

POOLSIDE POTIONS

FRESH AND SIMPLE SUMMER SIPPERS



RECIPES BY CHEF NICOLE ALONI PHOTOGRAPHY BY COLLEEN DUFFLEY
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REFRESHMENT IS A MORE SPIRITED CONCEPT IN THE SUMMERTIME, especially when ice-cold drinks are part of the mix. Nicole Aloni, Seattle-based chef, restaurateur, caterer and author, offers a refreshing twist on cool, summer cocktails in her latest book, *The Backyard Bartender* (Clarkson Potter). All are inspired by the season's freshest ingredients and her own love of entertaining. "I combined what people want in their glasses with my chef sensibilities to create really unique drinks that are easy to make, even if you are serving twenty people," says Aloni.

Her ebullience recalls something that world-renowned master chef Julia Child once said: "Find something you're passionate about and keep tremendously interested in it." For Aloni, a passion for food and the culinary arts fueled her entrepreneurial spirit from a young age. Unlike most 13-year-olds who earned their pocket



OPENING PAGES: Champagne sparklers: Bellinitini with peach garnish, La Vie en Rose with raspberries and The Lawn Mower with melon cubes. Flutes by Ochre. Pierre Deux tray. Hermès napkins. ABOVE: Pomegranate Freeze granita with pomegranate liqueur and champagne in Armani Casa wine glasses. Arte Italica tray. Christoffe spoons. RIGHT: Pepino (Cucumber) Agua Fresca and Sandia (Watermelon) Agua Fresca are favorites with street vendors in Mexico. Designers Guild bottle vase. Tall Ochre decanter. Linens by Home, James! Ralph Lauren Home goblets. Photographed at Caliza Pool in Alys Beach, Florida.





OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A refreshing Mango-Lime Sangria made with dry rosé in Calvin Klein pitcher; Yves Delorme linens. Playful Piña blended with mango, pineapple and cream of coconut in Baccarat glasses; Yves Delorme linens. Il Jardin tequila cooler garnished with cilantro in Tiffany & Co. glass; Crate and Barrel place mat; Pierre Deux napkins and Hermès porcelain in background. Strawberry Shirley is a twist on children's classic; William Yeoward stemware on Tiffany & Co. tray; Pierre Deux linens. THIS PAGE: Lemon Drop Martini rimmed with crushed lemon drop candies. Martini glasses by Vera Wang for Wedgwood. Cocktail picks from Williams-Sonoma. Sferra napkins.



SHAKEN NOT STIRRED, A NEW SWEETER ROUND OF **MARTINIS**





The Backyard Bartender: 55 Cool Summer Cocktails by Nicole Aloni is a summer treat.

money by babysitting or mowing the lawn, Aloni started a summer catering business for families in her Laguna Beach, California, neighborhood. With her mother as sous chef and chauffeur, she grocery shopped, cooked and served dinner to seven different families—one each night—using her own *Betty Crocker's Cooking With Kids* and her mom's *Larousse Gastronomique*.

After graduating from University of California, Los Angeles, in Westwood, she opened a “white tablecloth” vegetarian restaurant nearby with friends. It was an instant success with the celebrity crowd and landed a front-page review in the *Los Angeles Times* food section. Seven years later, she completed the diploma course at La Varenne, École de Cuisine in Paris, then worked for two years as a chef at châteaux in Burgundy. Returning to the U.S., she became director of catering at the Los Angeles Music Center, where she catered the Academy Awards, a state luncheon for Queen Elizabeth II and galas in honor of three American presidents, foreign dignitaries and Julia Child. She eventually started Nicole Cottrell Productions, Inc., her own company specializing in high-end catering and producing a line of gourmet foods sold at Neiman Marcus and upscale grocers.

After nearly two decades in catering, Aloni turned to writing. In 2001, she published her first book, *Secrets From a Caterer's Kitchen*, followed two years later by *Cooking for Company*. Her third book, *The Backyard Bartender*, offers fifty-five creative recipes for

refreshing summer cocktails using fresh herbs and fruits such as lavender, cucumber, peaches and raspberries. She includes her own creations as well as her versions of traditional drinks.

Shaken not stirred, the Lemon Drop Martini has a crushed candy rim for a touch of sweetness. Il Jardin cools with a subtle hint of cilantro and pineapple juice. The seductive taste of Pama pomegranate liqueur infuses the Pomegranate Freeze. Fizzy concoctions like Bellinitini, La Vie en Rose and The Lawn Mower are perfect for special occasions.

Fancy cocktails are always a summer treat, but nothing satisfies a crowd like pitchers of Mango-Lime Sangria made with a light, dry rosé. Or when alcohol is not an option, try such tasty refreshers as Strawberry Shirley, Agua Fresca and Playful Piña.

“All of the infused spirits, simple syrups and different spices, herbs, sugars and salts bring such complex flavor to every part of the drink. That is what made it really exciting for me.”

Aloni's latest project, *A Conscious Feast*, is a green-eating field guide and natural foods blog that encourages environmental consciousness and sustainability. She also makes television and radio appearances, teaches at schools such as Sur La Table, Viking and L'Academie de Cuisine and contributes articles to magazines.

“My focus in everything I do is to make people's lives easier,” says Aloni. “I want to show them how to find good food, prepare great meals and share my passion for the joy of entertaining.” □
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RECIPES

These recipes were adapted from those created by Nicole Aloni and are reprinted from *The Backyard Bartender*, Copyright © 2007 by Nicole Aloni. Published by Clarkson Potter/Publishers, a division of Random House, Inc.

BELLINITINI

Serves 1

- 1 ounce orange-flavored vodka (like Grey Goose L'Orange)
- 1 ounce peach or apricot nectar (like Loozza)

- 3 ounces cold brut champagne or dry sparkling wine
- fresh raspberry or peach slices (optional garnish)

Mix vodka and nectar in shaker with lots of ice. Strain mixture into chilled flute or martini glass. Top with cold champagne. Stir once and garnish.

THE LAWN MOWER

Serves 2

- 1 cup ripe honeydew melon, diced
- 1 ounce premium vanilla vodka (like Stoli Vanil)
- ½ ounce Cointreau
- ¾ ounce fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon fresh mint, roughly chopped
- ½ cup cold brut champagne or dry sparkling wine
- melon balls or cubes and mint leaves on a skewer (optional garnish)

Purée melon in blender, adding 1-2 tablespoons water if necessary. Press melon mixture through strainer into cocktail shaker filled with ice. Add vodka, Cointreau, lime juice and mint. Shake vigorously to infuse.

Strain mixture into chilled martini glass or flute and top with champagne float. Stir once and garnish.

LA VIE EN ROSE

Serves 2

- ¾ ounce fresh lime juice
- 1½ ounces Cointreau
- 1½ ounces cranberry juice
- 2 tablespoons superfine sugar (may be purchased or made by grinding regular sugar in a spice grinder)
- 1 cup chilled brut champagne or dry sparkling wine
- orange wheel, fresh cherry or raspberries (optional garnish)

Mix lime juice, Cointreau and cranberry juice in pitcher. Chill, covered, at least 2 hours or overnight.

Moisten rim of two flutes with water and dip into saucer of sugar to coat. Pour juice mixture into glasses and add ½ cup champagne to each. Stir once gently and garnish.

POMEGRANATE FREEZE

Serves 6 to 8

FOR SIMPLE SYRUP

- 2 cups water

2 cups granulated sugar

Combine water and sugar in saucepan and stir to mix. Place over medium-high heat to dissolve. As soon as syrup comes to rolling boil and is completely clear, remove from heat. Let cool and refrigerate in sealed container.

FOR POMEGRANATE FREEZE

- 1 cup (6 ounces) small strawberries, washed and hulled
- 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon Simple Syrup
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup Pama liqueur, plus more for drizzling
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cups chilled brut champagne fresh strawberry, lemon zest or pomegranate seeds in season (optional garnish)

Purée strawberries in blender or food processor. In large bowl, whisk $\frac{3}{4}$ cup purée and simple syrup. Mix in Pama, then champagne. Pour mixture into 8"-square metal baking pan.

Freeze mixture until icy around edges, about 45 minutes. With fork, rake frozen edges toward center. Repeat raking into center every 30 minutes until frozen through, about 5 hours. Cover and keep frozen.

TO SERVE

Use large spoon or ice cream scoop to mold and serve in frosty martini or dessert glasses. Garnish with fruit and drizzle with chilled Pama.

SANDIA (WATERMELON)

AGUA FRESCA

Makes about 2 quarts

- 4 cups diced watermelon
- 5 cups cold water, divided
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, or up to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup, Simple Syrup (see recipe for Pomegranate Freeze)
- 2-3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- pinch of salt
- wedges of lime or melon (optional garnish)

In blender, purée watermelon and 2 cups cold water. Strain through sieve into large pitcher.

Add remaining cold water, Simple Syrup, lime juice and salt; stir to blend. Add more syrup or water as needed. Garnish and serve well chilled.

PEPINO (CUCUMBER) AGUA FRESCA

Makes about 2 quarts

- 3 large cucumbers, peeled and chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ cups cold water

3-4 cups cold still or sparkling water

3-4 tablespoons fresh lime juice

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, or up to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup, Simple Syrup (see recipe for Pomegranate Freeze)
- cucumber slice (optional garnish)
- pinch of chili pepper or salt (optional)

In blender, purée cucumbers with $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups cold water. Add 3-4 more cups still or sparkling water, lime juice and Simple Syrup.

Serve well chilled with cucumber slice dusted in chili pepper or salt.

MANGO-LIME SANGRIA

Serves 8

- 1 cup mango, peeled and chopped
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup superfine sugar (may be purchased or made by grinding regular sugar in a spice grinder)
- 10 ounces fresh orange juice
- 10 ounces fresh lime juice
- 1 ounce triple sec
- 3 limes, thinly sliced
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup peach brandy or peach schnapps
- 1-2 bottles dry rosé (like Angove's Nine Vines or Barnard Griffin's Rosé of Sangiovese)
- 1-2 cups soda water
- fresh lavender or mint and slices of lime and mango (optional garnish)

Combine mango and sugar. Let sit 1 hour at room temperature.

Combine macerated mango, orange and lime juices, triple sec, limes, brandy or schnapps and rosé in large clear pitcher. Stir to blend. Cover and refrigerate 30-60 minutes or up to 8 hours.

TO SERVE

Stir to mix. Fill goblets or wine glasses half full of ice cubes. Add juice mixture and soda water to taste. Stir and garnish.

PLAYFUL PIÑA

Makes 1

- 3 ounces pineapple juice
- 1 ounce cream of coconut (like Coco López)
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup fresh berries or diced mango
- 1 cup crushed ice
- mango slice, pineapple wedge or baby orchid (optional garnish)

In blender, mix pineapple juice, cream of coconut, berries or mango and ice until smooth. Pour into margarita or wine glass. Garnish and serve.

IL JARDIN

Serves 1

- 2 ounces silver tequila
- 4-5 cilantro leaves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce triple sec
- $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce Simple Syrup, preferably lemon (see recipe for Pomegranate Freeze)
- 3 ounces pineapple juice
- soda water to top off
- pineapple spear and fresh cilantro sprig (optional garnish)

Fill cocktail shaker three-quarters full with ice. Add tequila, cilantro, triple sec, Simple Syrup and pineapple juice; shake vigorously to chill.

Strain mixture into tall glass filled with ice. Top with soda water and stir to blend. Garnish and serve.

STRAWBERRY SHIRLEY

Serves 1

- juice of 1 lemon
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons grenadine
- 8-10 ripe strawberries
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup 7UP
- 1 fresh strawberry, maraschino cherry or mint leaf (optional garnish)

In blender, mix lemon, sugar, grenadine and strawberries until fairly smooth. Pour into goblet or tall glass with ice. Top with 7UP and stir. Garnish and serve.

LEMON DROP MARTINI

Serves 1

- 2 lemon wedges
- superfine sugar or crushed lemon drop candies (superfine sugar may be purchased or made by grinding regular sugar in a spice grinder)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon Simple Syrup (see recipe for Pomegranate Freeze)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces Absolut Citron vodka
- $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce Cointreau
- lemon peel twists (optional garnish)

Rub rim of chilled martini glass with lemon wedge. Press rim into saucer of sugar or crushed lemon drops.

Put lemon wedges and Simple Syrup in cocktail shaker and muddle well. Add vodka and Cointreau. Fill with ice. Shake vigorously to chill.

Strain into chilled martini glass. Garnish with lemon twists and serve.