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Labor Day Weekend Recipes: Fresh & Fun Ideas for End-of-Summer Festivities

by [ROSE CURIEL](#) Fri., Aug. 30, 2013 1:51 PM PDT



With summer winding down, many of us will enjoy the final warm weather days by spending some quality time outdoors this Labor Day weekend. And if a barbecue or picnic is on your agenda, you'll want to be sure to treat your guests to a few tasty treats!

So, with that in mind, we've tapped a couple of chefs to share a few fresh ideas that are just perfect for the final days of the season.

While just about everyone who is firing up the grill this weekend will cook up a beef burger, why not spice things up with a shrimp version of the American classic? Chef **Big Shake** of *Shark Tank* fame shares a Mediterranean-inspired recipe for those craving something new:

For a fun appetizer that makes the most of the season's freshest produce, nutritionist personal trainer and exercise physiologist **Franci Cohen** has created a snack that's sure to please guests while they wait on their shrimp burger wraps:

Eggplant Roll-Ups:

- 2 medium long eggplants
- 2 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup ricotta cheese
- 1 cup pesto sauce

2 tbsp. lemon juice

Homemade Pesto (combine all in food processor):

2 cups packed fresh basil leaves

2 cloves garlic

1/3 cup pine nuts

2/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

2 tbsp. lemon juice

Preparation:

Preheat stovetop grill pan or outdoor grill on high heat. Cut the eggplants lengthwise into 1/4-inch thick slices (about 6 slices each eggplant). Brush the eggplant slices evenly with olive oil on both sides. Grill the eggplant slices in batches for 2 to 3 minutes on each side and then let cool. Mix ricotta cheese, pesto and lemon juice together in a small bowl and spread a heaping tablespoon of the mixture evenly over each eggplant slice. Roll up the eggplant slices, place on a plate seam-side down and serve.

And for a sumptuous side dish, Cohen recommends a fun alternative to the traditional salad:

Greek Quinoa Tomato Bowls

3 tbsp. freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 tbsp. red wine vinegar

1/4 tbsp. dried oregano

1 tbsp. garlic paste

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 cup quinoa

2 cups red and yellow grape tomatoes, halved

1 cup pitted Kalamata olives

2 scallions thinly sliced

1 small red onion, diced

3 English cucumber, diced

4 oz. feta cheese, crumbled

8 beefsteak tomatoes, insides scooped out, but leave shell on bottom

Preparation: Whisk together the lemon juice, vinegar, oregano, garlic and some salt and pepper in a small bowl. Slowly whisk in the oil until emulsified. Let sit at room temperature while you prepare the salad. Combine the quinoa, 2 cups of water, 1

teaspoon of salt and 1/4 teaspoon of pepper in a small saucepan, bring to a boil and cook until the water is absorbed and the quinoa is tender (about 15 minutes). Transfer to a bowl, fluff with a fork and let sit for 5 minutes to cool slightly. Add the tomatoes, olives, green onions, red onions, cucumbers, feta cheese, and dressing and toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 8 hours before serving—the longer it sits the better the flavor. Fill tomatoes, arrange on platter and serve!