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So here's another one ... you know you live in New Hampshire when 13° feels positively balmy. And yes, that's even if a thick layer of clouds is hiding the sun. That's how relieved we are that the mercury has crept above zero. Okay, maybe I exaggerate. We all know the temperature needs to climb to at least 20° before we get out our shorts and flip-flops.



Last week's deep freeze was more than enough to challenge the most diehard New Englander and outdoor enthusiast. I include myself in both these categories, priding myself on my Yankee roots and my inbred tenacity to get out and about despite the cold. (Tenacity sounds much better than stubbornness doesn't it?)

This is not to say that I am not occasionally forced to throw in the towel and admit defeat. There are those days, happily few and far between, when work, the cold or rain get the best of me. Hey, I may be tough but I've got a mortgage to pay and I'm not made of steel (or arctic fleece and Goretex).

My latest ploy to beat Mother Nature at her bone-chilling game is snowshoeing. Snowshoeing keeps you in constant motion and warm, even on the coldest day. Happily, unlike many sports (golf, sailing, skiing, to name a few), it does not require a big investment in equipment, lessons or time.

Lucky me, I hit the snowshoe jackpot at a summer sale at L.L. Bean's and was equipped for a song. Next, I dug out an old pair of hiking boots and cross country ski poles. Bundled up in long underwear, fleece sweat pants, a warm jacket, hat and mittens, I'm ready to go. What I may lack in glamour or style, I certainly make up in enthusiasm and panache.

Snowshoeing does not require a whole heck of a lot of training or skill. Let me qualify that. It doesn't require a lot of skill if, like me, you're in pretty decent shape with little or no inclination to join the elite racing circuit. I'm happy to plod along and let others dash and dart around the trees. My lack of ambition is probably a good thing since I've been known to stumble when attempting to walk and chew gum at the same time.

As long as you can put one foot in front of the other you can probably snowshoe. I have found that it helps if you remember to pick up your feet and put them back down heel-to-toe. When I get tired, I have a tendency to do a sort of foot-dragging shuffle which invariably sends me end over tea kettle. But not to worry, the snow is soft so the only thing I've managed to hurt so far is my pride.

At least for those of us that live in the country, snowshoeing is terribly convenient. I may not have a Starbucks or two or three within walking distance of my backdoor but there are several snowshoe trails within a mile or two of my house. I don't think I will ever get tired of the lake and woods or bored by the beautiful views.

All that said; I recently discovered that it could get too cold to snowshoe. Maybe not for every diehard New Englander, but alas, this outdoor enthusiast does have her limits. One day last week, I woke up to find the thermometer in my kitchen window was hovering at -20°. For maybe a nanosecond I thought about a quick jaunt through the woods on my snowshoes. Then caution and commonsense, or maybe it was sloth, quickly took over. It seems that when the going gets rough, this tough girl goes to the movies.

Enjoy the snow, stay warm,

Bon appétit!

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Contact me at
susannye@tds.net
603 / 526 7319
PO Box 1875 - New London
New Hampshire 03257

Fettuccine with Escarole, Radicchio and Mushrooms

The escarole and radicchio give this dish a bit of color and bite, the mushrooms add a nice woodsy flavor and the cheeses add richness. All in all, a wonderful combination! Enjoy!

Makes 6 servings

1 pound mushrooms wiped clean and stemmed
Olive oil
Balsamic vinegar
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 small red onion, cut in half lengthwise and then in thin wedges
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
Red pepper flakes to taste
1 teaspoon anchovy paste
1 small head of escarole, quartered and cut into thin ribbons
1 small head of radicchio, quartered and cut into thin ribbons
12 ounces fettuccine
Freshly grated parmesan and pecorino cheeses

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Put the mushrooms in a large, ovenproof skillet, toss with 1-2 tablespoons olive oil and 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar and season with salt and pepper. Roast, cup side up, for 15 minutes. Turn the caps over and roast for an additional 15 minutes or until the mushrooms are nicely browned and shrunken. Remove from the oven. When the mushrooms are cool enough to handle, cut in large strips and reserve, keeping warm.

While the mushrooms are roasting, put 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large heavy skillet, add the onion, garlic and red pepper flakes and cook over low heat until the onion is translucent. Stir in 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar and the anchovy paste and cook for a minute or two more. Add the escarole and radicchio, season with salt and pepper, toss to combine and cook, stirring, until wilted.

Meanwhile, cook the pasta according to package directions less 1 minute. Drain the pasta, reserving a little of the pasta cooking water. Add the pasta and a little pasta water to the escarole and radicchio; toss together, cover and cook for a minute or two over medium-low heat. If the pasta seems dry, add a little more of the pasta liquid.

Transfer the pasta to a large platter or individual plates, top with sliced mushrooms, sprinkle grated cheese and serve immediately.



If you are short on time you can sauté the mushrooms in the olive oil with the onions. However, roasting intensifies the mushrooms woodsy taste, so roast them if you can.