

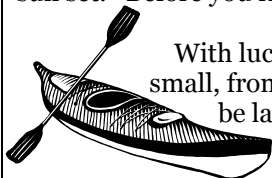


Memorial Day will soon be here. In New Hampshire where winter comes early and stays late, the last Monday in May, Memorial Day, marks the beginning of summer. The kids will get a day off from school. Most businesses will close, except for retailers; they will run 3-day sales extravaganzas. The highways and by-ways will be bumper-to-bumper with cars as most American flock to the mall or the beach.

Memorial Day has a solemn side and its roots stretch back to the Civil War. Originally known as Decoration Day, it was a day to honor the soldiers who died in the Civil War. Families and friends decorated soldiers' graves with flowers and flags. After the First World War, observances expanded to honor not just Civil War soldiers, but all who had died in American wars. Over the next week or so, relatives, veterans groups and even some school children will replace tired flags and plant flowers in cemeteries across the country. My Nana Nye was always busy on Memorial Day. Loaded down with gardening tools and geraniums, she made a pilgrimage to Brockton to spruce up the graves of her parents and in-laws as well as a bunch of aunts, uncles and cousins.

When I was growing up my family often headed north for the long weekend. We lived in the suburbs west of Boston and were always happy to spend time at our little vacation house near Pleasant Lake. My parents would check out the house and make sure that no leaks had sprung during the April showers. Various and sundry chores were assigned to my sister, brother and I. We would whip through these tasks as quickly as possible so we could escape to the beach. Brenda and I would get the jump on our summer tans while John went in search of tad poles and frogs. Toes would be put in the lake and before long; dares and double dares were thrown about. Then as often as not one or all of us plunged, shrieking, into the still freezing water.

In the coming days, all along the shores of Pleasant Lake, empty summer houses will fill up, at least for the weekend. Windows will be thrown open to air out stuffy cottages. Stray squirrels and mice will be chased out of attics and cupboards. (One year Brenda discovered a bunch of seeds and nuts in her bed. We figured that mice had taken our absence as an invitation and had moved in, snug and cozy under her quilt.) In houses and cottages, large and small, water will be turned back on and windows washed. Floors and decks will be swept clean. Beaches and yards will be raked free of winter's debris. Barbeque grills will be found and put to work. Lawn chairs will be pulled out of storage, dusted off and set out. Hopefully, in time to sit and enjoy a glass of wine and watch the sun set. Before you know it, everything will be shipshape and ready for summer.



With luck, there will even be some spare time for fun. Boats, large and small, from kayaks and canoes to sail boats to fishing and water ski boats will be launched. Favorite hiking trails will be rediscovered. Games of golf and tennis matches will be played. And at least a few kids will plunge, shrieking, into the ice cold lake.

My part time neighbors won't stay long. By late Monday afternoon they will put away their brooms, rakes and toys and head back to the city with a few sore muscles, black fly bites and sunburns. Sometime towards the end of June, the summer people will start to drift back to Pleasant Lake. But for a few more weeks, the lake will be left to the loons and those of us lucky enough to live in paradise year-round. Even if it is only for 3 days, enjoy the first delightful days of summer with fond memories, family and maybe even a swim in a still frigid lake,



Bon appétit! - Susan

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Summer Rolls

Don't confuse these tasty treats with deep fried spring rolls; summer rolls are light and healthy. With just a little bit of practice; you will quickly get the hang of rolling up these refreshing hors d'oeuvres. Enjoy them with an early summer sun set.

Makes 16

16 medium shrimp, cooked, peeled, cut in half lengthwise
3 ounces rice vermicelli
2 tablespoons rice vinegar
1 tablespoon sesame oil
2 teaspoons soy sauce
1 teaspoon hoisin sauce
Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper
16 round 8-inch rice-paper wrappers
1 medium carrot, peeled and cut into curls (use a peeler)
½ European cucumber, peeled, seeded, and julienned
2 ounces Chinese pea pods, trimmed and blanched
3 ounces pencil-thin asparagus (about 10 spears), trimmed and blanched
¼ cup packed fresh mint leaves
¼ cup packed fresh cilantro leaves

1. In a medium bowl, cover rice vermicelli with hot water; let soak for 10 minutes. Drain, rinse under cold water and drain well. Set aside.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together the vinegar, sesame oil, soy sauce, and hoisin; add the rice vermicelli and toss. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
3. Fill a shallow dish with warm water. Working with 1 rice-paper wrapper at a time, soak in water for 30 seconds; remove and blot gently on a towel; lay flat on a work surface. Place 2 reserved shrimp halves, cut sides up, on bottom third, leaving a 1/2-inch border. Top with 1-2 tablespoons of vermicelli and 2 tablespoons of an assortment of carrots, cucumbers, pea pods, asparagus, mint and cilantro. Fold bottom of wrapper over fillings; roll over once, tuck in sides, and finish rolling.
4. Place finished roll on a plate; cover with a damp towel. Repeat process with remaining ingredients. Serve with dipping sauce.

Vietnamese Dipping Sauce

1 clove garlic, minced
¼ teaspoon coarse salt
2 tablespoons sugar
¼ cup hot water
¼ cup rice vinegar
2 tablespoons fish sauce
½ teaspoon, or to taste, hot pepper sauce (optional)

1. Whisk ingredients together in a small bowl.