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Easy entertaining and recipe tips from celebrity chef Katie Lee

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(BPT) - Whether it's an end-of-summer bash or a back-to-school barbecue, entertaining is all about family, friends and of course, food. But hosting the perfect soiree doesn't have to mean you're stuck in the kitchen while everyone else is enjoying the party. TV chef and cookbook author Katie Lee offers these tips for easy entertaining that will get you away from the stove and into the party.

Consider a buffet or family-style menu

One large dish that everyone can serve themselves is an entertainer's dream. Make-ahead veggie burgers or shrimp rolls are two of Katie's favorites — just grill and prep all of the ingredients ahead of time and have people "Create Your Own" (CYO) with a buffet of toppings — bacon, lettuce, tomato, onion, etc. It's all about options for a big group so everyone is satisfied.

Prepare your side dishes ahead of time

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Opt for side dishes that can be prepared, refrigerated and pulled out when it's time for dinner. Any kind of grain salad, such as quinoa, is an easy, go-to choice. Paired with a burger or shrimp roll, it's the perfect complement.

Hors d'oeuvres are a must

Guests usually come hungry, so be sure to have hors d'oeuvres that are ready when they arrive! Try cantaloupe wrapped in prosciutto, a cheese plate or a tasty dip. It can be so simple, but the perfect little nibble for guests to enjoy while they mingle.

Cool off with tasty drinks

What party doesn't include some delicious drinks to complement the meal? Set up a festive station or bar area where guests can make their own. Include reusable plastic glasses, stirrers and cocktail napkins for easy access and clean up. Be sure to include fun options like fruit infused iced tea or refreshing lemonade.

Smart grilling options

Grilling doesn't always mean you have to indulge. Steaks and burgers are classic staples, but fresh fish or veggie burgers, served on a bun or roll with homemade flavor and soft texture, lighten things up. Your guests will be delighted and satisfied.

"No matter where I am, I always find myself entertaining friends and family so I love having a few go-to recipes in my pocket to keep things delicious," says Katie Lee. "There's nothing easier than sandwiches and burgers and I love that new Sara Lee Artesano Bakery Buns and Rolls make it easy to kick the flavor up a notch on my favorites!"

Here are two of Katie's go-to favorites:

Must-Have Mushroom Avocado Melt

There's so much flavor in this towering grilled veggie burger creation, you won't miss the meat.

Servings: 4

Time: 30+ minutes

Ingredients

4 Sara Lee Artesano Bakery Buns

1/4 cup Italian dressing

Juice of 1 lemon

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

4 Portobello mushrooms, wiped clean and stems removed

4 slices Muenster or Swiss cheese

1 red onion, thinly sliced and brushed with olive oil

2 avocados, thinly sliced

1 tomato, sliced

1/2 head iceberg lettuce, finely shredded

Red Pepper Aioli (recipe follows)

Red Pepper Aioli Ingredients:

1/2 cup mayonnaise

1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice

1/2 jar of roasted red bell pepper, finely chopped

1 garlic clove, minced

Directions Make the Red Pepper Aioli. Combine all ingredients in a small bowl, and fold together.

In a dish, combine Italian dressing, lemon and Worcestershire sauce. Add mushrooms, and toss to coat. Refrigerate at least 1 hour (or overnight, if desired).

Preheat a grill or grill pan to medium heat. Grill mushrooms 10 minutes on each side, then top with cheese, and let melt. Grill onions simultaneously 2 to 3 minutes on each side, until tender. Place buns on the grill to toast lightly as well. To build the sandwich, spread the top half of each bun with aioli. On each bottom half, place a mushroom, some red onions, avocado slices, a bit of lettuce, sliced tomato and the top half. BLT Shrimp Roll When a BLT meets shrimp salad, you get super snazzy sandwiches. Servings: 6 Time: 11-20 minutes Ingredients 6 Sara Lee Artesano Bakery Rolls Juice of 1 lemon (about 2 tablespoons) 3/4 cup mayonnaise 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard 1/2 teaspoon sugar 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper 2 pounds cooked shrimp, peeled, tails removed and diced 2 celery stalks, finely diced 1 tablespoon minced chives 1 tomato, sliced 6 slices bacon, cooked until crispy Bibb lettuce Directions In a large bowl, mix the lemon juice, mayonnaise, vinegar, mustard, sugar, salt and pepper. Stir in the shrimp and chives. Split 6 rolls in half and layer 1 tomato slice on each roll bottom. Top each with a scoop of the shrimp mixture, 1 slice of bacon, 1 lettuce leaf and roll tops. For more recipes for dishes your guests will be talking about the next day, visit saraleebread.com.

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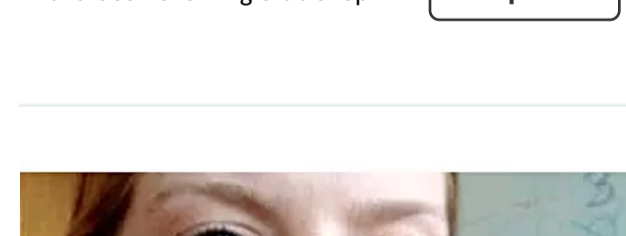
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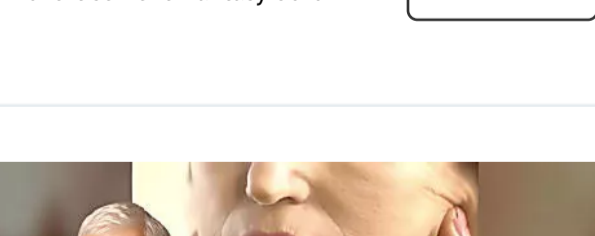
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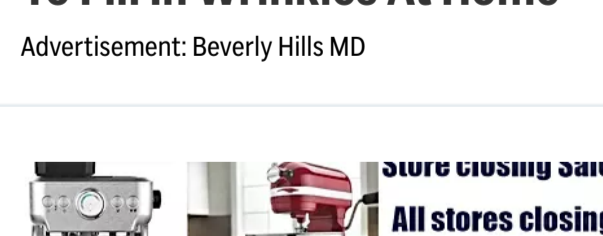
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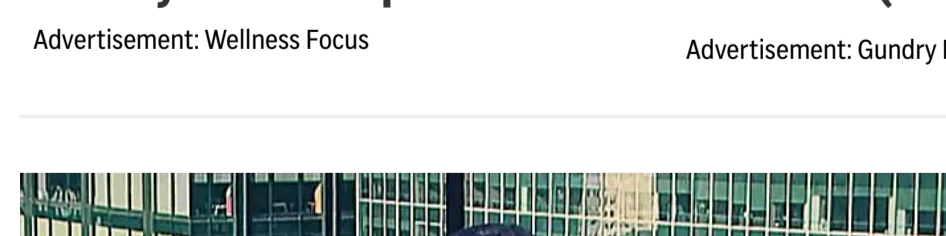
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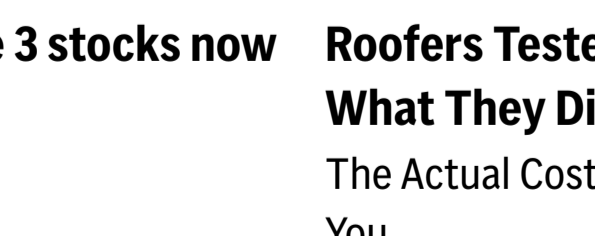
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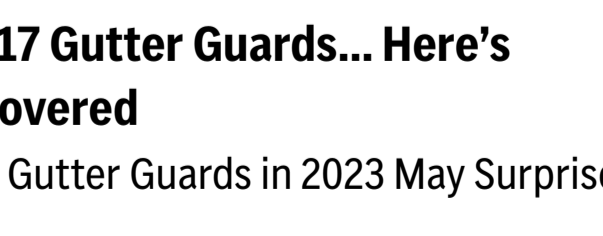
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