

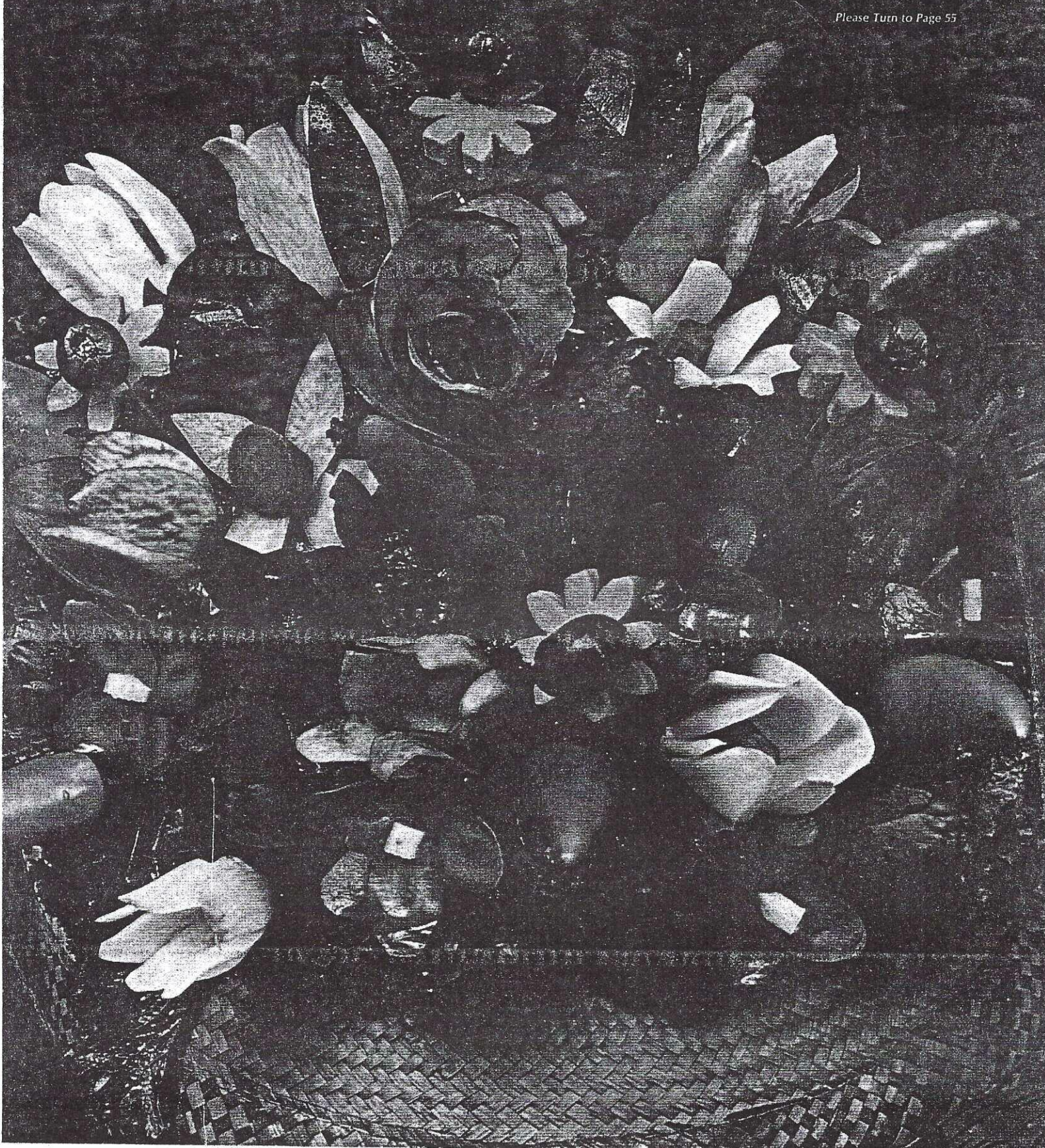
Patio entertaining doesn't have to be dull — add color and originality to your culinary talents with unique centerpieces made from vegetables and some unusual recipe suggestions.

The Art of Patio Dining

By Karen Feld

In spring a young man's fancy may turn to thoughts of love, but now that we're well into the hot and active summer months, the hunger for romance has probably been replaced by just plain hunger. Carefree weekends on the patio don't exactly encourage afternoons in the kitchen, slaving over a six-course

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meal. The emphasis for summer entertaining is on informality, relaxation and fitness. After all, as much as we'd like to think so, those winter waistlines won't magically disappear as soon as they're exposed to sun and surf.

The meals you plan and serve these next few months may be pretty much standard summer fare — hamburgers on the grill, seafood salads or easy-to-prepare ethnic foods — but if you plan to feed a crowd with a minimum of fuss, there is a way to lift even the most everyday foods out of the ordinary — unusual edible centerpieces that perk up the most basic table settings, especially the paper plates, nap-

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kins and cups you'll probably be using for your outdoor dining.

With a little bit of kitchen artistry, you can create three-dimensional masterpieces which look too good to eat, but are too tempting not to. You can add originality to your entertaining with a dazzling, easily assembled "floral" arrangement of colorful fruits and vegetables. Your guests will not only find your tabletop bouquet pleasing to the eye, but they can actually pick the daisies, pansies or tulips and their accompaniments and delight their taste buds as well.

"Gourmet Bouquet" is the brainchild of Los Angeles resident Julia Weinberg, who combined her background in nutrition and design to transform ordinary produce into beautiful flowers. Ms. Weinberg first created these eye-catching appetizers

while working as a volunteer in the pediatrics ward at the UCLA Medical Center. With an eye for the aesthetic, she began experimenting with ways to make nutritious food more interesting to the children. Needless to say, when presented with an edible bouquet, youngsters who formerly shunned vegetables ate them with delight. Munich-born Ms. Weinberg then began creating the bouquets for parties and taking them to her hostess when she was invited out, rather than a bottle of wine or a box of candy.

The bouquets are ideal as hors d'oeuvres or as a salad. Each bouquet is guaranteed to be an interesting conversation piece since it is your own creation. Imagination and the selection of vegetables in season are your only limitations. Use any combination to suit your color scheme, mood and taste buds. As a general rule, allow three to five vegetables per guest for hors d'oeuvres.

Following are directions for making three of the most basic flowers. We also offer some suggested arrangements for your creations and recipes designed to spice up your outdoor entertaining. Have fun!

Radish Crocus

A variety of flowers can be made from radishes. Following the design of the radish, it can be transformed into a sweet pea, tulip, crocus or almost any other flower. A large, elongated radish is suggested for the crocus. Your artistic "tools" should include a paring knife, grapefruit knife, skewers and ice water. Remember that the thinner the petals are cut, the more realistically the crocus will "bloom."

First, lightly peel the radish. Holding the stem end down, make one slice from the top, outermost edge of the radish toward the stem, but do not slice through. Repeat twice again, so that you have three "petals." Using a grapefruit knife, cut the center out at its core. Place the radish in ice water to allow it to "bloom."

Parsnip Gardenia

Besides gardenias, parsnips also make good pansies and other petal flowers. For a gardenia, the larger the parsnip, the better. This time, all you'll need is a sharp paring knife, skewers and ice water.

Cut six thin slices from the wide end of the parsnip, and then six more from the mid portion, producing six smaller petals. If you now have 12 thinly cut petals of two distinct sizes,

then, by George, you've got it! Curl the individual petals by placing them in ice water, then skewer the larger ones first in a circular pattern. Skewer the smaller petals on top of the larger ones. Be sure always to skewer the petals at the edges.

To make the stamen, cut a small piece at the narrowest portion of the parsnip, then skewer it into the center of the petals. Place the completed gardenia in ice water to retain crispness until it's time to add it to the bouquet just before serving.

Tuber Tulip

Tulips can be made from beets, turnips, rutabaga or any other vegetable that approximates that shape. You will need a paring knife, melon baller and grapefruit knife.

Hold the vegetable stem-end down and peel from the top down, so that you have vertical indentations all the way around. Starting close to the top edge, make a slice all the way down, being careful not to slice all the way through. Make another slice next to it just like the first one, but this time cut the slice out. From where you just cut out a slice, repeat the process, going all around the tuber until each slice is slightly behind and indented from the one before it.

Now you will have a center section from which the rest of the petals are separated. Cut out this middle portion using a grapefruit knife and scoop out any remainder with a melon baller. Place the flower in ice water.

When the tulip has "bloomed," skewer and insert a carrot-tip stamen in the center, made by cutting the tip from a peeled carrot between 1 to 1½ inches from the top. How fully the tulips open depends upon how long they are left in ice water.

All vegetables used in these creations may be dyed to match your mood or color scheme. Suggested colorings include beet juice for red, the juice from canned or frozen blueberries for blue, a mixture of turmeric and water for yellow, or really any other natural fruit juice or spice you can think of that might enhance or complement the basic flavor of the vegetable. Soak the vegetables in the coloring for three hours before arranging in the bouquets.

The flowers can be made the day before your party and still remain fresh if you glaze them. Dissolve a small envelope of unflavored gelatin

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(1 tablespoon) in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cold water and spoon over each flower. The mixture acts as a sealant and will give the flower a shiny appearance. It will also preserve freshness and prevent the flower from wilting. Always "plant" the flowers in a bouquet at the last minute and then spray with cold water before serving.

The fragrance of any of the bouquets can be enhanced by scattering small pieces of ginger throughout. Vases can be made from anything, from a hollowed-out eggplant or pineapple to even a loaf of hard French or Italian bread. Other vegetables that make interesting flowers include broccoli, asparagus, cabbage, cauliflower, endive and green beans. Shallots can be cut like ringlets and strung on a skewer. Your bouquet can also be spruced up with olives, bread sticks, cucumber peels, miniature ears of corn, cheese cubes, carrot pansies, red peppers, miniature artichokes and other imaginative ingredients.

The bouquet pictured is "planted" in a straw hat lined with a cardboard box to give it shape. Mint leaves add

fragrance and provide a good foliage base for anchoring and camouflaging the bottom of the centerpiece.

For additional ideas and tips for creating these edible conversation pieces from the "garden" in your refrigerator, consult Julia Weinberg's book, *Courmet Bouquet*, available from Butterick Publishing, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City, New York 10013.

Now that you have a dramatic beginning to your patio meal, here are some tasty recipes to cook up in your kitchen, then serve outdoors with flair:

CHICKEN IN PINEAPPLE HALF

Serves 4

- 6 boneless chicken breasts, cut in bite-sized pieces
- Salt and pepper
- Dash tarragon
- 1 cup pineapple juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white wine
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 2 pineapples
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup orange marmalade
- Dash paprika

Saute seasoned chicken pieces in butter. Add pineapple juice, wine and flour. Cut pineapples in half lengthwise and scoop out the inside. Spoon chicken mixture into pineapple halves and top with marmalade. Sprinkle with paprika. Bake at 400° for 50 to 60 minutes, or until chicken is cooked.

ALOHA PORK CHOPS

Serves 4

- 4 1-inch thick pork chops

- 1 11-ounce box raisins or dried apricots
- 1 cup pineapple juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dark corn syrup

Salt

- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon curry powder
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch

Place chops in a greased baking pan. Combine raisins or apricots, pineapple juice, corn syrup, salt and curry powder and pour over chops. Cover and bake at 350° for 40 minutes. Uncover and cook another 10 minutes. Remove chops and fruit to serving platter and keep warm. Add cornstarch to pan drippings and cook until gravy thickens. Pour gravy over chops and serve.

DATE SWEET POTATOES

Serves 4

- 2 pounds sweet potatoes, sliced
 - 2 9-ounce cans crushed pineapple
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter
 - 2 eggs, lightly beaten
 - 2 teaspoons salt
 - 2 teaspoons allspice
 - 1 8-ounce package diced dates
 - 4 tablespoons brown sugar
- Combine all ingredients in a casserole. Dot with butter and bake uncovered at 350° for 40 minutes.

MARINATED TOMATO AND RED ONION SLICES

- 3 large tomatoes, thinly sliced
- 2 red onions, thinly sliced and peeled
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 teaspoon sugar

Alternately arrange tomato and onion slices in a bowl. Mix together remaining ingredients and pour over vegetables. Chill a few hours before serving.

Roll Call

KAREN FELD says she was inspired to do our article on patio entertaining, and especially the "gourmet bouquets," when she received one as a



housewarming gift from their creator, Julia Weinberg — it served 75 and was the hit of the party! Though a native of Washington, D.C., Karen

has been living in Los Angeles for the past four years. While in our nation's capital, she penned a politics/society column titled "Around the Hill with Karen Feld," which appeared in the weekly Congressional newspaper for more than five years. Today, she writes on a variety of subjects, specializing in entertainment and politics, and is frequently published in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Washington Evening Star*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and many airline inflight magazines. Other articles are scheduled to appear as part of *The People's Almanac II*, to be published in September. Karen also does promotional and public relations work for products, motion pictures and television specials (clients include Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Yamaha and Haagen-Dazs Ice Cream). She also enjoyed a special position on the production staff for President Carter's New Spirit Inaugural Concert televised last year. Karen's many varied assignments often take her on trips around the country.