

Super Bowl Sunday

Winter 2007/volume 20

I just got back from Boxford and babysitting my nieces. My brother, John whisked his wife, Jennifer, off to a romantic vacation in San Francisco and the Napa Valley. I spent several days with the girlies and had an insider's view of suburbia; schlepping kids to soccer games, checking home work, watching American Idol and, in spite of the frigid weather, window shopping and eating ice cream in Newburyport. I also enjoyed a football party. The Craig's had the neighbors in to watch the Patriots play Indianapolis and as a short term, proxy parent I was graciously included. The Craig's pulled out all the stops. There was enough fabulous food to feed half the NFL. Kids were everywhere and most sported Patriot's jerseys. The cheering was both intense and heartfelt, but unfortunately it was not enough to send the Patriots back to the Super Bowl.

In spite of the sad results, it was great party and returning home it hit me; I should write a Super Bowl story. I should write about remarkable games and remarkable parties. The only problem is that I am football-impaired. When I was growing up, we watched a lot of baseball and even more hockey, but I don't remember watching football. During the winter, we rushed through dinner to get homework done in time to watch the Boston Bruins. We even had season tickets at the Boston Garden for several years. When Bobby Orr spoke at a Cub Scout father-son dinner, I don't know who was more star struck; my Dad or John. Or who was more jealous, me or my Mother.

But, back to football, not only did I miss out on football as a kid; I have lived most of my adult life in Switzerland. Football in Europe is played with a round ball which is kicked around the field. Americans call it soccer. To differentiate, most Europeans call the game with the pig skin American football. At least when I lived there, the Super Bowl was not televised in Switzerland. With its tiny population, some savvy Swiss must have run the numbers and figured out that they could not make a buck televising a sport with little local interest, and with the time difference, in the middle of the night.

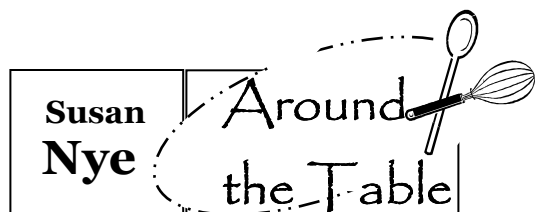


Around 1990 I was dating an American who was a football fanatic. He was determined to watch the Super Bowl and he went on a mission to find a place to watch and celebrate the game. If he couldn't watch locally he threatened to drive to one of the US military bases in Germany or even fly to the States. He discovered that one of the premium cable stations in France was televising the game live. France was a stone's throw from Geneva so he checked bars and hotels along the border. Negotiating in broken French he finally got confirmation that a hotel in Divonne had access to the game. However, the hotel bar was not an option. The game did not start until 11 p.m. local time and the bar closed at midnight. The hotel's management saw no reason to make an exception for Super Bowl Sunday.

A plan was formulated and put into action. A couple of rooms were booked. Anyone and everyone who might be remotely interested was invited. It was determined that this all-American sport could not be celebrated with French room service. Chips, dips, cold beer and some hot dogs (and a microwave to cook them in) were surreptitiously smuggled up to the rooms. This was not a gourmet affair! A motley crew of celebrants began to gather around 10:30. The group included American expatriates who had not seen a football game in years. Our European friends were celebrating their first Super Bowl party, and in most cases watching their first football game. Besides our host, there might have been one, possibly two, diehard fans in the group. At the end of the first quarter most revelers said their good nights and drifted off. Monday was a work day and it was well past midnight. Any concerns of being thrown out of the hotel for boisterous partying in the early morning hours disappeared.

The US has successfully exported Elvis and Madonna, PC's and iPods, McDonald's and Burger King, Coke and Pepsi; so why not football? I would love to wax philosophical and answer the question; but I'm football-impaired. Enjoy the game and,

Bon appétit! -
Susan



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Thursday Night Cooking Parties

February

- 8 Romantic Dinners
- 22 Paris Bistro

March

- 1 French Country Cooking
- 15 Moroccan Nights
- 29 Tuscan Feast

April

- 12 Grazing on Tapas
- 26 More Paris Bistro

May

- 10 Another Tuscan Feast
- 24 More French Country
Cooking

June

- 7 Summer Salads

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Black Beans Chili with Chicken and Corn

A new twist on an old favorite; this chili is a great party dish and easy to double or triple or more for a big crowd.

- 3 cans (15-16 ounces each) black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 red pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 yellow pepper, seeded and chopped
- ½ jalapeño pepper or to taste, minced
- 1 tablespoon or to taste of your favorite hot pepper sauce
- ½ teaspoon or to taste chipotle pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 teaspoons dried sage
- 1 bay leaf
- 8 ounces cheddar cheese, grated
- 1 cup sour cream
- ½ cup chicken broth
- ½ cup dry sherry
- 3 pounds cooked chicken, cut into bite size pieces
- 6 cups fresh or frozen corn kernels

1. Combine the onion, garlic, red and yellow bell peppers, jalapeño pepper, hot pepper sauce, chipotle and cumin in a large skillet toss with a little olive oil. Sauté over medium heat for 10 minutes.
2. Combine sautéed vegetables with the black beans, thyme, sage, bay leaf, cheddar cheese, sour cream, chicken broth and sherry in a large oven proof casserole.
3. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes.
4. Add the chicken and corn to the casserole.
5. Continue baking until bubbling, 30-45 minutes.

The chili can be made a day or two ahead. Complete through step 4. Cool slightly then refrigerate uncovered until cold; cover and keep refrigerated. Bring to room temperature before proceeding with step 5.

Serves 12