

## INVITING IDEAS

## Sunset sippers rated 'R' for adults only



RUTH MOSSMAN JOHNSTON

As the heat waves hit, we tend to eat outside — on patios, decks, porches and gazebos — and we're quite delighted about that. After all, we Michiganders wait many cool, gray, dreary months for this wonderfully warm weather.

A backdrop of beautiful sunsets ranging from pastel pink to fiery orange paint the summer skies while our palates await something cool, refreshing and quenchingly unique. Something like a batch of Sunset Sippers, like a Fire Breathing Dragon, a hot and spicy twist to the old tomato-vegetable drink.

## FIRE BREATHING DRAGON

Juice of 6 oranges  
36 fluid ounces tomato juice (homemade or prepared)  
Juice of 12 lemons  
8 teaspoons crushed chilies  
Grenadine Syrup  
Salt

Mix orange, tomato and lime juices

with crushed chillies. Add the desired amount of Grenadine and salt. Strain mixture and serve in chilled glasses garnished with a slice of orange and slice of lime. Yield 6 servings.

Or, try a Limglight with a Wallop. This recipe reminds me of the delicious cool limeade drinks from Drake's in Ann Arbor, a landmark for us old University of Michigan alums, which closed after 60 years. Of course, the limeade we all ordered didn't have any liquor, though it did have two squirts of that mysterious clear sugar syrup ingredient.

## LIMELIGHT

Fresh squeezed lime juice  
Vodka  
White rum  
Sugar syrup (1 cup water, 1 cup sugar)

First, for the sugar syrup, heat the water and sugar together in a saucepan long enough for the mix to form a syrupy texture. Remove and let cool. Then, to make the drink, place equal amounts of lime juice, vodka and white rum in a blender or Vita-Mix. Add sugar syrup to taste, then

add ice. Process to form a slush.

Want another? How about a Watermelon Surprise.

## WATERMELON SURPRISE

Frozen vodka  
Chilled watermelon juice  
Sugar syrup (optional)

This is a great taste combination. Just mix together desired proportions for as many chilled glasses as you want to serve. Cantaloupe or honeydew melon juices would be delicious, too.

Here are some more refreshing Sunset Sipper ideas:

Chilled flutes of champagne loaded with fresh frozen fruit. Remember to provide long handled spoons. Fingers can't make it down those flutes and trying to extract the fruit can become a challenge both mentally and physically.

Shushes and adult snow cones filled with a mixture of tropical fruit juice and your favorite "spirit."

Blue margaritas with lemon flavored salt around the rim.

Chilled mineral water with a shot of flavored Italian syrup and a slice of sugared fruit.

And don't stop there. Sunset Sippers are just a prelude to a summer's evening out. Give the night a Tropical Island theme. Decorate your yard or patio with exotic flowers, bright flowery tablecloths, tropical fruits and grass skirts. And, to serve with the sippers, finger foods like toasted pine nuts with Parmesan cheese, salt crusted bread sticks, sugared almonds, herbed cheese slices and baguette rounds topped with oil-packed, sun-dried tomatoes, a slice of chevre cheese and a fresh basil leaf.

For more complex appetizers, try a batch of mini-quiche with wild mushrooms, stuffed grape leaves, filo pockets of tropical fruit, coconut and custard or, one of my favorites, sautéed artichoke hearts.

## SAUTEED ARTICHOKE HEARTS

Canned artichoke hearts (drained



TAMARA CRAWFORD/ARTIST

and rinsed)

Butter or margarine  
Eggs  
Parmesan cheese  
Wondra flour (fine sifted flour)

Mix the flour and Parmesan cheese in equal amounts and place in a low flat container. Lightly beat the eggs and dip in artichokes a few at a time. Place the artichokes into the flour and cheese mix. Lightly pat, covering all sides.

In a large heavy fry pan, melt the butter or margarine to hot but not brown. In small batches, add the dredged artichokes and let lightly brown on all sides. Remove sautéed artichokes from pan and drain on paper towels to the excess butter and serve them hot.

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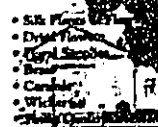
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Today it's the simple things in life — everyday triumphs — that deserve celebration. The way we celebrate these moments can be simple, too, according to author and casual dining expert Melanie Bernard.

Bernard recommends using an event as simple as the completion of a big project at the office — as a good reason to celebrate with family and friends. Here are some do's and don'ts for gatherings:

- Do invite friends with a wide range of ages and interests. It makes for a lively mix and more interesting conversation.
- Don't be afraid to invite guests at the last minute. The most spontaneous get-togethers are often the most memorable.
- Don't try complicated new recipes for the first time. Save recipe experiments

for rainy days or other no pressure times.

- Do introduce friends to each other along with an interesting bit of information about each person's interests to get a conversation started.

- Don't let background music overwhelm the conversation. Check the sound level ahead of time and again after everyone has arrived.

- Do keep a party drawer stocked with colorful paper plates, napkins, a few favorite CDs and recipes for easy-to-prepare snacks, so you're ready to get together on the spur of the moment.

- Don't turn down guest offers to help. People love to be a part of the moment and it makes for a more casual atmosphere.

- Do provide a few details about the get-together when inviting your guests.

## It's simple things that count