

# FOOD & DRINK

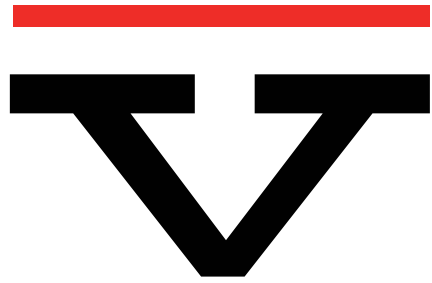
## A Spring Garden Feast

Santa Barbara author Valerie Rice shares celebratory seasonal recipes inspired by her idyllic seaside garden.

*Photographs by* GEMMA AND ANDREW INGALLS







Valerie Rice has long celebrated the graceful pleasures of the garden and the table from her beautiful Spanish Revival house in Santa Barbara. The University of California-educated master gardener and prolific cook has chronicled her botanical and culinary evolution in an extremely photogenic but always approachable fashion, first on a popular blog (remember those!), then on Instagram (for a serious case of raised-bed envy, go to @eatdrinkgarden), and now in her cookbook, *Lush Life: Food & Drinks From the Garden* (Prospect Park Books; \$35). Here she's gathered a collection of

recipes, arranged by season, with notes on what to plant now to better harvest your dinner just around the corner. So when you're cooking, say, the blistered asparagus in this story, there's a chart in the spring chapter that includes what tomatoes to plant now to set you for success with the tomato and stone fruit salad in the next chapter. All the recipes have a casual seasonal appeal, most coming together in well under an hour—often with the bonus of smart wine pairings from Raj Parr, James Beard Award winning sommelier turned winemaker. While the pretty dishes, wine suggestions, and tasty

cocktails are perfect for entertaining, they're simple enough to pull off at an intimate gathering with your nearest and dearest on a weeknight. As Valerie puts it: "My goal as a home cook is to cook the cleanest, most flavorful food, tied to the rhythms of the earth and the seasons, in the simplest way and with the least amount of dishes. Words to live by, right?" We couldn't agree more.

Rice supplements her farmers' market haul with produce from her garden.



## Oven-Baked Ribs With Nasturtium Gremolata

4 TO 6 SERVINGS

"Crispy on the outside and succulent on the inside, these ribs are so simple to make. I take any opportunity to use nasturtiums when they hit the scene in spring. Their rigorous growth of lush foliage and bright orange flowers blanket the garden like no other. They are delicious in the gremolata, but if you don't have them on hand, substitute with arugula. Or skip the gremolata altogether and just serve the ribs with a side of barbecue sauce."

### FOR THE NASTURTIUM GREMOLATA

½ cup (packed) nasturtium leaves and flowers, finely chopped

¼ cup finely chopped fresh Italian parsley

1 tsp. grated orange zest (from 1 small orange)

1 tsp. grated lemon zest (from 1 small lemon)

1 large garlic clove, grated

### FOR THE RIBS

2 racks pork baby back ribs

1 Tbsp. Diamond Crystal kosher salt

1 Tbsp. whole cumin seeds, toasted and ground

1 Tbsp. dried Aleppo pepper or other ground chilies

1 Tbsp. sumac

2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

2 tsp. smoked paprika

1. **FOR GREMOLATA:** Mix all ingredients in a bowl. (Can be made 4 hours ahead. Cover and refrigerate.)

2. **FOR RIBS:** Preheat the oven to 450°F. Place the ribs on a large rimmed baking sheet. Pat the ribs dry with clean towels (paper or cloth) and season both sides of the meat with 1 tablespoon salt. Mix cumin, Aleppo pepper, sumac, black pepper, and paprika in a small bowl. Rub the spice mixture all over the ribs. Cook for 45 minutes. The result will be tender meat and crispy skin.

3. Sprinkle ribs with gremolata and serve.

### WINE PAIRING:

- Raj tells me: A medium-bodied red wine like a Grenache will carry the spices. Consider Comando G Garnacha "La Bruja de Rozas" from Madrid or "Tribute to Grace" Grenache, Santa Barbara County.

"My goal is to cook the cleanest, most flavorful food tied to the rhythms of the seasons."





# Blistered Asparagus With Pistachios, Green Garlic, and Chives

6 SERVINGS

“I have tried numerous times to grow asparagus in our garden, but after devoting a good deal of space, lots of water, and tons of time only to get a few thin and measly stalks, I decided to scrap our crop and shop for it at the farmers’ market.

Garlic, on the other hand, is easy to grow in our Santa Barbara climate and is a very rewarding crop, as it delivers products in so many ways. #1: Pick it early for delicious and lovely green garlic. #2: Pull it from the earth once the leaves have browned for a full head. #3: Take a clove from the fully dried head and plant it for the process to repeat. It’s the simplest “Lather. Rinse. Repeat.” of gardening.

To pick the best asparagus wherever you shop, look for stalks that are thick and flower tops that are tight like a ball—not sprouting or stringy.”

**Kitchen Tips:** Try this recipe with sugar snap peas instead of asparagus and get a similarly tasty result. Feel free to play around with different spring herbs, such as thyme, savory, or mint. Go easy with the lemon—just a touch of it brightens the flavors in this simple dish, but too much will quickly overwhelm the gentle green garlic.

**5 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided**  
**¼ cup thinly sliced green garlic (from 1 to 2 green garlic heads with about an inch of the green stem)**  
**1 tsp. grated lemon zest (from 1 small lemon)**  
**½ cup toasted salted pistachios, coarsely chopped**  
**2 bunches asparagus, ends trimmed, stalks cut on bias into 2-inch pieces**  
**½ tsp. Diamond Crystal kosher salt**  
**1 Tbsp. chopped fresh chives**  
**1 tsp. fresh lemon juice (from ½ lemon)**  
**Flaky sea salt and freshly cracked pepper**  
**Lemon wedges**  
**Chive blossoms (optional)**



1. Preheat the broiler, positioning the oven rack about 5 inches from the heat source.
2. Stir 3 tablespoons olive oil, green garlic, and lemon zest in a small saucepan over medium heat until fragrant and warm, about 3 minutes. Mix in pistachios and set aside.
3. Place the asparagus on a rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons oil and ½ teaspoon salt; toss to coat. Broil for 2 minutes. Pull out the baking sheet to check on how things are going (be careful not to burn the asparagus) and shake

the pan. Continue broiling the asparagus until the tips begin to turn golden brown, about 8 more minutes, shaking the asparagus every 2 to 3 minutes.

4. Add the pistachio mixture, chives, and lemon juice to the asparagus and toss to coat. Place the asparagus on a platter and pour any residual sauce from the sheet pan over the top. Season with salt and pepper. Garnish with lemon wedges. Serve warm or at room temperature and garnish with chive blossoms, if available.



# Gin Salty Dog With Fresh Mint

MAKES 2 COCKTAILS

“Bright, sweet, and bold (no, I’m not talking about myself), Ruby Red grapefruits are lip-smackingly delicious. No need to add any sweetener to this type of God-made perfection. In California, grapefruit season generally lasts from January through August. If you can’t find Ruby Red, try other varieties like Oro Blanco, Pink, or Star Ruby. Whatever you do, don’t use pasteurized store-bought juice. The flavor is not even close to being as delicious. The longer the grapefruit sits in a bowl on your counter, the sweeter it will become. Sometimes if the flavor is too sweet, I’ll add a squeeze of lime. I love the freshness of the mint in this cocktail—it draws on all of the delectable botanical notes found in gin. If you’re an anti-gin person (I know, I know, you had a bad gin experience in college), you can substitute vodka. But gin is more traditional. Give it a go—you might be a convert.”

**2 Tbsp. flaky sea salt**  
**10 oz. (1¼ cups) fresh grapefruit juice (from 1 to 2 grapefruits)**  
**4 oz. (½ cup) gin, such as Ford’s, Caorunn, or Old Raj**  
**2 thin grapefruit wedges and 2 fresh mint sprigs (garnish)**

- Pour sea salt onto a small saucer. Dip the rims of two double Old Fashioned glasses in the juice, then dip them in salt (if you want to be fancy, just dip half of the glass in the salt). Fill glasses with ice. Stir the juice and gin in a small pitcher (or mixing glass) and pour into salt-rimmed glasses. Garnish with grapefruit and mint.

Be sure to pick up a copy of *Lush Life* for more inspired recipes from Valerie Rice. [\\$35, amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1633250000)

