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**Treat Yourself to an
Around the Table
Chef's Apron**

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More information the web at
www.susannye.com

I am hurriedly clacking away on my keyboard, anxious to finish up and head outdoors. After a summer of too many rainy days, lots of chilly weather and mildew, we have been blessed with a glorious Indian summer. The weather is perfect for walking or hiking, biking or kayaking or just sitting, reading and soaking up the sunshine.

Utt ohhhh ... will I somehow put a jinx on all this great weather if I sing its praises. I certainly hope not! In a few short days the Harvest Moon will light up the night sky. I can't think of a better way to celebrate autumn than a Harvest Moon party.

Why not bring your friends and family together for one last outdoor fling. It won't be long before a long summer evening on the deck or beach is a faint, but happy, memory. The days are already getting shorter and some nights have not just been cool, they've been downright chilly. If you bundle up there is still time to give the beach chairs and the picnic table one last go before putting them away for the season.

Spending a crisp fall evening outdoors adds a few complications that you might not find in the summer, especially if you are heading out to the beach or a park. Here are a few hints to help make the evening memorable ... in a positive way!

When it comes to menu, something comfy and cozy is great on a fall evening. Don't fuss with lots of different dishes when you can relax and enjoy your party with a simple one-pot supper. A big pot of chili, a hearty stew or a nice thick soup is the perfect solution. And dessert? That's easy, what else but s'mores. All you need to serve the meal are big soup mugs, spoons and of course sticks for the marshmallows.

Don't forget to bring along a big, empty box or bin and a few trash bags. Dusk turns to dark early. A large box is perfect for stacking dirty dishes and getting them off the beach and into the car quickly. Don't leave this chore until you are ready to leave. Even with a full moon, no one likes to tidy up in the dark. Speaking of tidying up in the dark, don't forget to bring a flashlight or two or three. Again, even with the light of the moon shoes can be lost and toes can be stubbed.

When it comes to dress code; forget about high fashion and glam. Think layers and dress warmly. You might want to start out in shorts and a t-shirt but odds are you'll need to add a layer or two as the evening progresses. It might feel balmy as you are packing up the car to head out but the temperature plummets as soon as the sun goes down. A heavy sweater or a toasty fleece will come in handy and if you're like me, you might even bring along a hat and gloves.

You don't need Frankie, Annette or Gidget for music or a little nostalgia. Invite a guitar player or two and build a fire. What could be cozier? And if you don't want to deal with a big bon fire? Well, now is as good a time as any to try out a new portable fire pit. Whatever you do, check with the fire department for permits!

As the evening progresses and cools down, gather around the fire to toast marshmallows and howl at the moon. (Which reminds me, don't wear that new posh jacket unless you want it to smell like wood smoke.) Have a wonderful evening with friends and family under the harvest moon.

Bon appétit!

Susan



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Spicy Chicken Stew with Vegetables and Chick Peas

Bring the stew to a simmer at home. When you are ready to go, wrap the pot in old beach towels and carefully slide it into a cooler. It will stay nice and hot until you are ready to enjoy!

Serves 12

1 large onion, chopped
2 leeks, white and light green parts only, chopped
5 stalks celery, chopped
1/2 pound butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cut in small cubes
5 carrots, chopped
4 cloves garlic, minced
1-2 tablespoons curry powder or to taste
1 teaspoon cumin
Pinch chili pepper
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1 cup dry white wine
4 pounds chicken breasts
4 – 8 cups chicken stock
28 to 32 ounce can crushed tomatoes
3 (15 ounce) cans chick peas
12-16 ounces baby spinach
Olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
Garnish: chopped fresh cilantro

1. Heat a little olive oil in a large heavy soup pot; add the onion, leek, celery, carrots and squash. Cook over low heat for 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the garlic, curry, cumin, chili pepper, thyme, salt and pepper and cook 5 minutes more.
2. Add the white wine, chicken, 4 cups stock and tomatoes to the pot. Raise the heat and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until the chicken is cooked through, about 20 minutes. Remove the chicken and let cool.
3. Add the chick peas to the pot and simmer.
4. When the chicken is cool enough to handle, remove the chicken from the bones. Discard the bones and skin. Cut or shred the chicken into bite-sized pieces. Add the chicken back to the pot. Add more stock depending on how thick or soupy you want your stew. Simmer for 10 minutes; add the spinach and simmer for 5 minutes more. Serve garnished with cilantro.

The stew is better if it's made 1 day ahead. Cool to room temperature, cover and refrigerate.