



PHOTO: GIRMANTAS URBONAS

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## The Upside of Outside

KATHY HARRISON LEADS THE WAY TO IRREFUTABLE  
SUMMER GOODNESS

ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLES I've been reading, I should get out of the kitchen this summer. I'm unclear on this concept. Evidently, I'm in the majority of no one.

You know that big box we have in our kitchens? The one with the door and thermometer? The one we call an oven? In my experience, I put something in this oven, close the door, and the heat stays inside. Newspapers, magazines, and talking heads are telling me to take the same chicken that was browning beautifully, all by itself (mind you)...take that chicken outside to a grill you stand over while the flames generated by that plump bird threaten to remove every one of your eyelashes and most of your bangs, as well. Walking away from this conflagration is rarely an option. You get to stand there in the heat and watch your guests have a gay old time in another part of the yard. Something is wrong with this picture.

Roast chicken. Nobody doesn't like it. As long as you get a nice, plump free-range chicken, you'll have a juicy meal on your plate in very little time. Time where you, too, are out of the heat.

It's summer. Tomatoes are plump. Juicy. Prevalent. I recently had dinner at a restaurant that served a positively gorgeous tomato salad. I called the chef, whining and begging for the recipe. He sounded amused. "Nature gave you a perfect tomato. Let it shine. We do as little as we can to it." Oh. Well, that works for me.

Only two things are irrefutable. Food tastes so good with the backdrop of nature. Eat outside if you can. And since you're working with so few ingredients, get the best you can. Flaky salt, finishing quality olive oil, beautifully colored tomatoes, and a nice plump chicken.

You can stand the heat and get out of the kitchen. U

### Roast Chicken

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 whole chicken (3 ½ -4 pounds), patted dry with paper towels
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- A few sprigs fresh parsley, thyme, or sage (optional)
- ½ onion, (optional)
- 4 slices Italian or French bread, 1-inch thick, lightly toasted (optional)

#### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Season the chicken inside and out with salt and pepper. If possible, refrigerate the chicken, uncovered, for at least an hour and up to 24 hours.
2. Heat oven to 400 degrees. If using herbs and/or onion, place inside the cavity of the chicken. Set the chicken, breast side up, in a roasting pan just large enough to hold it comfortably. Place in the center of the oven. Roast for 50-60 minutes until the juice runs clear when the skin near the thigh runs clear when pierced with the tip of a knife. Remove the chicken to a platter and cover loosely with foil. Let stand for 10 minutes before carving. Carve the chicken and serve over toasted bread to catch all the chickeny juices. The chicken can also be made in advance and served at room temperature.

## Beautiful Tomato Salad

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Here's a non-recipe recipe! Take a gorgeous large heirloom tomato and cut it crosswise through the equator. Now scatter colorful cherry tomatoes, halved, over and around the large tomato. Whisk 1 ½ tablespoons red or white wine vinegar with 6 tablespoons lovely olive oil. Taste and adjust with more vinegar or olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Just before serving, sprinkle the tomatoes with sea salt. Drizzle with the dressing and some beautiful fresh herbs such as parsley or basil, chopped. Dollops of whipped ricotta never hurt. If you have an abundance of basil and want to add a basil puree to the dressing, no one will complain.

## Basil Puree

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### INGREDIENTS:

2 cups packed fresh basil leaves

Finely grated zest of 1 lemon

2 tablespoons lemon juice

½ cup olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste



### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Make an ice water bath by placing water and ice cubes in a bowl. Bring a small pot of water to a boil. Remove from the heat. Add the basil and stir just until wilted. Drain and plunge into the ice water bath. Drain. Place the basil and the rest of the ingredients in a blender or mini food processor. Puree until smooth. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days, or freeze.