

Next best to cooking, the twins, who grew up with gardening parents, love working with flowers. For a summer luncheon party, they set off bright blossoms and spilling fruits with green and white tableware. Just as fresh is the menu itself: poached halibut sauced with a dill aioli and surrounded with two salads that are light yet substantial (see page 90). "San Francisco sour-dough bread [opposite top] makes great garlic toast," says Mary.





Mary Barber & Sara Whiteford
THYMES TWO

For these identical twins, a mutual passion for cooking was just the beginning of their joint ventures. Now their successful San Francisco catering business, Thymes Two, is branching into new avenues—two-lane, of course. “Our sixth book comes out this fall,” says Mary, seated above—“and,” adds Sara, “our babies are due on the same date in September!”

Not everyone can share a kitchen, much less a business, with a close family member. But for Sara Whiteford and Mary Barber, the only problem is that they both adore the creative part of cooking for private parties—“and we both hate the paperwork,” says Mary. So they amicably trade off.

Six years ago, the duo launched Thymes Two with what Sara calls “a huge soiree. We cooked madly, invited everyone we knew, and that night got five bookings.” Known not only for their fresh, light food but also for their attention to every eye-catching detail of a private party, from flowers to tableware, the twins are often asked to help restaurants develop menus and to write culinary and hosting tips for Web sites. “These are angles of our work,” says Sara, thinking ahead, “which sort quite well with motherhood.”

PHOTOGRAPHS MICHAEL SKOTT
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THYMES TWO

Ever since they were little girls sitting on the kitchen floor separating eggs for their mother's cakes, cooking together has come naturally to Mary, top at left, and Sara. "She'll start a cheesecake and I'll finish it," says Sara, "or I'll snatch one of her dishes out of the oven in time—just as we tend to finish each other's sentences." But when it comes to planning parties, each consults individually with her own clients—and then pitches in to help the other.

"If we're writing a book, we do have to cut down some on the catering," says Mary. Their latest, a sequel to *Smoothies* (Chronicle Books), is *Super Smoothies*, done with a strong health angle—including, of course, nutritional recipes for busy, expectant mothers.

One hallmark of a Thymes Two party is an original cocktail, such as the refreshing watermelon margarita, far left. Other luncheon surprises include the red potato salad above, perked with chèvre, roasted pine nuts, and strips of fresh mint. Bright cherry tomato halves and peas add color to the sautéed corn salad, middle. "Both salads are best served at room temperature," advises Sara.

*For additional information, see page 96.
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enough of the dressing over the grated vegetables to moisten them. Serve cold or at room temperature.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

THYMES TWO

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Roasted Corn, Tomato, and Sweet Pea Salad

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2 tablespoons olive oil

4 cups yellow corn kernels
(about 6 ears)

kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

2 cups fresh peas or frozen, thawed, blanched

2 cups cherry tomatoes, halved

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1/4 cup julienned basil leaves

1. In a large nonstick skillet set over moderately high heat, heat the olive oil until hot, add the corn, and season with the salt and pepper. Sauté until barely cooked, about 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer to a bowl and let cool. Add the peas, tomatoes, extra-virgin olive oil, and basil. Season with the salt and pepper to taste. Serve at room temperature.

Yield: 8 servings

Baby Red Potatoes With Goat Cheese, Pine Nuts, and Mint

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2 pounds baby red potatoes,
cut into quarters before they're boiled

2 teaspoons kosher salt,
plus additional to taste

1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Freshly ground pepper to taste

4 ozs. goat cheese
(about 3/4 cup, crumbled)

1/2 cup toasted pine nuts

1/4 cup sliced red onions

3 tablespoons julienned mint leaves

1. In a saucepan combine the potatoes with enough water to cover by 2 inches, add 2 teaspoons of kosher salt, and bring to a boil. Simmer, covered, for 15 minutes, or until tender. Drain and transfer to a bowl.

While still warm, add the olive oil and season with kosher salt and pepper. Let cool. Add the remaining ingredients and toss gently until well incorporated. Serve at room temperature.

Yield: 8 servings

LUCQUES

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Grilled Halibut Grand Aioli With Vegetables

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Four 4-5 oz. portions halibut

2 teaspoons grated fresh lemon zest

2 teaspoons minced fresh thyme leaves

2 teaspoons minced fresh parsley

FOR THE VEGETABLES:

4 small Yukon gold potatoes, roasted and sliced into 1/4-inch thick rounds

1 medium fennel bulb, sliced thin

1/2 cup blanched baby carrots

1/2 cup blanched rapini or young broccoli florets

12 radishes, cut into quarters

1/4 cup blanched and peeled fava beans

2 tablespoons sliced scallions

1 tablespoon minced parsley

1/3 cup lemon vinaigrette, recipe follows

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

2 soft-boiled eggs, halved lengthwise
(just hard enough to cut in half)

Fresh lemon juice to taste

1/4 cup aioli, recipe follows

1. Season both sides of the fish with the lemon zest, thyme, and parsley and let marinate, chilled, for 30 minutes.

2. In a bowl toss all the vegetables with the lemon vinaigrette and salt and pepper to taste. Arrange the vegetables on four plates in a natural style. Place the egg at the side of



the vegetables and season it with salt and pepper.

3. Grill or sauté the fish until just cooked through and place on top of the vegetables. Squeeze lemon juice over the fish and top with a dollop of the aioli. Serve immediately.

Yield: 4 servings

Meyer Lemon Vinaigrette

2 tablespoons juice of Meyer lemons
or regular lemon juice

1/2 tablespoon regular lemon juice

2 teaspoons minced shallots

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 cup extra-virgin olive oil

1. In a bowl combine the lemon juices, shallots, and salt and let stand for 10 minutes. Whisk in the oil, in a stream, and taste for seasoning.

Yield: about 1 cup

Aioli

(Garlic Mayonnaise)

2 very fresh egg yolks*

Juice of 1 lemon

1/2 to 1 clove garlic, pounded to a paste,
or to taste

Salt to taste

Cayenne pepper to taste

1 1/2 cups extra-virgin olive oil

1. In a bowl whisk together the egg yolks, lemon juice, garlic, salt, and cayenne pepper. Whisk in the oil, a little at a time until mixture is thick. (Alternatively, in a blender combine the yolks, lemon juice, garlic, salt, and cayenne pepper. With the blender running, add the oil in a stream.) Thin the mixture with a little room-temperature water if too thick. Correct seasoning, adding more salt, cayenne pepper, and lemon juice to taste.

Yield: about 2 cups

Pots de Crème

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1 cup heavy cream

2/3 cup whole milk

2 vanilla beans, split lengthwise

4 egg yolks*

1/3 cup sugar