

SUZANNE'S MENU

Iced Orange-Mint Tea

Grilled Shrimp with Tarator Sauce*

Lamb Meatballs in Tomato Sauce

Fattoush (Bread and Vegetable Salad)*

Marinated Green Beans
and Tomatoes with Dill*

Pita and/or Arab breads (store-bought)*

Rose Water Sorbet
with Chopped Pistachios

Baklava*

*These dishes are served at room temperature,
simplifying your setup.



“Entertaining’s easy
with make-ahead mezze”

Suzanne Williamson Pollak, coauthor of *Entertaining for Dummies*,
shares her recipe for keeping your cool while feeding a crowd

W“WE USED TO EAT MEZZE EVERY SUNDAY NIGHT,” says Suzanne Williamson Pollak, who was born in Beirut. “We’d go to Lebanese restaurants where endless platters of food were put in the middle of the table.” Mezze (a Middle Eastern buffet tradition) couldn’t be kinder to a host. Each recipe can be prepped ahead; some—such as baklava—weeks ahead. It’s Suzanne’s favorite no-fuss way to entertain.

“I love guests helping themselves to whatever they want,” she says. “Buffets relax people and encourage conversation.” The seven recipes she shares here yield fare that’s both impressive and easy. In addition, almost everything can be served at room temperature: grilled shrimp with a lemony garlic sauce, salad, marinated vegetables, and dessert. Only the lamb meatballs need a final warming. >



The daughter of a CIA official posted to a different country every few years, Suzanne began throwing parties as a teenager, to make friends. What she learned over the years would fill a book—and it did: the best-selling *Entertaining for Dummies* (now out of print), which she coauthored with Linda Smith.

For Suzanne, entertaining has always been a family affair with her husband and four children helping to cook, serve, clean, and, most importantly, “greet and talk to guests.” Now that her children are off on their own, Suzanne plans get-togethers around their visits back home to Beaufort, South Carolina. Her oldest son, Pete, lives down the road in Savannah, Georgia. He drove up one balmy afternoon, lent a hand, and mingled like a pro. Suzanne taught him well.



GRILLED SHRIMP WITH TARATOR SAUCE

To save you time, purchase fresh shrimp (preferably tails on) that have already been peeled and deveined.

MAKES: 10 servings **PREP:** 5 minutes **CHILL:** 3 hours **COOK:** 3 minutes
 2³/₄ pounds (about 50) fresh large shrimp, peeled and deveined
 2 large garlic cloves, thinly sliced
 4 fresh rosemary sprigs
 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
 Tarator Sauce (see recipe below)

1. Place first 3 ingredients in a large shallow baking dish, and toss well. Squeeze rosemary sprigs lightly to release flavor, then tuck down into shrimp mixture. Cover and refrigerate 3 to 4 hours.
2. Thread 5 shrimp on each of 10 long metal skewers (or wooden ones soaked in water), leaving space between shrimp. Grill, covered with grill lid, over high heat (500° to 550°), 1½ minutes on each side or to desired degree of doneness. Serve hot or at room temperature with Tarator Sauce.

NOTE: Shrimp may be broiled in the oven rather than grilled. Simply broil 4 inches from heat 2 to 2½ minutes on each side or to desired degree of doneness.

TARATOR SAUCE

Most commonly a sesame-based sauce, tarator can be found in many variations throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe.

MAKES: about 2 cups **PREP:** 5 minutes
 2 cups pine nuts
 3 slices firm-textured white bread, crusts removed and bread torn into 1-inch pieces
 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
 2 garlic cloves
 3/4 teaspoon salt
 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

Place all ingredients in a food processor with 1/3 cup water, and process 30 seconds. Scrape down sides of bowl, and process 30 seconds more or until smooth. Cover and chill until ready to serve. >



Take it from Suzanne:

Tips for entertaining, cottage style

Here's her latest advice for throwing a memorable party.

1 Save your energy—prep and freeze food ahead.

Choose flavorful food with personality that people don't usually make for themselves—for example, a meze, curry, or gumbo. Recipes you can assemble in advance free you to spend time with your guests.

2 Play music that puts guests in a party mood.

Wycliffe Gordon's *Joyride*, Suzanne swears, will wake the deadest party. "He's the world's best trombonist," she says.

3 Set the table the day before the party. Suzanne favors plain white linens (with the biggest napkins she can find), old silver cups for water, and the glow of off-white beeswax candles in antique brass candlesticks.



LAMB MEATBALLS IN TOMATO SAUCE

This recipe can be made weeks ahead and frozen in the casserole dish in which it will be heated and served. Allow dish to thaw in refrigerator for two days before cooking.

- MAKES:** 10 servings **PREP:** 10 minutes **STAND:** 30 minutes **COOK:** 30 minutes
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| 1 (5.25-ounce) box tabbouleh mix, minus spice packet | $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground pepper, divided |
| 2 pounds ground lamb | $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon ground cumin, divided |
| 1 yellow onion, finely chopped | $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon, divided |
| 1 large garlic clove, finely chopped | 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil |
| 1 tablespoon dried mint flakes | 2 (15-ounce) cans tomato sauce |
| 1 tablespoon dried parsley flakes | 2 large whole bay leaves |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt | |

1. Place tabbouleh in a large heatproof bowl; add 1 cup boiling water, cover, and let stand 30 minutes. Add lamb, next 5 ingredients, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cumin, and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cinnamon. Mix well with hands, and shape into golf ball-size meatballs. Lightly spritz meatballs with cooking spray.

2. Coat a large heavy pot or Dutch oven with cooking spray, add 2 tablespoons olive oil, and heat 2 minutes over high heat. Brown meatballs in 3 batches over medium-high heat, about 5 minutes per batch, shaking pot so meatballs brown evenly. Add remaining olive oil as needed. Drain browned meatballs on paper towels.

3. Deglaze pot with 1 cup water, cooking 2 minutes over medium heat and stirring to loosen browned particles. Add tomato sauce, bay leaves, and remaining pepper, cumin, and cinnamon. Bring to a boil, and return meatballs to pot; cover and simmer 10 minutes. Discard bay leaves, and serve meatballs and sauce warm, or freeze.

NOTE: If freezing, cool meatballs in sauce 30 minutes, transfer to a shallow 4-quart freezer-to-oven casserole dish, and cover with aluminum foil; label and date the container. To reheat thawed meatballs, bake, still wrapped in foil, at 350° for 45 minutes or until warm. >



MARINATED GREEN BEANS AND TOMATOES WITH DILL

Make this recipe a day ahead so the beans can absorb the flavor of the marinade.

MAKES: 10 servings **PREP:** 30 minutes **COOK:** 10 minutes

- 3 pounds fresh green beans, trimmed
- ¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh dill or 1 teaspoon dried dill weed
- 1 large garlic clove, finely chopped
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1½ pounds tomatoes (about 3 large),
peeled, cored, seeded, and cut into ½-inch pieces
- ½ small red onion, thinly sliced
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

- 1.** Cook beans, covered, in a large pot of lightly salted boiling water over high heat 10 minutes or until crisp-tender.
- 2.** Place dill and next 3 ingredients in a large heatproof glass bowl. Drain beans well, and add to dill mixture. Add olive oil, and toss well. Add tomato and onion, and toss gently. Cover and refrigerate up to 24 hours.
- 3.** Remove beans from refrigerator, and let stand, covered, at room temperature 1 hour. Add 2 tablespoons lemon juice, and toss gently. Taste for seasoning, and add remaining lemon juice, if desired. >



FATTOUSH (BREAD AND VEGETABLE SALAD)

Here's another party-perfect recipe that can be prepared a day or two ahead, with finishing touches added just before serving. This is a big salad, but guests will want seconds.

MAKES: 10 servings **PREP:** 15 minutes

- 1 pint grape tomatoes, halved
- 4 small pickling cucumbers, peeled, halved lengthwise, seeded, and sliced ½ inch thick
- 1 small red onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 1 green bell pepper, cored, quartered, and thinly sliced
- ⅔ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 romaine lettuce heart, sliced ½ inch thick
- 3 cups thin Arab bread, crackle bread, or toasted pita bread, broken into 1-inch pieces, or unseasoned croutons
- ½ cup coarsely chopped fresh Italian (flat-leaf) parsley
- ½ cup coarsely chopped fresh mint
- 4 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1½ teaspoons salt

Toss together first 7 ingredients in a large glass bowl. Cover and refrigerate. Just before serving, add remaining ingredients. Toss well, and adjust seasoning as desired. Transfer to a large salad bowl, and serve.



ICED ORANGE-MINT TEA

To make iced tea for a crowd, begin with a strong infusion that can be watered down as needed. Prepare several hours in advance, and let stand at room temperature until ready to serve.

MAKES: 10 servings

PREP: 10 minutes

- 12 Earl Grey tea bags
- 1/2 cup packed fresh mint leaves
- 5 (3-inch) orange rind strips
- 5 trays ice cubes or 5 pounds crushed ice

GARNISHES: fresh mint sprigs and extra orange rind strips

1. Place tea bags in a 2-quart heatproof glass pitcher. Squeeze mint leaves gently to release flavor, and add with orange strips to pitcher. Add about 2 quarts boiling water, and let cool to room temperature.
2. Strain tea infusion, discarding tea bags, mint leaves, and orange rind, and return to pitcher. Cover with a plate, and set in a cool dark spot (not the refrigerator) until ready to serve.
3. Fill 10 iced tea glasses halfway with ice, add tea infusion to level of ice, and fill with water. Garnish, if desired.

BAKLAVA

Our test kitchen gave this its highest rating. It can be made weeks in advance, frozen, and then baked the day before the party. You can also omit pistachios and use 1 pound walnuts, if desired. If butter hardens as you layer the baklava, microwave briefly on LOW to liquefy it.

MAKES: about 2 dozen small pastries

PREP: 1 hour 30 minutes

BAKE: 2 hours 10 minutes

- 1/4 pound (1 cup) pistachio nuts, rinsed and patted dry
- 3/4 pound (3 cups) walnuts
- 1 1/3 cups sugar, divided
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 (16-ounce) package frozen phyllo pastry, thawed according to package directions
- 1 1/4 cups unsalted butter, melted
- 3/4 cup mild honey
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1. Preheat oven to 300°. Chop pistachios in a food processor a few seconds until finely chopped. Add walnuts, 2/3 cup sugar, and cinnamon, and process until the texture of coarse meal; pulse out any lumps. Set aside.
2. Lightly fit 1 phyllo sheet in the bottom of a lightly greased 13- x 9-inch baking dish; trim phyllo to fit, if necessary. Brush well with melted butter. Fit 7 more phyllo sheets in dish, brushing each layer well with melted butter.
3. Scatter a generous 1/3 cup nut mixture over phyllo. Add 2 more phyllo sheets, brushing each with melted butter, then another 1/3 cup nut mixture. Continue layering phyllo and nut mixture, brushing each sheet with butter, until all nut mixture is used. Top with remaining phyllo sheets, brushing each with melted butter. Place baklava in freezer 10 minutes. (This makes it easier to cut.)
4. Slice baklava in a 2-inch-wide, diamond-shaped pattern. (At this point, baklava may be frozen: Wrap pan with heavy-duty aluminum foil, label and date, and freeze.)
5. Set baking dish on middle oven rack, and place a shallow pan of water on rack underneath. Bake at 300° for 2 hours and 10 minutes or until golden brown. (Bake frozen baklava, uncovered, in same way at 300° for 2 1/2 to 3 hours or until golden brown.)
6. Combine remaining 2/3 cup sugar, 2 cups water, honey, and lemon juice in a large, heavy, nonstick saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce heat to low, and simmer, uncovered, 20 minutes. Transfer to a 1-quart glass measuring cup, and cool to room temperature. Drizzle syrup evenly over baklava. Cool to room temperature, cover loosely with foil, and let stand overnight before serving. >

HOME COOKING IN GOOD COMPANY



ROSE WATER SORBET WITH CHOPPED PISTACHIOS

For a super-smooth treat, freeze in an ice-cream maker, preferably one big enough for 3 quarts. You can substitute orange flower water for rose water. Rinse pistachios, and pat dry with a paper towel to remove salt.

MAKES: about 2 quarts **PREP:** 35 minutes **COOK:** 5 minutes

1½ cups sugar

½ cup light corn syrup

¼ cup mild honey

1½ teaspoons (about ½ envelope) unflavored gelatin dissolved in ⅓ cup fresh lime juice

⅔ cup rose water

1 tablespoon finely grated lime zest

1 to 2 drops each red and yellow food coloring, if desired

⅓ cup finely chopped pistachios

1. Bring first 3 ingredients and 6 cups water to a boil in a large, heavy, nonstick saucepan over high heat. Reduce heat to low, and simmer, uncovered, 5 minutes.
2. Remove pan from heat, add gelatin mixture, and stir to combine. Mix in rose water and lime zest; add just enough food coloring for a dark, warm, rosy hue, if desired. Transfer sorbet mixture to 2 (1-quart) preserving jars, screw lids on tightly, and cool to room temperature. Refrigerate until ready to make sorbet.
3. Transfer sorbet mixture to the freezer container of an ice-cream maker, and freeze according to manufacturer's directions. Store in freezer until ready to use, letting sorbet soften 15 to 20 minutes at room temperature before serving, or divide among individual serving dishes, top with pistachios, and serve immediately. ■

Bonus! For Suzanne's recipe for White Beans, Onion, and Garlic with Oil and Lemon Dressing, visit [@cottageliving.com](https://www.cottageliving.com)