

Summer Party Food Trends



Summertime, and the livin' is easy.

Sweetpea, come in out of the heat, pour yourself an [Oaxaca Cooler](#), and dive into the heirloom crudité. We're chatting up ten of the bee's knees of cuisine about the top party food trends for summer, and you're not going to want to miss a morsel of their wisdom. From a grown-up take on classic s'mores to spicy Mexican corn-on-the-cob, this season's gastronomic forecast is looking très caliente. Read on for the scoop.



Peter Callahan's booze-infused s'mores are a grown-up version of the classic summer treat

Peter Callahan, founder of Peter Callahan Catering, whose clients include Martha Stewart, Valentino, Tory Burch, and Vera Wang, and author of [Bite by Bite](#)

Spanish dishes like paella are very on-trend for summer parties. Really anything served family-style feels very summery. Summer is also about freshness, so plan your menu around what catches your eye at your local farmers market and seafood store, and try to buy everything on the same day you'll be serving it. For dessert, grilled fruit dishes – like nectarines and peaches with sorbet – are popular. Also, look for more wild variations on s'mores. They aren't just for the fire pit anymore. Mix-and-match cookies and cracker flavors add more layers of flavors and booze-infused marshmallows are fun for the adults.

Mary Giuliani, founder of Mary Giuliani Catering & Events, whose clients include Bradley Cooper, Jessica and Jerry Seinfeld, Stella McCartney, Sheryl Crow, Matt Damon, and Donna Karan, and author of [The Cocktail Party: Eat Drink Play Recover](#)

DIY grilled corn bars are really popular for parties this summer. Have your guests

customize their corn with fun ingredients like balsamic vinegar and parmesan cheese, guacamole, salsa, and cotija cheese, and maple syrup and crumbled bacon. "Grilled cheese" is also popular: throw a wheel of Brie or a chunk of provolone on the grill until it starts to melt. Remove it from the grill, drizzle it with olive oil, sprinkle it with sea salt and black pepper, and serve it with crostini or crackers.



Pickled strawberries and grilled fruit transform this cheese board into a summery treat

Annie Falk, member of [The Salonniere 100](#) and author of [Hamptons Entertaining](#) and [Palm Beach Entertaining](#)

This year's top summer party food trend is also among the healthiest. Vegetables are everywhere, and they're not just appearing on the side. They're taking center stage on many plates and not only as a vegan or vegetarian alternative. Dehydrated fruits and vegetables garnish the most sophisticated plates, accompany cheese platters, and appear in chip bowls. My personal favorite is dehydrated onion: it's so wonderful crumbled over soups and salads and a fun topper for local fish. When prepared with just the right spices, they're like onion rings but without the fat and carbs. Heirloom ingredients are also making a comeback and have gone way beyond tomatoes. Here in the Hamptons, chicken coops are popping up everywhere, and you'll find heritage-breed chickens at the toniest addresses. Turmeric is in everything from scrambled eggs to sprouted lentil burgers and seriously upgraded oatmeal. Local, natural, sustainable, and homemade are the buzz words of the season, and doesn't it make sense? After all, whether you're creating a grand event or simply serving your child a meal, the goal is the same: to express care and love. What better way than with good, honest food?

Jamie Schmones Erickson, owner of Poppy's Catering and Events, whose clients include Beyoncé, Giselle, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Chanel

There's a huge shift towards family-style dining this summer, even for weddings and corporate parties. It's a great approach to serving guests because they get to enjoy a variety of entrées and sides instead of having to choose just one plated dish. It's also a great way to interact with other guests at the table.



Wolfgang Puck prepares a summer dinner for party hosts Shawn and Larry King

Wolfgang Puck, celebrity chef, restaurateur, author of eight cookbooks, including the soon-to-be-published [Wolfgang Puck Makes it Healthy](#), and owner of Wolfgang Puck Catering, whose clients include Madonna, Kim Kardashian, The Academy Awards, and The Governor's Ball

For me, summer party food is always about the freshest ingredients, like seasonal vegetables, fruits, berries, and freshly caught fish. I like to take a whole fish, roast it, and then filet it in front of the guests. It always makes a great presentation.

Angela Raynor, chef-owner of Nantucket hotspots The Boarding House and The Pearl

Vegetables are really on trend for summer. I love serving colorful vegetables, grouped by hue, on platters and in different pottery vessels or Weck jars, which are much less trendy than mason jars. It's the new raw bar. Hummus, made from vibrantly hued vegetables like green peas, carrots, and beets, is also popular. We also love setting up a grill bar and grilling little neck clams and oysters and offering guests a choice of sauces, including our signature KrACK sauce. It creates an interactive experience and saves some of the mess of a standard raw bar.



Paella parties are one of the most popular summer entertaining trends

Annette Joseph, member of [The Salonniere 100](#), contributor to NBC's *Today* show, and author of [Picture Perfect Parties](#)

Paella is a hot trend for summer parties. I'm seeing it served at more and more events around the world. It's the perfect party food, especially when prepared on an open fire or on the grill. It's an experience to watch it being prepared, and it's a great dish to serve a crowd.

Susan MacTavish Best, member of [The Salonniere 100](#), chef, and founder of Living MacTavish

I'm seeing a lot of homemade charcuterie plates. The benefit of serving pâtés and such at a party is that they need to be prepared well in advance, which will encourage you to get some of the party prep done ahead of time. Score!

David Standridge, executive chef at Cafe Clover, whose clientele includes Olivia Wilde and Jason Sudeikis, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Katie Lee, Gabrielle Union, and Nell Diamond

My current summer food obsessions are chickpea flour pizzettes. Healthy is the permanent trend at Clover, and chickpea flour is stacked with nutrients. The crispy crêpes are ridiculously easy to make in a standard nonstick pan. My current favorite topping is

the wild mushroom with hazelnut pesto, but I'm eagerly awaiting heirloom tomatoes.



Alex Hitz in his kitchen

Alex Hitz, member of [The Salonniere 100](#), celebrity chef, contributing editor to *House Beautiful*, and author of [My Beverly Hills Kitchen](#)

Trends may come and go, but fried chicken never goes out of style. Also, if you ever have a mishap and overcook something on the grill, do what the Greeks do: douse it in Tzatziki sauce. [Mine's](#) the best!

Summer Party Food Trends Welcome Mash-Up

Welcome photo: Bette Davis

Welcome quote: *The Long, Hot Summer* (1958)

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