



PARTY MENU

- Turks & Caicos Rum Punch
- Caicos Conch Salad
- Conch Fritters with Spicy Dipping Sauce
- Conch Chowder
- Grilled Caribbean Lobster with Basil Butter
- Caribbean Bread Pudding with Piña Colada Sauce

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GET A TASTE OF PARADISE

At their Turks & Caicos hideaway, Stan and Melissa Hartling show us the ultimate way to bring home the fun and flavors of the Caribbean



“Entertaining in Turks & Caicos is just like anything else in the Caribbean,” says Stan Hartling. “Easygoing, informal, and always full of rum!” He and wife Melissa often throw dream weddings at their Providenciales isle resorts, The Sands at Grace Bay and The Regent Palms. But at their home, which is planted next to miles of sugary sand and brilliant turquoise sea, they prefer to cook with friends in true Caribbean fashion—with delicious conch, the island’s staple seafood, and a steady flow of rum punch.

“The secret to a successful party is to keep it simple,” Melissa says. “Caribbean foods are easy to prepare, and many times require only a grill. You can mingle with guests while you’re cooking instead of being stuck in a hot kitchen.” Friends take in the aroma of herb-battered spiny lobster tails sizzling over the flames while snacking on island favorites—conch salad and crispy conch fritters. Some even help crack the beautiful, pink conch shells to pull out the prized meat.

Most Caribbean households have their own special recipes for preparing conch, as well as spicy jerk-flavored meats. “We also go for different types of salads, grilled vegetables, and fish straight from that sea,” Melissa explains, pointing to the blue backyard that is the constant source of her fresh bounty. “The best part is that these foods are not only easy and tasty but healthy, too,” she says.

Guests savor Melissa’s bread pudding, a traditional island dessert, next to the shimmering pool. A few stroll down to the soft, white beach to help the kids build a crackling bonfire. “Casual is the theme for how we approach most things in life,” says Stan, manning the outdoor grill. “Add a little music, tiki torches, and a full moon rising over the ocean and we’ve got a nice party going.”



LULU, THE HARTLINGS' MINIATURE SHIH TZU

Turks & Caicos Rum Punch

PREP: 4 minutes

- 1½ cups rum
- 1½ cups pineapple juice
- 1 cup grenadine
- ½ cup fresh orange juice
- ½ cup fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons cream of coconut, or more to taste

Combine ingredients in a pitcher. Serve over ice. Makes 4 servings.



Stan and Melissa Hartling's patio on Providenciales, a Turks & Caicos isle



FOR A PRETTY LAYERED DRINK, COMBINE ALL INGREDIENTS EXCEPT GRENADINE. POUR GRENADINE EVENLY IN FOUR ICE-FILLED GLASSES, AND TOP WITH RUM MIXTURE





Caicos
Conch Salad



BOTTOM RIGHT: TED TUCKER

Caicos Conch Salad

Conch salad is similar to ceviche, in which fresh citrus juices “cook” the protein in the fish. If conch is unavailable, substitute sea scallops. If desired, cook conch or scallops in boiling water 2 minutes or until opaque. You won’t need as much lime juice if the seafood is cooked. Start with half the amount, taste, and add more if needed.

PREP: 15 minutes

CHILL: 2 hours

- 2 pounds conch meat, diced
- 1½ cups fresh lime juice
- 1 large tomato, chopped
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 celery stalk, chopped
- 1 bird or other hot pepper, minced
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons hot sauce, or to taste

Combine all ingredients in a large nonreactive bowl. Cover and chill at least 2 hours. Stir in additional salt and hot sauce, if desired. Makes 10 cups.



Conch Fritters

Conch Fritters with Spicy Dipping Sauce

Substitute an equal amount chopped, peeled, and deveined shrimp for conch, if desired.

PREP: 15 minutes

COOK: 15 minutes

- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- ½ cup milk
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon ground cayenne
- 8 ounces chopped conch meat
- ½ onion, finely diced
- ½ green bell pepper, finely chopped
- 2 stalks celery, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced

Vegetable oil

Spicy Dipping Sauce (recipe below)

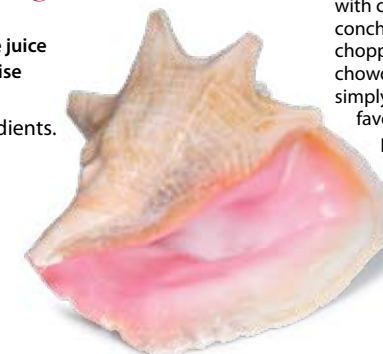
1. Whisk together first 6 ingredients. Stir in conch and next 4 ingredients.

2. Pour oil to a depth of 5 inches into a Dutch oven; heat to 350°. Drop batter by heaping teaspoonfuls into hot oil, and fry in batches, 4 to 5 minutes or until golden. Drain fritters on paper towels. Serve with Spicy Dipping Sauce. Makes about 2½ dozen.

Spicy Dipping Sauce

- ½ cup ketchup
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup hot sauce

Combine all ingredients. Makes 1¼ cups.



YOUR CONCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Food editor Julia Rutland gives a quick lesson

Q What is conch?

A Pronounced “konk,” these large saltwater snails are a traditional staple in Caribbean cooking. Queen conch, the culinary species, is commonly eaten raw in salads or cooked in soups and fritters. Conch has a clean, clamlike taste but can be very tough if not tenderized before cooking.

Q Where can I buy it?

A If your fish market is unable to order it for you, visit prawnco.com or charlestonseafood.com. Conch sells online for around \$19 per pound. FYI: At seafood markets, look for white- or cream-colored, fresh-smelling meat. Conch freezes well, so buy when available and store for later.

Q How do I prepare cleaned conch?

A Conch meat is tough and must be pounded or finely chopped to tenderize. Remove any remaining dark skin. Slice large conch into equal pieces about the size of chicken breast cutlets, and pound with a meat mallet to ¼-inch thickness. For chopped conch (in soups, salads, and ceviches), use a food processor, if desired. Pulse several times, but don’t overprocess into a paste.

Q Are conch eco-friendly?

A Conch fishing is regulated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Wild conch harvest from Florida is prohibited. Conch seen in fish markets or on restaurant menus must be imported from countries practicing sustainable harvests.

Q What can I substitute?

A Seafood with firm texture makes a good substitution. For conch ceviches, try coarsely chopped scallops. The conch chowder recipe is very versatile; simply substitute any of your favorite fish or shellfish, pound for pound. We tried it with a mix of fresh shrimp, halibut, and salmon.



Conch Chowder



Grilled Caribbean Lobster with Basil Butter



MELT AND SERVE REMAINING BASIL BUTTER OVER GRILLED VEGETABLES



Caribbean Bread Pudding with Piña Colada Sauce

Conch Chowder

PREP: 17 minutes

COOK: 1 hour, 45 minutes

- 4 slices bacon, coarsely chopped
- 2 cups chopped onion
- 2 cups chopped celery
- 1 cup chopped green bell pepper
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 3 quarts fish or chicken broth
- 2 pounds conch, pounded until tender and finely chopped
- 4 potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 cup tomato puree
- 1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon dried Italian seasoning
- 2 bay leaves
- 3 tablespoons fresh minced basil

Salt, to taste

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Hot sauce, to taste

1. Sauté first 5 ingredients in a Dutch oven or soup pot 10 minutes or until tender and golden brown. Add broth and next 6 ingredients. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer 1½ hours.

2. Discard bay leaves. Stir in remaining ingredients. Makes 12 cups.

Note: Substitute 2 pounds mixed seafood, cut into 1-inch pieces, if desired. After simmering 1½ hours or until potatoes are tender, stir in seafood, and cook 3 to 5 minutes or until done. Remove from heat. Stir in fresh basil, and season to taste.

Grilled Caribbean Lobster with Basil Butter

Substitute American lobster tails if spiny lobster tails are unavailable.

PREP: 5 minutes

COOK: 14 minutes

- ½ cup butter, softened
- 8 basil leaves, coarsely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
- 2 tablespoons orange liqueur
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 4 (8- to 10-ounce) spiny lobster tails

PAGE 103, LOBSTER: STOCKFOOD.COM; ALL ITEMS EXCEPT LIQUOR: TED TUCKER; RUM AND CURAÇAO: COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS

1. Process first 6 ingredients in a blender or food processor until smooth. Cover.

2. Cut lobster tails in half lengthwise. Spread half of butter mixture over meat, and grill 2 to 4 minutes per side or until lobster is opaque and completely cooked through. Serve over mixed grilled vegetables. Melt and serve remaining butter on the side. Makes 4 servings.

Caribbean Bread Pudding with Piña Colada Sauce

PREP: 7 minutes

COOK: 40 minutes

- 6 cups cubed French bread (about 8 ounces)
- 1 cup skim milk
- 1 cup pineapple orange banana juice
- ½ cup egg substitute
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon imitation butter flavor extract
- 1 (20-ounce) can crushed pineapple in juice, undrained
- ½ cup raisins
- ¾ cup pineapple preserves
- ⅓ cup shredded coconut, toasted
- 1 teaspoon spiced rum

1. Place bread in a large bowl. Whisk together milk and next 4 ingredients. Pour over bread mixture, tossing gently.

2. Drain pineapple, reserving ¼ cup juice for sauce. Fold pineapple and raisins into bread mixture.

3. Pour mixture into a lightly greased 11-x 7-inch baking dish. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 40 minutes or until golden brown.

4. Combine reserved pineapple juice, pineapple preserves, coconut, and rum in a glass bowl. Microwave on HIGH 2 minutes or until bubbly and heated through. Cut bread pudding into serving pieces, and top with sauce. Makes 6 servings. 🌿



Caribbean lobsters: Also called spiny or rock lobsters, they live in warm tropical and subtropical waters. This species lacks the large pinching claws prized in traditional Maine or American lobsters.

HOW TO STOCK A CARIBBEAN PANTRY



COCONUT: Coconut meat is grated or shredded, often with added sugar. Green (young) coconuts contain coconut juice or water that is drunk fresh as a beverage. Coconut milk is the grated white pulp combined with water.



CURAÇAO: an orange-flavored liqueur from the island of the same name. When Spanish explorers brought Valencia oranges to the island, locals discovered that they liked the peel's aroma. Curaçao is naturally clear, but some brands tint it blue, red, green, or orange.



GRENADINE: This red syrup is used to sweeten and tint drinks. It's traditionally made from sugar and pomegranate seeds; mass-market versions contain red dye and high-fructose corn syrup. Sonoma Syrup Company Pomegranate Syrup; specsonline.com



JERK SEASONING: a fiery blend of herbs and spices usually rubbed on chicken and pork. Ingredients include allspice, thyme, cinnamon, cloves, and ground hot peppers. We like Walkerswood Jerk Seasoning; pyropepper.com or amazon.com.



LIMES: This citrus fruit is used to prepare conch salads and ceviches. Choose either small Key limes or Persian (common grocery store variety) limes, and make sure to use fresh, not bottled, juice.



HOT PEPPERS: Many different kinds of chile peppers grow in the Caribbean, most notably the Scotch Bonnet or habanero and bird pepper. Use a small amount to spice up soups and salads. For a variety of hot pepper sauces, visit pyropepper.com.



RUM: Rum plays a leading role in the history and culture of Caribbean islands. The liquor is made from the by-products of sugarcane manufacturing. Light rums are used in cocktails rather than for sipping. Dark rum gets its color from aging in wood casks. Spiced rum includes flavorings and caramel color.