

# Home For The Southern Living<sup>®</sup> Holidays

food, friends, and family

## Gather by the Water

*Living in Destin, Florida, inspires this chef to entertain in laid-back beach fashion. His secret is to prepare most of the food ahead of time.*

**FRESH INGREDIENTS. SIMPLE COOKING. ADVANCE PLANNING.** According to chef Tim Creehan, these three elements are the keys to his style of cooking, whether it's for friends gathered at his home, his catering business, or the menu at his Beach Walk Café—Destin's only upscale beachfront restaurant. Tim's focus when entertaining is to spend time with guests. "It's easy to do with planning," he says. "Prepare cold appetizers you can pull from the fridge, serve soups already made, and have meat ready to put on the grill."

### enjoying the party

Tim's goal is to prepare each recipe to the furthest stage possible before the guests arrive. That doesn't mean that every recipe has to be done the night before, but ingredients can be chopped and measured, dressings mixed, and meat marinated. Tim says he likes having only one recipe that will require his attention after the party starts.

With the mixture of recipes we adapted here from Tim's new cookbook, *Simple Cuisine*, you can find the right one for your own special occasion. **DEBORAH GARRISON LOWERY** ▶



**above:** Tim Creehan relaxes with his sister, Denise Creehan, as they enjoy Gulf breezes and a platter of Thai Mussels on the dock of her home in Destin.



### thai mussels

MAKES 8 SERVINGS; PREP: 35 MIN., COOK: 20 MIN.

Serving plenty of crispy garlic bread with this tasty dish allows you to sop up the flavorful broth.

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|---|---|
| 1 (13.5-ounce) can coconut milk             | 1 tablespoon minced fresh garlic          |
| 2 small tomatoes, seeded and chopped        | 1 tablespoon butter                       |
| 1 small onion, minced                       | 1 tablespoon lime juice                   |
| ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro                | 160 mussels (about 6½ pounds)             |
| ½ cup dry white wine                        | Garlic bread (optional)                   |
| 3 tablespoons tomato paste                  | Garnishes: green and red jalapeño peppers |
| 1 small jalapeño pepper, seeded and chopped |   |

**1. COMBINE** first 10 ingredients in a 10-quart stockpot; bring to a boil. Add mussels, stirring from top to bottom to combine ingredients. Cook 10 to 15 minutes or until mussels open. (Discard any mussels that don't open.) Serve with garlic bread, if desired. Garnish, if desired.

**NOTE:** Call the manager of the seafood counter or seafood market, and place your order in advance to get all the fresh mussels you need.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (LEFT) DREILING / STYLING: LISA POWELL

**right:** Bananas Foster Cheesecake is a decadent combination of tropical flavors, including dark rum and banana liqueur.

### do this ahead

Use the following tips to prepare all or part of these recipes before company comes.

● **Thai Mussels:** Have mussels on the stove and ready to cook before guests arrive. Warm sliced garlic bread in the oven.  
● **Dreamsicle Martini:** Juice fresh oranges the day before, and refrigerate the juice. Place measuring cups and spoons by the blender so you can quickly mix individual drinks as needed. Dip the rims of martini glasses in liqueur and sugar in advance.

● **Grouper Sandwich With Chipotle Tartar Sauce:** Make the tartar sauce a day ahead; shred the cabbage, and slice the tomatoes. Have the fillets seasoned and in the fridge, then ask a friend to help man the grill a few minutes before time to eat.

● **Creole Coleslaw:** Make the dressing a day ahead. Then mix with the packaged slaw an hour before the party.

● **Bananas Foster Cheesecake:** Make the cake a day or two before. Prepare the Bananas Foster Sauce one day in advance or just before the party; warm it before pouring over the cheesecake slices.

**for more information:** on Beach Walk Café or Tim Creehan's cookbooks and food products, call (850) 650-7100, or visit [www.beachwalkcafe.com](http://www.beachwalkcafe.com).

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### bananas foster cheesecake

MAKES 12 SERVINGS; PREP: 30 MIN.; BAKE: 1 HR., 32 MIN.; STAND: 20 MIN.; CHILL: 4 HRS.  
This blend of two classic recipes—New York-style cheesecake and bananas Foster—is a standing menu favorite at Beach Walk Café.

**1/4 cup graham cracker crumbs**  
**2 1/4 cups sugar, divided**  
**1 1/2 cups butter, melted and divided**  
**4 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, softened**  
**6 large eggs**  
**2 tablespoons white crème de cacao**  
**2 tablespoons banana liqueur**  
**2 tablespoons vanilla extract**  
**Bananas Foster Sauce**  
**Garnishes: whipped cream, mint sprig**

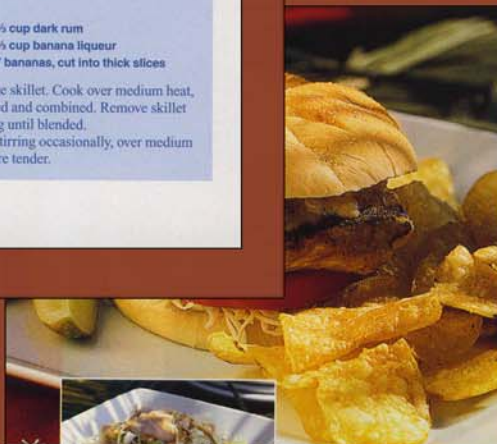
**1. STIR** together graham cracker crumbs, 1/4 cup sugar, and 1/2 cup melted butter; press mixture into bottom of a 10-inch springform pan.  
**2. BAKE** at 325° for 10 to 12 minutes or until edges are brown. Cool.  
**3. BEAT** cream cheese and remaining 2 cups sugar at medium speed with electric mixer until fluffy. Add remaining 1 cup butter, beat until blended. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in crème de cacao, banana liqueur, and vanilla. Pour batter into prepared crust.  
**4. BAKE** at 325° for 20 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 250°, and bake 1 more hour or until center is set and firm to the touch. Turn off oven; let cheesecake stand in closed oven 20 minutes. Remove from oven, and cool completely on wire rack. Chill at least 4 hours. Serve with Bananas Foster Sauce. Garnish, if desired.

### bananas foster sauce:

MAKES 5 CUPS; PREP: 10 MIN.; COOK: 12 MIN.

**2 cups firmly packed brown sugar**  
**1/2 cup unsalted butter**  
**1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**  
**2/3 cup dark rum**  
**1/2 cup banana liqueur**  
**7 bananas, cut into thick slices**

**1. COMBINE** first 3 ingredients in a large skillet. Cook over medium heat, stirring until butter and sugar are melted and combined. Remove skillet from heat; add rum and liqueur, stirring until blended.  
**2. ADD** banana slices to skillet. Cook, stirring occasionally, over medium heat 5 to 10 minutes or until bananas are tender.



### creole coleslaw

MAKES 6 SERVINGS; PREP: 10 MIN.; CHILL: 1 HR.

Tim serves the spiced mayonnaise dressing on top of plain slaw. We stirred it in for a more even flavor.

**1 cup mayonnaise**  
**1/2 cup ketchup**  
**1/4 cup sugar**  
**1/4 cup white vinegar**  
**1 tablespoon Creole mustard**  
**1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce**  
**1/2 teaspoon ground red pepper**  
**1/4 teaspoon salt**  
**1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper**  
**1 cup shredded carrots**  
**2 (10-ounce) packages angel hair slaw mix\***

**1. STIR** together first 9 ingredients in a small bowl.  
**2. PLACE** carrots and slaw mix in a large bowl. Add half of mayonnaise mixture, and toss to coat. Cover slaw and remaining mayonnaise mixture; chill 1 hour. Just before serving, add remaining mayonnaise mixture to slaw, tossing to coat.  
\*6 cups fresh, shredded cabbage may be substituted.

### dreamsicle martini

MAKES 1 SERVING; PREP: 5 MIN.

Add a dash of vanilla extract to regular vodka if you don't have vanilla-flavored vodka.

**3 tablespoons vanilla-flavored vodka**  
**2 tablespoons orange liqueur**  
**1/4 cup fresh orange juice (about 1 medium orange)**

**Ice**  
**Orange liqueur or orange juice**  
**Sugar**

**1. PLACE** first 3 ingredients in a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Cover with lid, and shake vigorously until chilled.  
**2. DIP** rim of 1 martini glass in orange liqueur; dip in sugar to coat. Strain vodka mixture into prepared glass. Serve immediately.

**NOTE:** For testing purposes only, we used Absolut Vanilla Vodka. ▶

### grouper sandwich with chipotle tartar sauce

MAKES 4 SERVINGS; PREP: 15 MIN.; GRILL: 10 MIN.

Thin, crispy napa cabbage, also called Chinese cabbage, adds a refreshing flavor and crunch to this sandwich.

**4 teaspoons lemon pepper\***  
**4 (5-ounce) grouper fillets**  
**Vegetable cooking spray**  
**4 kaiser rolls, split and toasted**  
**1/2 cup finely shredded napa cabbage**  
**4 tomato slices**  
**Chipotle Tartar Sauce**

**1. SPRINKLE** lemon pepper evenly over fillets. Spray fillets evenly with cooking spray.  
**2. GRILL,** covered with grill lid, over medium-high heat (350° to 400°) 4 to 5 minutes on each side.  
**3. PLACE** one fillet on bottom half of each roll. Top evenly with cabbage, tomato, and Chipotle Tartar Sauce; top with remaining roll halves. Serve immediately.  
\*4 tablespoons Lemon Pepper Grill Plus, a product marketed by Tim Creehan to enhance grilling, may be substituted for 4 teaspoons lemon pepper. Prepare according to package directions. To order any of Tim's special seasonings, call 1-888-457-4735, or visit [www.chefsgillplus.com/store](http://www.chefsgillplus.com/store).

### chipotle tartar sauce:

MAKES 3 CUPS; PREP: 10 MIN.; CHILL: 3 HRS.

Use this smoky, creamy sauce in potato, chicken, or shrimp salads or as a spread for meatloaf sandwiches.

**1 1/2 cups mayonnaise**  
**1/4 cup finely chopped celery**  
**2 tablespoons minced onion**  
**1/4 cup sweet pickle relish**  
**3 canned chipotle peppers in adobo sauce, seeded and minced**

**1. STIR** together mayonnaise and remaining ingredients in a small bowl. Cover and chill at least 3 hours.

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