



# Cold Comfort

*for Hot Days*

Try these cool summer dishes  
and you'll be made in the shade.

*By Laura Pensiero, RD*

**O**n summer's hottest and most humid days, it's either cold food or no food at all. I select the former! Ceviche, cold salads, cold soups, shellfish platters, antipasti platters, and vitello tonnato (thinly sliced chilled veal in tuna sauce) are palate pleasing.



Some of the most active months at my restaurant, market, and catering business include days at temperatures well beyond the eating comfort zone.

In the oppressive August heat, I'm always amazed when a customer orders braised lamb shank with a big glass of red wine. Bravo! Mazel Tov! To this guest, chilled food is obviously not dinner food, but it certainly can be.

I work with Executive Chef Jesse Frederick and General Manager/Catering Coordinator John Storm to create menus that fit the season—cool fresh foods for hot days or exactly the opposite for autumn's first chill.

Following are some of our ideas for foods to cool the dog days of summer:

- Antipasto platters loaded with grilled vegetables of the season—room temperature is perfect for appreciating the flavors.
- Bruschette, crostini (or substitute a good quality cracker) topped with the classic chopped tomatoes and basil, white beans with herbs, or any leftover cooked vegetables. Try chopping grilled radicchio, tossing it with a great quality extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar, then top with a shaving of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.
- Chilled soups: roasted vegetable gazpacho with or without shrimp, leek-potato, zucchini-

pea-mint, or, for dessert, strawberry, peach, or melon with a dollop of vanilla yogurt, gelato, or crème fraiche

- Cold salads: reduced-fat potato (see recipe); pasta; tuna or egg salad mixed with low-fat mayonnaise and spiked with seasonal vegetables; or baby greens tossed with any raw or grilled vegetables in season. (For a complete meal, top the salad with grilled or pan-seared chicken or fish.)
- Gravlax or poached chilled salmon with a thinly shaved cucumber salad
- Sushi or sashimi
- Plateaux de Fruits de Mers: gorgeous multi-level chilled platters of steamed or poached shrimp, crab, and lobster along with refreshing briny oysters
- Vitello tonnato (see recipe)
- Beef carpaccio with baby arugula, shaved Parmesan, and a light lemon vinaigrette
- Fruit salad bursting with every fruit at its height of juicy sweetness and goodness
- Room temperature tarts (cherry or any berry topped with low-fat frozen yogurt or gelato).

As you'll see if you try the recipes that follow, cold food is real food, and it can be worked into your everyday dining scenario or served as elegant fare. ♣



## Creamy Potato Salad With Chives

Potatoes, sour cream, and fresh chives make an ideal marriage of flavors. This low-fat version of potato salad—a summer favorite—replaces most of the mayonnaise base with low-fat sour cream.

Makes 6 servings

**2½ pounds red new potatoes**

**Salt**

**¾ cup low-fat or reduced-fat sour cream**

**¼ cup low-fat mayonnaise\***

**2 teaspoons Dijon mustard**

**Freshly ground black pepper**

**2 celery stalks, diced**

**½ cup very thinly sliced red onions**

**¼ cup chopped fresh chives**

*\*If you cannot find the low-fat version, combine in equal parts fat-free and reduced fat.*

Place the potatoes in a large saucepan and cover with about 2 inches of water. Bring to a boil over high heat, season with salt, then reduce the heat to medium and cook for 15 minutes or until the potatoes are just tender when pierced with a sharp paring knife. Drain and let cool slightly.

In a small bowl, whisk together the low-fat sour cream, mayonnaise, and mustard. Season with salt and pepper and set aside.

Peel the warm potatoes and cut them into bite size pieces (quarters or eighths depending on size). Place them in a large bowl along with the sour cream mixture, celery, onions, and chives. Using a rubber spatula, fold together to combine. If necessary, adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper.

## Vitello Tonnato

Vitello tonnato is an Italian classic of poached, thinly sliced veal with a sauce of puréed tuna, anchovies, capers, lemon, and olive oil. It is served cold (veal and sauce) and is an elegant meal that can be prepared long before your guests arrive. Pork loin, turkey breast, or chicken can be substituted for veal.

Makes 6 to 8 servings

- 1 (2 to 2½-pound) veal roast from the leg or loin, boned and tied
- About 2 quarts water or just enough to cover veal
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1 medium onion, peeled and quartered
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 celery stalks, halved horizontally and lengthwise
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns

### Tonnato Sauce

- 12 ounces imported Italian yellow-fin tuna in oil
- or 2 (6-ounce) cans oil-packed solid white tuna, drained
- ½ cup reduced-fat mayonnaise
- 8 anchovy fillets, drained and chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon capers, rinsed, plus extra for garnish
- ¼ cup reserved cooking broth
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons fresh chopped Italian parsley
- Lemon slices, for garnish

Place the veal in a large saucepan and add the wine, onions, carrots, celery, bay leaves, peppercorns, and just enough water to cover the meat. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to a simmer, and cover. Cook, turning occasionally, until a thermometer placed in the thickest portion of the meat registers 145° to 150° F, about 50 minutes to 1 hour.

Remove the veal and place it on a platter or baking pan (with sides) and let it cool.



Strain and reserve ¼ cup of the cooking broth. Wrap the veal and refrigerate it until chilled or for as long as 24 hours.

Combine the tuna, mayonnaise, anchovies, lemon juice, capers, and two tablespoons of the reserved cooking liquid in a food processor or blender and purée until smooth. With the motor running, drizzle the olive oil into the feed tube until just emulsified, about 30 seconds. The sauce should be a thick

liquid consistency (like melted ice cream); add a bit more of the reserved cooking liquid, if necessary, to thin. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground pepper. Transfer to a bowl; cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Thinly slice the meat and layer it on a platter. Season with salt and pepper and spoon sauce over each slice. Garnish the sauced veal with sliced lemon, chopped parsley, and capers, and serve.



## Summer Vegetable Bulgur and Chickpea Salad

This easy-to-prepare whole-grain salad can be served warm or chilled and can take on the flavors of any season. In the fall, add mushrooms and dried fruits such as currants, raisins, chopped apricots, or cherries along with slivered almonds and some aromatic spices like cumin and cinnamon to give it a North African theme. In the winter, keep the spices and dried fruits and add diced butternut squash. Hold the spices in the spring and add baby peas, asparagus, and mushrooms.



Makes 4 to 6 servings

- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil**
- 2 cups boiling vegetable or chicken broth, or water**
- 1¼ cups uncooked bulgur**
- 1 small onion, diced**
- 1 small zucchini, diced or sliced into thin half-moons**
- 1 small red bell pepper, seeded and finely diced**
- 1 15.5-ounce can chickpeas, rinsed and drained**
- 2 cups halved cherry or grape tomatoes**

Combine the lemon juice, zest, salt, and pepper in a small bowl. Add 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, stir with a whisk and set aside.

Combine boiling broth or water and bulgur in a large bowl. Cover and let stand for 20 minutes or until liquid is absorbed.

While the bulgur absorbs the liquid, heat the remaining oil in a medium skillet (preferably nonstick) over medium-high heat. Add the onions and zucchini and cook, stirring often, until they're just barely soft, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in the peppers and chickpeas and cook another 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer vegetables and the dressing to the bowl with the bulgur. Toss to coat. Fold in the cherry tomatoes. Serve chilled or at room temperature. (And when the weather changes, you can serve it hot!)

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