

Americans consume approximately 150 million hot dogs every Fourth of July, according to the National Hot Dog and Sausage Council.



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ICE HACK

Cold coffee cubes

Keep your iced coffee cold without watering down the flavor with this chill hack: Brew a batch of coffee, let it cool, then pour into an ice cube tray and place the tray in the freezer. Once frozen, use the java cubes instead of regular ice with chilled coffee. Enjoy! Coffee and ingredients are available in Costco warehouses and at Costco.com.



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YOU SAY TOMATO

Cherry Tomato Bruschetta

1 pt cherry tomatoes, halved
¼ cup basil leaves, cut into chiffonade
4 cloves garlic, minced
2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil,
plus more for brushing or drizzling
Salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 baguette, cut into 20 slices
about ½ inch thick
Balsamic reduction (optional)

Preheat broiler.

In a bowl, combine tomatoes and basil. In a separate small bowl, whisk together garlic and olive oil. Pour mixture over the tomatoes and basil then stir until coated. Season with salt and pepper.

Place baguette slices on a baking sheet. Brush tops lightly with olive oil. Toast under the broiler until lightly browned and crunchy, about 2 to 3 minutes, being careful not to burn them.

Remove toasts from the oven. Top each with a spoonful of bruschetta. If desired, drizzle with a little olive oil or balsamic reduction before serving. Makes 20 toasts.

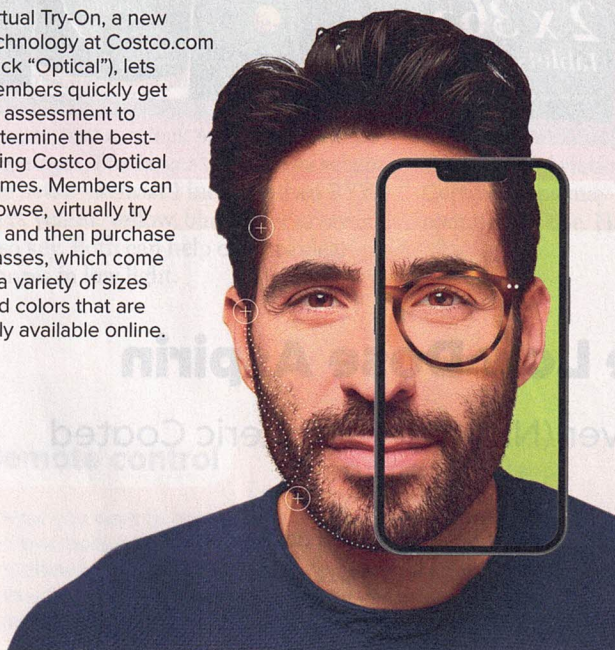
Recipe and photo courtesy of Lizzie Streit, registered dietitian and nutritionist, (itsavegworldafterall.com)



COSTCO OPTICAL ONLINE

Try and buy glasses virtually

Virtual Try-On, a new technology at Costco.com (click "Optical"), lets members quickly get an assessment to determine the best-fitting Costco Optical frames. Members can browse, virtually try on and then purchase glasses, which come in a variety of sizes and colors that are only available online.



At Costco, our goal is always to offer you the highest-quality foods at the best value possible. Brands may vary by region, but the quality, freshness and value remain consistent. Come see what's on the table!



Watermelon Sushi

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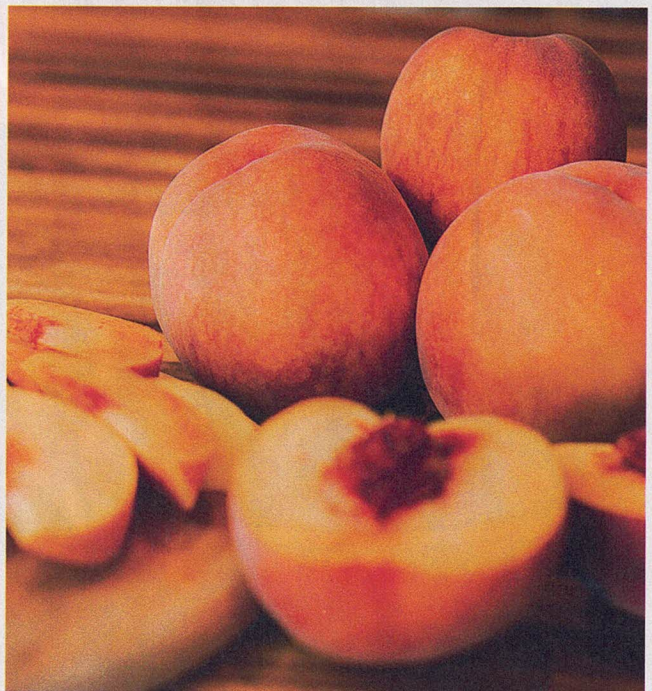
- 1½ cups cooked sushi rice, divided
- 3 nori sheets
- 1 watermelon slice, cut into long strips
- 1 cucumber, cut into long strips
- 1 avocado, pitted, peeled and cut into strips

Wet your fingertips. Sprinkle ½ cup rice evenly over a nori sheet, leaving a 1-inch-wide empty strip down the length of nori on one side. Firmly press down rice. Place a few each of watermelon, cucumber and avocado strips in a compact line down the long side of the nori. Starting with the strips' side of the nori, tightly roll the nori to enclose/seal the roll. Cut the cylinder into 1-inch-thick slices simulating the look of sushi. Repeat with remaining ingredients. Arrange on a platter and serve. Makes 6 servings.



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Writer's block

New thriller digs deep into a fictional suburban town

by JUDY GELMAN

Costco's suggested Book Club read provides insight into a selected novel, as well as an appropriate recipe to accompany your own book club's discussion.

During a brainstorming session for the book that would become *The Block Party*, Jamie Day's editor mentioned attending a neighborhood party "and a lightbulb went off," Day recalls. "We agreed a block party would be fun—and a great title."

Day drew on his experiences growing up in a close-knit suburban community where he enjoyed backyard football games, barbecues and neighborly bonding. "On my street, everyone knew each other and one another's business," Day reminisces. "But, as my youthful innocence faded into adulthood, I learned that behind the idyllic facade of my childhood street, there was a darker side filled with secrets, lies and betrayals."

In Day's novel, a murder rocks a Memorial Day party on posh Alton Road in Meadowbrook, Massachusetts. Who was the victim, and who was the perpetrator? The domestic thriller delves into neighborhood rivalries and suspicions, revealing the hidden dangers lurking within.

The Block Party unfolds from the perspectives of residents Alex Fox and her teenage daughter, Lettie, who look back



Jamie Day

© MICHAEL NAIMO

on the year leading up to the murder. "Alex, the grounding force in the neighborhood, connects us to multiple people," explains Day, "and allows readers to observe the observer." And through Lettie, readers get another perspective. "Teenagers have a very rich inner world, and I wanted to give readers that insight," adds Day.

The novel's reverse chronology begins with the murder. "Readers turn pages because they care about the characters, and they want answers," says Day. "I created questions about who was killed and why. From there, the characters take over."

As Alton Road neighbors gather over meals for numerous events throughout the year including Friendsgiving, Girls' Night, Christmas Eve and block parties, the mystery unfolds. "These are pivotal scenes where they exchange gossip, rumors and innuendo over food," says Day.

To complement a book club discussion, Day suggests serving block party fare such as potato salad and burgers, along with a vegetarian alternative. He envisions Lettie, who is passionate about animal welfare and environmental health, enjoying Mushroom Sliders. "Lettie loves her block party burgers; only hers are never made from sentient beings," he explains, "so enjoy these tasty sliders during your visit to fictional Meadowbrook." ■

Judy Gelman is the creator of the website Bookclubcookbook.com.

Lettie's Mushroom Sliders

- 8 Tbsp butter, divided
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1¼ lbs mushrooms, sliced
- 1 shallot, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tsp thyme leaves, chopped
- ¾ tsp kosher salt, divided
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 12 pull-apart slider rolls
- 1 cup grated Gruyère, divided
- 1 cup grated fontina cheese, divided
- 3 Tbsp grated Parmesan cheese
- ¼ tsp garlic powder

Heat oven to 350 F. In a large skillet, over medium, heat 2 Tbsp butter and olive oil. Add mushrooms and cook until golden brown.

Add 4 Tbsp butter, shallot, garlic and thyme. Cook until shallot softens. Add ½ tsp salt and Worcestershire sauce. Cook for 3 minutes, stirring frequently.

Cut rolls in half horizontally, split but not separated. Place bottom buns cut side up on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Sprinkle with half of the Gruyère and fontina cheese. Spoon mushrooms on top, then sprinkle with remaining cheese. Cover with top buns.

Melt 2 Tbsp butter, and place in a small bowl. Stir in Parmesan cheese, garlic powder and ¼ tsp kosher salt. Brush tops with Parmesan mixture.

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until lightly browned and cheese has melted. Cut sliders into individual portions. Serve immediately.

Makes 12 sliders.

Adapted from Carolynscooking.com



The Block Party (item 1749980) will be available in mid-July in most Costco warehouses.