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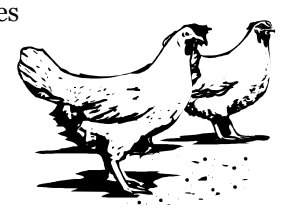


In case it has slipped your mind, Patriots Day is Monday. Massachusetts is one of the few if not the only state to celebrate the day. This mostly forgotten holiday honors the first battles of the American Revolution at Lexington and Concord. While Patriots Day has disappeared from popular knowledge, most Americans have heard of Paul Revere's famous ride through the countryside to warn the patriots that the British were coming. This warning helped the wily colonists beat the British and win the Revolution's opening volley.

The Boston Marathon, one of New England's most famous rites of spring, takes place on Patriots Day. The marathon runs 26 long miles from Hopkinton to downtown Boston and I grew up on the route at about the 20-mile mark. Unlike the rest of the country, schools in Massachusetts are closed on Patriots Day. When I was little I often watched at least part of the race while waiting in line, usually in the rain, for the matinee at the local movie theater. It never occurred to me that I would or even could run in the marathon, but years later I did just that.

When I started training for the marathon, most of my friends and family thought I was crazy. I was an MBA student, up to my eyeballs in books, case studies and spreadsheets. I decided to run to get a break from the number crunching and studying that monopolized most of my waking time and thoughts. I like to set goals so running 26 miles in under 4 hours seemed as good a goal as any.

The day I ran the marathon it was cold, grey and overcast; a typical April day in New England. It rained buckets in the morning, but luck was with me and the kzillion other runners when the downpour stopped just in time for the race. I wound my way through snow flurries in Framingham and my home town of Wellesley and then headed for the Newtons. It is here after 20 relatively flat miles that the marathon climbs up the infamous Heartbreak Hill. Topographers and surveyors tell us that Heart Break Hill is a half mile stretch with a relatively gentle incline. In reality it is a monstrously steep hill that goes on forever. Boston College lines this part of the route and the sidewalks were jammed with students drinking beer and good naturedly heckling the runners as we valiantly struggled to the top of the hill. One of my most vivid memories of the marathon was an enthusiastic co-ed shrieking "They've all got chicken legs!"



I don't think I changed anyone's mind concerning my sanity but a few friends, most of my study group and my family found places along the route to cheer me on. My then-9 year old niece, Gillian, created an oversized sign complete with a drawing of me running. Her encouragement was sweet, although there was an ulterior motive. We all figured that an elaborate sign would improve her chances of getting interviewed by at least one of the dozens of local television reporters and talk show hosts covering the event.

Gillian did not make it on television, but I did make it to Boston in one piece, chicken legs and all. As for my goal, I finished the marathon in 3 hours and 50 minutes. After all, it was a very long time ago.

Bon appétit -  
Susan





## Rites of Spring: Patriots, Marathons and Chicken Legs

Early Spring 2007/volume 31

### Thursday Night Cooking Parties

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### Runners' Chicken and Pasta

*Carbo loading with pasta is a marathon eve tradition. Whether you are a runner or not, give this hearty pasta a try.*

Serves 4-6

4 each chicken legs and thighs  
½ cup all purpose flour  
1 large yellow bell pepper, chopped  
1 onion, chopped  
3 garlic cloves, minced  
Pinch of red pepper flakes  
¾ cup dry white wine  
1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes  
¾ cup chicken stock  
1½ teaspoons dried oregano  
½ teaspoon dried thyme  
½ cup Sicilian olives, pitted and roughly chopped  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley  
8-12 ounces spaghetti or linguine  
Grated parmesan cheese  
Olive oil  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Sprinkle the chicken pieces with salt and pepper. Dredge the chicken pieces in the flour to lightly coat.
2. In a large heavy sauté pan, heat 1-2 tablespoons of olive oil over a medium-high heat. Add the chicken pieces to the pan in batches and sauté just until brown, about 5 minutes per side; reserve. Add the bell pepper, onion, garlic and pepper flakes to the pan and sauté over medium heat until the onion is tender, about 5 minutes. Add the wine and simmer until reduced by half, about 3 minutes. Add the tomatoes, broth, oregano, thyme and Sicilian olives and stir to combine. Return the chicken pieces to the pan and turn them to coat in the sauce. Bring the sauce to a simmer. Check for seasoning. Continue simmering over medium-low heat until the chicken is just cooked through, about 20 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, cook the pasta in salted water according to package directions. Drain the pasta and transfer to a large serving bowl; add a little sauce to the pasta, sprinkle with half the parsley and toss to coat. Arrange the chicken on top of the pasta and sprinkle with remaining the parsley. Serve immediately; pass the extra sauce and grated parmesan cheese.