



How to Make Your Pool the Place to Be

by homewarranty.com

Maintaining a swimming pool is more complicated than many of us imagine, but the rewards are clear. Four components must be constantly nurtured: water chemistry, the pool's surface, its circulation, and its filtration system. Keep your swimmers (and your investment) healthy this summer with the following pool maintenance tips.

Brush

Be sure to brush the walls of your pool to remove particles that adhere to concrete or fiberglass. Brush at least once a week to clean mold and algae from your pool's walls - and do this *before* you vacuum. Particles that have sunk to the bottom of your pool can then be easily removed by the vacuum.

Vacuum and Rake

Use a net to scoop out twigs, leaves, and other debris that finds its way to your pool. Experts suggest investing in a scoop with a sturdy yet lightweight design. Choose a scoop with an extra-wide net and a telescopic pole to enable you to reach the middle of your pool. Use a pool vacuum to remove debris such as leaves that have fallen to the bottom of your pool. Vacuum your pool weekly, at a minimum.

Keep the Filter Clean

Clean your filters once a week. Even if you keep your chemicals in perfect balance, a dirty filter will counteract this. A dirty filter can lead to a cloudy or even green pool due to the lack of water circulation. As water passes through the filter, millions of tiny particles are

trapped by the filter. The accumulation of the particles then leads to an overworked and under-performing pump that is not able to properly do its job.

Skimmers and Returns

Skimmers (*we're not referring to net skimmers on a pole*) pull water from the pool and send it to the filter for cleaning. The returns then push the cleaned water back out into your pool. It's important to keep the skimmers and returns clear of debris and/or obstructions.

Check PH Levels on the Regular

Check the pH levels of your pool every day if possible. The pH level measures the acidity of your pool water, and the scale goes from 0 to 14, 7 being neutral. The ideal pH level for pool water is 7.5. The best time to test the water is in the evening, before adding chemicals, and again first thing in the morning to ensure it is suitable for swimming.

Maintain Water Level

Water levels should be checked weekly when you skim the pool. Your pool will lose water over time due to evaporation. Don't let the water level fall below the skimmer intake, as this may damage the pump. Fill your pool with a garden hose.

Keep a Schedule

Between your family, your neighbors, and Mother Nature- all happily spending time in your pool, it's important to make a cleaning schedule and stick to it. Better yet, post a schedule of tasks, due dates, and the family member responsible for the task. Just like other ongoing projects, staying on top of the regular maintenance will make any task-at-hand easier.



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August Calendar

August 7 - Purple Heart Day

August 14 - National Financial Awareness Day

August 15 - National Back-to-School Prep Day

August is National Goat Cheese Month

Homeowner Tip



Grow Your Own Mosquito Repellent

Yes, it's true. Mosquitoes actually are repelled by something other than cheap cologne. Try these easy-to-grow, all-natural mosquito repellents sure to send the hungry pests to your neighbor's backyard instead. Fast-growing Horsemint is a drought-resistant favorite. Marigolds, typically known as just another pretty face, contain pyrethrum, a compound used in insect repellents. Finally, Catnip has been shown to be as effective as DEET in small areas.

August is Back-to-School Month - A Few Tips For a Great Start

The following back-to-school tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics offer great advice for getting your child back into the swing of school.

- Get your child started on their school schedule a week or so ahead of time to ease them into the change.

- If your child is facing a new situation such as a new school, take them for a visit before the first day of school. Let them know other kids probably have similar feelings.

- If your child is beginning a new school, take

advantage of any available orientations beforehand. Make sure to include your child in any school tours available for new students.

- Stress the positive aspects of school. Remind them of the friends they will see again and the new friends they are bound to make.

- If possible, find another child in the neighborhood with whom your child can ride or walk to school with.

- If need be, drive your child, or walk with them to school on their first day. Try to arrive early to avoid the unnecessary stress that comes from being late and rushing to find the correct classroom.



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Strawberry Goat Cheese Bruschetta

The way the tangy, slightly salty goat cheese works with the syrupy, balsamic-coated strawberries and crispy, charred bread is a thing of beauty.

INGREDIENTS

½ cup balsamic vinegar
12 slices Italian bread
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 pound strawberries, washed and diced
2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves, plus more for serving
1 cup goat cheese, room temperature
salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Heat vinegar in a small skillet over medium-low heat. Simmer until reduced by about half, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove

from heat and allow to cool to room temperature.

Prepare a grill for high heat. Place bread slices on a foil-lined baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil.

Combine strawberries and thyme in a small bowl and set aside.

Grill bread on the preheated grill until browned, about 3 minutes per side.

Spread goat cheese on toasted bread. Add black pepper, salt, and reduced vinegar to the strawberry mixture. Spoon over the goat cheese topped bruschetta.

Garnish with additional thyme.



*Photo & recipe courtesy of:
AllRecipes.com
Strawberry Goat Cheese Bruschetta*