



Climb, Claw or Crawl Your Way Out of a Winter Rut

Early Spring/Volume 132

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Around the Table
Chef's Apron

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susannye@tds.net

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More information the web at

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It seems that that we are at that time of year when lots of people begin to get a little cranky. They're not necessarily curmudgeons or cantankerous by nature. Well ok, maybe some of them are. Most are just fed up with winter and tired of the cold, the snow and too much shoveling. I guess I might be a Miss Cranky Pants by now if it weren't for skiing. Spending a few days on the slopes every week makes New Hampshire's long winter not just bearable but downright wonderful.

After a long winter, you may be feeling fed up, housebound and a little bored with life. Sometime during the long winter, you probably fell into a rut. How can you tell you are in a rut? You're probably in one if you can't remember the last time you were excited about, well, anything. With an extra hour of sunshine every afternoon, the time is right to climb, crawl or claw your way out of your winter doldrums. Here are a few practical tips to help you get out of that rut:

Take on a new challenge

Your new venture can be as grand as completing a marathon or as simple as committing to a daily walk. It can be as time-consuming as reading War and Peace (no Clift notes) or as quick as installing that new doorbell. Tackling a new challenge is a great way to get out of any rut.

Shake up your routine

Find ways to take the ho-hum out of the everyday. Put on some Motown and dance your way through the dishes or turn off the TV and read a great book. A change to your daily grind will give you new energy and a new lease on life.

Learn something new

Thinking about learning a new language? Maybe you want to discover the many mysteries that lie under your car's hood or take up yoga. Whether it is replacing a spark plug or perfecting your downward dog, take pride and pleasure in your accomplishments, large and small. You'll feel terrific.

Spend some time with enthusiastic friends, old and new

Positive people have lots of energy and their enthusiasm is contagious. Seek out all the cheerful, upbeat people you know and spend an hour, an afternoon or an evening together. Take the time to get to know a few new people, especially the ones who smile a lot. Introduce yourself to that no-longer-new neighbor or a colleague in another department. You'll expand your horizons while you expand your circle of energetic friends.

Laugh

You can't feel tired, bored or out of sorts when you are laughing. It's physically impossible. So tell a joke, giggle or share a good story.

All of the above!

Invite friends over for a fun and fabulous dinner. Forget the same-old-same-old; make the evening special by experimenting with new dishes. Start by exploring a new cuisine and investigating different herbs and spices. Take on the challenge of trying a new technique. You can impress your guests and yourself with a delicious taste of Greece, Argentina or Thailand. Most important, spend the evening laughing, sharing stories and good cheer. Enjoy the time together and,

Bon appétit!

Susan



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just look like one!

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Around the Table Chef's
Apron

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Roasted Eggplant with Peperonata

Lighter and brighter than classic eggplant parmesan, this dish combines hearty slices of eggplant with spicy peppers. Use leftover Peperonata on pasta, grilled chicken or fish.

Enjoy!

6 servings

2 pounds eggplant, cut crosswise into 1/2-inch slices

Olive Oil

Balsamic vinegar

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

6 ounces crumbled Feta cheese

2 ounces grated Parmesan cheese

Peperonata (recipe follows)

1 tablespoon chopped, fresh mint

1 tablespoon chopped, fresh parsley

1/4 - 1/2 cup toasted pine nuts

1. Sprinkle both sides of the eggplant slices liberally with salt. Place the eggplant in a colander and set in the sink for 30-50 minutes to drain. Rinse the eggplant under cold water and dry thoroughly with paper towels.
2. Preheat oven to 450 degrees
3. Brush the eggplant slices with a little olive oil and balsamic vinegar and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Arrange the eggplant slices in a single layer on non-stick baking sheets. Roast the eggplant slices without turning until they are tender and lightly browned about 20 minutes.
4. Reduce the oven temperature to 350 degrees.
5. Toss the Feta and Parmesan cheeses together in a small bowl. Sprinkle the eggplant slices with the cheeses and top with a generous spoonful of Peperonata. Return to the oven and bake until heated through. Sprinkle with mint, parsley and pine nuts and serve.

Peperonata

2 large onions, cut into thin slices

5 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

6 large bell peppers (3 red and 3 yellow) cored, seeded and cut into thin strips

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes (or to taste)

1 tablespoon chopped, fresh oregano

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

1 cup dry white wine

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Extra-virgin olive oil

1. In a large sauté pan, heat a little olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion, peppers and red pepper flakes; cook until tender, about 10-15 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for an additional 2 to 3 minutes.
2. Add the oregano, balsamic vinegar and white wine. Bring to a boil; lower heat and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Set aside until ready to use.