

*As a busy TOM AIKENS looks forward to a well-earned holiday in the sun, he encourages us to get outside for a barbecue if the British weather will allow it*

THE height of summer is on us and we're all in holiday mode—as you read this, I'll be sunning myself on holiday somewhere very hot with a cold drink in my hand. I'm always moaning about how long it is between January and August as I don't really get any holiday until then. I really need to recharge this year, as I'm cramming in so much, what with opening another restaurant in September called Tom's Place and getting married in June. I'm also launching my own food-product brand under Tom's Kitchen. Not busy at all! Then, once September starts, I'll be studying on weekends from home for a part-time nutrition course. All part of my plan to make you fitter and stronger through the enjoyment of food.

August is a time when London empties and the majority of us are away, enjoying the sun in another part of the world. It also marks the start of the game season and grouse and hare are in season.

It's the prime time to enjoy barbecues and picnics, and there's nothing more English

than these whether they're in the beautiful countryside, a well-manicured lawn or on the coast. It makes me laugh to see the macho males take over from their other halves and create either a catastrophe or a feast fit for a king.

The trick is to keep it all easy to cook and to prepare in advance. Make all the meat something that cooks quickly and can be transported without making a mess everywhere. You may opt for the great British banger, but I prefer a Cumberland sausage over anything else. Use some meat that's been prepared the day before. For example, chicken breasts that have been cut into strips and marinated in some Greek yogurt, lemon juice, a little garlic, cumin powder, black pepper and salt, then left for a day to marinate. Soak some wooden skewers in cold water for a few hours, skewer the chicken with them and then bag them all up.

Then there are minute steaks that you can marinate in olive oil, crushed garlic, black pepper, thyme and rosemary, before sealing them in a ziploc bag.



No time to stand about this year

Or how about the homemade burgers shown here?

You could even take a load of sliced vegetables to grill on the barbecue—think red peppers, courgettes, aubergines and red onions—again marinating them in some olive oil, garlic and rosemary.

Keep the salads simple yet fresh: peas with a lemon dressing; crushed broad beans with feta cheese; sliced figs with Parma ham; and slow-roasted vine cherry tomatoes.

Then for dessert, some very simple poached fruits—peaches with vervain, poached strawberries with mint, or apricot with vanilla. All of these can be done the day before to make your life simpler. Make a basic stock syrup with three parts water to one part sugar, then add some fresh vanilla pods split and scraped, lemon peel and the juice of two lemons, then some fresh mint. Bring to a simmer for 10 minutes, then cook the fruit until tender. Leave it to cool and keep in the fridge for a day before use. Serve these with some semi-whipped cream, sugar and vanilla seeds.

Find out what's cooking at Tom's restaurants at [www.tomaikens.co.uk](http://www.tomaikens.co.uk)

## PICNIC BARBECUE

### BURGER INGREDIENTS

Makes six or seven burgers  
1kg minced beef  
400g minced-beef fat  
300g finely diced onion  
15g garlic  
20g salt  
2g thyme  
10g chopped parsley  
2g oregano  
1 whole egg

### METHOD

Mix all the ingredients and mould into approximately 150g sections for a nice-sized burger. Then grill for about three or four minutes each side on a medium heat.

### TOMATO KETCHUP INGREDIENTS

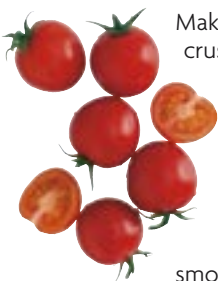
Makes 2.5 litres  
3.5kg tomatoes, roughly chopped  
1kg apples, peeled, cored and chopped  
900g onions, peeled and chopped into 1cm cubes  
800g sugar  
1 litre malt vinegar  
25g sea salt  
1g cayenne pepper  
2g whole black pepper corns  
2g whole allspice  
1g cloves

### METHOD

Put all the spices into a tied muslin bag and place all the ingredients into a pan. Turn the heat to full and bring to the boil, then turn down the heat and simmer, cooking the ingredients until they're a pulp (about two hours). Stir the mixture now and again so it doesn't burn.

Turn off the heat, ladle the pulp into a blender jug to only half full and purée until it's nice and smooth. Tip this into a fine sieve over a clean pan and press the liquid through using a small ladle.

## FOOD IN SEASON FOR AUGUST



Make a very light cherry-tomato gazpacho by crushing say a kilo of cherry tomatoes, then adding 200ml olive oil, 100ml water, 20g sea salt, 40g icing sugar and a little basil. Place this into the blender and purée for a minute until smooth, then pass through a fine sieve. Place back into the blender and purée half at a time. While it's being blended, add another 50ml olive oil until it goes smooth, then pass it through again.

Blackcurrants	Pumpkins and squash	John Dory
Blackberries	French beans	Peppers
Raspberries	Runner beans	Aubergines
Strawberries	Cherries	Samphire
Courgette and marrows	Greengages	Tomatoes
Plums	Hare	Cherry tomatoes
Sweetcorn	Crayfish	Redcurrants
		Grouse



JOHN LAWRENCE-JONES

Return the pan to the heat and re-boil for two to three minutes. Place into sterilised jars and bottles and sterilise following the correct procedure.

**BAKED SEABASS**  
**INGREDIENTS**

1 x 2kg scaled and gutted bass

*with no head*  
50ml white wine  
100ml olive oil  
Juice and zest of one lemon  
3 bay leaves cut in half  
Small bunch of dill roughly chopped  
2g thyme leaves  
2g sea salt

Place two sheets of foil

together, about 40in long, then fold it over and make a boat shape so the sides come up. Take the bass and slash through the flesh to 0.5cm deep, about 10 times each side. Rub in the olive oil and put the bay leaves and dill into the slashes. Add the lemon juice, peel and white

wine, then the salt. Wrap this up well to transport for the barbecue, then cook it on a low heat so it steams in the foil. Alternatively, you can take it out of the foil and place it on the grill for about six to eight minutes each side. Just before you cook the fish, add the salt. This should be very tasty.