

Welcome September

Early Fall 2008/volume 103

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September is my favorite month. The air cools down, the sun shines and the air is dry and clear. It is a welcome relief after the long hot days of summer. Or for this year, the long soggy days of summer.

September starts with both Emma M. Nutt Day and Labor Day on the first. Throughout the month there are scores of birthdays and anniversaries to celebrate, historic firsts to commemorate and sacred days to observe. But before I go on, you are probably asking "Who the heck is Emma Nutt?" She is none other than the first woman telephone operator. Emma took up the headset and began transferring calls on September 1st 1878.

Lots of famous people were born in September. Famed stars and All-American beauties Gwyneth Paltrow, Jennifer Hudson and Hillary Duff were all born in September. Too much Hollywood fluff? How about novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald or mystery writer Agatha Christie? Or better yet, how about an All-American hero? For that, you can't beat track and field star, Jesse Owens, golf legend Arnold Palmer or the courageous cyclist and cancer survivor, Lance Armstrong. They were all September babies. And finally, who wouldn't have wanted to be a fly on the wall at a September birthday party for Patsy Cline, Otis Redding or Ray Charles? Do you suppose they treated their well-wishers to special renditions of the famous Happy Birthday jingle?

Some interesting sporting firsts occurred in the month of September. Back in 1895 a bunch of leather heads got together and played the first game of professional football. The first U.S. bowling league was established in 1921. Mark Spitz earned his then record breaking seventh gold medal in 1972. It took more than three decades but Michael Phelps just topped him in China. Swim suits might have been involved in a different sort of competition in Atlantic City back in 1921. Seven lovely ladies competed and sixteen-year-old Margaret Gorman from Washington, D.C. took home the title of the first Miss America.

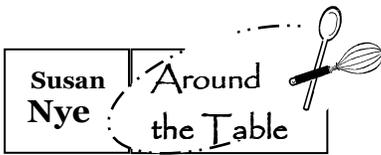
September is not just the traditional back to school month; it was also marks a new invigorated return to business after the dog days of summer. Barney Flaherty became the nation's first newsboy in 1833. It took The New York Times awhile longer to get started. They didn't begin publishing all the news that's fit to print until 1851. The sewing machine was patented by Elias Howe in 1846. One hundred years later, the first answering machine received its patents. Ford introduced the Edsel on September 4th in 1957 with much fanfare and promise. One of the automobile industries most notorious and dismal failures, the venture died a few years later. But not before it lost Ford \$350 million.

September is also a romantic time. Forget June, September is a great time for a wedding. Camelot began in September of 1953 when John F. Kennedy married Jacqueline Lee Bouvier. My parents said their "I do's" on the 16th and forty years (less one day) later my brother and his wife tied the knot.

The sacred days of Ramadan will be celebrated throughout the month of September. More than a billion Muslims around the world, including some 8 million in North America, will observe the holiday. Ramadan is a spiritual time, marked by prayer, reflection, fasting and charity. It is a time of worship but also a time to mend troubled relationships and forgive others.

And finally we will close the month with Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. The Jewish New Year is not a wild time with party hats and champagne. It is a time of introspection and prayer; a time for looking back at the past year and planning changes or making resolutions for a better future. So whether you celebrate a birthday, an anniversary or a sacred holiday, I wish you all the best for a wonderful September. Enjoy the warm days and cool nights of Indian summer and,

Bon appétit! – Susan



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Harira (A Middle Eastern Soup with Chicken, Chick-Peas and Lentils)

Muslims fast from sun-up to sun-down during Ramadan. At the end of the day the fast is broken with prayer, a meal and visits with family and friends. This hearty, flavorful soup has its roots in the Middle East. As the evenings turn chilly, why not try it out on your family and friends. It is a delicious change from your standard vegetable soup. Enjoy!

Makes about 4 quarts

8 cups chicken stock
28-to 32-ounce can ground tomatoes
1/4 teaspoon crumbled saffron threads
2 medium onions, finely chopped
2 celery ribs, finely chopped
1 carrot, finely chopped
1 teaspoon turmeric
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
Pinch chili pepper
2 pounds bone-in chicken breast
2 cups cooked chick-peas, drained and rinsed
1/2 cup lentils
2 ounces dried orzo
Olive oil
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
1/4 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro leaves
1/4 cup finely chopped fresh parsley leaves

1. Cook onion, celery and carrot in a little olive oil in a large heavy pot over medium-low heat for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg and chili pepper and cook, stirring, 3 minutes.
2. Add the chicken and enough chicken stock to cover. Raise heat and bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer until chicken is just cooked about 20 minutes; remove the chicken and reserve.
3. Add remaining chicken stock, the tomatoes, saffron and lentils to the pot; bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer, covered, 30 minutes or until lentils are tender.
4. Shred chicken, discarding skin and bones. Add the chicken and chick-peas to the soup with salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a simmer and cook for 5 minutes. Add the orzo and cook until al dente, 8 to 10 minutes. Add lemon juice and serve garnished with cilantro and parsley.