



Hideaway We Go

As Americans tire of the forced togetherness of open-plan homes, they're sneaking off to renovated attics or basements—chic takes on the 1960s rec room—to save their sanity



REC ROOM REIMAGINED

In a Fair Haven, N.J., attic playroom, designer Kati Curtis steered clear of primary colors: "Too stimulating and expected," she said of them, opting for jewel tones instead.

BY ELIZABETH ANNE HARTMAN

IN THE 1960S and '70s, long before helicopter parenting emerged as a parenting style, adults had far less interest in looming over their children, frequently urging them to go play outside or downstairs. The netherworld to which these parents pointed was usually a recreation room or finished basement, clad insipidly in wood-vener paneling and linoleum. Furnishings typically included a saggy sofa, a scratched ping-pong table and a built-in bar never used for mixing drinks; instead, the kids commandeered it as a make-believe store or

a stage for puppet shows. Not even Dad's novelty naked-lady martini stirrers lured him down once the children moved in. And the closest Mom got was to stand at the top of stairs and yell, "Supper's ready! Wash your hands!"

Perhaps these ratty rec rooms weren't worthy of *House Beautiful*, but the stints of physical distance they offered parents and offspring arguably benefited both in ways today's airy cathedral-ceiling'd great rooms can't.

These days, people are taking another look at developing basements or attics as getaway bonus spaces to ensure family peace. As the idea of the open-plan home—the combination kitchen, living and dining room that's long dominated

residential layouts—has aged, it's revealed its flaws. When parents are relentlessly texting children all day and then coralling the whole family into a single living space all night, there's no escaping each other, and nerves can fray. Aesthetic frustrations foment, too. "People no longer want the 60-inch flat-screen TV as the focal point of their open-floor-plan homes," New York designer Tina Ramchandani said. Designer Phillip Thomas, a fellow New Yorker, noted, "While [the open plan] was successful in allowing multiple generations to congregate, it also led to consolidated visual chaos."

Today's recreation rooms differ from the *Please turn to page D2*

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EATING & DRINKING

SUNDAY LUNCH

Picnic Blanket Statement

When it comes to toting a meal along on a hike, this al-fresco-eating expert has one thing to say: Keep it simple

BY ELIZABETH G. DUNN

PICNICS always sound like a good idea, in theory. But then by the time I've found a decent patch of grass—never as decent as the one envisioned—the deviled eggs have invariably capsized in their Tupperware and I'm left clutching a sweaty bottle of rosé, realizing I forgot the cork screw.

Picnicking is, however, a cherished Sunday lunch tradition for Birgit Cameron. As senior director of Patagonia Provisions, the food division of outdoor clothing company Patagonia, she's thought a lot about the sort of food that travels well. She's also an avid hiker around northern California's Marin County, where she's lived for 20 years. A busy mother of two, she offers this picnic prescription: "It's got to be easy, otherwise you don't do it."

She suggests sticking to one or two cooked dishes—ideally fare that can be eaten by hand to eliminate the need for dishes and cutlery. Her summer-vegetable frittata (recipe at right) is sturdy enough to cut into squares and transport in cloth napkins. "It's about packing in a way that you're not lugging a lot of containers," Ms. Cameron said. She wraps sandwiches in Bee's Wrap, a reusable beeswax and organic cotton paper that keeps them from falling apart en route. Her daughters often bake scones or cookies.

Supplements might include cans of anchovies or sardines (Ms. Cameron likes the ones from Wild Planet), salami, a hard cheese like Gouda, crusty bread and seasonal fruits, all of which can be eaten with the help of a pocket knife.

Naturally, Foods Ms. Cameron has developed in the five years since the launch of Patagonia Provisions often feature. The brand's first product, lightly smoked wild pink salmon, is a family favorite.

If fish doesn't seem like an obvious starting point for a list of backpacking foods, that's because the decision wasn't guided by consumer demand. Ms. Cameron had discovered an ancient technique for catching pink



MOBILE MEAL Ms. Cameron (rear, left) hiking in Marin County, Calif., with her daughters, Grace (rear) and Claire, and her husband, Matt.

salmon with reef nets being used off Washington's Lummi Island, a sustainable way to harvest the fish. She wanted to showcase the technology.

"I think we're at a recalibration moment in terms of how we harvest our food," Ms. Cameron said. "We need to assess the things that make sense for the next 100 years, and make brave decisions about other things that aren't going to let us move forward in a healthy way."

Her commitment to conservation certainly extends to her picnicking approach, which generates minimal waste and keeps the focus squarely on the setting. As a weekend ritual, it gives the family a chance to regroup before starting another week—or another year. Ms. Cameron fondly recalls a trip to Windy Hill Preserve in California's Portola Valley for her mother-in-law's birthday. "Lunch was sort of strewn all over," she said. "But that's life."

PICNIC PRO TIPS // ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

1. Cutting board.
2. Pocket knife. Ms. Cameron uses an Opinel model.
3. Cloth napkins.
4. Tin cups.
5. Fleece blanket to sit on.



Summer Vegetable and Feta Frittata

TOTAL TIME: 1 hour
SERVES: 4-6

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, roughly chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, diced
- ½ red bell pepper, seeded and roughly chopped
- 2 medium zucchini, sliced into thick rounds
- 2 tomatoes, seeded and roughly chopped
- Large handful chopped fresh greens such as spinach, chard, arugula or kale
- 12 eggs
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 ounces feta, crumbled
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. In a large cast-iron or other non-stick, oven-safe pan, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add chopped garlic and cook until fragrant and softened, 1-2 minutes more. Increase heat to medium-high and add peppers, zucchini and tomatoes, and cook until softened and lightly browned, 8-10 minutes. Add fresh greens and cook until wilted, 1-2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.



2. While vegetables are cooking, whisk eggs in a large bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Carefully pour eggs into hot pan with vegetables and use a rubber spatula to slowly pull egg away from edges, mixing up vegetables and eggs. Once eggs begin to solidify, crumble cheese evenly overtop. Transfer to oven and cook until center of frittata is puffed and no longer jiggle, 15-20 minutes.

3. Remove from oven and let cool slightly. Gently loosen with a spatula and slide frittata onto a cutting board. Let sit until cooled and set completely, at least 30 minutes. Wrap in heavy foil or slice into individual portions and wrap in cloth napkins or plastic wrap.

—Adapted from Birgit Cameron



Whole-Grain Chocolate-Chip Cookies

These cookies are brimming with whole grains and also gluten-free.

TOTAL TIME: 40 minutes
MAKES: 2 dozen cookies

- ½ cup buckwheat flour
- 1 cup oat flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup softened butter
- 1 large egg

- 1 cup coconut sugar
- ¼ cup pecan butter or peanut butter
- ¼ cups semisweet chocolate chips
- ¼ cup chopped pecans (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a medium bowl, mix flours, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon and salt.

2. Use an electric mixer to mix egg, sugar and butter until smooth. Add dry ingredients and pecan butter. Stir in chocolate chips and chopped pecans.

3. Drop rounded tablespoons of dough onto ungreased cookie sheets and bake until edges are golden brown, 12-14 minutes. Remove from oven and transfer to a cooling rack.

—Adapted from Jay Dupuis, Ventura, Calif.

A LITTLE SOMETHING SWEET

CHOCOLATE MILK MAKEOVER

Cool, creamy and mightily minty, this Mexican-style iced chocolate makes a festive and fuss-free dessert

WHENEVER I EAT Mexican food, I crave ice cream for dessert. It's cooling after all the fiery spice and also a creamy antidote to the bright acidity associated with this cuisine. But at the tail end of a recent meal at Fonda Frontera in Chicago, I discovered what's become my favorite follow-up to most any sort of late-summer repast.

I actually had no intention of ordering dessert that day, but my 11-year-old son had other ideas. Soon our table was laid with an abundance of sweet, deep-fried churros, some dipped in chocolate, others glazed with pistachio, hazelnut or peanut icing. A drink we'd ordered looked like a simple glass of chocolate milk, but the first sip revealed something more akin to the best York Peppermint Patty or After Eight mint imaginable—the milk cold and creamy, the chocolate subtly spiced with cinnamon, and the mint very, very fresh.

I asked Rick Bayless, the chef-proprietor of Fonda Frontera as well as Xoco, Topolobampo and other Chicago restaurants, how he harnessed that brisk blast of cooling mint. He told me he starts by picking the mint for the

drink in his garden and steeping an uncommonly generous amount of it in milk heated to a simmer. He allows the herb to infuse the milk for half an hour, removes and discards it, then whisks in freshly ground Mexican chocolate and cinnamon.

Mexican chocolate is slightly granular and typically sold in compressed puck-shaped tablets. (Taza Chocolate makes a particularly good cinnamon-spiced Chocolate Mexicano disc that works well in this recipe, available at tazachocolate.com.) You can also grate three ounces of semi-sweet chocolate and stir in a half-teaspoon of powdered cinnamon. A drop or two of almond extract may be added to the milk as well, but I prefer the pure shock of mint and the warmth of the cinnamon without the smoothing influence of almond.

Mr. Bayless calls the frothy concoction Iced Mint Chocolate. He whizzes mint and sugar in a food processor, dampens the rim of a cold glass and dips it into the minty mixture before serving—a festive touch, if you can resist swigging this drink straight from the fridge.

—Aleksandra Crapanzano

PURE COLD Whipped until frothy, this iced mint chocolate is lighter than a shake, bolder than chocolate milk.



Iced Mint Chocolate

ACTIVE TIME: 15 minutes TOTAL TIME: 4 hours (includes chilling) SERVES: 4

- 1 quart whole milk
- 1 packed cup plus 2 tablespoons fresh mint leaves
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablet Mexican chocolate, such as cinnamon-flavor Taza Chocolate Mexicano

1. In a medium saucepan, combine milk and 1 cup mint over medium heat. When milk is steaming hot but just short of boiling, remove from heat. Allow mint to infuse milk for 30 minutes. Remove and discard mint. Bring milk to a simmer. Add chocolate and whisk until chocolate has melted into milk. Transfer hot chocolate to the refrigerator and chill until cold, about 3 hours. Set four empty Collins glasses in the refrigerator to chill.

2. A few minutes before serving, pulse remaining mint and sugar in a small food processor. Wet the rims of the glasses, then dip each rim into mint sugar, as you would salt a glass when making a Margarita.

3. Just before serving, transfer chilled chocolate milk to a blender and blend on high speed until frothy, about 30 seconds. Pour into chilled glasses and serve immediately.

—Adapted from Rick Bayless of Fonda Frontera, Chicago