

Compliments of Jodee Harris

# essential living

606

## Escape to Stillness

Nantahala National Forest,  
North Carolina



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As summer settles in, there's nothing better than making the most of your home — inside and out. Transform your outdoor space into a comfortable extension of your home, creating inviting spots to relax, entertain or simply enjoy the fresh air.

When it's time to step away from home, America's quiet corners offer the perfect escape. These serene getaways provide space to slow down, reconnect with yourself and enjoy the rare pleasure of uninterrupted calm, leaving you feeling restored and inspired.

When hunger calls, turn to Essential Living's top recipes. Easy to make and impossible not to love, these dishes bring comfort and deliciousness to every table.

— From the Publisher



**What's your favorite cold treat?**

Scan the QR code to cast your vote!



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## Lemon Blueberry Mug Cake

- ¼ c. all-purpose flour
- ¼ tsp. baking powder
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. coconut oil,  
melted
- 1 tbsp. maple syrup
- 4 tbsp. milk
- 2 tbsp. blueberries

1. In a small mixing bowl, add your dry ingredients and mix well.
2. In a microwave-safe mug, mix lemon juice, coconut oil, maple syrup and milk. Add in the dry ingredients and mix well. Fold in the blueberries.
3. Microwave for 1-2 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out clean from the center. Allow to cool for 2-3 minutes and enjoy!

# Contents

---

**02 Sorbet All Day**  
Frozen delights to brighten your day

---

**08 America's Quietest Vacations**  
Unwind where the pace slows and the noise fades away

---

**12 Step Into Seamless Living**  
Design a backyard that feels like home

---

**17 Plunge Into the Depths of Crater Lake**  
Discover Oregon's iconic deep-blue lake

---

**20 Beat the Heat**  
Easy tricks to keep you cool all summer long

---

**23 Flag Football Fever**  
Join the excitement with fast moves and clever plays

---

**25 Our Favorite Flavors**  
Taste the best of Essential Living

---

**30 Can It Swim?**  
A visual guide to nature's most unexpected swimmers

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# SORBET ALL DAY

When summer heat strikes, nothing beats the refreshing simplicity of homemade sorbet. These icy treats require just a few ingredients and minimal effort but burst with flavors that perfectly capture peak-season fruits. From a blueberry sorbet packed with summer's essence to a tropical delight that transports you to paradise, these 8 delicious sorbets offer the perfect frozen escape for every palate.





# Sorbet Base

## INGREDIENTS

### FOR THE SIMPLE SYRUP

- 1 c. white sugar
- 1 c. water

### FOR THE SORBET BASE

- Frozen fruit
- 3-4 tbsp. simple syrup
- Add-ins

## YIELD

2-3 servings

## PREP TIME

15 minutes

## NOTES

- **Adjust sweetness** by using more or less simple syrup.
- **If using fresh fruit**, remove inedible parts, then slice into ½-inch chunks. Prepare a lined baking sheet with parchment paper and spread the cut fruit into a single layer. Place in freezer until fruit is frozen solid. If using fresh raspberries or blueberries, you can freeze them whole.
- **If using frozen fruit**, you may need to add water to loosen large chunks of fruit. Start with one tablespoon, slowly adding more if needed.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### FOR THE SIMPLE SYRUP

1. Combine sugar and water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Remove from heat and let cool. Transfer to an airtight glass jar. Store in the fridge for up to a month.

### FOR THE SORBET BASE

1. Place frozen fruit in a food processor or blender with an ice crushing setting.
2. Begin to pulse the fruit in short bursts. Note that smaller pieces of fruit will purée faster. It is important to not overheat the food processor or blender, as it can cause the sorbet to melt.
3. Add in the simple syrup a tablespoon at a time, while continuing to pulse. Add in lemon or lime juice if using. Pulse until smooth.
4. Serve immediately or transfer to a loaf pan and place in freezer until firm, about two hours.



# Strawberry Sorbet With Crushed Pistachios

Strawberry meets crunchy pistachios in every bite



## INGREDIENTS

- 3 c. strawberries, frozen
- ½ tbsp. lemon juice
- 2 tbsp. crushed pistachios, for topping

# Mango

Bursting with flavor and made for summer days

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 c. mango, frozen
- ½ tbsp. lime juice





# Watermelon Basil

Crisp watermelon combines with a touch of basil for an icy treat

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 c. watermelon, frozen
- 1 tbsp. lime juice
- ½ tbsp. fresh basil, finely minced, added in with lemon juice
- ⅛ tsp. salt, added in with lemon juice



# Peach

A spoonful of pure summer sunshine

## INGREDIENTS

- 2½ c. peaches, frozen
- ½ tbsp. balsamic vinegar



# Banana Sorbet With Pecans and Cocoa Powder

Indulge in creamy, nutty, chocolatey bliss

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 bananas, frozen
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- ¼ c. toasted pecans, coarsely chopped, for topping
- Cocoa powder, for topping

# Triple Berry

Three times the deliciousness,  
all in one scoop

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 c. blueberries, frozen
- 1 c. raspberries, frozen
- 1 c. blackberries, frozen
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract





# Blueberry

This sorbet is as sweet as it is simple

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 c. blueberries, frozen
- ½ tbsp. lemon juice

# Cherry Sorbet With Almonds

Tart cherries and crunchy almonds will have you hooked from the first bite

## INGREDIENTS

- 3 c. cherries, pitted and frozen
- ½ tbsp. almond extract
- ¼ c. slivered almonds, for topping



# America's QUIETEST VACATIONS

Sometimes the best kind of getaway isn't about seeing and doing it all — it's about slowing down. Serene vacations invite you to step away from the rush and sink into a sense of calm. They offer the chance to connect with nature, unplug from the noise and rediscover quiet moments. These four destinations across America offer the opportunity to embrace the serenity of the wilderness without the crowds.



## *Caladesi Island State Park*

### FLORIDA

This hidden gem is for vacationers whose ideal R&R retreat is spent beachside. Caladesi Island State Park in Florida offers an oasis teeming with pristine beaches, warm water and plenty of relaxing activities to choose from including kayaking through the three-mile mangrove grove. Accessible only by boat, this beach is far less crowded than the nearby Tampa Bay area. With no hotels on the island, consider boat-in camping at the marina to fully enjoy the tranquility of this secluded spot.



# Capitol Reef National Park



## UTAH

National parks have always been a haven for travelers seeking peace and quiet. Capitol Reef National Park in Utah showcases landscapes as striking as Bryce Canyon and Zion, yet it sees far fewer visitors. Famous for its dramatic rock formations and winding canyons, the park offers exceptional hiking, scenic drives and the kind of solitude that feels increasingly rare. From camping under the stars to staying at the 4-star Capitol Reef Resort, there are options for every type of traveler. Anyone who loves the natural beauty of Sedona or the stunning vistas of Arches National Park will find Capitol Reef an unforgettable destination.





# Isle Royale

## MICHIGAN

This remote island off the coast of Michigan in Lake Superior is the ideal Midwest wilderness escape. Known for its diverse wildlife, astonishing scenery and limited visitation, Isle Royale offers the opportunity to fully immerse yourself in nature. The island is home to Isle Royale National Park and provides an array of adventures, from diving to the shipwrecks of Lake Superior to wilderness tours filled with moose, beavers and wolves. Accessible only by boat or seaplane and home to no permanent residents, the island is one of the least visited national parks in the United States. Visitors can embrace the untouched beauty and camp under the stars, or retreat to one of the island's two resorts for a balanced experience of nature and comfort.





## Nantahala Mountains



## NORTH CAROLINA

Deep in the mountains of North Carolina sits a picturesque destination of dramatic waterfalls, colorful cliffs and phenomenal views. The Nantahala Mountains are known for their diverse range of outdoor recreational opportunities amongst their rugged natural beauty. With 600 miles of hiking trails, whitewater rafting down the Nantahala River and waterskiing along Fontana Lake, it's truly an outdoor adventurer's paradise. Although these mountains are part of both the Appalachian Mountain Range and Nantahala National Forest, while bordering the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, they still fly under the radar. With a wide range of campgrounds and cabins, visitors can choose the level of seclusion they prefer as they explore the landscape of the East Coast.

These destinations show that a serene vacation can be as rewarding as a busy itinerary. They offer the chance to slow down, reconnect with nature and let the world's natural beauty set the pace.





# Step Into Seamless Living



## HOW TO EXTEND YOUR LIVING SPACE

Gone are the days when your backyard was just for weekend barbecues. Indoor-outdoor living lets homeowners enjoy a seamless connection between interior and exterior spaces, turning the backyard into a true extension of the home.



## Create a Seamless Transition



## Keep the Kitchen Close

A pass-through window or kitchen hatch makes serving food effortless and keeps conversation flowing. Alternatively, position your patio table near your indoor dining table. Open the sliding doors during gatherings, and you instantly double your entertainment space, with guests moving seamlessly between inside and out.

The key to successful indoor-outdoor living lies in creating smooth transitions. When possible, design your patio, deck or outdoor area at the same level as your interior floors. This creates the illusion that your rooms simply continue outside, making both areas feel dramatically larger and more connected.

Flooring plays a major role in creating cohesion. Tie the spaces together with natural patio stone that echoes your kitchen tiles or with composite decking in warm wood tones to match your hardwood floors.



# Layer Your Lighting



## Keep the Entertainment Flowing

Why should the fun stop when you step outside? Weatherproof speakers let you keep your playlist going from kitchen to patio, while an outdoor TV turns your deck into the perfect spot for game day or movie nights — all without sacrificing style or comfort.

Good lighting transforms your outdoor space from daytime-only to a place you'll want to enjoy long into the night. Layer different types of lighting just like you would indoors. String lights add effortless charm, solar path lights enhance safety and cordless table lamps provide a warm, inviting glow.





## Connect With Colors and Textures



## Provide Shade and Comfort

Whether you choose a retractable awning, a large patio umbrella or a permanent covered porch, having protection from the sun makes all the difference. Shade keeps your outdoor space cool and comfortable, protects furniture and fabrics from fading and lets you enjoy the fresh air in any weather.

A simple way to bring more of the inside to your backyard is through color and texture. Choose cushions, rugs and accessories for your patio that reflect the tones inside your home. Layering in textures that mimic indoor fabrics, such as woven rugs, soft outdoor throws or wood tones, creates continuity between environments.



# Final Touches



Little details go a long way in making your backyard feel like a true extension of your home. Fire pits, water features and decorative planters add personality, while functional touches like side tables, storage benches or built-in seating help merge the living areas.

With a few intentional updates, you can enjoy the best of both worlds — bringing the comfort and style of your home into your outdoor retreat.





# PLUNGE INTO THE DEPTHS OF CRATER LAKE

Nestled in southern Oregon, Crater Lake National Park is a natural marvel that captivates visitors with its deep blue waters and dramatic landscapes. Formed after the collapse of Mount Mazama, the lake plunges to 1,943 feet, making it the deepest in the United States. Its remarkable clarity and vivid color make it a must-see destination for nature lovers and adventure seekers alike.

## TAKE A DRIVE

Rim Drive, a 33-mile loop around the lake, was carefully built to blend with the landscape, virtually disappearing when you look across the water. With 30 overlooks along the route, each turn offers breathtaking vantage points and sweeping panoramas of Crater Lake's deep blue expanse.

## DEEP BLUE WONDER

Crater Lake's striking blue color comes from its depth and remarkable clarity. Sunlight penetrates the water, with longer wavelengths like red and yellow absorbed, while shorter blue and purple wavelengths scatter back to the surface, creating the lake's iconic hue. Near the shallower edges, some green light is reflected, giving subtle variations along the shoreline. The lake's color can shift daily depending on sunlight, cloud cover and wind, making each visit a unique visual experience.





## SEASONS OF ADVENTURE

From November through May, Crater Lake transforms into a winter wonderland. Visitors can join ranger-led snowshoe walks or glide along quiet cross-country ski trails, enjoying the serene snow-covered landscape. When summer arrives, the snow melts to reveal hiking trails for every skill level, offering endless ways to explore the lake's stunning scenery.

## BEYOND THE LAKE

Crater Lake National Park offers more than just its stunning waters. Wildlife such as elk, black bears and bald eagles can often be spotted along the trails, while the park's volcanic history is visible in the surrounding cliffs and rock formations. The Rim Visitor Center and Steel Information Center provide insight into the lake's formation, local ecology and conservation efforts, helping guests connect with the park on a deeper level. Whether you're hiking, photographing or simply soaking in the scenery, there's always something new to discover around every corner.

# BEAT THE HEAT

12

Ways to Stay  
Cool When It's  
Scorching Hot

Summer is here and while the sun is perfect for fun, it can also leave everyone feeling overheated. Luckily, keeping cool doesn't have to mean hiding indoors all day. Here are 12 ways you can beat the heat and make summer days enjoyable for the whole family.



# 1 EARLY MORNING ADVENTURES

Start the day before the sun peaks. Go for a walk, bike ride or backyard play session when it's cooler and the air feels fresh.

## 2

### STAY OUT OF THE KITCHEN

Cooking can heat up the house. Stick to cold meals, sandwiches or outdoor grilling to keep the temperature down inside.



## 3 PRE-HYDRATE

Get ahead of dehydration by drinking a glass or two of water before stepping into the sun.

## 4 KEEP DRINKING

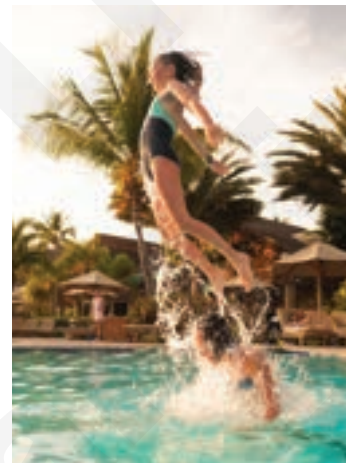
Keep the hydration going all day long. Toss in slices of citrus, berries or fresh herbs for a flavorful, cooling boost.



## 5

### TAKE A PLUNGE

Whether it's a pool, lake or sprinkler, jumping into water is the quickest way to cool down.



## 6

### KEEP THE SUN OUT

Close blinds or curtains during the hottest part of the day to block the sun.



## 8 FANS, FANS, FANS

Ceiling fans, standing fans or even handheld fans make a huge difference in circulating air.

## 9 COOL YOUR PULSE POINTS

Press a cold washcloth or ice cubes on your wrists, neck and temples for an instant cool down.



## 7 DRESS SMART

Light-colored, loose clothing in breathable fabrics like cotton or linen keeps the body cooler. Add a hat and sunglasses to keep the sun off your face and stay cool all day.

# 11

## FROZEN FRUIT SNACKS

Pop grapes, berries or melon cubes in the freezer for a sweet and refreshing treat.



## 10 WATER BALLOON BATTLE

Fill up some water balloons and squirt guns for a splash-filled showdown everyone will love.



# 12

## DON'T FORGET YOUR PETS

Keep furry friends cool with shaded spots, fresh water and even pet-friendly frozen treats.

**SUMMER DOESN'T HAVE TO MEAN SWELTERING DISCOMFORT. WITH A LITTLE CREATIVITY AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY FUN, YOU CAN STAY COOL WHILE MAKING MEMORIES THAT LAST ALL SUMMER LONG.**



# FLAG FOOTBALL FEVER

Played by more than 20 million people across over 100 countries, flag football has surged in popularity in recent years. The game brings the excitement of traditional American football while eliminating heavy hits, emphasizing speed, strategy and teamwork instead.

The NFL has invested heavily in growing flag football worldwide, and the sport is set to make its Olympic debut at the 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles, featuring competitions for both men and women.



Its inclusive nature has fueled this growth, with high schools and colleges quickly adding programs to cultivate the next generation of athletes and expand the sport's future.

## THE BASICS

**Objective:** Advance the ball down the field and score touchdowns in the opposing end zone while preventing the other team from doing the same.

**The Most Important Rule:** Contact is off-limits. That means no tackling, diving, blocking or screening. Players wear flags attached to a belt at their sides and the defense stops a play by pulling one or both flags from the ball carrier.

**Field Size:** Flag football fields measure 70 x 25 yards, with a 10-yard end zone at each end.

**Teams:** Most commonly, teams compete 5-on-5, but the rules can easily be adapted for 6-on-6, 7-on-7 or 9-on-9 formats, making the game flexible for all skill levels and group sizes.

**Game Play:** Matches are played in two 20-minute halves with a running clock, stopping only for halftime, timeouts or injuries. The offensive team starts with the ball at its 5-yard line and has four plays to cross midfield.

**Scoring:** Touchdowns are worth six points. After a touchdown, teams can attempt an extra point by running or passing the ball into the end zone from the 5-yard line or go for two points from the 10-yard line.

## GETTING STARTED

- 1. Find a League:** Check community rec centers, adult sports clubs or intramural groups.
- 2. Gear Up:** All you need are a pair of cleats, comfortable clothes and a flag belt — often provided by organizers.
- 3. Learn the Lingo:** Familiarize yourself with downs, scoring and flag-pulling. The learning curve is short, but the excitement is high.

*Flag football is a fast, engaging way to stay active while building teamwork and strategy. Its simple rules and inclusive nature make it accessible for players of all skill levels, whether you're playing for fun or aiming for serious competition.*

# OUR FAVORITE FLAVORS

This lineup of recipes highlights some of the standout dishes that have appeared in Essential Living. Each one is bursting with flavor and perfect for sharing with friends and family. Whether you're craving savory huevos rancheros to start your morning or sweet cheesecake bites to celebrate a special occasion, there's a favorite recipe for every moment of the day.



BREAKFAST

## HUEVOS RANCHEROS

Wake up your taste buds with this zesty, flavor-packed breakfast.

### INGREDIENTS

For the pico de gallo

- 2 Roma tomatoes, diced
- ¼ red onion, diced
- ¼ c. canned green chilis, diced
- ¼ c. cilantro, minced
- 1 tbsp. lime juice
- 1 tbsp. sea salt

For the huevos rancheros

- 1 15-oz. can of black beans, rinsed twice
- ¼ c. cotija cheese
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 2 eggs, room temperature
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 corn tortillas
- 1 avocado, sliced

### INSTRUCTIONS

For the pico de gallo

1. Combine all ingredients in a medium bowl. Set aside until ready to serve.

For the huevos rancheros

1. In a small pot, add the black beans, cotija cheese and cumin. Cook over medium heat for five minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat and transfer to a small bowl. Gently mash with a potato masher to soften slightly — you don't need to fully mash.
2. Grease a non-stick frying pan and carefully crack one egg into the center. Sprinkle with ½ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper. Cook over medium heat until the egg whites are set, about three minutes. Transfer to a plate and repeat with the second egg.
3. Coat each corn tortilla with one tablespoon olive oil. Toast in the oven, air fryer or on a hot pan until crispy.
4. Spread the black bean mixture over each toasted tortilla. Top each with a fried egg, then add pico de gallo and avocado slices.
5. Serve warm and enjoy!

Prep Time: 20 minutes  
Cook Time: 5 minutes  
Yield: 2 servings

# WAFFLE CAPRESE MELT

Switch up your classic melt with this waffle recipe featuring tomatoes, mozzarella and chicken!

Prep Time: 15 minutes  
Cook Time: 20 minutes  
Yield: 4 servings

## INGREDIENTS

### For the waffles

- 1 ½ c. all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¾ c. almond milk
- 2 eggs
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- 2 tbsp. cane sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

### For the melt

- ¼ c. mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp. sriracha
- 4 chicken breasts, cooked and sliced
- 2 8-oz. balls of fresh mozzarella cheese, sliced
- 2 Roma tomatoes, sliced
- 1 avocado, pitted and sliced
- 1 c. arugula, washed

## INSTRUCTIONS

### For the waffles

1. Combine the flour, baking powder and salt in a small bowl. Whisk together, then set to the side.
2. In a large bowl, combine the milk, eggs, butter, sugar and vanilla extract. Mix to combine, then add in the dry ingredients and whisk until thoroughly incorporated.
3. Grease a waffle iron and pour a ladle of the waffle batter into the prepared iron. Press down for one to two minutes.
4. Once the waffle is cooked and fluffy, release and transfer the cooked waffle to a plate.
5. Repeat with the rest of the batter.

### For the melt

1. Combine the mayonnaise and sriracha in a small bowl. Spread two teaspoons over each waffle.
2. Add the sliced chicken breasts, tomato and mozzarella cheese to one waffle. Place in the air fryer at 375° F for five minutes until the cheese is melted.
3. Layer avocado and arugula before topping with the other waffle. Repeat with the remaining ingredients and enjoy!



# MINI TWICE-BAKED POTATOES

Mini twice-baked potatoes mean you can have twice as many!



Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 1 hour

Yield: 10 servings

## INGREDIENTS

- 10 Yukon Gold potatoes
- 3 tbsp. butter
- $\frac{1}{3}$  c. milk
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c. sour cream
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c. Parmesan cheese
- 1 tbsp. garlic powder
- 3 tsp. pepper
- 2 tsp. salt
- $\frac{1}{3}$  c. shredded cheddar cheese
- 3 tbsp. cooked bacon, crumbled
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c. green onions, minced

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 425° F and line a baking sheet with foil.
2. Use a fork to poke three holes in each potato, then place them on the prepared baking sheet and roast for 45 minutes. Then, allow them to cool.
3. Cut the potatoes in half lengthwise and scoop out the insides into a large bowl. Ensure you leave a thin layer around the outside skins.
4. Mash the potato filling, then add the milk, sour cream, Parmesan, garlic powder, pepper and salt. Stir to combine.
5. Fill the potato skins with the mixture and garnish with shredded cheddar cheese. Reduce oven temperature to 350° F and bake for another 15-20 minutes or until the tops are golden brown.
6. Top with crumbled bacon and green onions!

# MUSHROOM RISOTTO

Creamy, comforting and rich with earthy mushroom flavor, this risotto is the ultimate satisfying dinner.

## INGREDIENTS

- 4 c. chicken or vegetable broth, heated
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 3 tbsp. unsalted butter, divided
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and finely minced
- ½ medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- 4 oz. baby Portobello mushrooms, cleaned and sliced
- 4 oz. white mushrooms, cleaned and sliced
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- Sea salt and black pepper, to taste
- 1 c. Arborio rice
- ½ c. dry white wine
- ½ c. Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- 2 tsp. fresh rosemary leaves, finely chopped

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a small saucepan, heat chicken or vegetable broth until hot. Reduce heat to simmer and keep warm.
2. Add olive oil, one tablespoon butter and garlic to a large, high-sided skillet. Turn heat to medium and sauté for approximately one minute, or until garlic softens.
3. Add onion and sauté for two minutes before adding the sliced mushrooms and dried thyme. Cook until mushrooms soften and release liquid, approximately 4–5 minutes. Remove from heat and season with salt and black pepper, to taste. Transfer to a bowl and set aside.
4. Return pan to heat and add remaining butter. Add Arborio rice and sauté until thoroughly coated, approximately 1–2 minutes. Add white wine and stir constantly until wine is completely absorbed.
5. Add one cup warm broth to pan and stir constantly until it is completely absorbed. Repeat with remaining broth, one cup at a time, until it is all incorporated and the rice has achieved a rich, creamy consistency, approximately 25–30 minutes. (For a creamier texture, add more broth until the desired results are achieved.)
6. Remove from heat and stir in the freshly grated Parmesan cheese and fresh rosemary. Add mushrooms and stir until thoroughly combined. Season with salt and black pepper, to taste.
7. Transfer to a serving dish and garnish with additional Parmesan cheese and fresh rosemary, if desired. Serve immediately. Enjoy!



Prep Time: 20 minutes  
Cook Time: 30 minutes  
Inactive Time: 4 hours  
Yield: 4 servings

# CHEESECAKE BITES

Creamy, sweet and perfectly bite-sized, these cheesecake treats are irresistible.

Prep Time: 20 minutes  
Cook Time: 30 minutes  
Inactive Time: 4 hours  
Yield: 24 servings



## INGREDIENTS

For the crust

- 1 c. graham cracker crumbs
- 3 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- 2 tbsp. brown sugar
- ¼ tsp. salt

For the filling

- 8 oz. cream cheese, room temperature
- ¼ c. unsalted butter, room temperature

- ¼ c. granulated sugar
- 1 large egg, room temperature
- 1 tbsp. vanilla extract

For the topping

- 2 c. frozen blueberries
- 2 tbsp. water
- ¼ c. sugar
- 2 tsp. lemon juice

## INSTRUCTIONS

For the crust

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line a 24-count mini muffin tin with cupcake liners.
2. In a food processor, combine the graham cracker crumbs, melted butter, brown sugar and salt.
3. Add a heaping teaspoon of the mixture to each greased muffin tin, pressing it into the bottom and up the sides.
4. Bake in the oven for 4–5 minutes, then remove and let cool.

For the filling

1. In a large bowl, mix together the cream cheese and butter. Use an electric mixer to cream together until smooth, about two minutes.
2. Then, add the egg, sugar and vanilla extract. Beat again to combine.
3. Spoon a heaping tablespoon of the filling on top of each cooled graham cracker crust.
4. Bake for 15–20 minutes, or until you cannot see the center jiggle when you give the pan a light shake. Remove from oven and let cool completely in the muffin tin.
5. Once it reaches room temperature, place in the refrigerator for three hours.

For the topping

1. While the cheesecake is baking, prepare the blueberry compote.
2. In a small saucepan, combine one cup of the frozen blueberries, sugar, water and lemon juice. Cook over medium heat for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Add in the rest of the frozen blueberries. Cook for an additional 5–8 minutes, stirring frequently, until thickened.
4. Remove the pan from heat and set aside to cool for at least five minutes.

# CAN IT SWIM?



## BATS

Can they swim? Yes. Do they enjoy it? Not so much. When bats unexpectedly find themselves in water, they use their wings to do an impressive butterfly stroke to get to land.



Across the animal kingdom, land-dwellers harbor aquatic talents that often float under the radar. These unexpected swimmers prove getting your hooves wet isn't so scary after all.

## GIRAFFES

These towering giants can keep themselves afloat when necessity calls, though their usual savannah elegance doesn't quite translate to water ballet. We'll give them points for being persistent, though.



## NINE-BANDED ARMADILLOS

Don't be fooled by their armored shells — these mammals can walk underwater, holding their breath for nearly six minutes to cross streams and riverbeds. For longer distances, they inflate their intestines to stay buoyant and doggy paddle across to the other side with steady determination.





### ELEPHANTS

Nature's gentle giants are also buoyant swimmers who use their trunks as built-in snorkels. Watching a massive elephant effortlessly paddle is both impressive and oddly calming.



### CAMELS

While swimming isn't their strong suit, it's not impossible either. These desert dwellers can manage respectable strokes, though they clearly prefer dunes over depths.



### SLOTHS

Reaching the water can be a slow journey for a sloth, but once they hit the water, they move three times faster than on land. They often swim to get between forest patches and can even hold their breath underwater.



### PIGS

As proven by the famous swimming pigs of the Bahamas, these barnyard creatures can navigate open waters with ease. They love paddling through waves as much as wallowing in mud, making them true aquatic adventurers.



## GORILLAS

Nope! Given the other animals on the list, one would surely think gorillas would be able to stay afloat, but their limited flexibility, muscular bodies and short legs make water activities hard.



If you spot a moose mid-lake, don't be shocked (but do get out of the way).

They're natural swimmers and will even dive to the bottom to snack on some aquatic greens.



## COWS

These bovine beauties might look like they'd sink straight to the bottom, but cows are surprisingly strong swimmers. They'll paddle across rivers to reach new pastures and are even known to take to the water willingly for a refreshing soak on hot days.



## HIPPOPOTAMUS

Despite spending most of their lives in water, hippos don't actually swim in the traditional sense. Instead, these hefty herbivores walk, push off and glide along the riverbed like underwater ballerinas in slow motion. Their dense bones prevent them from floating, but that doesn't stop them from moving through water with surprising grace and total confidence.





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## couscous salad

### Ingredients

- ½ c. couscous
- 6 ¾ oz. vegetable stock, hot
- 2 spring onions
- 1 red pepper
- ½ cucumber
- ½ c. feta cheese
- 2 tbsp. pesto
- 2 tbsp. pine nuts

### Instructions

1. Tip the couscous into a large bowl and pour over the stock. Cover, then leave for 10 minutes until fluffy and all the stock has been absorbed.
2. Slice the onions and pepper, and dice the cucumber. Add these to the couscous and fork through the pesto. Sprinkle the crumbled feta and pine nuts on top before serving.

# 5 WAYS TO CREATE A Welcoming Entryway



1. Use a mix of ambient, accent, and task lighting for warmth.
2. Add functional storage for keys, mail, and essentials.
3. Add a rug that complements your décor.
4. Place a small bench or chair for putting on shoes.
5. Include fresh flowers or a potted plant for a touch of nature.



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# 3 House Plants

THAT WILL THRIVE IN YOUR KITCHEN

## ALOE VERA

Prefers bright, indirect light. Water sparingly, allowing soil to dry out between watering.

## SPIDER PLANT

Prefers indirect light and can tolerate a bit of neglect. Water when soil feels dry.

## POTHOS

Allow the soil to dry between waterings and avoid direct sunlight.



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