

THE NATURE PLACE DAY CAMP

Summer 2020 Cookbook

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Cooking Brings Us Together...

. . .in all of the best ways. We collaborate, problem-solve, create, and in the end, we share in devouring a delicious masterpiece. This past summer, we had to make sure cooking didn't bring us *too* closely together. We adapted, modified, and got creative to ensure that we could be safe, while still experiencing the joys of cooking with friends. As you'll read in the following pages, campers created their own individual versions of each of our recipes, spaced apart from one another in our open-air patio kitchen. While we weren't all working on one shared dish, we were each working on the same dish, and the spirit of sharing ideas, troubleshooting, and encouraging one another still abounded. It was a wonderful thing. I hope you enjoy the recipes below and remember that 'together' can look a lot of different ways.

Happy Cooking!

xx Eva

Overheard on the Kitchen Patio

It was a pleasant summer morning at the Nature Place Day Camp. The voices of arriving campers were bringing the campus back to life after the weekend. The outdoor kitchen was set up for the day's first cooking class. Next to each other on the table were the mixing spoon and the grain mill. After a few yawns and stretches, they struck up a conversation. . .

GRAIN MILL:

It's a beautiful day on the patio this morning. I must confess, initially, the idea of an outdoor kitchen made me a little nervous! I had never worked outdoors before. I was scared, you know; rain could ruin me!

Good thing we're always under this nice large canopy that protects us from rain and direct sun. Everyone seems to like it, wouldn't you say?

MIXING SPOON:

It really has been a good summer here on the patio. I'll tell you; this outdoor experience has totally changed my perspective! We never saw this much of camp before. I love overhearing conversations of campers walking by, getting a glimpse of the games on the field, watching the man who brings those birds of prey, and most of all, seeing the drum circle and hearing the sound of the drums.



Every time the campers start drumming, I feel as if something was moving inside of me. I can't help it--I have to move to the beat! Hey, do you think I'd make a good drummer? If I close my eyes, I can hear the rhythm right now. Grain mill, shall we dance?

GRAIN MILL:

Grain mills don't dance! So, wait, are you are telling me that you've been busy all this time watching campers, eavesdropping on conversations, and staring longingly at the drumming tent? What about your kitchen duties?

MIXING SPOON:

Hey! You've seen my job performance--I'm a pretty good multi-tasker! I'm just saying, sometimes I dream of getting out in the middle of that drum circle and really letting loose.



GRAIN MILL:

I know, do you ever wish we could venture off the patio for the day, just to see what else goes on at camp? I want to see the Enchanted Forest, the archery range, and the pond everyone likes to swim in! And I wish I could visit The Garden and meet the baby chicks. The campers talk about them ALL the time. Apparently, they're small fluffy creatures that run around and peck and the campers can pick them up and feed them. And did you know that chicken eat grains? I'm into grains myself. Maybe we could be friends.

MIXING SPOON:

You know what my biggest dream is? Going out into the woods with the kids. Strap me to a backpack and take me on a hike! And they couldn't go there this summer, but I've heard a lot from longtime campers about canoeing on a lake they called Cedar Pond. I could be a paddle! I have the right shape and transferable experience. Stirring pond water instead of dough shouldn't be that hard, right? And then after a day on the water, I would help make dinner, then sit by the campfire, listen to the songs and stories told, watch the stars with the campers. . .

GRAIN MILL:

Earth to Spoon! Snap out of it! We have a lot to do here. The campers are coming soon. Everyone likes to turn my crank and transform wheat into flour. It's hard work—I've got to stay focused.

MIXING SPOON:

Well, a spoon can dream, right?



GRAIN MILL:

Of course, but honestly, I love our jobs here. No stress, it's a peaceful place, manageable hours, good benefits, and the commute is unbeatable. Plus, I can be myself. Most campers have never seen a grain mill, but they don't call me 'strange' or 'weird'. In fact, they're grateful when I do my magic and help them to transform grain into flour. I feel fulfilled!

MIXING SPOON:

You're right. Being in the camp's kitchen is really the best job ever. And the most rewarding. Yesterday the campers were asked about their favorite part of camp, and one girl answered, "Being here with all of you." Do you think she meant us too?

GRAIN MILL:

You bet she did, pal! We are all part of the mixture that makes this camp so unique. You should know--you're the expert on mixing.

MIXING SPOON:

Oh, look! Here they come! And they're bringing a basket full of veggies from the garden. We're going to have a feast!

• • •



Taking Care Week

Our unusual 35th camp season opened with a traditional theme. We've had *Taking Care Week* at camp for as long as I can remember, but taking care of our environment, those around us, and ourselves seemed more important than ever this summer.

In the kitchen, we kicked off the season with an easy and forgiving, but nourishing and versatile dish. Campers made brown rice grain bowls. Instead of cooking together to make a single dish as we may have in past years, we worked next to each other, creating our own personal-sized dishes. As we chopped and mixed in our outdoor kitchen, we shared ideas and words of encouragement, but not kitchen tools or food. This sometimes proved challenging, but was a great exercise in adaptability, and gave campers the opportunity to choose from a variety of ingredients and create their very own unique dishes.



Hearty Grain Bowls

Makes four servings.

Prepare the vinaigrette by mixing all ingredients together. Our favorite camp method is shaking them together in a small, tightly closed mason jar.

To assemble the grain bowls, begin with a base of rice in your bowl, and place the ingredients of your choice on top. Children will enjoy arranging the ingredients in an aesthetically pleasing way--cooking meets art in your grain bowl! Drizzle the vinaigrette over your rice and veggies. Enjoy at room temperature or cold.

For the grain bowl

- 2 cups cooked brown rice
- 1 cup cooked or canned beans or chickpeas
- 1 cup diced red or green peppers
- 1 cup diced cucumbers
- 1 cup diced carrots
- 1 cup chopped cabbage
- ¼ cup sliced red onion or scallions (optional)
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley or basil
- ¼ cup feta (optional)

For the vinaigrette

- 3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- ⅓ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 garlic clove, pressed (optional)
- 1 tablespoon honey (optional)



Rooting for You Week

This week took us back to our roots. We tried our hand at working with yeasted dough, preparing a basic food for sustenance: bread. Some roots were literally present in the mix--our bread was flavored and colored by beetroot! Campers found the color of the dough fascinating, and the process of kneading and forming the dough to be very relaxing and satisfying.

Once our rolls were in the oven, we put our grain mill to work. Campers cranked out fresh rye flour needed for the next project: a sourdough culture. The children put some of the freshly ground rye flour and water into their jars, and the magic of catching wild yeast began. During the following days, the cultures were nourished by the campers, and then taken home to give life to many more good loaves and rolls.

“Nothing beets this bread!” commented one of the campers seeing and smelling the freshly baked rolls come out of the oven. Someone swore they heard a soft, happy chuckling coming from the direction of the grain mill.



Beet Rolls

2 cups all-purpose flour
 1 cup whole wheat or rye flour
 1 ¼-1 ½ cups lukewarm water
 2 teaspoons instant dry yeast
 ¼ cup sourdough starter (optional--if omitting, increase instant dry yeast by ½ teaspoon)
 1 ½ teaspoons salt
 1 small beet, grated
 ¼ cup raw sunflower seeds (optional)

Combine dry ingredients in a mixing bowl. Add water, sourdough starter, beets, and sunflower seeds. Stir together with a large spoon or mix on low speed with the paddle attachment of a mixer until dough comes together. Cover and let rest for about 15 minutes. Knead by hand or machine (medium speed for 10 minutes), cover the bowl, and let the dough ferment at room temperature for 1 hour. Transfer the dough to the refrigerator and keep there overnight.

The next day, take the dough out of the refrigerator, and let it warm up for 30-60 minutes. Dust your counter or a large wooden board with flour. Transfer the dough onto the floured surface and form a ball. Let rest for 10 minutes. Divide the dough into 10-12 pieces, and form round rolls. Put the rolls on a baking sheet, cover with kitchen towel and let rest for 30 minutes. Bake the rolls in a preheated oven at 450°F for 20-25 minutes.

Get Lost Week

Nothing gets lost in the camp kitchen. When planning our activities, we take into account the expected harvest from our garden, and we try to incorporate as many herbs and vegetables grown just across the street from our kitchen as possible. Collecting kitchen scraps for composting is also one of the tasks campers help with in the kitchen, ensuring that no nutrients go to waste. Compostable waste from the kitchen gets turned into compost by our gardener neighbors at the Pfeiffer Center.

By the third week of camp, there was an abundance of cucumbers and summer squash in the garden. They couldn't go to waste. It was time to save some of the harvest for later. We were getting lost in pickling!



1 pound sliced Kirby or Persian cucumbers (or combination of cucumbers and young summer squash)

1 small sliced onion

1 small thinly sliced carrot (optional)

2-4 cloves of garlic (optional)

For the brine

1 cup apple cider vinegar

1 cup water

2 tablespoons granulated sugar

1 tablespoon kosher salt

1 teaspoon mustard seeds

¼ teaspoon coriander seeds

A few black peppercorns

Pickles



Makes two 16-ounce jars.

Wash and dry the jars. Make the brine: In a small saucepan heat the vinegar, water, salt, sugar, and spices until the mixture comes to simmer and the salt and sugar dissolve. Let the brine cool. Pack the vegetables into the jars, leaving a ½ inch of space from the rim of the jars. Pour the cold brine over the vegetables, filling each jar to within ½ inch of the top. Close the lids tightly and refrigerate the pickles. Try to wait at least 2-3 days before opening them. Eat within 3 weeks.

Chicken *In* Week

We followed the call of the week. We chickened in and bravely chose to bake a seasonal crisp. Every camper prepared his/her very own mini pear crisp.

With some ripe organic pears on hand, we first worked on our knife skills. More experienced young chefs used real knives, while younger campers cut up the soft pears with butter knives. After the fruit was placed into the small pie plates, it was time to mix together the ingredients for the topping. In a strange way, the mixing spoons held by the campers seemed almost to be moving to the rhythm of the drums being played on the field, but the smell of cinnamon pulled them back to the reality of kitchen life.



Pear Crisp

For the Filling

5 large Bosc pears, cored and sliced

¼ cup brown sugar

¼ teaspoon cinnamon

1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice

For the Topping

¾ cup rolled oats

⅓ cup whole-wheat pastry flour or all-purpose flour

½ cup sunflower seeds or coarsely chopped pecans

½ cup brown sugar

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon salt

6 tablespoons melted butter or coconut oil, plus a little more for greasing the pan

This recipe makes one large crisp or 4-6 individual desserts, depending on the size of your mini pie plates.

Preheat oven to 375°F. Butter the pie plate/plates. In a bowl, combine the toppings: oats, flour, sunflower seeds, sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Stir the mixture as you drizzle on the melted butter. Place the pears in a separate bowl and add the sugar, lemon juice, and cinnamon. Toss gently to combine. Transfer the mixture into the pie plate. Distribute the topping over the pears. Bake the crisp for 45-60 minutes (or 25-35 minutes if using multiple small pie plates) until the pears are tender when pierced and the topping is lightly browned. Let cool slightly before serving.



Lettuce Wrap It Up Week

We decided to wrap up the camp season with a pizza party, as what could be more celebratory!? While most campers baked pizza in their final cooking session of the season, older campers tried their dough-handling skills by making a wrapped-up pizza, aka Stromboli. Shaping the sticky soft dough into a small personal pizza was challenging, but fun. As for the toppings, campers had a variety of vegetables to choose from. Some adventurous eaters didn't shy away from adding freshly picked hot peppers from the garden. The personal pies were finished with mozzarella or dairy-free cheese. A delicious ending to an extraordinary summer!



For the pizza dough
 1 cup warm water
 2 ½ cups bread flour
 1 teaspoon dry yeast
 1 ½ teaspoons sea salt
 1 tablespoon olive oil

For the toppings
 ½ cup pizza sauce
 1 tablespoon olive oil
 8 ounces grated mozzarella
 toppings of your choice
 (mushrooms, red peppers, onion,
 olives, etc.)



Pizza

Makes 4 personal pizzas or one sheet pan pizza

Place the warm water into a large bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer. Sprinkle the yeast over the water and let sit for 5 minutes. The yeast should begin to foam. Add the flour, salt, and olive oil and mix just until there are no dry spots left. Cover the bowl and let sit for about 20 minutes. Knead the dough by hand or on medium speed for 8-10 minutes, if using a mixer. Form the dough into a ball and cover. Allow it to ferment for 40 minutes. Stretch and fold the dough: put the dough onto a lightly floured surface, pull it slowly into an oblong shape, and fold into thirds. Repeat on the opposite axis. After 40 minutes of fermentation, stretch and fold again. Ferment for another 40 minutes.

For personal pizzas, divide the dough into 4 pieces. Form each piece into a smooth ball. Lightly dust with flour, cover, and let rest for 1-2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Lightly brush with olive oil. Place the dough on the baking sheet and drizzle with a little olive oil. Stretch the dough into a thin round (if making 4 small pizzas) or all the way to the edges of the baking sheet for one sheet pan pizza. Depending on the size of your baking sheet, you may be able to bake only two personal pizzas at once. Add pizza sauce, toppings of your choice, and finally mozzarella cheese. Bake for 15-25 minutes, depending the size and thickness of your pizza.

Until Next Summer...



Whether you're a grain mill, a mixing spoon, or a human, we can all use a little perspective shift every once in a while. This summer helped open our eyes to new possibilities and ways of doing and being, in the camp kitchen and beyond. We're excited to cook up our 36th summer with this experience under our belts, and we can't wait for you to join us! See you then. . .





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