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Yachting

Welcoming Friends Onboard

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COVER FEATURE



Tips for Easy Entertaining Onboard

By Sheryl Shard
Photos by Paul and Sheryl Shard

The dream of living aboard a boat and sailing to exotic ports around the globe was a dream my husband, Paul, and I shared since we were high school sweethearts. And coming up this year we're delighted (and somewhat amazed!) to be celebrating 25 years of international cruising together.

In preparation for our first cruise, I read every book and magazine article I could about provisioning a boat and cooking at sea. (There was no Internet or blogging for research then.) When we finally set sail for tropical destinations on September 21, 1989, I felt ready for anything as far as cooking on a boat was concerned. I had pot clamps on the stovetop, a galley strap in place in front of the oven. I'd collected recipes for easy one-pot meals for quick and hearty meal preparation during storms at sea.

We waved goodbye to supportive friends and family as we cast off the docklines at Port Credit Yacht Club on Lake Ontario aboard our self-built Classic 37 sailboat and headed south. Our plan was to do a two year sabbatical, then return home and settle down. The settling down part still hasn't happened.

Since that day in 1989, Paul and I have visited over 60 countries and colonies around the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean, Mediterranean, Baltic and North Seas, have sailed more than 90,000 nm offshore as well as up narrow creeks and canals, helped design and instruct the Extended Cruising course for the Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons, have made five transatlantic crossings, written a book about outfitting and provisioning for cruising, and have been blessed with the opportunity to introduce millions of people to the joys of the boating lifestyle through the sailing adventure TV series we host, Distant Shores. The show airs weekdays across Canada on Cottage Life Channel as well as in 24 languages worldwide and is now in its 10th season.

Like all those that love the water and follow its call, we have had indescribable adventures at sea and in foreign lands, faced danger and adversity and overcome it, had incredible encounters with nature in the wild, and enjoyed sampling the delicious cuisine of foreign cultures. But if you ask any boater what the greatest joy of the cruising life is, most would agree that it's the people you meet.

And meeting people means entertaining.

I learned pretty fast on our first trip south that the biggest demands on the galley chef are not cooking in a seaway (although that has its special challenges which we'll reserve for another time). The toughest thing is the continual demand to come up with something delicious and creative using limited supplies for the innumerable spontaneous get-togethers that occur while travelling on a boat, whether in home waters on weekends or in exotic foreign ports on a long-term voyage.

The reason? Boaters are friendly folk and like to share stories and information over a drink or a meal. Planning ahead

Waiting for guests to arrive at anchor in Gorda Sound, British Virgin Islands. The table is set and LED candles set the mood. LED candles are safer on a boat and don't blow out. Napkins with a nautical theme dress up the table as well.

Photo by Paul Shard



The perfect location for a romantic dinner for two. Distant Shores II anchored alone in Eustacia Sound, BVI.

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just isn't part of the cruising life when it comes to most social situations since everyone is on the move. You don't know who will show up or when someone might be leaving so "Carpe Diem" - Seize the Day. On board Happy Hours are frequent with fellow sailors you've just met that day on the dock or who you discover you are sharing an anchorage with. You often meet local people too who help you out or that you just resonate with and want to get to know better. They're usually curious about your life afloat so you invite them to the boat for a drink and appetizers and show them around. The conversation flows so you rely on your repertoire of fast but amazing meals so you can whip something up easily from your staple of supplies on board and invite them to stay for dinner. Learning how to stretch out what you've already planned for the day's meal by adding extra vegetables, pasta or rice to accommodate unexpected guests or deal with increased appetites from outdoor activity is another useful skill when boating.

So although I love all those classic books I initially read about provisioning and cooking at sea (see sidebar) and still use them on passages, the cookbooks I refer to most on our boat are ones with titles such as "Nifty Nibbles" and "Sip to Shore".

Is my boat filled with long-life foods for ocean crossings? Only occasionally. Mostly I have lockers filled with a variety of crackers for canapes, jars of pate or interesting olives, packaged snack foods, delicious goodies in cans to use in a pinch, and dried pasta to create large meals for many. The bilge lockers hold wines and liquors I've stocked up on in duty-free ports. A shelf in the fridge is always stuffed with the makings of dips and spreads. I've added some kitchen equipment and gadgets to the boat over the years to speed up the meal preparation process such as a hand blender, pressure cooker and microwave. I collect interesting cheeses and dried sausages for quick and easier appetizers. I'm ready for anything!

You can make delicious and moist one-pot meat, veg, and rice dishes when company is coming using a pressure cooker. These reduce clean up so you can relax and enjoy the time with your friends or family.

You don't have to be an amazing cook to entertain friends and family on board. You just need a few tricks up your sleeve to feed them well while, more importantly, making them feel welcome and special. And the less work you have to do in the galley by keeping it simple means you're a more relaxed host.

HAPPY HOUR

Probably the most frequent form of entertaining on a boat is having friends, old or new, over to the boat for a drink. If you are weekend cruising, you can plan ahead for this more often than when you are cruising and on the move.

Drinks and snacks such as peanuts and pretzels are the simplest thing to offer. If you want to prepare a more filling appetizer consider a plate of canapes. Canapes are small slices of bread or pastry or crackers with some kind of topping such as a slice of cheese or a savoury spread and perhaps a vegetable garnish such as a sprig of parsley, sliver of red pepper or slice of cucumber. Canapes are simple but elegant appetizers which are so great for a boat.

Of course if you have the time, you can cook up a storm earlier in the day or week and refrigerate or freeze things to have ready to pop in the oven or microwave or ready to serve up. If you are a weekend sailor you can bring things you've made at home in a cooler, thermal bag or portable fridge/freezer. The key is to simplify and don't take up fridge space unnecessarily.



Boaters that are cruising long term usually bring their own drinks and contribute a snack when getting together for Happy Hour on anyone else's boat understanding that everyone is dealing with limited supplies and probably a restricted budget. That way no one's under pressure to serve the group and everyone is drinking what they like and monitoring their own supply. It frees everyone up to just get together and enjoy each other's company.

An appetizer I serve frequently and is always a hit is Stuffed Grape Leaves (See photo). My secret? They come straight out of a can! There is no prep time other than displaying them nicely on a plate with some olives in a pretty little dish. They don't take up space in the fridge and there are no dishes to wash up. They're delicious and I'm frequently asked for the recipe. Paul and I sometimes have them for lunch underway with fresh bread. Easy. I stock up when I can find them. They're nice with tzatziki too, a Greek garlic cucumber yoghurt dip, which I make ahead if company is coming. Tzatziki is also nice as a chip dip or with carrot sticks, celery or other vegetables.

TZATZIKI

A Greek woman I met when we were sailing in the Aegean Sea shared her tzatziki recipe with me and I happily pass it on to you.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups plain Greek yogurt *
 1 cup peeled and grated cucumber**
 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (juice of 1 lemon) or white vinegar
 2 tablespoons of olive oil
 2 small or a large garlic cloves, pressed or finely diced
 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh dill
 Salt and pepper, to taste



*Greek yoghurt is quite thick. If you just have regular plain yoghurt, either full fat or low fat, you can use that too but the dip will be more liquidy. An alternative is to drain the plain yoghurt to thicken it. Line a sieve with a paper towel or two and suspend it over a bowl. Plop the regular yoghurt into the lined sieve and allow the liquid to drain into the bowl for about 30 minutes or longer depending on how thick you want it.

**If you don't have a grater on board, diced cucumber works well too.

Left: Our friend William is a professional chef and photographer so is skilled with adding colour and flavour to meals. He punched up the colour of this braised chicken dinner with scalloped potatoes by adding tropical fruits such as mango and watermelon to a spinach salad.

Right: William, Shane and Paul at the cockpit table aboard Distant Shores II. William wanted to use the oven for his BBQ ribs recipe so we ate late when the temperature was cooler for working in a hot galley.

DIRECTIONS:

1. If using grated cucumber squeeze out moisture with your hands over the sink. You want the cucumber to be as moisture-free as possible.
2. In a medium bowl, combine Greek yogurt, olive oil, lemon juice or vinegar, cucumber, garlic, and dill. Stir until well combined. Taste and season with salt and pepper.
3. If you have time, chill before serving.

Serve with vegetables, pita bread, crackers, or chips; it's also good with meat and fish. The Greeks use it as a condi-



ment for many things. Tzatziki will keep in the refrigerator for 2-3 days. Drain off any liquid and stir before serving after refrigerating.

MEAL ONBOARD

Paul and I are dinner-and-conversation people. We love to prepare a meal and have people over to the boat for an evening. (If you love to bake, invite people over for dessert and coffee. Entertain and spend time with friends in a way that brings you joy!)

If we have lots of time, we'll have a fun afternoon preparing and cooking. If it's hot, as it often is in the tropics where we're currently cruising in the Caribbean, we'll pick up a rotisserie chicken, if available, and quickly prepare vegetables and/or a salad. It makes an impressive meal, keeps the heat out of the galley, and saves fuel. Entertaining on board is all about making everyone comfortable and content.

That includes the hosts.

PRESSURE COOKER AS TIME SAVER

A piece of kitchen equipment I find useful on a boat as many cruisers do is a pressure cooker. I was initially nervous of using it but then I got an excellent pressure cooker cookbook (see sidebar) and now use mine frequently.

Pressure cookers cook foods at high pressure with moist heat in a fraction of the time of conventional methods. They save fuel, reduce heat, and preserve the flavour and vitamins in foods. They are great at sea since the lids lock on so contents don't slop around.

Here's a one-pot Mexican-Style Chicken and Rice dinner recipe that was shared on the Pressure Cooking for Boats Facebook group and that I have adapted slightly. It has become a favourite aboard Distant Shores II.

PRESSURE COOKER MEXICAN-STYLE CHICKEN AND RICE

(See photo page 32)

INGREDIENTS

4 large boneless skinless chicken breasts, trimmed
salt and pepper
4 tsp vegetable oil
2 onions, halved and sliced ½ inch thick
2 jalapeno peppers, stemmed, seeded and minced
1 T cumin
1 T chili powder
8 cloves garlic sliced thin
1 cup water
2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
2 cups long grain white rice
1 (14.5 oz) can diced tomatoes, drained
1 (15.5 oz) can pinto beans, rinsed
¼ cup minced fresh cilantro
4 green onions, sliced thin for garnish
Lime wedges (for serving)

METHOD

Dry the chicken with paper towels, then season with salt and pepper. Heat 2 tsp in the bottom of the pressure cooker over medium-high heat and brown chicken lightly on both sides, about 3



Alex baked the chicken with stuffing and served with mashed potatoes and steamed vegetables. Canned cranberry sauce and a nice bottle of wine completed the meal.

minutes, then transfer to a clean plate.

Add the remaining 2 tsp oil and head until simmering. Add the onions, jalapenos, cumin and chili powder. Cook until softened about 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic and cook for 15 seconds. Stir in the water, scraping up any browned bits, then pour into the pressure cooker.

Stir the broth and rice into the pressure cooker. (When out of broth I use the drained juice off the tomatoes plus water.) Arrange the chicken on top of the rice and press lightly to partially submerge.

Sprinkle the tomatoes over the chicken (do not stir). Lock the lid in place and bring to high pressure over high heat. Cook for exactly 4 minutes adjust-

ing the heat as necessary to maintain high pressure.

Remove the pressure cooker from the heat. Allow the pressure to naturally release for 8 minutes, then quick release any remaining pressure. Carefully remove the lid, allowing the steam to escape away from you. Transfer the chicken to a cutting board and tent loosely with foil.

Stir in the beans and cilantro into the rice and season with salt and pepper to taste. Replace the lid (do not lock) and let the rice sit off the heat until it is completely tender, about 2 minutes. Serve onto plates with a chicken breast, one per person, on top of the rice and beans. Alternatively, slice the chicken 1/2 inch thick. Transfer the rice to a serving platter and arrange the chicken slices over the rice and sprinkle with chopped green onion. Serve with lime wedges.

Another way to keep the heat out of the galley and prepare fast delicious meals when company is joining you on board is to use a barbecue to grill meat, fish and vegetables. We recently got rid of our barbecue because we got tired of the messy clean up and instead use a grill pan on the stovetop. Here's an amazingly fast and simple meal for grilling that looks and tastes great if you enjoy seafood.



Grilled seafood makes an elegant yet quick-to-prepare meal for dinner on board.

SEARED TUNA STEAKS AND COCONUT RICE

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tuna steak per person
- half a zucchini per person, sliced
- green tea leaves (rip open a tea bag or two)
- salt and pepper
- sesame oil
- coconut milk (I used dried coconut milk powder)
- water
- long-grain rice
- pickled ginger slivers for garnish
- chopped green onion for garnish (I used chopped lettuce or spinach if green onion isn't available)



From left to right: David MacDonald and Alex Palcic of S/V Banyan, Paul Shard of S/V Distant Shores II, Lynn Kaak and Ken Goodings of S/V Silverheels III. Cruising sailors understand the difficulty of keeping your boat stocked with supplies and the drain on those supplies when entertaining. So most sailors casual get-togethers are potluck and BYOB. We all own nice thermal bags to carry to friends' boats to keep drinks cold or food hot.



The boating life involves lots of outdoor activity which increases hunger and thirst so be ready to make meals larger than usual to satisfy increased appetites.

METHOD

Measure out enough rice so there will be a plateful for each person. Use a mixture of half-water/half coconut milk instead of just water to make the required amount of rice. Let boil and steam while preparing the tuna.

Wash tuna steaks with water and dry off with paper towels. Rub the tuna steaks with a little sesame oil, green tea leaves (yes, rip open a tea bag and use like oregano), salt and pepper.

Heat barbecue or grill pan. Grill zucchini slices and when done remove to other part of barbecue or a clean plate to keep warm.

Sear the steaks on the hot grill or grill pan for 1-2 minutes per side depending on how well cooked you and your guests like the fish.

Serve the steaks, one per person, on top of the coconut rice. Arrange zucchini slices on the side.

Garnish with slivers of pickled ginger and chopped green onion.

My friend, Alex Palcic, who sails with

her husband, Dave MacDonald, aboard S/V Banyan out of Halifax, is a master of simple but elegant dinners. Her Friday night special is Beef Tacos (see photo) that is simply seasoned ground beef including taco sauce stuffed into taco and sprinkled with grated cheddar cheese. It's baked in the oven until the cheese melts. Yum!

One night when we met up in Grenada she wowed us by preparing Dave's mother's "Stuffed Chicken", an onboard version of Thanksgiving dinner. Alex tells me, "It is very easy, but has no measured ingredients per se... you kind of make as much as you need and adjust the ingredients so it tastes right/looks right. It works well for thin turkey, chicken or pork fillets."

Here's the gist of it:

BANYAN'S STUFFED CHICKEN RECIPE

Finely chop some onions to cover the bottom of a large frying pan.

Melt a rather large quantity of butter

in the frying pan and saute the onions until translucent.

Meanwhile in a bowl, shred a loaf (more or less) of soft white bread (small pieces).

In a large mixing bowl add the butter/onion mixture and bread pieces. Mix well so all bread chunks have been moistened.

You may at this point have to add more bread/more butter or onions, depending on the amount of dressing desired.

Add a generous portion of Summer Savoury and salt and pepper, to taste.

Take one of the fillets, stuff with a spoonful or two of stuffing, and roll to hold together, attaching ends with a toothpick or twine. Repeat for the rest. One per person.

Bake in a preheated 350F oven until cooked through. (Time varies on thickness of meat and boat oven.)

Favourite Cookbooks and Books on Provisioning

- The Care and Feeding of Sailing Crew by Lin Pardey
- The Cruising Cook and First Addition by Shirley Herd
- Voyaging on a Small Income by Annie Hill
- The Perfect First Mate: A Woman's Guide to Recreational Boating by Joy Smith
- The Joy of Cooking by Irma S. Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker
- The Essential Galley Companion by Amanda Swan-Neal
- The Boat Galley Cookbook by Carolyn Shearlock and Jan Irons
- Cooking on the Go by Janet Groene
- Galley Gourmet by Nicole Parton
- Six Ingredients or Less by Linda Hazen and Carlean Johnson
- Nifty Nibbles by Cathy Prange and Joan Pauli
- Sip to Shore Cocktails and Hors d'oeuvres: A Collection of Caribbean Charter Yacht Concoctions by Jan Robinson
- Everything Healthy Pressure Cooker Cookbook by Laura D.A. Pazzaglia
- Maran Illustrated Guide to Bartending



Photo by William Torillo

As boaters we all love to get out on the water and enjoy the great outdoors which is highlighted by sharing the experience with family and friends. Entertaining on board is one of the pleasures of this lifestyle and keeping things simple keeps it that way.

Wishing you a wonderful boating season. See you on the water! •

Paul and Sheryl Shard are award-winning filmmakers, sailing authors, and the fun-loving hosts of the Distant Shores sailing adventure TV series that airs weekdays across Canada on Cottage Life channel. The shows are also available on DVD and download. They are currently updating their best-selling book, Sail Away! A Guide to Outfitting and Provisioning for Cruising, to a third edition. Sheryl and Paul have been sailing internationally for nearly 25 years and have documented their global adventures cruising to over 60 countries and colonies on 5 continents.

You can follow their adventures on www.distantshores.ca