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Treat Yourself to an Around the Table Chef's Apron

Contact Susan Nye at susannye@tds.net or 603/526 7319

More information the web at www.susannye.com

Last Wednesday I woke up feeling out of sorts. Lying in bed I took a few moments to assess the situation. First I noticed a little scratchy feeling in my throat, then I realized only one side of my nose was working and finally I noted a few aches and pains. In spite of the fuzzy wuzzy feeling in my brain, I figured it out. I had a head cold. Given my fragile state, this assessment took an almost Herculean effort and was all followed by a fierce desire to roll over and burrow under the covers. Which I did, at least for a little while. While sometimes referred to as the common cold, as far as I'm concerned my colds are anything but common.

For many years I spent a lot of time in airports and on airplanes. While a small child may be the most effective Petri dish for breeding and spreading cold and flu germs, an airplane takes a close second. To make matters worse, airports are notoriously cold and drafty. Schlepping through miles and miles of chilly, subterranean corridors is enough to wear down anyone's resistance, including mine. Passing the winter with a series of colds was part of the territory. Most were minor, the take-two-aspirins-go-to-bed-early-and-you-won't-need-to-call-me-in-the-morning variety. But about once a year, the stars misaligned and I came down with one of those absolutely-wretched-put-me-out-of-my-misery colds.

Now that I am rarely on airplanes, I usually manage to avoid most of the nasty viruses that lurk around looking for innocent noses to attack. Until last week. I have no idea where I caught it. Did someone sneeze on me in the super market? Could it have been one of the nieces? They seemed healthy enough when I skied with them on the weekend, but who knows? Or maybe with all the racing around before, during and after the holidays, my luck or resistance ran out.

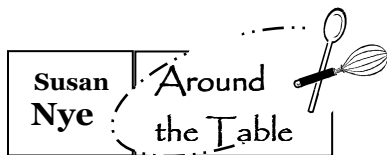
When it comes to treating my colds, I tend to be a bit haphazard. I can never remember if it is starve a cold and feed a fever or feed a cold and starve a fever. It must be feed a cold since soup, especially chicken noodle, is my all time favorite cold remedy. Regardless of old wives tales, the care and feeding of my colds can best be described as alternatively coddling and ignoring them.

I eventually managed to roll out of bed on that Wednesday morning. I had no soup on hand so I kicked off the morning by searching the medicine cabinet for anything with a sell-by date after 2003. Luck was with me, I dosed myself with vitamin C, some decongestant and pain reliever. I then went about my day pretending that all was right with the world although I'm pretty sure I grumbled a bit and complained to anyone who would listen (or not).

I was delighted to surrender to my stuffy nose, aches and pains on Thursday. I spent the entire day cuddled up on the couch in front of the fire. My self-indulgence was cut short and I was up early on Friday for a bunch of phone calls and then raced out the door to run errands and make soup on the noon news. (If you missed my live performance you can watch the video clip on www.youtube.com/susannye.)

I was tempted to retreat to the couch again on the weekend but ignored the impulse and skied both Saturday and Sunday mornings. However, I was ever so happy to spend both afternoons prone in front of the fire. I seriously considered a return trip to the sofa on Monday and again on Tuesday. Unfortunately both days were already booked. And today, one week later, the good news is I'm breathing freely again. And the bad news? Well if I want to languish on the sofa I'll need to find another excuse!

Take care, stay well and bon appétit!



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or just look like one!

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My Favorite Spicy Chicken Noodle Soup

This is not the soup I made on air last week but it is my absolute favorite cold remedy.

*The steaming broth clears my nose and the jalapeño and spices wake up my foggy
brain. Enjoy!*

Serves 8

Olive oil

1 large onion, chopped

2 leeks, chopped

4 carrots, chopped

4 celery stalks, chopped

4 cloves of garlic, minced

1 tablespoon or to taste jalapeño pepper, minced

1/4 teaspoon or to taste dried chili pepper flakes

1/2 teaspoon dried thyme

12 cups chicken stock – homemade or store bought

2 cups cooked chicken in bite size pieces

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

4-6 ounces Chinese noodles

Garnish: 1/2 cup cilantro, chopped (optional)

1. Put a little olive oil in a soup kettle. Add the onion, garlic, jalapeño, chili pepper and thyme and cook over low heat for 10 minutes. Add the leeks, carrots and celery and cook for an additional 5 minutes.
2. Increase the heat to medium high. Add the stock and bring to a boil. Add the chicken and reduce heat to low. Simmer until vegetables are tender, 30-45 minutes.
3. Cook the Chinese noodles in a separate pot according to package directions less 1 minute. Drain and rinse under cold water to remove excess starch. Shake off excess water.
4. Add the noodles to the soup; return the soup to a simmer and cook for 1 minute. Serve immediately, garnished with chopped cilantro.