

Though her reputation is spotless, this Texan knows how

to cook up a good time at the coast. A helpful hint: Keep it simple.



Dilled Salmon

heloise

hits the beach



Roasted Oysters with Cilantro-Lime Dipping Sauce

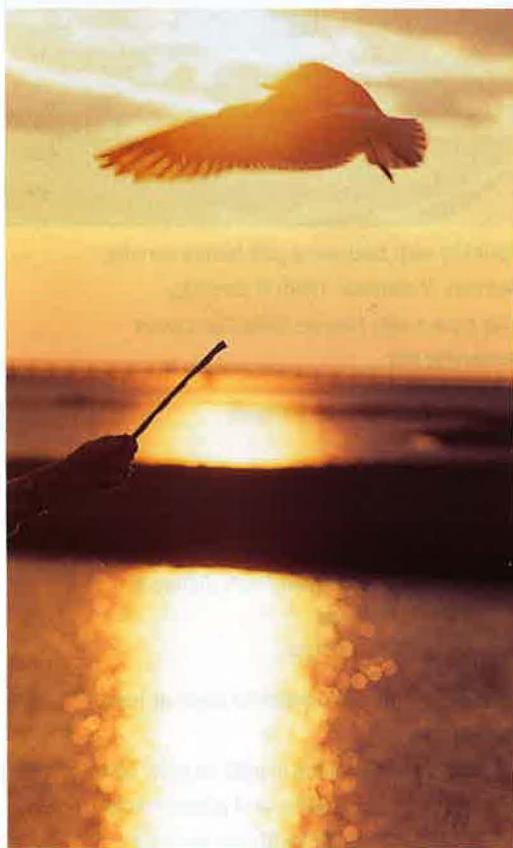


David, master shucker





Poached Pear



The big Texas sky blazes a vibrant blue over Aransas Bay as seagulls glide overhead. A garlic-laden brisket is sizzling, fresh oysters are roasting, beverages are iced to hand-numbing cold, and friends are catching up on the latest happenings. But what's the best part? Despite the intimidating reality that the partygiver here is Heloise—queen of proper housekeeping—no one worries about a tropical shirt stain or a little spilled piña colada.

"Life is easy at the beach," shrugs the convivial host. "Down here, it's okay, you know?"

You can bet that if this maven of "kitchen-eneering" wanted to, she could get those spots out. After all, she knows a thing or two about it. Each week 75 million people in 15 countries seek her resourceful household advice via her hugely popular syndicated column, "Hints from Heloise."

And Heloise, née Poncé Kiah Cruse, has worn the domestic-bliss badge since 1977. That's when the column was left in her hands upon the passing of her mother, the original Heloise—a folksy Texan who got the mothball rolling in Honolulu in the late 1950s.

Nowadays, "Heloise II" (as her mother dubbed her) is a petite and plucky dynamo who looks a lot like Heloise I—especially with that silky silver-gray mane that's a family trademark. She spends almost every weekday

in her San Antonio office promoting new projects, reviewing thousands of reader questions, testing "recipes" for modern household dilemmas, or juggling collaborations with reporters.

But it's weekends at the beach that keep her "energized and invigorated." Whenever possible, she takes back her name of Poncé ("Pon-see") and heads down to the Texas shore with her husband of 20 years, David Evans, and their miniature schnauzer, Savvi (short for "Sauvignon"). The trio's new house near Rockport has been a labor of love,

with an emphasis on labor. That's why a relaxing get-together is in order.

Though many people recognize her from her column, books, and television appearances, most don't bring up her work. She laughs about the time when a neighbor and party

guest, Judge Jim Barkley—after dining with Heloise and David on several occasions—asked, "Any truth to the rumors that you're Heloise?"

"'Not down here,' I told him. We're all just a bunch of aging hippies, so there's not a lot of fuss. No one's judgmental. It's wonderful."

As the daughter of a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel and the first Doyenne of Domesticity, Heloise does indeed know how to entertain. She also knows how to bend the rules of her military upbringing. At the beach,

HELOISE'S LONE-STAR LINEUP

Olive-Nut Sandwich Spread

Southwestern Crudité

Dilled Salmon

Roasted Oysters with
Cilantro-Lime Dipping Sauce

David's Mesquite-Smoked
Texas Brisket

Grilled Onions

Easy Red Velvet Cupcakes

Poached Pears

BY JUDY FEAGIN AND DENISE GEE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM BATHIE STYLING BY KAY CLARKE

impromptu parties where folks bring this or that are the most fun. “It’s the coast. I tell my guests that the first rule is there are no rules. Just relax.”

David, keeping vigil at the grill, says the secret to his brisket lies in the smoldering wood chunks. “You’ve got to use Texas mesquite—not the kind you find in most stores,” he says. “You have to get this stuff from the man who sells firewood.”

While everything cooks, guests fill the time by doing a little fishing and birding—the first being David’s favorite pastime and the latter, Heloise’s.

“My friends wonder about me. They say, ‘You don’t sun [her skin is like porcelain], you don’t fish [she doesn’t have the patience], so why do you want to be down here?’ Because, I tell them, being near the ocean is calming. The nature. The birds. The sounds. There’s something so melodic about it all.”

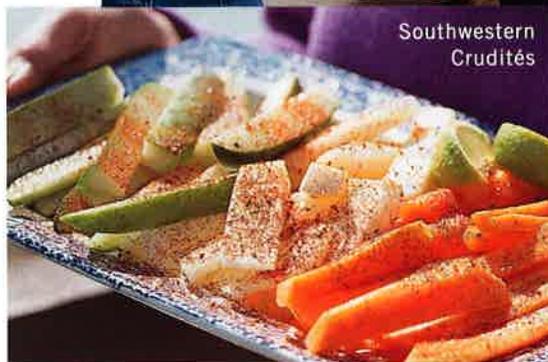
For this occasion, Heloise chose some recipes from her latest book, *In the Kitchen With Heloise* (Perigee, \$22.05), as well as a few other favorites. “I always include two desserts with every menu—one low-cal and one rich. In this case the rich one is a red velvet cake with a special story. In 1995, a fan requested a recipe, so I asked readers to send their favorites. We received more than 15,000 recipes. This one was made with a cake mix—that certainly fits my lifestyle at the beach.”

A lifestyle epitomized by this observation: She never wears an apron.

“Why bother?” she smiles. “I know how to get the grease spots out.”

More info: page 144.

Helpful hints: coastalliving.com



Olive-Nut Sandwich Spread

- 2 (3-ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup sliced salad olives
- ½ cup chopped pecans
- 2 tablespoons olive juice
- Dash of pepper

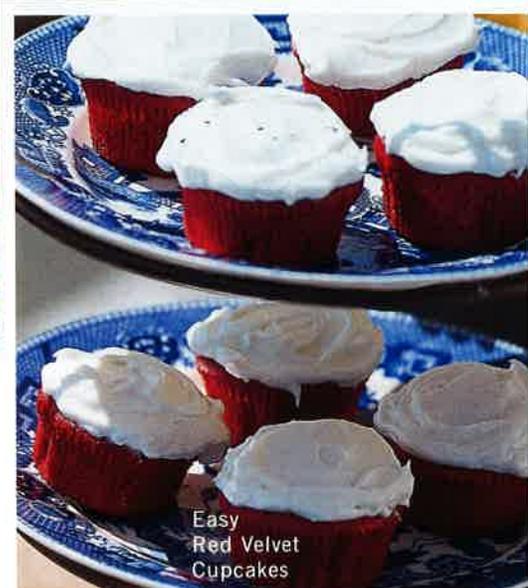
Stir together all ingredients. Cover and chill. Serve with French bread slices or breadsticks. Yield: 1¾ cups.

Southwestern Crudités

- 2 cucumbers, unpeeled
- 2 carrots, cut into ½-inch sticks
- 1 small jicama, peeled and cut into ½-inch sticks
- 1½ tablespoons fresh lime juice
- ¼ to ½ teaspoon Mexican seasoning*
- Garnish: lime wedges

Cut cucumbers in half lengthwise; remove seeds, and cut into ½-inch sticks.

Arrange cucumber, carrot, and jicama sticks on platter; drizzle with lime juice.



Sprinkle with seasoning just before serving. Garnish, if desired. Yield: 8 servings.

*We tested with Pico de Gallo Con Limon seasoning mix.

Dilled Salmon

- Mesquite chunks
- 1 (3-pound) salmon fillet
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon seafood seasoning*
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dillweed
- 2 limes, quartered
- Garnish: dillweed sprigs

Soak wood chunks in water to cover at least 30 minutes.

Prepare charcoal fire in grill; let burn 15 to 20 minutes. Drain chunks, and place on coals. Brush salmon fillet with oil; sprinkle

with seafood seasoning and fresh dillweed.

Grill, covered with grill lid, over medium heat (300° to 350°) 25 minutes or until fish flakes with a fork. Squeeze lime quarters over fillets. Garnish, if desired. Yield: 8 servings.

**We tested with Chef Paul Prudhomme's Seafood Magic Seasoning Blend.*

Roasted Oysters with Cilantro-Lime Dipping Sauce

- 3/4 cup water*
- 1/4 cup sugar*
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro*
- 1/4 cup chopped green onions*
- 1/4 cup fresh lime juice*
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice*
- 1/4 cup dry white wine*
- 4 to 6 dozen oysters, scrubbed*

Stir together $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water and sugar in a small saucepan; bring to a boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Cool. Stir in cilantro and next 4 ingredients. Set aside.

Place oysters on grill. Cook over medium-high heat (350° to 400°) 8 to 10 minutes or until shells open. (Shells will open about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.) Remove from grill.

Pry open oysters using an oyster knife, discarding the empty half shells. Run knife under meat of oyster to release.

Arrange oysters on platter, and serve with dipping sauce. Yield: 12 appetizer servings.

David's Mesquite-Smoked Texas Brisket

- Mesquite chunks*
- 1 (8- to 10-pound) beef brisket*
 - 10 to 20 garlic cloves, peeled*
 - 1/4 cup Greek seasoning*

Soak wood chunks in water to cover at least 30 minutes.

Prepare charcoal fire in smoker; let burn 15 to 20 minutes. Drain chunks, and place on coals. Place water pan in smoker; add water to depth of fill line.

Make deep slits in brisket. Insert garlic into each slit. Sprinkle with Greek seasoning.

Place brisket, fat side down, on upper food rack; cover with smoker lid. Cook 2 hours. Remove from smoker; wrap tightly in 2 layers of heavy-duty aluminum foil. Place in roasting pan; bake at 250° for 2 hours. Remove from oven; let stand 30 minutes. Slice brisket diagonally against the grain. Yield: 16 to 20 servings.



CHEERFUL ADDITIONS

Heloise favors the wines of small wineries "that offer big tastes for little money." Here's what she served along with this menu.

Basa Sauvignon Blanc, a crisp and refreshing Spanish white, with herbal and citrus pizzazz. About \$9.

Springbok Cabernet Sauvignon, a lush South African dinner red with hints of cherry, chocolate, and currant. About \$10.

Heloise also made sure that the following beverages (from \$5 to \$7 a six-pack) were nestled in ice:

Lone Star Light (brewed by Pabst in San Antonio), **Rick's Spiked Lemonade**, **O'Doul's** (nonalcoholic), and Mexican favorites **Pacifico Clara**, **Corona**, and **Negro Modelo**.

Grilled Onions

- 2 bunches green onions, trimmed*
- Vegetable oil*
- 1/2 teaspoon salt*
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper*
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice*

Brush onions with vegetable oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Grill, covered with grill lid, over medium-high heat (350° to 400°) about 6 minutes, turning once. Sprinkle with lime juice.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings.

Easy Red Velvet Cupcakes

- 1 (18.25-ounce) package yellow cake mix*
 - 2 tablespoons cocoa*
 - 5 large eggs*
 - 1/2 cup vegetable oil*
 - 1 cup buttermilk*
 - 2 (1-ounce) bottles red liquid food coloring*
- Cream Cheese Frosting*

Beat cake mix and next 5 ingredients at low speed with an electric mixer 2 minutes. Spoon batter evenly into 24 paper- or foil-lined muffin cups, filling two-thirds full; bake according to package directions. Remove from pans immediately, and cool on wire racks.

Spread cupcakes evenly with Cream Cheese Frosting. Yield: 2 dozen.

Cream Cheese Frosting

- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened*
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine, softened*
- 2 1/4 to 2 1/2 cups sifted powdered sugar*
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract*

Beat cream cheese and butter at medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy. Gradually add sugar, beating at low speed until smooth. Stir in vanilla, beating until mixture is blended. Yield: 2 cups.

Poached Pears

- 8 firm Bosc pears*
 - 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice*
 - 2 tablespoons water*
 - 2 cups water*
 - 1 cup sugar*
 - 2 cups dry white wine*
 - 1/2 lemon, sliced*
 - 1/2 orange, sliced*
 - 4 whole cloves*
 - 1 (2-inch) cinnamon stick*
- Garnishes: mint leaves, orange slices*

Core pears from bottom, cutting to, but not through, stem end. Cut a thin slice from bottom of each so that pears stand upright. Stir together lemon juice and 2 tablespoons water in a medium bowl. Peel pears; coat with lemon juice mixture to prevent browning.

Combine 2 cups water and next 6 ingredients in a large Dutch oven over medium heat; bring to a boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Add pears; cover, reduce heat, and simmer 20 minutes or until pears are fork-tender. Remove pears, and chill.

Strain liquid; return to Dutch oven. Bring to a boil; simmer 20 to 25 minutes or until liquid is reduced to 2 cups. Chill. Serve with pears. Garnish, if desired. Yield: 8 servings. 🍷