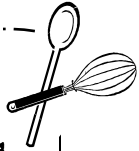


Susan  
Nye

Around  
the Table



## Slipping and Sliding through Mud Season

Early Spring 2007/volume 32

### Thursday Night Cooking Parties

#### April

- 12 Grazing on Tapas
- 26 French Bistro Cooking

#### May

- 10 Cooking in Tuscany
- 24 French Country Cooking

#### June

- 7 Summer Salads

Special programs always available  
on request

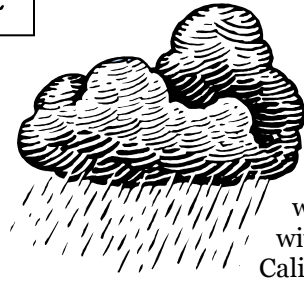
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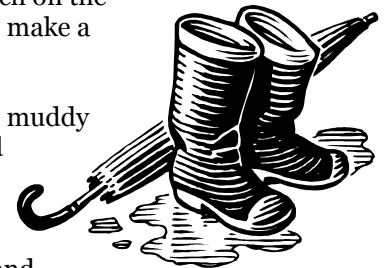
There is lots of weather in New England. There is snow, sleet and driving winds in the winter. Slowly but surely it warms up. Spring arrives with torrential rains, sometimes with thunder and lightning and often with wind or fog. Warm or cold, between storms, we are blessed with spectacular sunshine and brilliant blue skies. I lived in California for a short time and found the climate very disconcerting; each day was same and felt like a perfect day in May. There was constant sunshine and very little change in temperature, in a word, boring.

New Hampshire weather is never boring. Better late than never, we can finally see the first signs of spring; mud season has arrived. I must confess to a lukewarm feeling for mud season. The past few weeks have been stormy and a couple of feet of heavy wet snow and tons of rain have fallen. Piles of dirty snow are now rapidly melting, leaving a soggy mess. A gritty layer of sand covers my front garden and there is a swamp in my backyard. The good news: my flowers are starting to push up through the mud and the first hardy crocuses and iris are blooming yellow and purple.

Many years ago I was an art teacher in Vermont. The school's classrooms and dormitories were built up and down the side of a steep hill. In a former life, one of the dorms had been a ski lodge and there was even an ancient rope tow in the yard. In the 1930's or '40's it might have been described as a school for wayward boys and girls. When I was there, the school's brochure described its students as bright underachievers. The school's most famous student was a Kennedy cousin. He only stayed a few months and was expelled after he threatened a staff member with a ski pole. He was recently convicted of a murder he committed a year or two before his short sojourn in Vermont. He is now serving a 20-to-life sentence.

Teaching bright underachievers was a challenge but mud season in Vermont was a bigger challenge. As winter turned to spring, melting snow turned the one unpaved road leading in and out of school into a bubbling brook. As soon as the sun went down the temperature plummeted below freezing and the brook turned into a sheet of ice. As spring progressed and it got warmer, the road became a sea of mud both day and night. Just out of college, I drove a cute but aging 1973 gold Pontiac Firebird. During mud season I could only hope to drive it. My little car skittered on the ice like a drunken roller skate and had little if any traction in the mud. The Firebird spent most of the spring marooned on a dry patch on the top of the hill. After a few years, it was clear I needed to make a decision, dump the car or move. I was 24, I kept the car.

For the next month or so, New Englanders will deal with muddy boots, soggy sneakers and wet dogs. It seems like a good time to defy the mucky mud and cook up some sunny dishes from warmer, drier climates. Bring the tastes of the Caribbean, India, Mexico or Morocco to your table with exotic spices, hot curries and fiery peppers. Enjoy and,



Bon appétit! -

Susan



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Thursday Night Cooking  
Parties  
Learn & Laugh

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### Caribbean Confetti Salad with Spicy Grilled Chicken

Enjoy this salad, its light and colorful with fresh lime and cumin to brighten a grey day.

Serves 4

1 cup fresh or frozen corn kernels  
1/2 red or yellow bell pepper, julienne  
8 grape tomatoes, cut in half  
1/2 carrot, cut in curls with a vegetable peeler  
1/4 cup cilantro leaves, roughly chopped  
1/4 cup mint leaves, roughly chopped  
4-6 scallions, thinly sliced  
6 ounces of mixed greens or arugula  
1 Avocado, diced  
Lime-Cumin Dressing (recipe follows)  
Spicy Grilled Chicken (recipe follows)

1. Put the corn kernels in a large sauté pan, toss with a little olive oil; sauté over high heat until lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Let cool.
2. Put peppers, tomatoes, carrot and scallions in a bowl; add the corn and toss to combine. Drizzle with lime-cumin dressing. Let marinate for 20 minutes.
3. To serve: add the greens, cilantro, mint and avocado to the mixed vegetables, toss to combine. Add a little more lime-cumin dressing if necessary. Check for seasoning. Put the salad on a serving platter, top with Spicy Grilled Chicken.

#### Lime-Cumin Dressing:

1/4 cup freshly squeezed lime juice  
3/4 cup olive oil  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
2 teaspoons honey  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
Pinch cayenne pepper  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

1. Whisk the ingredients together into a bowl until smooth.

#### Spicy Grilled Chicken

1-1/2 pounds boneless chicken breasts  
1/4 cup freshly squeezed lime juice  
1 teaspoon each ground cinnamon, ginger and allspice and kosher salt  
1/2 teaspoon each cayenne pepper and freshly ground pepper  
4 cloves garlic, minced  
3-4 tablespoons olive oil — enough to coat the chicken

1. Combine the lime juice, spices and garlic, in a bowl; add enough oil to create a smooth paste. Add the chicken and toss to coat; let the chicken marinate in the refrigerator for at least one hour.
2. Pre-heat grill to medium high. Reduce the heat to medium and grill until cooked through. Remove from the grill, let rest for 10 minutes and slice.