

BON APPÉTIT!

Why not start on a lighter note this year? Opt for a healthy but tasty home-made summer salad instead of the usual holiday culprits and you might discover some kitchen prowess...or even that ever-elusive waistline!

Stepping into Susan Greig's home in Hyde Park is like arriving at a fancy hotel in some exotic, faraway destination. Her garden is a botanical wonder, created for her by her husband whom she describes as 'an obsessively passionate gardener', and their house is swarming with animals – bearded dragons, birds, chameleons, dogs, mice, monkeys, silkworms and snakes! Well isn't that a mouthful? Nope, because you haven't tried Susan's cooking yet. If you guessed that she's a zookeeper, you'd be wrong – one of her two daughters just happens to be mad about pets. Susan's actually a culinary whizz with a taste for Parisian décor. 'I'm an obsessive Francophile,' she admits, 'When I'm cooking I like to dream that I'm in my kitchen in Provence'. Well, that dream's about to come true because she's actually in the process of decking out her garden studio kitchen in a French country theme after her fave holiday destination. 'It's where I hold my monthly cooking classes.' Back up! She teaches too? Yep, one inspirational, themed cooking class every month... and don't worry if you're frying pan-impaired, Susan says anybody can cook. 'It's normal to have flops and disasters in the kitchen. At my first dinner party, the Pyrex dish I was roasting fillet in blew up in the oven! I simply prised out all the glass and served the fillet, panicking about the impending death of my guests, but they're all still here today. I always try to show my students that mistakes can be rectified and are de rigueur in the kitchen. If you don't make mistakes, you're not learning and life is about learning every day.' With a complete French-style getaway in her back yard we'd think she'd be holing up at her tranquil abode this December, but that's not the case. 'A holiday, for me, is all about relaxing and doing as little as possible, but we're making the



pilgrimage to Plett this year because our teenage daughters want to strut their stuff on the beach there. I do love the idea of a beach picnic though. All you need is a well-stocked and organised picnic basket and my friends bought me one a few years ago so I'm good to go! Mini food is always your best bet for a picnic. I'm thinking mini quiches, sesame chicken strips with crudités and delicious dips.' We're thinking yum! But that's not the only

tasty tip Susan has for us. 'Summer eating is all about fresh ingredients so I prepare exotic platters of salad, served with crusty, warm ciabatta and chilled wine – what could be better? I think if you have a repertoire of about 10 delicious salads, you're all set for summer entertaining.' You'll be sorted for the new year too, as Susan's salads are tasty and low cal, so no festive season bloating for us, girls! That's enough reason in itself to celebrate.



Susan's five easy-peasy but oh-so-delish salads

Exotic Zing Shred some red and green baby cabbages and carrots and slice up some red onions. Toss it all together and drizzle over some soya sauce, rice vinegar, caster sugar and sesame oil. Then add gratings of fresh garlic, chilli and ginger.

Deconstructed Greek platter Toast some pita bread, cut into triangles, arrange in a circle around a mound of home-made hummus and cover with clusters of olives, tomatoes and feta cheese.

Sweet Italiano Decorate a bed of rocket with mozzarella balls, prosciutto and sliced peaches and dress with olive oil.

Presto Pesto! Whip up an asparagus pesto by blending together some blanched asparagus and almonds with garlic, Parmesan and olive oil. Toss over cooked pasta and dress with fresh herbs.

What a Gem! Slice some baby gem lettuces in half and top with a dressing of buttermilk, garlic, oil, vinegar and seasoning of your choice!



Food editor Ntwenhle shares a few keep-trim tips

She says she prefers to make her own food at home, but when Bona's food editor Ntwenhle Gcabashe does grab a munch on-the-go, she always goes for the salad and asks for the dressing on the side. That way she can see exactly what goes into it. She also advises not to fall into the trap of buying things with low fat labels because a lot of these items are packed with sugar to improve the taste...even the salad dressings. For a tasty home-made salad dressing Ntwenhle just throws together some minced fresh garlic, a dash of ginger, a splash of olive oil and lots and lots of lemon juice. She doesn't have much of a sweet tooth, but we all have at least one weakness. 'I love my trifle, but I make my own custard at home and I don't use cream. If you want an even healthier option you can replace the cake section with wafer as well.' Ntwenhle jogs every morning to give herself a nice little metabolism spike, but we're not so enthusiastic about getting up for an early-morning run during the holidays. The good news is, you can eat yourself skinny too! 'I've heard things like cayenne pepper, cinnamon and anything spicy can get the metabolism going.' Well now we know what's on the menu for Christmas - how 'bout a curry?



Looking for the perfect gift for your foodie friend? Try a voucher for one of Susan's delicious cooking classes. Details: www.susangreig.co.za

Text: Caitlyn Storm Coles. Photographer: Tabitha Dillschmitter.