

Menu Planning for May

If you're planning a menu for May, there are a few holidays to consider and many fresh fruits and vegetables making their entrance for the summer.

Plan for May:

Full Moon on May 18th is called the Flower Moon.

May is National BBQ, Egg, Strawberry and Salad Month!!

- May 1st – May Day
- May 5th – Cinco de Mayo
- May 4th – 145th Kentucky Derby
- May 12th – Mother's Day
- May 18th – 21st – National Restaurant Show, Chicago, IL
- May 27th – Memorial Day observed

Plan ahead for June:

Full Moon on June 27th is called the Strawberry Moon because it indicated when the berries were ready for harvest (called the Rose Moon in Europe where strawberries were not indigenous).

June is National Dairy Month, Get Outdoors Month and National Fruit and Vegetable Month!

- June 4th – End of Ramadan
- June 13th - Weed Your Garden Day
- June 14th - Flag Day
- June 17th - Eat Your Vegetables Day
- June 18th – International Picnic Day
- June 16th – Father's Day
- June 21st - First day of Summer (Solstice is celebrated, the longest day of the year!)

Mid-month, wild strawberries (*frais de bois*) start becoming available, depending on the heat. Purchase wild strawberries from your local farmer's market or strawberry stand because they are too delicate to ship – the aroma from *frais de bois* seems almost manufactured in its strength and perfume. There is a commercial hybrid called Mare de Bois that is an adequate substitute and a bit more durable. Crystallized flowers are another plate freshener and they are becoming readily available from wholesale suppliers. Mother's Day is a great time to decorate with any edible flowers!



Crystallized Viola

Mother's day is mid-month this year – on Sunday, May 12th.

Remember that this is the busiest restaurant day of the year so a *weekend* of specials may be advantageous to guarantee a book full of reservations.

May availability becomes a bit more predictable towards the end of the month as the weather mellows and crops take hold of their landscapes. Ramps, fiddleheads and other harbingers of spring fade by mid - May to make room for stonefruit, their decline may be a little later this year – because of the late spring. Apricots and the first of the good Peaches will come in at the end of the month and provide a great treat to herald in June!

Plan on cherries, the first of the domestic stonefruit, to be best between Mother's Day and Father's Day (these holidays are a great way to remember the fresh cherry season in California). Most of the other



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commonly thought of *drupes* begin at the end of this month: apricots, plums, peaches, nectarines, pluots, apriums and almonds.

Growing regions beyond California may start their cherry harvest a bit later to carry the sugar through the early part of the summer. The early cherries are the Burlatt, followed by the Bings in June, with Brooks in the middle; there are other lesser known varieties, but these are the most commonly seen fruit on the commercial market.

Lychee and Mangosteen are two international fruits that become more available in May and they are delicious bursts of tropical flavor. Late citrus should be available through almost the end of June: Meyers lemons, tangelos, sanguenille bloods and mandarins. Think of mixing some delicious late harvest citrus with some beautiful spring greens, baby roasted beets and

some beautiful candied nuts and pansies.

All the flowering herbs are in full swing from mid-May through June – Sage, thyme and chive blossoms are beautiful additions to salads and tabletops. Lemon verbena makes a killer simple syrup for cocktails.



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Planning for May:

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|------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Almonds, Green | Corn | Peas - English |
| Apples | Cucumber | Peppers - padron/shishito |
| Apples – New Zealand | Endive, Belgian | Peppers – Bell |
| Artichokes | Feijoa | Peppers – Chile |
| Artichokes, Baby | Fennel | Persimmon - Chile |
| Asparagus | Fiddlehead Fern (Eastern) | Pineapple |
| Avocados | Grapes – Perlette (new crop) | Potatoes - Purple |
| Bananas | Horseradish | Potatoes – Red |
| Beans - Fava | Kale | Potatoes – White |
| Beans - Green new crop | Kiwano (Horned Melon) | Potatoes-Yukon Gold |
| Beets | Kiwifruit | Quince |
| Berry - Blackberry | Kohl Rabi, Green | Radicchio |
| Berry - Blueberry | Kohl Rabi, Purple | Radish |
| Berry - Raspberry | Citrus - Kumquats | Rhubarb |
| Berry - Strawberries | Leeks | Salanova |
| Broccoli | Lychee | Shallots |
| Broccoli Rabe | Mangoes | Spinach |
| Broccolini | Melon - Cantaloupe | Spinach - Baby |
| Cabbage | Melon - Honeydew | Squash |
| Cabbage - Napa | Melon - Pepino | Squash - Chayote (Merlito) |
| Cactus Leaves | Melon - Watermelon | Squash - Summer |
| Cactus Pear (Tuna) | Mushroom - Maitake | Star Fruit |
| Cauliflower | Mushroom - Morels | Stinging Nettle |
| Celery | Mushroom - Mousseron | Stonefruit - Apricots |
| Celery Root (celeriac) | Mushroom - Porcini | Stonefruit - Cherries |
| Chard | Okra | Stonefruit - Nectarines – new crop |
| Cherimoya | Onions - Spring | Stonefruit - Peaches – new crop |
| Citrus – Blood Oranges | Onions – Spring Sweet | Tamarillo |
| Citrus - Grapefruit | Onions - Vidalia | Turnips |
| Citrus - Lemon, Meyer | Papaya | Walnuts, green |
| Citrus - Oranges | Pears – Packham (imports) | |
| Collards | Peas | |

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May menu planning

Monthly seasonality calendar based on harvest histories, some items may not be available because of weather or other unforeseen circumstances.