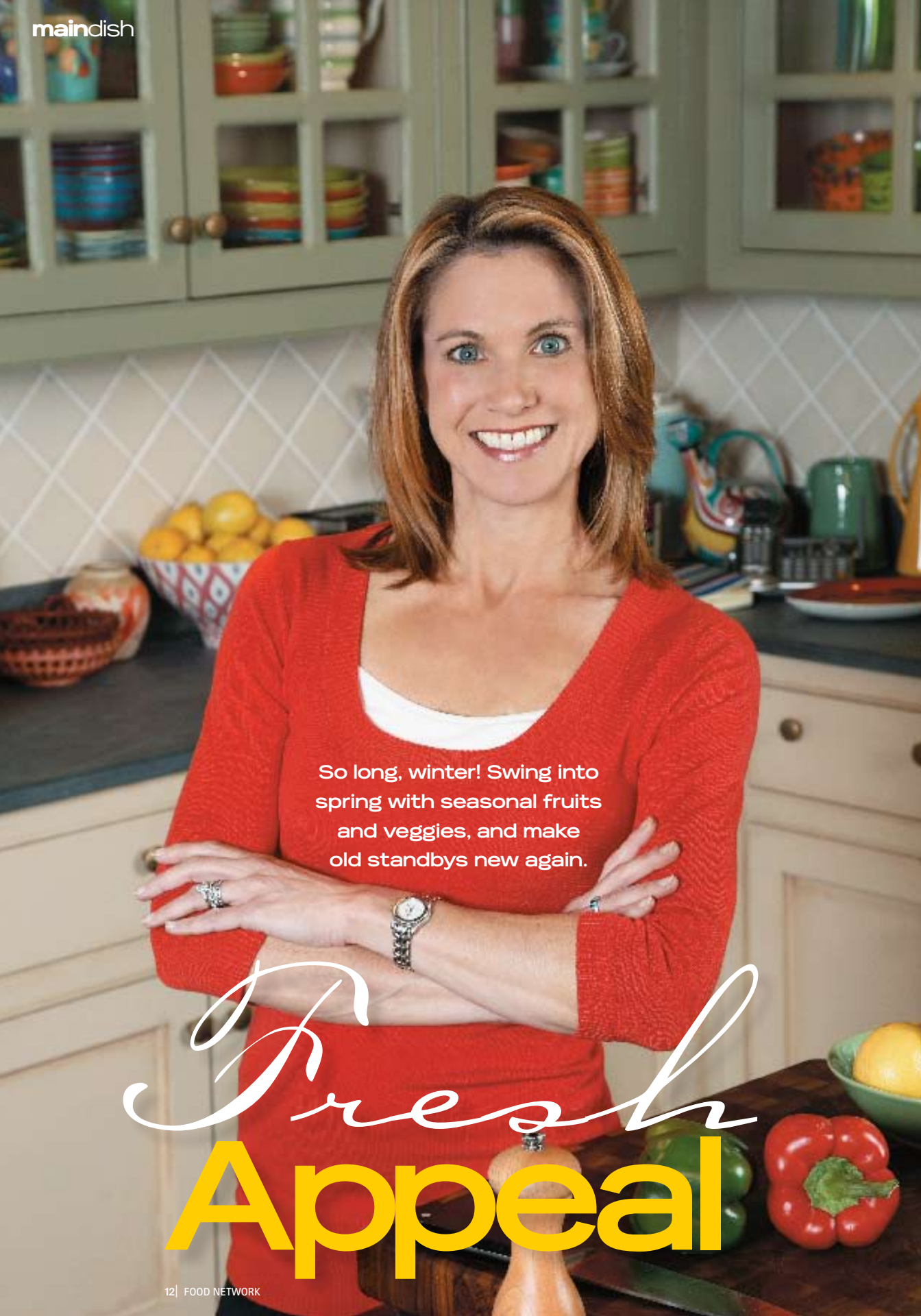


PICALINE-GLAZED HAM
Recipe provided by Southern Living Cooking School
Makes 12 servings
Hands-on: 25 min.; Total: 2 hrs., 20 min.

- 1 (7-to-11 lbs.) bone-in, smoked, spiral-cut ham half
 - 1 1/2 cups finely packed dark brown sugar
 - 1/2 cup Creole mustard
 - 1/2 cup apple juice
 - 1 Granny Smith apple, thinly sliced
1. Place spiral-cut ham half, cut side down, in a lightly greased 13- x 9-inch pan.
 2. Stir together brown sugar, mustard, and apple juice; pour mixture over ham. Bake at 350° on lower oven rack for 2 hours or until a meat thermometer inserted into thickest portion registers 140°, basting every 20 minutes with glaze. Remove from oven; let stand 10 minutes. Remove ham from pan, reserving drippings.
 3. Remove fat from drippings, and discard. Cook drippings in a saucepan over medium-low heat 10 minutes; add apple slices, and cook an additional 5 minutes. Serve warm sauce with ham.

Easter ideas brought to you by
WAL-MART
and Southern Living
Cooking School





So long, winter! Swing into spring with seasonal fruits and veggies, and make old standbys new again.

Fresh Appeal

When it comes to spring cooking, Robin Miller, host of "Quick Fix Meals," keeps it simple. "I love asparagus and artichokes like you wouldn't believe! And I don't fuss much. I roast the asparagus with just a little olive oil, salt, and black pepper and then squeeze fresh lemon juice over the top. I often make extra so I can make asparagus soup," she says. "And, for artichokes, I like to blanch them [a quick dip in hot, then cold water], stuff them with seasoned breadcrumbs and Parmesan, and bake them. Yum!"

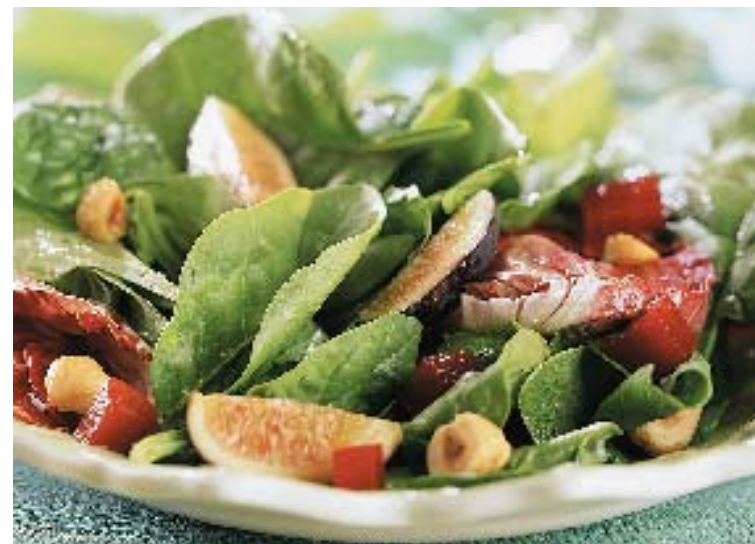
Spring cooking is all about celebrating nature's bounty. Crisp sugar snap peas, succulent strawberries, and perfect peppers grace farmers'

cook and eat," she says. "Also, being able to talk to the people that grow your food is a wonderful thing."

SALAD DAYS

Salads are an effortless way to use seasonal produce. From lively green salads with crisp greens to heartier salads with cooked meats, pastas, and beans, little needs to be done to make them delicious if the produce is fresh and ripe.

"Tender Bibb lettuce comes into season in spring and it's delicious in salads with a little fresh dill, lemon, and olive oil," says Alford. "It's also great cooked; I love wilting the Bibb leaves with glazed peas with mushrooms."



RENEE COMNET/UPITER IMAGES

markets and gardens everywhere. Not only are these springtime gems at the peak of flavor, they're also more affordable in season. "Fresh spring vegetables are full of flavor, so it's best to cook them as simply as possible to really appreciate them," says Katherine Alford, Food Network Test Kitchens director. Forgo frying, heavy stews, and roasts and opt for raw, steamed, poached, or sautéed dishes. "Glazed peas with mint, butter, and shallots are just wonderful," she says.

To truly immerse yourself in the freshest produce around, head to a farmers' market. Alford says shopping at farmers' markets helps her welcome foods with a short season, such as ramps and fiddlehead ferns. "It's a lovely way to

Other greens, such as endive, escarole, arugula, and sorrel, can also add zest to your salad. But don't stop there. "I like to add chives to pasta, rice, and chicken and tuna salads," says Miller. Thinly sliced radishes give kick and color as a garnish for cold cucumber soup, while fresh peas and beans add texture and variety to lettuce or pasta salads.

Mustards, vinegars, and oils are available in many flavors and can radically change the taste of even a simple green salad. But keep these dressings balanced so they don't overpower the dish. Remember the saying: "It takes four people to dress a salad—a wise one to add the salt, a mad one for the pepper, a miser for the vinegar, and a spendthrift for the oil."



Shelf Preservation

Here's how to pickle and freeze spring produce so you can use it year-round.

Pickling is one of the oldest tricks in the book. By soaking and storing vegetables in a brine containing salt and/or acid (usually vinegar), you can preserve them for months. Cucumbers, asparagus, and onions lend themselves to pickling.

Another simple way to preserve produce is, of course, to freeze it. Many fruits and vegetables can be frozen for up to a year. Berries, for example, freeze well. Wash and drain, pat dry, and arrange them in a single layer on a cookie sheet or a tray and freeze for about 2 hours. Remove from the freezer, put them in bags, and refreeze until ready to use.

Vegetables such as beans, sugar snap peas, carrots, and cauliflower also freeze well. For a good result, blanch them for 3 minutes by dipping in boiling water, then transfer to a bowl of freezing cold water for another 3 minutes. Drain well. Pop the veggies into a freezer bag and freeze until ready to use.

A MOVABLE FEAST

After being cooped up all winter, is there anything better than a spring picnic? Fruit and vegetable salads are healthy and easy to make for this outdoor occasion. Add a crusty loaf of bread and some cheese to the basket and you've got a tasty, quick meal.

Food Network Test Kitchens' food stylist Sarah Copeland says that eating outdoors reminds her of romance and childhood and all the things that are right in the world. "The key to a great picnic is variety, and many things that are easy to eat with your hands. Sliced fruits and vegetables, cleaned and prepped for easy eating, are the obvious

choices," says Copeland. "And my absolute favorite picnic food is the Spring Garden Potato Salad from Food Network Kitchens' "Get Grilling." It does require a fork, but the salad's thinly sliced red potatoes, radishes, cucumber, scallions, and halved cherry tomatoes are a bright, refreshing—and addictive—twist on traditional potato salad."



Dressed to Impress

Spruce up salads, appetizers, and entrées with garnishes that reflect the spring season—and make your guests swoon.

1. "Snap peas and snow peas sliced thinly on the bias add texture and taste to cold salads, and really pump up the nutritional value. Sliced radishes or snap peas make a surprising and colorful addition to warm soups," says Food Network Test Kitchens' food stylist Sarah Copeland.
2. Think beyond the orange carrot! Farmers' markets are also great places to look for different colors of this super-sweet root vegetable, from golden to dark purple. Because of their natural sweetness and crispy texture, carrots can be added to lots of dishes for color and crunch.
3. When you find fennel in the spring, the sweetness of this anise-flavored vegetable has a completely different quality than during the rest of the year. Wild fennel produces the small flat seeds that are used for seasoning, but it's sweet fennel that can be eaten raw as part of crudité or added to all sorts of savory dishes. You eat only the white bulb (so select one that is unblemished and feels crisp to the touch). The fronds can be used as garnish or in salads.
4. Use chives. These dainty, hollow green stems are the most mild-flavored of the onion family. Chives can be snipped with scissors and will regrow where you cut them, making for a smart addition to your herb garden from spring all the way through fall. When sliced thin, they make a lovely garnish, and both the chive and the gorgeous lavender buds work well in salads.
5. Spicy watercress adds a wonderful bite to salads or sandwiches, or it can be cooked to slightly mellow its flavor. You will need to wash watercress carefully by dunking it in a bowl of cool water and then remove the large stems—the small "branches" are tender enough to eat. Choose dark green leaves with no yellowing or wilting.

Courtesy Food Network



TUNE IN
 Watch "Quick Fix Meals" with Robin Miller weekdays at 3:30 pm ET/2:30 pm Central. To help you make more time for the things that matter, get Robin's new cookbook available at FoodNetwork.com.

Spring produce can help to update traditional recipes with new flavors and garnishes. Miller likes adding sugar snap and snow peas to stir-fried or steamed vegetable side dishes, and fava beans or fiddlehead ferns to risotto. And instead of classic creamed spinach, she suggests creamed kohlrabi.

To top off your spring feast, look to seasonal fruits to make desserts sing. The beginning of cherry season, in early June, offers inspiration for desserts: poached cherries with ice cream, cherry tarts, or even a simple stemmed cherry adorning a luscious pastel-colored cupcake for Easter brunch. "To me, spring is a time for cakes," says Alford. "A homemade carrot cake with real cream cheese frosting—I like to add a touch of sour cream—is a yummy dessert. If you get great spring carrots, they taste really sweet."

No matter what you like to cook, spring's brightly colored fruits and vegetables are truly a pleasure for the senses. "Anything that looks fresh and new is a welcome addition to any serving dish or platter," says Miller. "Select what looks the freshest, and that will provide the most flavor and color."

Monica Bhide



SPRING

From Easter to Cinco de Mayo, spring's celebrations encourage you to eat, drink, and be merry.

Spring

Spring sometimes seems like one long food-filled celebration. And why not? The icy cold has beat a hasty retreat, and warm weather makes a much-welcomed debut. The festivals and holidays this season embrace many cultures yet have one thing in common: delicious culinary traditions.

One spring festival that's increasingly popular in the United States is Cinco de Mayo, a Mexican holiday observed on May 5 that commemorates the victory of the Mexican army over the French army in 1862 in Mexico.

Juventino Avila, a chef-instructor at the Institute of Culinary Education in New York City, says he's noticed a lot more revelry on Cinco de Mayo in the United States in the past few years. "When I was growing up, it was not as much of a celebration as it is now in the United States," says Avila, who was raised in Puebla, Mexico. "Here, it is a day of drinking margaritas and eating Mexican food. Big dinners are a huge part of Cinco de Mayo celebrations. We eat a lot of mole poblano, the famous chocolate sauce."

Chiles en nogado—chiles stuffed with seasoned

ground beef, topped with a creamy walnut sauce, and garnished with pomegranate seeds—are a Cinco de Mayo favorite of Roberto Hernandez, chef at Dos Caminos Park Avenue in New York City. "The dish is symbolic of the colors of the Mexican flag—green, white, and red," he says. Hernandez also prepares carnitas—braised, seasoned pork—for the occasion. "Cinco de Mayo's our biggest holiday [at the restaurant]," he says. "I make mole poblano with 27 different ingredients, and slow-roasted lamb, too."

At Fonda San Miguel in Austin, Texas, chef Miguel Ravago recalls eating tamales and giant pots of his grandmother's mole sauce as a child. Though his family is originally from Mexico, he was raised in Phoenix, and remembers the mole as the center of the meal. "My grandmother would cook it in a beautiful clay pot, and we'd have 14 people at the table," he says.

So, this May 5, whether you're at home or out celebrating, raise a margarita glass and dig into the rich traditions and spicy food of Mexico. Salud!

Rosemary Black

Fiesta in a Flash

You can create your own festive south-of-the-border party with these quick ideas.

- Piñatas are fun for kids of all ages. Fill them with authentic Mexican candies, gum, and lollipops.
- Serve up frosty margaritas rimmed with salt and decorated with fresh lime wedges.
- Dress tables with napkins and dishware in green, white, and red (the colors of the Mexican flag).
- Create a playlist or mix a CD with traditional and modern Mexican music.
- Cook creative Cinco de Mayo fare with recipes from Foodnetwork.com.



FOOD IMAGE SOURCE/GETTY IMAGES

International Flavor

Cinco de Mayo is but one of many celebrations that take place from March to May. Here are a few others—along with the foods—that make this season special.

For two weeks beginning March 31, life really is a bowl of cherries as Washington, D.C., celebrates **The National Cherry Blossom Festival**. The event honors the 1912 gift of 3,000 cherry trees from Tokyo to the United States and inspires chefs around town to create jubilant cherry-inspired menu items. At the Dupont Grille, you'll find a sun-dried cherry crème brûlée, while at the Willard InterContinental Hotel, guests can sip cherry-infused teas and nibble on fresh cherry scones. "Cherries play a vital role in spring and summer produce along with citrus and berry crops, which chefs look forward to each year," says Dupont Grille's Chef Russel Cunningham.



ANN STRATTON/JUPITER IMAGES

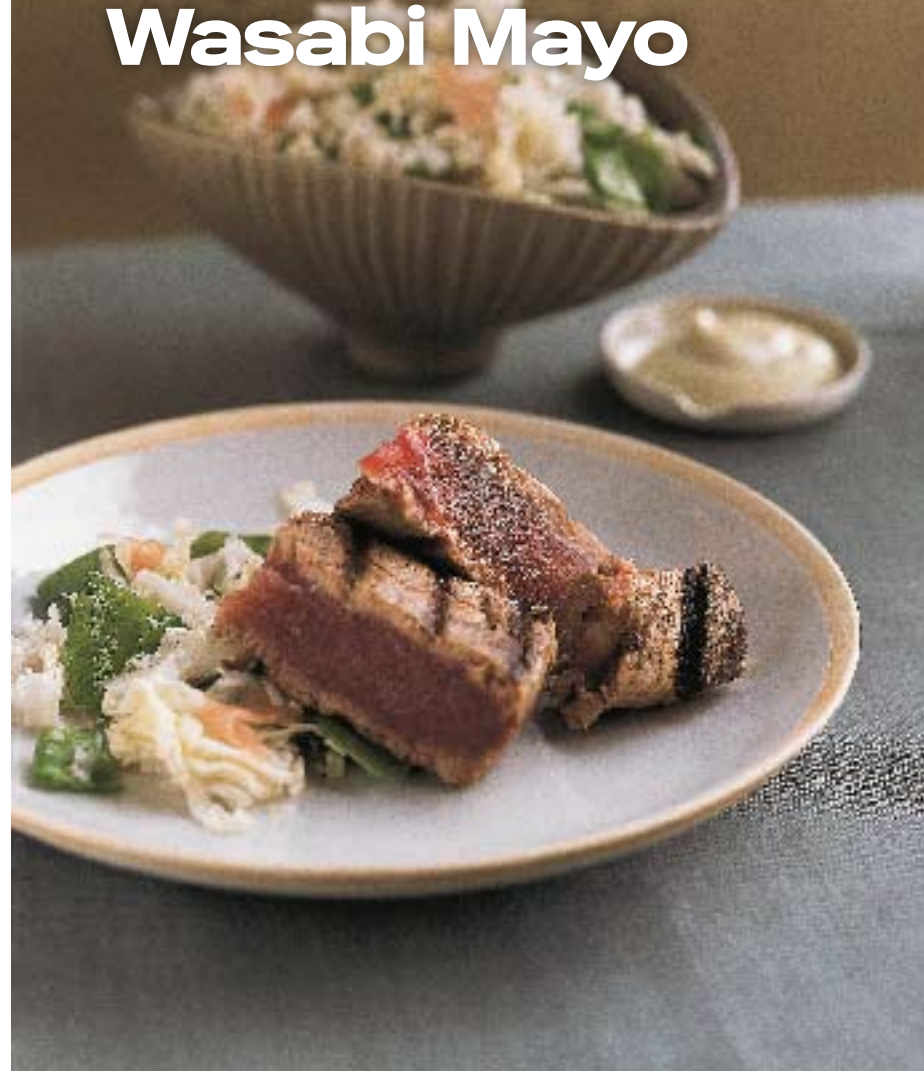
Passover, which begins this year on April 2, is an eight-day Festival of Freedom that commemorates the exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. At the center of the Passover Seder, which is held on the first two nights, is the seder plate consisting of six foods representing the hardship that the Jewish slaves faced as they fled from Egypt. Maror (a bitter herb such as raw horseradish) represents the bitterness of slavery, while charoset (a fruit and nut mixture) symbolizes the bricks and mortar the Israelites used to build pyramids when they were slaves. "People want to cook what their mothers did," says Ken Wolfe of the catering firm Robbins Wolfe Eventeurs. "Some want honey in the charoset, others want the fruit

chopped very fine, or coarse. It all depends on what you had when you were growing up." During Passover, matzo (unleavened bread symbolizing the hasty escape from Egypt) is eaten instead of bread.

Easter (April 8) observances vary depending on where you're from, but eggs tend to be a constant. As a child, Lorrie Reynoso, who grew up in the Philippines and now lives in New York City, awoke to a morning Easter egg hunt. Whoever found the golden egg would get a prize. Her family and friends went to church and then enjoyed a huge feast of ham, a whole roasted pig, and perhaps turkey stuffed with seasoned ground pork and chorizo (spicy sausage). Dessert typically included flan (an egg-based custard, similar to crème caramel) and a fruit salad made with pineapple, mango, and kaong (a sweet sugar palm). "Easter, along with Christmas, is our biggest food celebration," she says.

Thai New Year (called Songkran) is celebrated on April 13 and lasts three days—plenty of time for families to partake of great fish and other fruits of the sea, says Gypsy Gifford, executive chef at Rain, a Pan-Asian New York City restaurant. On this holiday, water symbolizes cleansing and refreshment. "It's a time to wash away the old and prepare for the new," she says. "And we prepare dishes that use foods that come from water." Fresh river prawns are especially popular, as well as water chestnuts and fresh lily bulbs. Inventive dishes might include quick-fried scallops with water chestnuts and sweet chili sauce and rice dumplings made with water chestnuts, tapioca, and coconut.

Grilled Tuna with Napa Slaw & Wasabi Mayo



COURTESY FOOD NETWORK

4 SERVINGS

WASABI MAYONNAISE

- 4 teaspoons wasabi powder
- 4 teaspoons water
- ½ cup mayonnaise

SLAW AND TUNA

- ½ head (about 1 pound) napa cabbage, quartered, cored, and thinly sliced (6 cups)
- 6 ounces fresh snow or sugar snap peas, cut in thirds crosswise
- ¼ cup drained and chopped pickled ginger
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt, plus additional for tuna
- Freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup rice wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons dark or regular peanut oil, plus additional for tuna
- 1 (1¼-pound) tuna steak (about 2 inches thick)
- 2 teaspoons gomashio (Japanese sesame-seed spice blend), optional

Shop Smart
When buying tuna, ask for sushi-grade tuna, the highest quality available, and look for glossy, bright-red steaks.

▶ Heat an outdoor grill or preheat a grill pan to medium-high.

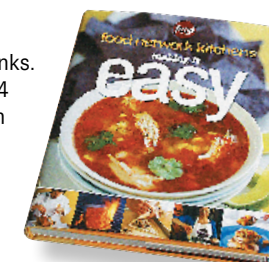
Whisk the wasabi and water in a small bowl to make a thick paste; turn the bowl over and set aside for a couple of minutes. Whisk in the mayonnaise until smooth. Cover until ready to use.

For the slaw: Toss the cabbage, snow peas, pickled ginger, 1½ teaspoons salt, and pepper to taste in a large bowl. Add the vinegar and the 2 tablespoons peanut oil and toss again to coat.

For the tuna: Brush the tuna lightly all over with peanut oil and season generously with salt and pepper. Grill the tuna until it looks cooked about ½-inch up the side, about 3

minutes; turn and cook another 3 minutes. Using tongs, hold the tuna on its sides to brown, about 1 minute on all sides. (If you like your fish medium, add 1 to 2 minutes per side to the cooking time.) Set aside for 5 minutes before cutting.

Cut the tuna into bite-size chunks. Mound some slaw on each of 4 plates and arrange the tuna on top. Sprinkle some gomashio over each serving, if desired, and serve with a dollop of wasabi mayonnaise.



From "Food Network Kitchens Making It Easy," Meredith, 2004

Fresh ideas in flavor that show your good taste.

Who says a salad has to be boring? Yours can be an exciting prelude of what's to come. Just take your choice of the suggestions here and you'll be off to the beginning of a memorable meal.

ORANGE-BALSAMIC VINAIGRETTE

Recipe provided by Southern Living Cooking School

Makes 2½ cups

Hands-on: 5 min., Total: 5 min.

- 1 cup orange juice
- 1 cup olive oil
- ½ cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 garlic cloves
- Salt and pepper to taste

Process orange juice and remaining ingredients in a blender until smooth.

Combine fresh pineapple chunks, strawberries, raspberries, jicama strips and chopped roasted chicken with Orange-Balsamic Vinaigrette for a colorful and fabulous salad.

HONEY-APPLE CIDER VINAIGRETTE

Recipe provided by Southern Living Cooking School

Makes ¾ cup

Hands-on: 5 min., Total: 5 min.

- ½ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 2 Tbsp. honey
- Salt and pepper to taste

Whisk together all ingredients until well combined. Serve vinaigrette immediately, or cover and chill.

Top a package of gourmet mixed salad greens with some blueberries, strawberries, crumbled blue cheese, roasted beef slices, toasted almonds and Honey-Apple Cider Vinaigrette for a fast and impressive entrée.

TANGY GREEN BEANS

Recipe provided by Southern Living Cooking School

A sweet-and-sour dressing and crisp bacon give these green beans irresistible flavor.

Makes 8 servings

Hands-on: 20 min., Total: 20 min.

- 2 lb. fresh green beans, trimmed
- 3 bacon slices
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1½ tsp. minced garlic
- 1 (2-oz.) jar dried pinto beans, drained
- ½ cup red wine vinegar
- 1 tsp. sugar
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. pepper

1. Cook green beans in boiling water to cover 8 to 12 minutes or until crisp-tender. Drain and set aside.
2. Cook bacon in a large skillet until crisp; remove bacon, and drain on paper towels, reserving 2 Tbsp. drippings in skillet. Crumble bacon.
3. Sauté onion and garlic in hot bacon drippings over medium-high heat 5 minutes or until tender. Stir in green beans, pinto beans, and next 4 ingredients; reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, 5 minutes. Sprinkle evenly with bacon.

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