

## **Sweeten your Summer Desserts with Local Strawberries**

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Strawberries are ready to pick in our region, providing a great family outing to a u-pick stand as well as making a great dessert. While COVID-19 may have changed some procedures at u-pick strawberry stands, they are open for business when the weather is cooperative. Be sure to check with the farm to determine strawberry availability, hours of operation, and whether or not you need to bring a mask. You can also check local farmers markets for strawberries if you would rather not pick your own berries.

As I reside in Clinton County, I am a fan of the banana split. Wilmington is where the banana split originated in 1907, although it should be noted that this claim is contested with a town in Pennsylvania. In the early 1900s, you could purchase a banana split for just \$0.10. However, it will cost a little more today to purchase or make a banana split.

Due to COVID-19, the banana split festival was cancelled for this year, however this provides the opportunity to create your own version of a banana split with your local strawberries. The traditional banana split is a combination of chocolate, strawberry, and vanilla ice cream, a banana, chocolate sauce, pineapple, strawberries, whipped cream, nuts, and cherries.

While there are endless uses for strawberries this season, I encourage you to try a new recipe and incorporate local ingredients into your kitchen.

## **KEEPING IT COOL: SUMMER MEALS**

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When the temperature soars, keep cool with these tips:

1. Plan cold meals. Serve sandwiches with fresh fruits and vegetables.
2. Cook in the morning before it gets hot. Refrigerate the food and reheat when needed.
3. Cook Batches. For example, if you are planning a meal with pasta, cook extra to use later in a salad or other dish. Or make a triple batch and freeze some for later use.
4. Cut down on cooking time by including quick to fix foods in your menu. Try canned beans, tuna and quick cooking rice.
5. Keep a variety of prepared foods on hand, such as spaghetti sauce. Remember that prepared foods may cost more. Read the nutrition label to avoid foods high in sodium, fat or sugar.

6. Prepare combination foods such as a chef's salad that includes vegetables, meat and cheese. Serve with a slice of bread, glass of milk and fruit for a cool, delicious meal.
7. Stir-fry, broil or grill instead of frying or baking for meats such as boneless chicken or beef. These cooking methods will not heat up the kitchen as much.
8. Slice meats and poultry thinly for quick cooking.

Recipes to try from [celebrateyourplate.org](http://celebrateyourplate.org)

### **Pasta Salad**

#### **Ingredients**

1 16 ounce box whole wheat bow tie OR penne pasta, cooked, drained, and cooled.  
5 cups fresh OR frozen vegetables diced (If using fresh vegetables, we recommend 2 bell peppers, 1 cucumber, 2 cups broccoli florets.  
1 cup grape tomatoes. If using frozen, follow directions on package to prepare/thaw and drain well.)  
1 cup low-fat mayonnaise  
1 tablespoon Italian seasoning OR 1 teaspoon fresh chopped basil and oregano  
1 lemon, juiced (about 4 tablespoons)

#### **Instructions:**

1. Before you begin, wash your hands, surfaces, utensils, and produce.
2. In a large bowl combine cooked pasta and prepared vegetables. Mix well.
3. In a small bowl, add mayonnaise, Italian seasoning, and lemon juice and mix together with a fork or whisk.
4. Drizzle dressing over vegetables and pasta. Toss to combine.
5. Cover and refrigerate 1-2 hours before serving.

### **No Bake Lemon Pie**

#### **Ingredients**

2 cups fat-free vanilla yogurt  
3 tablespoons lemon pudding mix  
1 8 ounce can mandarin oranges, drained  
½ cup blueberries  
4 graham crackers, crushed

#### **Instructions**

1. Before you begin wash your hands, surfaces, utensils, and fruit.
2. Mix vanilla yogurt and pudding together in a medium bowl. Add mandarin oranges and blueberries and gently stir.
3. Put graham crackers in a plastic bag and crush with your hands until they are a uniform consistency.
4. Place graham crackers in the bottom of the serving dish. Use the back of a spoon to smooth them into an even layer.
5. Pour pudding mixture over graham cracker layer. Eat immediately or refrigerate for a firmer texture.