

Summer Cookout Weekend

FIRE UP THE GRILL, COOL DOWN
WITH SOMETHING SWEET



A SIX-RECIPE SUMMER COOKOUT COOKBOOK

MEALBAKE COLLECTION | AUGUST 8-9, 2026

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FIRE UP THE GRILL, COOL DOWN
WITH SOMETHING SWEET



THE COLLECTION

Your complete backyard cookout menu

Start the grill with two crowd-friendly mains, then use make-ahead butter and chilled salads to keep service easy. Serve the corn hot, keep the salads cold, and bring out frozen peach pops when everyone is ready for dessert.

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[VIEW COLLECTION ONLINE](#)

COLLECTION NOTES

Prep the cold dishes

Make the potato salad and peach pops first, then keep the watermelon salad components separate until serving.

Share the grill

Cook the burgers and chicken in batches, then grill the corn while the hot mains rest.

Keep service safe

Hold chilled salads over ice and use a clean platter and utensils for every cooked protein.



THE GRILL CLASSIC

Smoky Cheddar Onion Burgers

Grilled beef burgers layered with sharp cheddar, deeply browned onions, and a tangy smoked-paprika sauce for an easy backyard cookout main.

INGREDIENTS

METHOD

VIEW ONLINE

ACTIVE

1 hr

CHILL

0 min

TOTAL

1 hr

SERVES

6

LEVEL

Medium

Minimum elapsed time shown; cooling and setup may vary.

Smoky Cheddar Burgers

SHOPPING LIST

- 1/2 cup Mayonnaise
- 1 tbsp Dijon Mustard
- 1 tsp Smoked Paprika
- 1 tsp Apple Cider Vinegar
- 2 large Yellow Onions, Thinly Sliced
- 2 tbsp Unsalted Butter
- 1 1/2 tsp Kosher Salt
- 3/4 tsp Black Pepper
- 2 lb 80 Percent Lean Ground Beef
- 6 slices Sharp Cheddar Cheese
- 6 Brioche Burger Buns
- 1 tbsp Neutral Oil
- 6 leaves Green Leaf Lettuce

WHY IT WORKS

These burgers bring the familiar pleasures of a summer grill into balance: savory beef, sharp cheddar, sweet browned onions, and just enough smoky sauce to tie everything together. Nothing is so heavy or assertive that it competes with corn, crisp salads, or the rest of a backyard spread.

The onions cook first and can be made several hours ahead, which keeps the final grilling session straightforward. A splash of water near the end loosens the browned bits and leaves the onions glossy without making them jammy or overly sweet.

For tender patties, divide and shape the beef with a light hand, then season the outside immediately before grilling. A shallow indentation in the center helps each burger cook evenly instead of swelling into a ball.

Set out the toasted buns, sauce, onions, and lettuce while the patties rest briefly. Guests can assemble their burgers at the buffet, or the host can build them just before serving so the cheese stays warm and the lettuce stays crisp.

KITCHEN NOTES

- Cook the onions up to one day ahead, refrigerate them, and rewarm gently before serving.
- Keep the beef cold until shaping and avoid compressing it so the cooked patties stay tender.
- Use an instant-read thermometer inserted from the side to confirm the patties reach 160°F.

Smoky Cheddar Burgers



1

Stir the mayonnaise, Dijon mustard, smoked paprika, and apple cider vinegar in a small bowl until smooth. Cover and refrigerate the smoky sauce while you prepare the burgers.



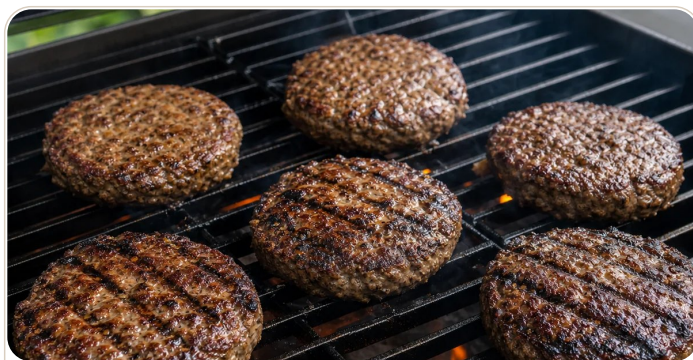
2

Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onions and 1/2 teaspoon salt, then cook for 18 to 22 minutes, stirring often, until deeply golden and soft. Add 2 tablespoons water and scrape up the browned bits; cook until the liquid evaporates.



3

Heat a gas or charcoal grill for medium-high direct heat, about 425°F. Clean and oil the grates. Divide the beef into 6 equal portions and gently shape 3/4-inch-thick patties slightly wider than the buns, pressing a shallow indentation into each center.



4

Season both sides of the patties with the remaining 1 teaspoon salt and the black pepper. Grill with the lid closed for 4 to 5 minutes, until the undersides release easily and are well marked. Flip and grill for 3 minutes.

Smoky Cheddar Burgers



5

Top each patty with a cheddar slice, close the lid, and cook for 1 to 2 minutes more, until the cheese melts and the centers reach 160°F. Transfer the burgers to a clean platter and rest for 3 minutes.



6

Brush the cut sides of the buns lightly with oil and grill cut-side down for 30 to 60 seconds, until golden. Spread smoky sauce on both halves, then layer the lettuce, cheeseburgers, and browned onions. Close the burgers and serve immediately.



THE BRIGHTER MAIN

Lemon Herb Grilled Chicken Thighs

Juicy grilled chicken thighs soak in a make-ahead lemon, garlic, and fresh herb marinade, then cook over a two-zone fire for a bright, savory summer main.

INGREDIENTS

METHOD

VIEW ONLINE

ACTIVE
38 min

CHILL
30 min

TOTAL
1 hr 8 min

SERVES
6

LEVEL
Easy

Minimum elapsed time shown; cooling and setup may vary.

Lemon Herb Chicken Thighs

SHOPPING LIST

- 2 lb Boneless, Skinless Chicken Thighs
- 1/4 cup Extra-Virgin Olive Oil
- 3 tbsp Fresh Lemon Juice
- 1 tbsp Finely Grated Lemon Zest
- 4 cloves Garlic, Minced
- 1/4 cup Fresh Flat-Leaf Parsley, Finely Chopped
- 1 tbsp Fresh Thyme Leaves
- 2 tsp Honey
- 1 1/2 tsp Kosher Salt
- 3/4 tsp Black Pepper
- 6 pieces Lemon Wedges

WHY IT WORKS

These lemon herb chicken thighs bring a lighter choice to a summer cookout without giving up the deeply browned edges everyone wants from the grill. Lemon zest, garlic, parsley, and thyme season the meat all the way through, while a little honey rounds out the acidity and encourages caramelization.

The marinade can be mixed the night before, so the chicken is ready when guests arrive. Thirty minutes gives the thighs a lively surface flavor, but two to eight hours produces a fuller herb-and-garlic character. Avoid marinating longer than eight hours because the lemon juice can soften the exterior too much.

A two-zone grill is the most reliable way to handle boneless thighs. Sear them over direct heat for color, then move them to the cooler side if dripping marinade causes flare-ups or the exterior browns before the center reaches 165°F. Discard the marinade that touched raw chicken rather than using it as a finishing sauce.

Rest the chicken briefly, then arrange it on a platter with lemon wedges and a scatter of parsley. It is sturdy enough for a relaxed backyard buffet and pairs naturally with burgers, charred corn, creamy salads, and crisp slaws.

KITCHEN NOTES

- Marinate the chicken in the morning or the night before, but keep the total marinating time under 8 hours.
- Keep one section of the grill free of direct flame so the chicken can finish gently without scorching.
- Check several thighs with an instant-read thermometer because their thickness can vary.

Lemon Herb Chicken Thighs



1

Pat the chicken thighs dry with paper towels and place them in a large zip-top bag or shallow nonreactive dish.



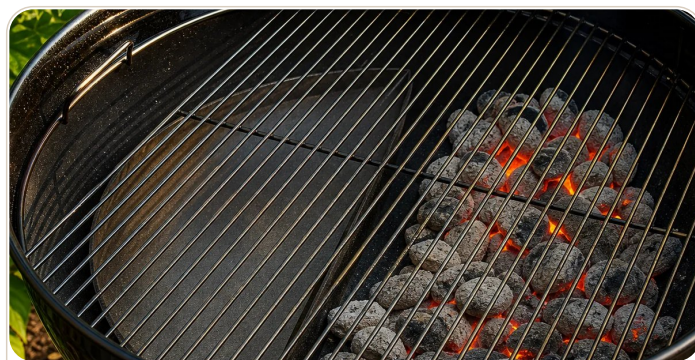
2

Whisk the olive oil, lemon juice, lemon zest, garlic, parsley, thyme, honey, salt, and black pepper until the marinade is evenly blended.



3

Pour the marinade over the chicken, turn every thigh to coat, and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or up to 8 hours.



4

Prepare a grill for two-zone cooking over medium-high heat, about 400°F, and clean and lightly oil the grates.

Lemon Herb Chicken Thighs



5

Lift the thighs from the marinade, let the excess drip away, and discard the used marinade. Arrange the chicken smooth-side down over direct heat.



6

Grill for 5 to 6 minutes without moving, until browned and easy to release, then turn and cook the second side for 4 to 5 minutes.



7

Move the thighs to indirect heat whenever flare-ups occur or the surface is browning too quickly. Cover and cook for 4 to 7 minutes more, until the thickest piece reaches 165°F.



8

Transfer the chicken to a clean platter, rest for 5 minutes, and serve with lemon wedges and additional parsley if desired.



THE HOT SIDE

Charred Corn with Lime Scallion Butter

Juicy grilled corn brushed with a bright lime and scallion butter that can be made ahead for an easy summer cookout side.

INGREDIENTS

METHOD

VIEW ONLINE

ACTIVE
32 min

CHILL
0 min

TOTAL
32 min

SERVES
8

LEVEL
Easy

Minimum elapsed time shown; cooling and setup may vary.

Lime Scallion Corn

SHOPPING LIST

- 8 Large Ears Sweet Corn, Shucked
- 1 tablespoon Neutral Oil
- 6 tablespoons Unsalted Butter, Softened
- 3 Scallions, Thinly Sliced
- 2 teaspoons Lime Zest
- 1 tablespoon Fresh Lime Juice
- 3/4 teaspoon Fine Salt
- 1/4 teaspoon Black Pepper
- 8 Lime Wedges

WHY IT WORKS

Sweet corn needs very little help at the height of summer. A hot grill concentrates its juices and adds smoky, blistered patches while the kernels stay plump enough to pop with every bite.

The finishing butter combines lime zest, lime juice, and thinly sliced scallions. Zest gives the corn a fragrant citrus note, while just enough juice cuts through the butter and balances richer burgers and grilled chicken.

Brushing the seasoned butter onto the ears keeps the topping neat for a backyard buffet. Cut each ear in half before grilling if shorter portions will be easier for guests to pick up and eat outdoors.

Mix the butter up to three days ahead and refrigerate it, then let it soften while the grill heats. The corn cooks quickly over direct heat, making it easy to slide onto the grate after the main dishes come off to rest.

KITCHEN NOTES

- Make the lime scallion butter up to 3 days ahead, cover and refrigerate it, then soften it at room temperature before grilling.
- For easier buffet portions, cut each ear crosswise in half before oiling and grill the pieces for the same total time.
- Keep the grill lid closed between turns so the kernels cook through before the exterior becomes too dark.

Lime Scallion Corn



1

Heat a gas or charcoal grill for direct cooking over medium-high heat, about 425 to 450°F. Clean and oil the grill grates.



2

Stir the softened butter, scallions, lime zest, lime juice, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and black pepper in a small bowl until evenly combined. Set aside at room temperature while the grill heats.



3

Pat the corn dry. Rub the ears with the neutral oil and season them evenly with the remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt.



4

Arrange the corn across the hottest part of the grill in a single layer. Close the lid and cook for 3 minutes, then turn each ear one quarter turn.

Lime Scallion Corn



5

Continue grilling, turning the corn every 2 to 3 minutes, until the kernels are tender and bright with scattered deep brown char, 9 to 12 minutes total. Move any rapidly darkening ears to a cooler part of the grill.



6

Transfer the hot corn to a rimmed platter. Immediately brush all sides with about two-thirds of the lime scallion butter so it melts into the kernels.



7

Let the corn stand for 2 minutes, then brush it once more with the remaining butter. Serve warm with lime wedges alongside.



THE COOLING SALAD

Watermelon Cucumber Feta Salad

Cold watermelon, crisp cucumber, salty feta, and mint meet a sharp lime dressing in a refreshing salad made for warm-weather cookouts.

[INGREDIENTS](#)[METHOD](#)[VIEW ONLINE](#)

ACTIVE
25 min

CHILL
0 min

TOTAL
25 min

SERVES
8

LEVEL
Easy

Minimum elapsed time shown; cooling and setup may vary.

Watermelon Feta Salad

SHOPPING LIST

- 6 cups Seedless Watermelon Cut Into 1-Inch Cubes
- 2 English Cucumbers Halved and Sliced
- 6 ounces Feta Cheese Coarsely Crumbled
- 1/2 cup Fresh Mint Leaves Torn
- 1/3 cup Red Onion Thinly Sliced
- 3 tablespoons Fresh Lime Juice
- 2 tablespoons Extra-Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 tablespoon Red Wine Vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon Kosher Salt
- 1/4 teaspoon Freshly Ground Black Pepper

WHY IT WORKS

Watermelon and cucumber are at their best when they stay cold and crisp. Here they form the juicy base of a salad with enough acidity and salt to stand beside smoky burgers, grilled chicken, and sweet summer corn.

A lime dressing sharpened with red wine vinegar keeps the fruit from tasting cloying. Crumbled feta brings richness, while mint and a small amount of red onion add a clean herbal finish and gentle bite.

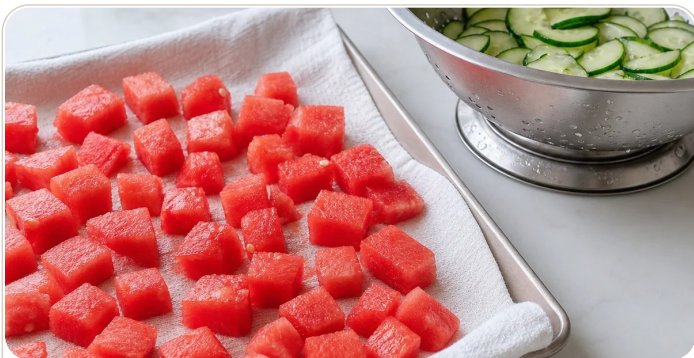
The key to a salad that does not flood the serving bowl is a short draining step. Chilling and draining the cut watermelon and cucumber separately removes loose juice without seasoning away their fresh texture.

Prepare the dressing and cut the produce ahead, but keep every component separate and refrigerated. Toss the salad shortly before serving so the feta remains distinct, the mint stays green, and the fruit holds its shape.

KITCHEN NOTES

- Choose a firm, deeply colored watermelon; overripe fruit releases more liquid and breaks during tossing.
- Keep the drained produce, dressing, feta, and mint in separate covered containers for up to 6 hours before assembling.
- For outdoor service, nest the serving bowl over ice and return leftovers to refrigeration within 2 hours, or within 1 hour when the temperature is above 90°F.

Watermelon Feta Salad



1

Spread the watermelon cubes on a rimmed tray lined with a clean kitchen towel. Place the sliced cucumbers in a colander. Refrigerate both for 15 minutes so excess surface moisture can drain away.



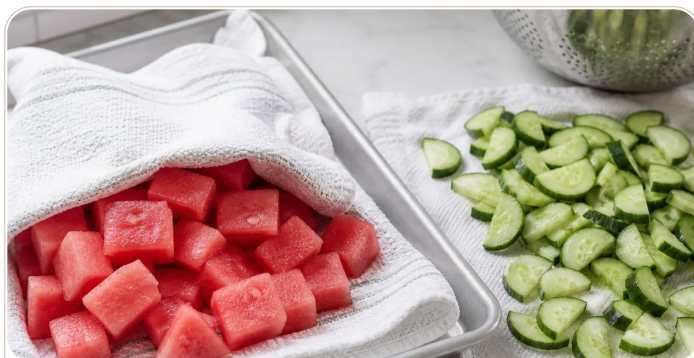
2

Soak the sliced red onion in a small bowl of ice water for 10 minutes to soften its sharpness. Drain thoroughly and pat dry.



3

Whisk the lime juice, olive oil, red wine vinegar, kosher salt, and black pepper in a small bowl until the dressing looks lightly emulsified.



4

Lift the chilled watermelon from the towel and blot any visibly wet pieces. Shake the cucumber colander well, then blot the slices dry without crushing them.

Watermelon Feta Salad



5

Place the watermelon, cucumber, and drained onion in a wide serving bowl. Pour over the dressing and fold gently with a large spoon until the fruit is evenly glossed.



6

Add the feta and torn mint. Fold only two or three times so the feta remains in visible pieces and the mint is distributed without bruising.



7

Taste immediately and adjust with a small pinch of salt or squeeze of lime if needed. Serve cold within 30 minutes, draining off any accumulated liquid before a second serving.



THE MAKE-AHEAD SIDE

Dill Pickle Potato Salad

Tender potatoes, crunchy dill pickles, celery, and fresh dill are folded into a tangy, creamy dressing for a cookout salad that gets better as it chills.

INGREDIENTS

METHOD

VIEW ONLINE

ACTIVE
45 min

CHILL
2 hr

TOTAL
2 hr 45 min

SERVES
8

LEVEL
Easy

Minimum elapsed time shown; cooling and setup may vary.

Pickle Potato Salad

SHOPPING LIST

- 3 lb Yukon Gold Potatoes, Scrubbed And Cut Into 3/4-Inch Pieces
- 1 tbsp Kosher Salt
- 1 1/2 cups Dill Pickles, Drained And Finely Chopped
- 2 stalks Celery, Finely Diced
- 1/3 cup Red Onion, Finely Diced
- 1/3 cup Fresh Dill, Chopped
- 3/4 cup Mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup Sour Cream
- 3 tbsp Dill Pickle Brine
- 1 tbsp Dijon Mustard
- 1 tsp Granulated Sugar
- 1/2 tsp Freshly Ground Black Pepper

WHY IT WORKS

This substantial potato salad brings a clear dill pickle snap to the cookout table without letting the dressing turn thin or harsh. Waxy Yukon Gold potatoes hold their shape, while finely chopped pickles, celery, and red onion add crunch in every scoop.

The dressing balances mayonnaise with sour cream, Dijon mustard, fresh dill, and just enough pickle brine to sharpen the flavor. Draining the pickles and allowing the cooked potatoes to steam dry are small but important steps that keep the finished salad creamy rather than soupy.

Prepare the salad a day ahead if convenient. A few hours in the refrigerator lets the potatoes absorb the dill and pickle flavors, and a reserved spoonful of dressing restores the creamy finish just before serving.

For outdoor service, keep the bowl over ice and return it to the refrigerator within two hours, or within one hour when the temperature is above 90°F. Set out a smaller portion and replenish it from a chilled container during a long backyard buffet.

KITCHEN NOTES

- Choose firm, waxy potatoes and begin them in cold water so the pieces cook evenly.
- Blot the pickles dry and let the potatoes steam before dressing them to prevent a watery salad.
- Keep the salad at 40°F or below. Discard any portion left above 40°F for more than 2 hours, or more than 1 hour when the air temperature exceeds 90°F.

Pickle Potato Salad



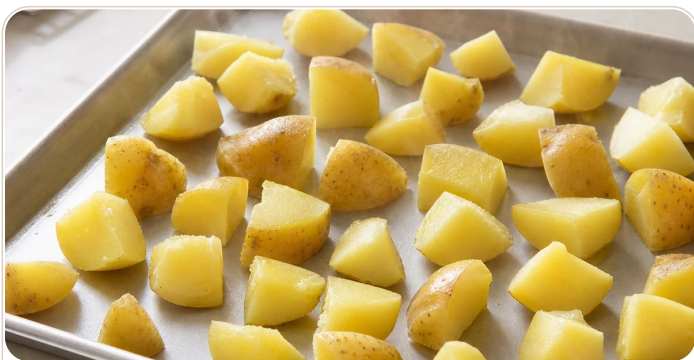
1

Place the potatoes in a large pot and cover them with cold water by 1 inch. Add the kosher salt and bring to a boil over medium-high heat.



2

Reduce the heat to maintain a steady simmer and cook for 10 to 14 minutes, until the potatoes are tender when pierced but still hold their shape.



3

Drain the potatoes thoroughly, then spread them on a rimmed sheet pan. Let them steam dry and cool for 15 minutes.



4

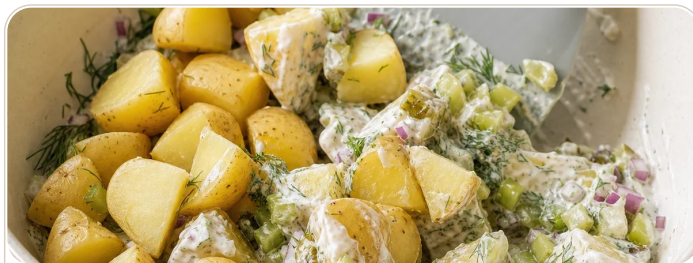
Spread the chopped pickles on a clean kitchen towel or paper towels and blot them dry. Combine them in a large bowl with the celery, red onion, and fresh dill.

Pickle Potato Salad



5

Whisk the mayonnaise, sour cream, pickle brine, Dijon mustard, sugar, and black pepper in a medium bowl until smooth. Reserve 1/4 cup of the dressing in a covered container.



6

Add the cooled potatoes and remaining dressing to the pickle mixture. Fold gently until every piece is coated, taking care not to mash the potatoes.



7

Cover and refrigerate the salad for at least 2 hours and up to 24 hours so the flavors can settle.



8

Before serving, fold in enough of the reserved dressing to restore a creamy consistency. Taste and adjust with a small splash of pickle brine or a pinch of salt if needed.



9

Serve well chilled. For outdoor buffets, nest the serving bowl in a larger bowl of ice and follow the safe holding times described in the tips.



THE FROZEN FINISH

Peach Yogurt Swirl Pops

Ripe peach purée and tangy vanilla yogurt are loosely layered for creamy frozen pops with sunny fruit ribbons in every bite.

[INGREDIENTS](#)[METHOD](#)[VIEW ONLINE](#)

ACTIVE
20 min

CHILL
6 hr

TOTAL
6 hr 20 min

SERVES
8

LEVEL
Easy

Minimum elapsed time shown; cooling and setup may vary.

Peach Yogurt Pops

SHOPPING LIST

- 3 medium Ripe Yellow Peaches, Pitted And Chopped
- 3 tablespoons Honey
- 1 tablespoon Fresh Lemon Juice
- 1 pinch Fine Sea Salt
- 1 1/2 cups Plain Whole-Milk Greek Yogurt
- 1 teaspoon Pure Vanilla Extract

WHY IT WORKS

These peach yogurt swirl pops are designed for the end of a generous summer cookout. Their bright fruit flavor and gentle tang feel refreshing after smoky grilled food, while the creamy texture makes them more satisfying than a plain fruit ice.

The peach layer uses fully ripe fruit, lemon juice, and just enough honey to stay flavorful once frozen. A separate vanilla Greek yogurt mixture provides contrast, and barely stirring the two mixtures in the molds creates distinct golden and ivory ribbons.

Make the pops the day before the gathering so dessert is ready whenever guests are. A brief rinse of warm water around the outside of each mold releases the pops cleanly without softening their striped centers.

Freestone yellow peaches give the most vivid color, but any fragrant ripe peach will work. Taste the purée before filling the molds: frozen desserts mute sweetness, so it should taste a touch sweeter and brighter than you want the finished pop to be.

KITCHEN NOTES

- For the strongest peach flavor, use fruit that gives slightly when pressed and smells fragrant at the stem end.
- Keep the swirl restrained: one gentle pass through each mold preserves clear ribbons.
- Unmold only the pops you plan to serve, and keep the rest frozen so they retain their shape.

Peach Yogurt Pops



1

Add the chopped peaches, 2 tablespoons of the honey, lemon juice, and salt to a blender. Blend until mostly smooth, leaving a few tiny flecks of peach for texture.



2

Whisk the Greek yogurt, remaining 1 tablespoon honey, and vanilla in a medium bowl until smooth and evenly combined.



3

Spoon a small layer of peach purée into each of eight 3-ounce pop molds, then add a layer of the yogurt mixture. Continue alternating until the molds are nearly full, leaving about 1/4 inch of space at the top.



4

Slide a thin skewer or butter knife once through each filled mold in a gentle figure-eight motion. Stop while the peach and yogurt still form visible ribbons rather than blending into one color.

Peach Yogurt Pops



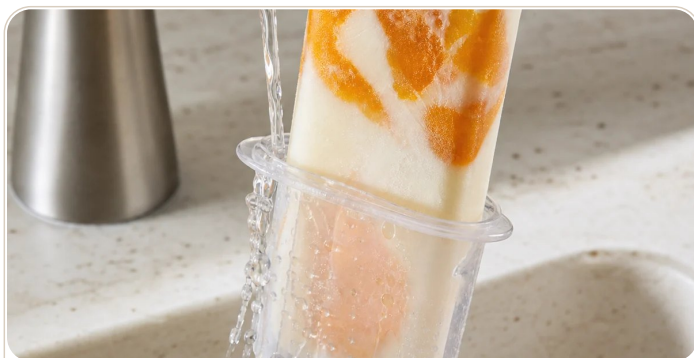
5

Tap the mold firmly against the counter several times to settle the mixtures and release large air pockets. Insert the pop sticks and secure the mold lid.



6

Freeze the pops on a level surface until completely firm, at least 6 hours or overnight.



7

To unmold, run warm water over the outside of one mold for 8 to 12 seconds without wetting the pop. Gently pull the stick straight up; repeat the warm-water rinse for a few more seconds if the pop resists.