

BACKYARD BLISS

MAYBE YOU HAVE ACRES OF GLORIOUS GREEN.
MAYBE YOU'VE GOT A FIRE ESCAPE.
EITHER WAY, NEGLECTING YOUR OUTDOOR SPACE
WOULD BE A CRIME AGAINST SUMMERTIME.
COME OUT BACK—THIS IS GOING TO BE FUN.

Photographs by
Thayer Allyson Gowdy

Illustrations by
Marisol Ortega





A Little Slice of Home

How one Texas transplant learned—through the universal language of barbecue—that you can find refuge in any yard, no matter its size

By APRIL REYNOLDS

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Y CHILDHOOD IS A STUDY of what folks can do in a backyard. In ours, we pitched tents and played house; we made swings and hung them from trees. My father was less than pleased with what we did with his water hose to achieve that project. My sisters and I built a tree house that was so rickety it didn't last a week. We gave up when I managed to fall out of it. It's a wonder I didn't break a leg. But mainly, my family cooked.

It's hot in Texas, and we didn't have an air conditioner. So on Fridays we went out to the backyard to have a fish fry. And in my father's opinion, "Where else would you fry fish?" On Saturdays, my father would argue with himself. *Chicken or beef? Beef or chicken?* And once that was settled, Dad would marinate a brisket, heavy on the pepper, and pull up a lawn chair. Billows of smoke would unfurl from the oil drum my uncle Herman had wrought into a smoker and given to my father as a wedding gift.

The sight was arresting in the jungle that was my Dallas backyard. Wild grass reached my father's knees. From the porch, my sisters and I would watch him murmur. "I should have put in more pineapple juice. More garlic powder. Where did that paprika go?" His worry circled the 20 pounds of brisket in the smoker. What he didn't do is lift the lid. "Just open the lid and check it out, Daddy."

My father's response always sounded like a chorus in a song: "Naw, babies. If you looking, you ain't cooking." He followed his own advice until the final hours of barbecuing, when he had to lift the lid and swaddle the brisket in a paper bag to keep it moist. We Texans call this the Texan napkin.

When we weren't barbecuing in our backyard, we headed across town to cook on my uncles' and cousins' lawns. My dad was from Arkansas and was a beef man; my uncles were raised in Georgia and loved pork.

"You know why I love pork?" my uncle Fonz would ask my dad.

"Why's that?"

"Cause pork loves me." I think my father lost those arguments mainly because he was outnumbered.

I'D LIKE TO SAY that when I moved to New York City at 18, the things I missed most were playing, sleeping, and cooking in our backyard. It stands to reason, since I had spent most of my childhood out there. But the fact is, its absence was thrilling. I would spend hours on the phone with my dad explaining the mind-boggling state of your average New York backyard.

"First of all, nobody has a lick of grass."

"Oh, come on! You're messing with me."

"No, Daddy, it's true. They've got grass in the park and that's it."

"Even the rich folk?"

"Even the rich folk, Daddy. Best they can do is put these little bitty trees in planters on their balconies."

"Lord. Well, I'll be."

IT TOOK MOVING to Astoria, Queens, 12 years ago to miss my childhood backyard. My neighborhood is a combination of three-family apartment buildings and multistory housing complexes. The sidewalks are filled with people hawking their wares: cellphone cases, sunglasses, scarves. All of us—Japanese, Egyptian, Bulgarian, Mexican, Tibetan, Greek—fondle their merchandise. One day, minding my own business (as New Yorkers are wont to do), I smelled smoke. And it wasn't the smell of a building burning down.

On Fridays we went out to the backyard to have a fish fry. In my father's opinion, "Where else would you fry fish?"

It was the very distinctive odor of fire and meat coming together. I asked my Japanese neighbor across the street what they were doing.

"Yakitori."

"Yaki what?"

"Taste it."

"What is it, exactly?" I looked at the square box they stood next to. The grill was latticed. The meat—chicken, beef, and pork—was cut into discrete pieces and bunched together on metal skewers.

"Taste it." My father used to tell me, if it wasn't wiggling too much, put it in your mouth. Eating food people offer is the fastest way to make friends. What I chewed was salty and just a touch sweet. My neighbors were grinning at me. I'm pretty sure I was grinning too. I had moved to Queens and found my people.

From then on, I seemed to smell smoke everywhere. The Bosnians down the block were grilling these little sausages; the Cambodians an avenue away were charring satays. Best of all, my butcher became my close friend. John Kosmidis was not a man deterred by a pint-size backyard. When he roasted a baby lamb on a spit for Greek Easter at his in-laws' apartment building, I was invited. There was enough room for six of us to stand shoulder to shoulder and pluck meat just as it was done. That first year in Queens was a heady one, and it got me thinking: "If all these people can cook like this in backyards the size of postage stamps with not a blade of grass to be found, why can't I?"

It wouldn't be the same as back home, but so what? Standing in the corner of our mostly concrete backyard is my Weber smoker. I don't get to cook the way we did in Texas. In a city, one is forced to share. My backyard is communal property; I've got to find out who is planning something on any given day. I don't get to sleep next to my smoker in a lawn chair like my father did. I check the temperature with a pair of binoculars from my window. I tote platters of beer-butt chicken and Kansas City-style pork ribs and brisket—complete with a Texas napkin—up and down three flights of stairs. There's not a speck of grass or a lick of shade. But when I take a bite of brisket with a dill pickle slice on top, I think to myself, "Wherever you are, you can find your happiness in a backyard."

Reynolds is a novelist who teaches at Sarah Lawrence College. Her second book, *The Shape of Dreams*, is forthcoming.

VACATION IN PLACE

NO AIRPLANE FOOD, NO RESORT FEES, NO COMPLAINING FROM THE BACK SEAT. THESE OUTDOOR TRANSFORMATIONS WILL LET YOU HAVE THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE WITHOUT EVER LEAVING HOME.

By Emily Hsieh



Build Your Own Backyard Water Park



No pool? No problem. Create a cooling oasis with some clever water-centric activities. Amp up the joy of running through sprinklers by tossing beach balls back and forth through the spray. A water table filled with plastic bowls, measuring cups, and floating toys will keep toddlers engaged for hours (or close to it). Offer extra shade with umbrellas: If half your yard is shaded, estimate one umbrella per 8 to 10 people; if you have zero coverage, go with one umbrella per five or six people. Party-rental companies offer umbrellas that can be borrowed for about \$20 a day.



ENCHANTED SPRINKLER

Ginormous Unicorn Yard Sprinkler, \$50; target.com.

OVERSIZE UMBRELLA

Peacoat Blue Stripe 10-foot cantilever outdoor umbrella, \$170; worldmarket.com.

GRAPHIC CHAIR

Teak sling chair, \$358; serenaandlily.com.

BALLOON BUNCH

Zuru self-sealing water balloons, \$29 for 300; amazon.com.

GAS GRILL

Everdure by Heston Blumenthal The Furnace grill, \$900; williams-sonoma.com.

PLAY STATION

Sand and Water table, \$399; crateandbarrel.com for similar.

BEACH BALL SPRINKLER

Little Tikes Ultimate Beach Ball sprinkler, \$15; bedbathandbeyond.com.

BUBBLE MACHINE

1byone portable bubble machine, \$40; amazon.com.

VIBRANT HOSE

Dramm ColorStorm premium rubber hose, \$58; amazon.com.

COLORFUL COOLER

Yeti Roadie 20 cooler, \$200; dickssportinggoods.com.

"Offer an array of sunscreen and insect repellents in a cooler for a soothing touch when applied to skin."
—Colin Cowie, event planner

READER IDEA: "TO CREATE A GIANT BUBBLE-BLOWING FACTORY, FILL A KID-SIZE POOL HALFWAY WITH SOAPY WATER AND ADD SLOTTED SPOONS, STRAINERS, AND OTHER HOLEY OBJECTS." —SANDE M.



3 FUN FORMULAS FOR WATER GAMES

WATER ARCADE

Balance Ping-Pong balls atop golf tees stuck into a brick of floral foam (sold at craft stores). Have players blow water through straws to knock them over.

WATER BALLOON DODGEBALL

Set up a line of water balloons across the middle of your playing field and divide players into two teams. The last team standing wins.

DRIP, DRIP, DOUSE

Try a summertime version of Duck, Duck, Goose. Whoever is "it" carries a bucket of water around the circle, dripping a little water onto each player's head. Eventually, "it" picks someone to douse with the remaining water. "Douse" must tag "it" before "it" makes it around the circle, or else "Douse" becomes the new "it."

PROP STYLING BY SARAH CAVE AT E.H. MANAGEMENT; FOOD STYLING BY ERIN MERHAR; FASHION STYLING BY ERIKA DIEKARSKI; SEAMSTRESS: JOSIE BASKARAN, THEPAISLEYPATH.COM; SPECIAL THANKS TO LYDIA PURSELL, THE ALLEN AND BALLENTINE FAMILIES, LUCY BARR, AND TUCKER LITTLE

PRODUCT IMAGES COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS

Easy Iced Fruit Pops

Divide chopped fruit (such as strawberries, cherries, kiwis, and blackberries) among 4-oz. ice pop molds. Fill each mold with lemonade or lemon-lime soda. Insert ice pop sticks and freeze until firm.



TO BUY: Zoku classic pop molds, \$15; williams-sonoma.com. Mums the Word fabric in blue, \$64 per yard; katiekime.com.

OUTDOOR ESSENTIALS

The pros reveal their go-to goods for all types of backyard gatherings.

OUTDOOR SPEAKERS

"Don't bother playing DJ. Outsource the playlist to the younger crowd and it'll turn into an all-ages dance party." —Christiane Lemieux, founder of the Inside, a customized-furnishings company

TO BUY: Sonos One, \$199; sonos.com.

HEADLAMPS

"Set out a basketful for kids to play headlamp tag after dark." —Dan Braun, founder and CEO of Camp Navarro in Northern California

TO BUY: Three Trees Headlamp, \$10; amazon.com.

FOLDING BEACH CHAIRS

"Ikea's Mysingö [\$25; ikea.com] is my all-time favorite for bright, lightweight, and inexpensive seating." —Elizabeth Demos, a Savannah, Georgia-based designer and prop stylist

SPECKLED ENAMELWARE

"This stuff telegraphs summer. Plus, it's durable and all you need for a pretty outdoor table." —Lemieux

TO BUY: Graniteware breakfast plates, \$85 for 4; barnlight.com.

OUTDOOR BEANBAGS

"Inflatable loungers by Chillbo [\$55 each; chillbo.com] work equally well on grass and in water." —Braun

For more ideas for budget-friendly outdoor decor, visit realsimple.com/backyard.

Build Your Own Backyard Campsite

At the heart of every camp is a fire. In your own backyard, a fire pit makes it easy and keeps it contained (event planner Tara Guérard likes the Red Ember Cast Iron Fire Pit, \$140; hayneedle.com). Spread gravel beneath your fire pit to create a barrier between it and any flammable debris. If you choose to light an in-ground fire, check with your town's public safety office first to confirm local regulations. To create extra seating, contact a nearby tree-removal company to get stumps to use as stools. Old-school games, like cornhole, horseshoes, and lawn dice, never fail to please. You can also look for oversize outdoor versions of Jenga or dominoes.

"A blow-up pool filled with pillows and blankets makes a cozy nook for lounging and stargazing."
—Natalie Good, owner of A Good Affair

PRODUCT IMAGES COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS



FOOTED FIRE PIT
Sunnydaze Decor cast-iron bowl fire pit, \$151; hayneedle.com.

TINY TENT
Asweets 4 Wall Cotton Play Teepee, \$95; wayfair.com.

USB LANTERN
Forest Lantern, \$50; barebonesliving.com.

LOUNGE POOL
Splash Outside the Lines! pool, \$70; minnidip.com.

CAFÉ LIGHTS
Edison-style string lights, from \$20; worldmarket.com.

MODERN CORNHOLE
Black Triangle cornhole set, \$280; wolfum.com.

ROASTING STICKS
Steel & Wood Roasting Forks, \$56 for 8; shopterrain.com.

No-Fail Foil Packets

Beef & Potato Packets

Toss 4 sliced potatoes with 1 sliced onion and 1 Tbsp. olive oil; season with salt and pepper. Divide potatoes and onions among 4 large pieces of aluminum foil. Top each with 6 oz. ground beef and a squirt each ketchup and mustard. Seal packets and throw on a roaring campfire or hot grill or in a 400°F oven. Cook until potatoes are tender, 20 to 25 minutes.

S'more Packets

Toss 8 graham crackers with 8 large marshmallows and 4 1-oz. chocolate bars broken into pieces. Divide mixture among 4 large pieces of aluminum foil. Seal packets and throw on a roaring campfire or hot grill or in a 400°F oven until chocolate melts, 5 to 10 minutes.



TO BUY:
Diagonal-stripe fabric in Lagoon, \$158 per yard; rebecca atwood.com.

For s'more inspiration, go to realsimple.com/indoorsmores.

READER IDEA: "THROW 99 PENNIES INTO THE BACKYARD AND TELL THE KIDS THAT WHEN THEY FIND 100 PENNIES, YOU WILL GIVE THEM ICE CREAM." —LINDA MAE A.

Paint a white rectangle onto a sturdy drop cloth for an inexpensive movie screen. Attach grommets to the corners (you only need a hammer) and secure it between two trees with rope.



PRODUCT IMAGES COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS

Build Your Own Backyard Movie Theater

Outdoor movie magic starts with a projector—the options out there are easier to use and more affordable than ever (Oh Joy! blog founder and creative director Joy Cho's pick: the DB Power T20, \$99; amazon.com). Make your own screen with a drop cloth, or invest in an inflatable option (EasyGO 14' Inflatable Mega Screen, \$148; amazon.com). The closer the projector is to the screen, the smaller, sharper, and more colorful the movie will be. "Tape down the cord with colored duct tape on hard surfaces to minimize the possibility of tripping," says interior designer and stylist Emily Henderson. Create a concession stand on a garden caddy or bar cart offering drinks, popcorn, and classic movie treats. Ask guests to RSVP with the name of their favorite movie, and pick one from a hat.

- MULTILEVEL STAND**
Three Tier Folding Plant Stand, \$70; worldmarket.com.
- OUTDOOR PILLOW**
Calliope Maui pillow, \$35; pier1.com.
- RESIN COOLER**
Tina Frey large white bucket, \$380; marchsf.com.
- BEVERAGE DISPENSER**
Bubble Glass Drink Dispenser, \$30; worldmarket.com.
- PRO-STYLE PROJECTOR**
Epson Home Cinema 660 SVGA 3LCD projector, \$360; bestbuy.com.
- ENAMEL BOWL**
Pastel enamel salad bowl, \$48; shopterrain.com.
- DRINK STATION**
Riviera bar, \$798; serenaandlily.com.
- COMFY SEATING**
Stripes Bean Bag Lounger, \$116; wayfair.com.

"After the show winds down, play some movie trivia. Try Heads Up!, a charades-style app for your phone." —Nicole Gibbons, interior designer

READER IDEA: "GIVE THE KIDS A LITTLE PAIL OF WATER AND A FAT PAINTBRUSH. THEY CAN 'PAINT' THE SIDEWALKS, THE HOUSE, AND EACH OTHER WITHOUT MAKING A MESS." —BRENDA R.

Ode to a Trampoline

An appreciation for a toy shared and loved by a group of neighbors in San Francisco

By ELIZABETH WEIL

Out the front door on our San Francisco block were cars, danger, a whole adult world: aging parents, too-expensive groceries, garbage cans to try (and fail) to remember to pull onto the sidewalk each Wednesday night. Out the back were giggles and low-key mystery, a child's world: Meyer lemon trees, a garden fountain on which to launch roly-poly bugs, the endlessly undulating trampoline. Soon the family of five who lived kitty-corner from us cut a child-size hole in their fence, and then the family of four to the south of them did so too. No parental permission was required for the kids to go jump. Sometimes mine screamed, "Mom, bye!" Often they just self-released. On the trampoline was a whole life, or practice for one. At age 14, my older daughter sat on it and tried to figure out how to stay close to the best friend she'd had since kindergarten and was starting to outgrow. At age 12, my younger daughter jumped out there with her sixth-grade boyfriend, because what else do you do with a sixth-grade boyfriend?

Then, a few weeks ago, the trampoline died. The rim rusted out, and the formerly single mother's hunky new husband lovingly disassembled it and carted it off to the dump. I'm fighting the urge to replace it—circle of life and all. "RIP trampoline, a true backyard gift."

Weil is the coauthor, with Clemantine Wamariya, of *The Girl Who Smiled Beads*.



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Y NEIGHBOR to the east has three hand-painted tombstones in her tiny San Francisco backyard, commemorating the lives of "Clancy, a hen so sweet," "Flower Dowager, poultry supreme," and "Dupres, a very fine chicken." The birds had hopped every day through the hole we cut in the fence that separates my garden from

hers and had spent a lot of time bawking outside my office's glass door. She also had a gravestone for "Chix, an excellent cat." Now we need a marker for another death in the family: the trampoline.

It appeared one day, 14 years ago, the relaxation therapy of a tenant who, within six months, had moved in and out of the apartment, leaving behind this 12-foot-round specimen of rubber, aluminum, and joy. In the years that followed, our baby grew into a toddler and our toddler into a preschooler, and then one day my husband yelled to the new tenant, a single mom with a son between our girls' ages, "Hey, neighbor! What do you think of me cutting another hole in the fence right here?" She gave the thumbs-up. My husband found his Sawzall. Fifteen minutes later we had a kid-size hole in the redwood.

"Ask guests to bring their own blankets, or load up on towels from the dollar store to make sure everyone stays cozy until the credits run."
—Kate Turner,
principal designer of
Kate & Company



BANISHING BUGS

Expert-approved ideas for keeping mosquitoes at bay

"Place jarred citronella candles or insect-repelling incense under the dining table to help keep feet and ankles bite-free." —Colin Cowie

"I first spotted mosquito-repellent bracelets [\$19 for 6; homedepot.com] making the rounds at my son's soccer tournaments. They're sweat-proof and kid-safe." —Elizabeth Demos

"I'm a big fan of Burt's Bees herbal insect repellent [\$8; burtsbees.com]. It's safe for the whole family and smells like yummy lemons." —Nicole Gibbons

"The Thermacell Patio Shield [\$25; thermacell.com] creates a barrier against mosquitoes without any scent or flame." —Tara Guérard



TO BUY:
Cleo navy indoor/outdoor rug, \$906 (5 by 8 ft.); annie selke.com.
Harbour Island floor pillow (far left), \$188; serenaandlily.com.

Popcorn 3 Ways

Un-Cheddar

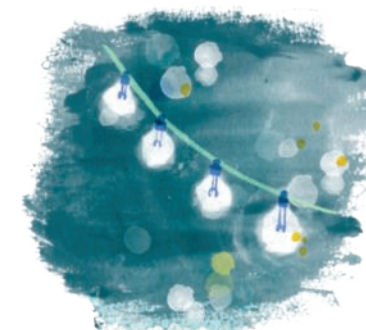
Spread 10 cups freshly popped popcorn (from ½ cup kernels) on a rimmed baking sheet and spray lightly with olive oil spray. Toss with ¼ cup nutritional yeast, 1 tsp. kosher salt, and ½ tsp. garlic powder.

Lemon-Pepper-Parmesan

Spread 10 cups freshly popped popcorn (from ½ cup kernels) on a rimmed baking sheet and spray lightly with olive oil spray. Toss with ¼ cup grated Parmesan, the zest of 1 lemon, 1 tsp. kosher salt, and 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper.

Furikake

Spread 10 cups freshly popped popcorn (from ½ cup kernels) on a large rimmed baking sheet and spray lightly with olive oil spray. Toss with ¼ cup furikake and 1 tsp. kosher salt.



STRING LIGHTS 101

Look for bistro lights, which have a retro, European feel and large bulbs that give off plenty of light. LEDs, while more energy efficient, emit a cooler, less face-flattering light. For easy installation along wood rails or fencing, use plastic telephone-wire nail-in clips (\$3 for 20; homedepot.com), which have hooks to slip the string-light cable into with ease.

READER IDEA: "FILL TWO-LITER BOTTLES WITH WATER AND FREEZE THEM (OR FILL WITH SAND). LINE THEM UP LIKE BOWLING PINS AND USE A SOCCER BALL TO KNOCK THEM OVER." —ROSIE W.

JUST ADD SUNSHINE

WHAT MAKES FOR A TRULY RELAXING BACKYARD MEAL, AT YOUR PLACE OR THEIRS? AN ARSENAL OF SECRET-WEAPON RECIPES YOU CAN WHIP UP ALL SUMMER LONG, IN AS LITTLE AS 10 MINUTES FLAT.

By Dawn Perry

Photographs by Victor Protasio

Illustrations by Marisol Ortega





GERMAN BEET-AND-POTATO SALAD

ACTIVE TIME **20 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **1 HOUR, 20 MINUTES**
SERVES **6**

- 2 lb. gold or Chioggia beets
- ½ lb. Yukon Gold potatoes
- 4 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 8 oz. sliced bacon
- 2 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. whole-grain mustard
- 1 shallot, thinly sliced

PREHEAT oven to 400°F. Place beets, potatoes, and 1 cup water in a 13-by-9-inch baking dish. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons oil and season with ½ teaspoon salt and several grinds of pepper. Cover with aluminum foil and roast until beets and potatoes are tender when pierced with a small sharp knife, 45 to 55 minutes. Uncover and set aside until cool enough to handle, about 15 minutes.

PEEL cooled beets, slice into wedges, and transfer to a large bowl. Using your hands, gently crush potatoes into bite-size pieces and add to beets.

COOK bacon in a large skillet over medium, turning occasionally, until crisp, 5 to 7 minutes. Drain on a paper towel-lined plate and let cool 5 minutes. Break or chop into pieces and add to beets and potatoes.

WHISK together vinegar, mustard, shallot, remaining 2 tablespoons oil, remaining ½ teaspoon salt, and several grinds of pepper in a small bowl. Pour dressing over beet mixture and toss to combine. Serve at room temperature.



SWEET AND SPICY TOMATO GLAZE

ACTIVE TIME **5 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **5 MINUTES**
MAKES **1 CUP**

- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- ¼ cup honey
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 3 Tbsp. olive oil
- 4 tsp. kosher salt
- 2 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 2 tsp. toasted sesame oil
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

WHISK together all ingredients in a bowl until smooth.

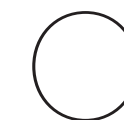
BASTE chicken, pork, steak, burgers, or hot dogs with mixture during the last 5 minutes of grilling. Store glaze, tightly covered, in refrigerator for up to 1 week.

FOOD STYLING BY CHELSEA ZIMMER, PROP STYLING BY CLAIRE SPOLLEN; SEAMSTRESS: JOSIE BASKARAN, THEPAISLEYPATH.COM

Everybody's Out Back

How sharing a yard with five other families helped one New Englander give her kids the freedom to roam

By MIRA T. LEE



OUR BACKYARD in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was never much to look at. A small, weedy patch of green wedged behind a pair of triple-deckers, it harbored a wobbly plastic table and a few cracked chairs. But accessible to six growing families, it would slowly evolve as our community did. One year we invested in lawn-care treatments; the next, a cedar fence; then a deck big enough to hold a wooden Ikea picnic table.

Our fancier neighbors had stone patios, trellises, meticulous plantings, and koi ponds, but our humble little backyard had heart—soon it would become a social hub to a dozen neighborhood kids, ages newborn to 10, who didn't care if the grass was dry or the dirt pocked with holes, as long as they could run and kick and yell at the top of their lungs.

Come the New England spring, we all propped open our doors. The kids tore up and down the back stairwells, ducking in and out of one another's apartments. Even the toddlers wandered freely, old-school style, in the care of communal eyes and ears.

Summer evenings, we'd congregate outside, each family with its own version of mac and cheese and cucumber wheels. Someone would dole out ice pops, or we'd split a watermelon. We shared a lawn mower, a sprinkler, an inflatable pool, insect repellent, ice packs, and Band-Aids too. Some weekends, entire afternoons passed unscheduled. Kids soaked one another with the hose, flew paper airplanes from balconies, socked Wiffle balls onto

the roof. As one shuffled off to baseball, another showed up with a bag of water balloons. And so on until the sun sank low and a second-floor mom called out, "Charlieeee, it's time for your bath!"

Amid whines and protests, parents corralled their kids. But the next morning, bright and early, doors flung open again. With my tea on the porch, I'd hear the clatter of plates or the roar of a vacuum. First-floor Henry had dashed out to play basketball; second-floor Charlie's baby sister was demanding juice.

My kids downed their cereal, raced downstairs. "Charlieeee? Can Charlie come out to play?"

Suddenly, I'd flash back to my care-free days in suburban Buffalo, New York, when I'd roam with my neighborhood pack from dawn to dusk.

Last year, we moved to a bigger apartment. It's a lovely space, nearly double the size of our old one. But there's no yard. No hub. And that's made me realize why I loved that little shared space so fiercely: It was a chance to impart one tiny, idyllic piece of my own childhood to my children.

Lee is the author of *Everything Here Is Beautiful*.





GARLICKY PAN CON TOMATE

ACTIVE TIME **10 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **10 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

- 1 1-lb. loaf ciabatta, halved horizontally
- 3 Tbsp. olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 1 large clove garlic, peeled
- 2 large ripe tomatoes, halved
- Flaky sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

PREHEAT grill to high or oven to broil with oven rack 4 inches from heat. Brush cut sides of ciabatta with oil. Grill directly on grates or broil cut side up on a baking sheet until lightly charred in spots, 3 to 5 minutes.

RUB garlic all over cut sides of ciabatta. Rub tomato halves over cut sides of ciabatta, letting seeds and juice fall on top. Drizzle with more oil and season with salt and pepper.

CUT crosswise into 1½-inch-thick pieces and serve.



KIWI-CUCUMBER RELISH

ACTIVE TIME **10 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **10 MINUTES**
MAKES **2 CUPS**

- 1 small English cucumber, chopped (about 1½ cups)
- 3 kiwis, peeled and chopped (about 1 cup), divided
- ½ bunch fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems, coarsely chopped
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and chopped
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lime juice (from 1 lime)
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt

PLACE cucumber and ½ cup chopped kiwis in a medium bowl. Place cilantro, jalapeño, lime juice, salt, and remaining ½ cup kiwis in a blender and process until smooth, about 15 seconds. Pour mixture over cucumber and kiwis and toss to combine.

SERVE with chips or on top of burgers, hot dogs, chicken, or fish.



CRUNCHY BROCCOLINI WITH LEMON AND PECANS

ACTIVE TIME **20 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **20 MINUTES**
SERVES **6**

- 4 bunches (1¾ lb.) Broccoli, trimmed, divided
- 6 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 lemon
- 1 Tbsp. honey
- ½ cup pecans, toasted and chopped

PREHEAT oven to 400°F. Toss 3 bunches Broccoli with 4 tablespoons oil, ½ teaspoon salt, and several grinds of pepper on a rimmed baking sheet. Arrange in a single layer and roast, shaking sheet halfway through, until charred in spots, 12 to 15 minutes.

MEANWHILE, thinly slice half the lemon. Stack slices and finely chop. Transfer chopped lemon (including peel) to a food processor and add the juice of the remaining lemon half, honey, remaining 2 tablespoons oil, and remaining ½ teaspoon salt; process until combined, about 10 seconds.

CHOP roasted and raw Broccoli into 2-inch pieces and toss with lemon dressing. Serve topped with toasted pecans.



VANILLA PEACHES IN ROSÉ

ACTIVE TIME **10 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME
2 HOURS, 10 MINUTES
SERVES **8**

- 8 firm ripe peaches, apricots, or nectarines (about 3½ lb.), halved and pitted
- 1 750-ml bottle dry rosé
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise
- 3 whole star anise (optional)
- Vanilla ice cream, for serving

ARRANGE peaches in a 13-by-9-inch baking dish. Combine rosé and sugar in a medium pot. Scrape seeds from vanilla bean and add seeds, bean, and star anise to pot. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until sugar is dissolved, 5 to 7 minutes. Pour rosé syrup over fruit and let macerate, uncovered, at room temperature for 2 hours or refrigerated overnight.

SERVE peaches with ice cream, with rosé syrup spooned over top.

Get a guide to grilling every kind of meat, fish, and vegetable at [realsimple.com/howto/grill](https://www.realsimple.com/howto/grill).

