

Summer gatherings are the perfect opportunity to spend quality time with family and friends. They should not be stressful on your spirit, or painful on your wallet. You should look for recipes that require little prep work, activities that are fun and entertaining, and beverages that are suitable for both children and adults. For example, you can whip up a large batch of seasonal appetizers, such as guacamole, cold soup or a yogurt-based vegetable dip. If you want to make a style statement, you could host a theme summer soiree like Christmas in July. Regardless of the theme, here are some summer ideas that are sure to be a hit at any summer gathering.



Make Ice Shot Glasses

It's all in the details, and if you want to be the talk of the town, then making these frozen shot glasses just might do the trick. Although the prep time takes only 20 minutes, expect around 2 hours before serving the first round. You'll want to serve these immediately upon removing them from the molds because they don't stay frozen long. These can be made non-alcoholic by using Gatorade, guava, and cranberry juices.

Delicious Sorbets

Sorbets and frozen desserts are quick, easy treats for summer gatherings. Sorbets can be made in a blender and require only a few ingredients: fruit, ice and a sweetener. There are many refreshing recipes to choose from in your quest to beat the heat and cool down during the summer. How does the easy peasy blueberry, coconut banana twist, and sweet and spicy mango sounds? You can visit www.healthylife.com



SUMMER

ENTERTAINING IDEAS

TO KEEP COOL

BY JANET THOMSON



for these and other dessert and recipe ideas.

Water Balloon Piñatas

While the adults are indulging in "spirits," the kids need some way of keeping cool. Because every home doesn't have a swimming pool for cooling off, why not make a water balloon piñata to keep the kids, and adults who are young at heart, entertained. All you

need is a packet of balloons, a piece of strong rope, a stick or bat, a water hose, and somewhere to string up the piñata – such as a clothesline or between two trees. Kidspot.com.au suggests that you prepare lots of water balloons so that you can continue reloading the piñata, as more balloons get popped. Finally, make sure that everyone stands clear until it's their turn to take a swing at the piñata.



Serve Balled Fruit in Ice Cream Cones

It might sound strange dressing up fruit in an ice cream cone. But, according to bakersroyale.com, "this is not a recipe, but merely a presentation idea," which is one good reason you might want to give this idea a try. Not only will you impress the adults with your clever creativity, you also could become a big hit with the kids as well. For instance, if you've had a hard time getting your kids to eat their fruit, this "balled fruit in an ice cream cone" just might be the incentive they need. You could promise them a scoop or two of their favorite ice cream after they've eaten the fruit. The jury is still out whether or not this idea will fly, but it's definitely worth a try.



Giant Bubble Station

It's just not summer without bubbles. If you want to mesmerize and engage the little ones while the adults are mingling, keeping them occupied with a bubble station can be music to your ears. In fact, even the older kids (and some adults) will spend hours making giant bubbles. There are lots of recipes for making homemade bubbles, but if you want to make giant bubbles that don't easily pop, then visit www.chemistry.about.com to get the recipe and learn the key to blowing giant bubbles that won't easily pop.

With these cool summer entertainment hacks, you'll never have to worry about throwing a boring summer party ever again. ■

Janet Thomson is a freelance writer, copywriter and military wife residing in Charlottesville.