

Best Scenic Drives • Savory Chicken Salads • Carmel

Sunset

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Summer Pleasures

Outdoor Entertaining
Menus and Ideas

Great Decks

Delicious Berry
Shortcakes

Garden Color for
Sun and Shade

this party's really

cooking



For a highly entertaining evening, let your guests team up to chop, mix, grill, and poach

By Linda Lau Anusasananan • Photographs by Just Loomis

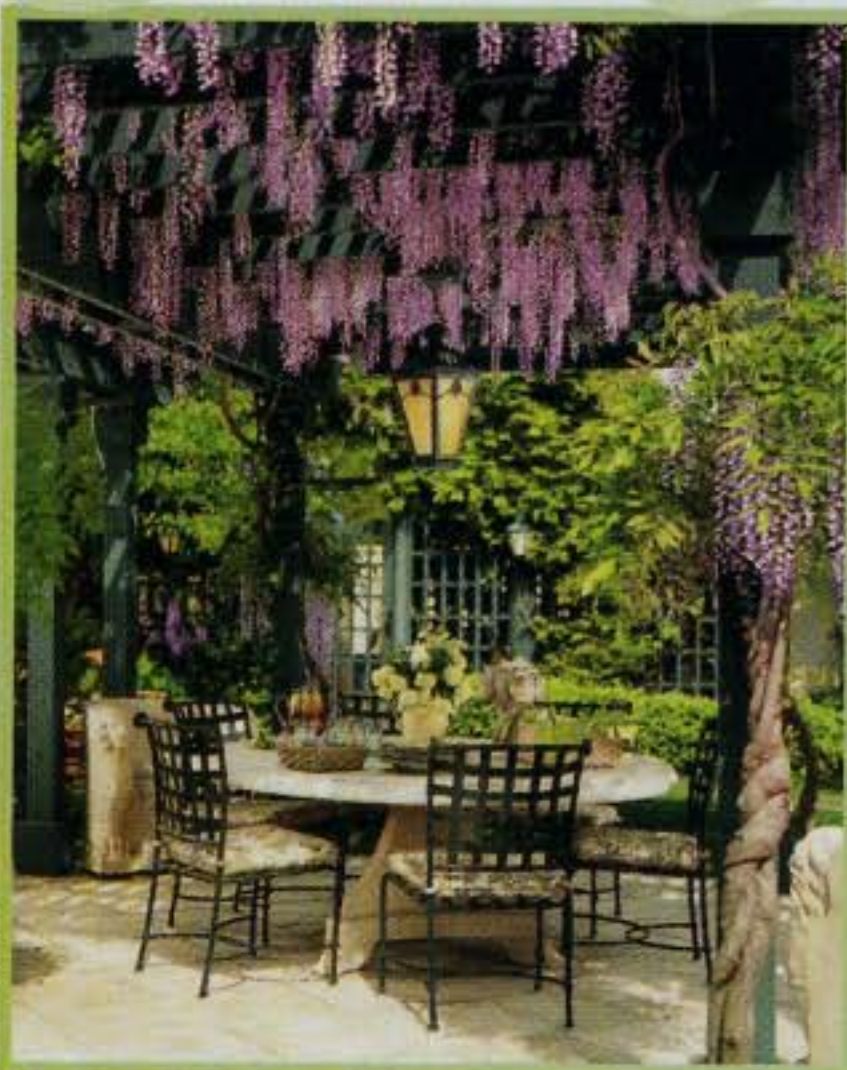
Food styling by Basil Friedman

Are you just too busy to entertain? Can't spend an entire Saturday preparing dinner? Or does the whole prospect secretly terrify you? Then this party is for you. • Overworked but clever hosts are discovering how to make entertaining ridiculously easy and prodigiously fun: Let the guests cook. Slicing, dicing, baking, and boiling—in good spirits—become the party mixer, with (usually) delicious results. Your job as the host is to plan the menu; organize the tasks; provide the recipes, ingredients, and tools; and supervise. Hand drinks to

your guests, offer appetizers, and let them loose.

Within an hour or two, there's a dinner that everyone will be personally proud of. • Standard summer fare—barbecued chicken, potato salad, and strawberry shortcake—will work, of course, but it's more entertaining to choose unexpected dishes. Each recipe in this menu expands guests' cooking repertoires but employs a simple technique. • For an easy-to-manage party, start with eight guest-cooks, divided into teams of two, each producing one or two dishes. Use our countdown on page 114 to bring dinner together on schedule. Teams that finish first can help others, set the table, pass out more drinks, or just snack and anticipate.

Our cover image, a dining arbor draped in a cloud of lavender wisteria, resonates with the romance of outdoor living. San Francisco landscape designer Chris Jacobson (www.chrisjacobson.com) designed it for Carol and Gary Olimpia. But whether you have a pergola or a patch of lawn, it's clear that, as these pages show, one of summer's greatest pleasures is a garden gathering to share a meal with friends.



JAY GRAHAM