

(ingredient: WATERMELON)

# Midsummer's Melon

*Pastry chef Andrea Lever Upchurch does watermelon both sweet and savory*

written by MARION SULLIVAN // photographs by RUTA ELVIKYTE



Say watermelon and see picnic? While this star of summer still shines in coolers and cookouts, chef Andrea Lever Upchurch has stepped up the fruit's game. Executive pastry chef for Magnolias, Blossom, and Cypress restaurants, Upchurch brings a popsicle that will satisfy your inner child, but also develops the savory potential of watermelon's sweet red flesh.

In her pops, its combination with creamy, subtle pineapple and tart raspberry pleases multiple parts of the palate. As for her watermelon consommé with scallop ceviche, "On warm summer days it is a great dish to cool off your guests while exciting their taste buds," she says. "The chilled fruit is delivered in the naturally sweet and simple consommé and plays perfectly against the heat and depth of the jalapeño, citrus, and herbs in the ceviche." In a grilled watermelon and shrimp salad, she teases the two Lowcountry favorites with South American ingredients and intensifies the fruit's flavor with time on the grill.

Upchurch sources her melons from Coosaw Farms, fourth-generation growers in watermelon-prolific Allendale County. While Charleston County is not known for watermelon production for the wholesale market, the melon on your table doesn't have to travel far to get there. Boone Hall Farms has a prodigious patch that fills its store. Upchurch recommends the crimson sweet, a round orb with fine-textured flesh that averages 18 to 25 pounds. Just be sure it's ripe. "Lift the watermelon; riper melons tend to be heavier with thick rinds," she advises. "The rind should be dull, not shiny. Also, the spot where the melon rested on the ground while growing should be yellow, not white or green. Whole melons can be stored in the refrigerator but not longer than a week and a half. Cut watermelon should be wrapped tightly, refrigerated, and used within a few days."



## THE SCOOP

### Dishing It Up with Chef Andrea Lever Upchurch

► **RESTAURANTS:** Magnolias, Blossom, and Cypress

► **ACCOLADES:** 2012 Chef Chair for Charleston Wine & Food Festival

► **FIRST F&B GIG:** Hostess at Uncle Liu's in Lake Wylie, SC

► **EDUCATION:** Degrees in Culinary Art and Hospitality and Tourism Management at Culinary Institute of Charleston; Bachelor of Arts in Arts Management at College of Charleston

► **FAVORITE LOCAL INGREDIENT:** Peaches

► **RECIPE SHE'LL TAKE TO THE GRAVE:** My Nanny's pear relish and lemon cheesecake

*"Watermelon consommé...is a great dish to cool off your guests while exciting their taste buds." —Andrea Lever Upchurch*



**SALAD DAZE:** Grilled watermelon shrimp salad in a cucumber lime vinaigrette; (left) Upchurch selects a fresh melon from Boone Hall Farms.

## **Grilled Watermelon & Shrimp Salad with Cucumber Lime Vinaigrette**

(SERVES 6)

### ***For the vinaigrette:***

- 1 large cucumber, peeled, seeded, and diced*
- 2 Tbs. red wine vinegar*
- Zest of 1 lime*
- 2 Tbs. fresh lime juice*
- 2 Tbs. finely chopped chives*
- 2 Tbs. finely chopped flat-leaf parsley*
- 1 1/2 tsp. Dijon mustard*
- 1 tsp. local honey*
- 1/2 tsp. fine sea salt*
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil*

Combine all the ingredients except the olive oil in a blender. Blend until completely smooth. With the blender on low, stream in oil until combined. Strain the mixture through a fine mesh strainer.

### ***For the salad:***

- 2 tsp. lemon zest*
- 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice*
- 2 tsp. blackening seasoning, preferably  
Charleston Original Sauces brand*
- Fine sea salt*

*Freshly cracked black pepper*

*1 lb. jumbo shrimp, peeled and deveined*

*Metal skewers or wooden skewers soaked in cold water for 30 minutes*

*14 oz. seedless watermelon, sliced thick and rind removed*

*1 lb. fresh arugula, washed and patted dry*

*1/2 ripe avocado*

*1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted and lightly salted*

*1/2 cup cucumber lime vinaigrette*

Ready a medium-high grill fire. Whisk the first five ingredients together in a mixing bowl. Add shrimp to the marinade and let set for about eight minutes.

Thread the shrimp onto skewers. Grill the shrimp, flipping them once to get nice grill marks on each side, until firm and pink, about five minutes. Put the watermelon slices on the grill. Flip them once so that there are nice grill marks on each side. Set aside.

Toss the arugula with just enough cucumber lime dressing to lightly coat it. Put the arugula on a serving platter. Slice the avocado and arrange around the arugula. Remove shrimp from the skewers. Top arugula with the shrimp and watermelon slices. Sprinkle on the pine nuts. Season with sea salt and cracked pepper. Drizzle a bit of the extra dressing on top and serve.

## Watermelon Consommé with Scallop Ceviche

(SERVES 6)

*For the watermelon consommé:*

*1/4 cup water*

*1/4 cup fresh lime juice*

*1/4 tsp. fine sea salt*

*2 tsp. finely chopped cilantro*

*4 cups diced seedless watermelon*

Put the water, lime juice, and salt in a small saucepan over medium-high heat and bring it to a simmer. Stir well to make sure that the salt has completely dissolved.

Put the cilantro and watermelon in a blender and blend until completely smooth. In a separate bowl, combine the lime juice mixture and watermelon purée. Strain mixture through a fine mesh strainer. Refrigerate until completely cold.

*For the scallop ceviche:*

*1 lb. dry-packed scallops*

*Zest from 1 lime, lemon, and orange*

*1/4 cup fresh lime juice*

*1/4 cup fresh lemon juice*

*1/4 cup fresh orange juice*

*2 small tomatillos, finely diced*

*3 Tbs. minced sweet onion*

*1 tsp. minced jalapeño*

*2 cups of 1/2-inch pieces honeydew*

*1 Tbs. finely chopped cilantro*

*Kosher salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*1 Tbs. finely chopped flat-leaf parsley*

Remove any side-muscles that might still be on scallops. Cut the scallops into 1/2-inch pieces. Put them into a nonreactive bowl. Add the zest and juice of the citrus to the scallops. Combine tomatillos, onion, and jalapeño with the scallops. Cover the bowl and refrigerate until scallops are opaque, about 30 minutes.

Drain the excess juice off of the scallop mixture. Stir in the honeydew, parsley, and cilantro. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

To serve, divide the consommé among six chilled bowls. Divide the ceviche among the six bowls, spooning it in the center of the consommé. Garnish with parsley and serve.

## Watermelon-Raspberry-Pineapple Cream Popsicle with Toasted Coconut

(MAKES 12 4-OZ. POPSICLES)

*For the watermelon raspberry mixture:*

*1 cup water*

*2/3 cup sugar*

*1/4 tsp. kosher salt*

*4 1/2 cups diced seedless watermelon*

*1/2 cup raspberries*

*3 tsp. fresh lemon juice*

*Zest of 1 lime*

Combine the water, sugar, and salt in a saucepan and bring to a simmer. Remove from the heat and cool syrup to room temperature.

Working in batches, put the watermelon, raspberries, lemon juice, lime zest, and syrup in a blender and blend until liquefied. Strain the mixture through a fine mesh strainer. Refrigerate until chilled.

*For the pineapple cream mixture:*

*1 cup diced golden pineapple*

*1/4 cup sugar*

*1/8 tsp. kosher salt*

*1/3 cup heavy whipping cream*

*Zest of 1/2 lime*

SUMMER CEVICHE: watermelon consommé with scallops





**POP TO IT:** Two-toned pops get an extra crunch topped with toasted coconut.

*5 oz. plain Greek yogurt*

Combine the pineapple, sugar, and salt in a saucepan. Cook on medium heat, stirring occasionally, for about five minutes, until sugar and salt have completely dissolved. Transfer into a medium bowl and cool to room temperature.

Whip the cream to medium peaks. Add the lime zest to the cooled pineapple mixture. Fold in the yogurt, then fold in the whipped cream. The mixture should be smooth and creamy.

***For assembly:***

*1 cup shredded coconut*

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spread coconut out on a baking sheet and bake until lightly toasted, about five minutes. Allow coconut to cool completely. Store in a tightly sealed container.

To make layered pops, begin by filling the bottom of the molds with either the watermelon mixture or the pineapple cream. Freeze this before pouring in the next layer of the other flavor. Repeat. When ready to serve, place the toasted coconut in a bowl. Unmold the popsicles and sprinkle them in coconut. Serve. **C**