



NEWS RELEASE

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Summer sides that really dish up the flavor

*By Kay Blakley,
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FORT LEE, Va. – Depend on your commissary’s offering of fresh summer ingredients to jazz up meals ranging from quick and simple sandwiches to an elaborate spread of meats, poultry or fish for the grill. As a matter of fact, as long as your appetite isn’t too voracious, two of this week’s featured side dish recipes – Golden Polenta Caprese and Mississippi Caviar – could stand alone as one-dish meals.

If you happen to be from Texas, you’ll recognize the Mississippi Caviar. Yup! The good people of Mississippi might have stolen your recipe, but it’s so good, who could blame them? Feel free to claim it back and rename it Texas Caviar, if you like.

There’s nothing better than grilled asparagus to serve alongside any main dish, and this recipe’s use of melted butter and minced garlic makes it extra special. For dessert, try the cool and creamy Icebox Key Lime Pie. It is the very best version I’ve ever made. Here’s hoping you’ll love it, too.

Recipe #1

Golden Polenta Caprese (serves 4)

2 cups low-sodium chicken broth

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup polenta

1 cup ripe olives, sliced into wedges

1½ cups (about 8 ounces) cherry tomatoes, halved
1 cup (4 ounces) diced fresh mozzarella cheese
½ cup basil leaves, torn
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 teaspoons red wine vinegar
Kosher salt and coarsely ground black pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Bring broth to a boil in a small saucepan.
2. Whisk in polenta, turn heat down to a low simmer and cook for 20 to 30 minutes, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon.
3. Remove from heat and mix in ½ cup ripe olives.
4. Pour onto a lightly greased baking sheet and form into a 7- by 8-inch rectangle. Top with a piece of plastic wrap and set aside to cool for 30 minutes.
5. While polenta is setting, combine tomatoes, mozzarella, basil leaves and remaining olives in a large mixing bowl.
6. Toss with 1 tablespoon of olive oil and red wine vinegar. Season to taste with salt and pepper and set aside.
7. Remove plastic wrap covering and cut polenta into 4 rectangles (each about 3 1/2 by 4 inches).
8. Heat remaining olive oil in a large sauté pan or nonstick griddle over medium-high heat. Place polenta slices in pan and cook for 2 to 3 minutes on each side until golden.
9. Place cooked polenta onto serving plates and top with salad mixture.

Recipe #2

Mississippi “Caviar” with Cider Vinaigrette (serves 6 to 8)

2 11-ounce packages steamed, ready-to-eat black-eyed peas, rinsed and drained
1 cup precooked brown rice, thawed according to package directions
½ cup fresh corn kernels (1 ear)
½ cup finely chopped red onion
1 tomato, seeded and finely chopped
1 medium green bell pepper, finely chopped
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and finely chopped

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar

½ teaspoon Dijon mustard

1 garlic clove, minced

Bibb lettuce leaves (optional)

Directions:

1. Combine first 7 ingredients in a serving bowl.
2. Stir in a pinch of salt and pepper.
3. Whisk together oil, vinegar, mustard, garlic and an additional pinch of salt and pepper.
4. Pour over pea mixture, and toss to combine.
5. Serve over lettuce leaves, if desired.

Recipe #3

Grilled Asparagus with Garlic Butter (serves 4 to 6)

Use asparagus that is at least ½ inch thick near the base. Do not use pencil-thin asparagus; it will overcook.

3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

3 small garlic cloves, minced or pressed through garlic press (about 1½ teaspoons)

1½ pounds thick asparagus spears, ends trimmed

¼ teaspoon table salt

Ground black pepper

Vegetable oil for cooking grate

Directions:

1. Combine butter and garlic in small bowl. Brush asparagus with butter mixture, sprinkle with salt and season with pepper to taste,
2. When grill is medium hot, scrape grill grate clean with grill brush, dip wad of paper towels in oil; holding wad with tongs, wipe cooking grate.
3. Grill asparagus, turning once until just tender and caramelized – 2 to 5 minutes per side (move asparagus as needed to ensure even cooking). Transfer asparagus to platter and serve.

Recipe #4

Icebox Key Lime Pie (serves 8 to 10)

This is the very best version of Key lime pie I've ever made! Be sure to use instant pudding that requires no stovetop cooking, and use fresh-squeezed lime juice. The superior flavor is well worth the effort.

For the crust:

8 whole graham crackers, broken into smaller pieces

2 tablespoons sugar

5 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

For the filling:

¼ cup sugar

1 tablespoon grated lime zest

8 ounces cream cheese, softened

1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk

1/3 cup instant vanilla pudding mix

1¼ teaspoons unflavored gelatin

1 cup fresh lime juice – from 6 to 8 limes

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Directions:

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Pulse crackers and sugar in food processor until finely ground. Add melted butter in a steady stream while pulsing until crumbs resemble damp sand.
3. Using bottom of a dry measuring cup, press crumbs firmly into bottom and sides of a 9-inch pie plate.
4. Bake until fragrant and browned around the edges – 12 to 14 minutes. Remove to wire rack and cool completely.
5. Process sugar and lime zest in food processor until sugar turns bright green – about 30 seconds. Add cream cheese and process until combined – about 30 seconds. Add condensed milk and pudding mix and process until smooth – about 30 seconds. Scrape down sides of bowl.

6. Stir gelatin and 2 tablespoons lime juice together in a small bowl. Heat in microwave for 15 seconds; stir until gelatin is dissolved.
7. With machine running, pour gelatin mixture, remaining lime juice and vanilla through feed tube and mix until thoroughly combined – about 30 seconds.
8. Pour filling into cooled crust, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 3 hours or up to 2 days.
9. To serve, let pie sit at room temperature for 10 minutes before slicing.

-DeCA-

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,300 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*