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Treat Yourself to an Around the Table Chef's Apron

Contact Susan Nye at susannye@tds.net or 603/526 7319

More information the web at www.susannye.com

What will you do on Earth Day? Celebrated every year on April 22nd, Earth Day is a reminder that our planet's resources while bountiful are far from infinite. The first Earth Day was held in 1970. It was a turbulent time with too many lows and not enough highs. It was a time of protest, with movements for and against a seemingly endless array of issues. There were demonstrations in New Haven, Washington, Seattle, San Francisco and everywhere in between. Is there any wonder that Simon and Garfunkel's "Bridge Over Troubled Water" was the year's number one hit?

Reuse, Reduce and Recycle were not yet entrenched in our psyches and we were a long way away from our current widespread interest in Going Green. We were a prosperous, throwaway nation. We drove big sedans, huge station wagons and powerful muscle cars. We guzzled 36-cent-a-gallon gas without a care in the world. Factories were belching clouds of thick smoke and spewing sludge into once-clean rivers. The environment was hardly a concern and was rarely covered on the evening news.

Gaylord Nelson, a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin changed all that. An oil spill off Santa Barbara motivated him to launch the first Earth Day. In an era of demonstrations, he proposed the first nationwide environmental protest "to shake up the political establishment and force this issue onto the national agenda." Americans heard the call and on the first Earth Day, 20 million took to the streets, parks and auditoriums to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment. The issue was recognized across the nation and rallies were held coast-to-coast.

Different groups had been fighting a wide variety of environmental concerns, from pollution, toxic dumps and pesticides to oil spills, dwindling wilderness and endangered wildlife. These groups were fragmented and disconnected. Earth Day brought them together as diverse pieces in one common cause.

Earth Day 1970 was indeed a rarity in American politics. Nelson was able to achieve support and alignment across party lines, from both rich and poor, city slickers and country folks, management and labor. Since that first Earth Day, tremendous progress has been made. Recycling is now commonplace. Most of us are trying to find ways to reduce the amount of trash we throw away and find new uses for the old stuff we used to consider junk. We can breathe a little easier with cleaner air and water and once endangered species like the bald eagle are thriving. But we still have a long way to go.

As we begin the countdown to four decades of going green, the thirty-ninth Earth Day will be commemorated and celebrated on the Mall in Washington and in cities and towns across the country. Earth Day is a wonderful way to greet spring and prepare for summer. Why not attend a rally and learn about new initiatives in your town, across the State and in Washington.

Prefer to spend the day active and outdoors? Make it a festive day with family and friends. Gather up a group of volunteers to help clean up your town or neighborhood. Head to a community park to pick up trash, plant trees and tend gardens. If you live near the water, spend the day at the beach cleaning up winter debris. The snow has melted leaving layers of litter on the roadside. Grab a trash bag and take a cleanup walk around your neighborhood. When the work is done, reward yourselves with a festive, potluck feast.

However you spend Earth Day, enjoy the changing seasons while you celebrate the planet and all things green!

Bon appétit!

Susan

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just look like one!

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Apron

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Dandelion Salad with Grilled Steak & Asparagus

A big, bountiful salad is a delicious way to welcome spring and Earth Day. This one dish supper may look complicated but it's really very easy. (Especially if you use leftovers!).

Enjoy!

Serves 4

1/2 – 1 pound asparagus, cut 1 1/2 inches thick
1 – 1 1/2 pound New York strip steak
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
Olive oil
2 cups mixed greens
2 cups chopped dandelion or arugula
1/2 medium cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped
8 grape tomatoes, halved
1-2 scallions, thinly sliced
Vinaigrette (recipe follows)
2 ounces gorgonzola, crumbled
1/4 cup toasted chopped walnuts
Garnish: fresh chopped chives and parsley

Prepare a charcoal or gas grill. Fire should be medium hot.

Season the steak with salt and pepper. Grill the steak, about 4 minutes per side for rare and 6 minutes per side for medium rare. Transfer to a cutting board and let stand for 5-10 minutes.

Toss the asparagus with a little olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Grill the asparagus, turning once, until tender about 1 minute per side.

Put the greens, dandelion, cucumber, tomatoes and scallions in a large bowl. Add a little vinaigrette and toss to combine. Arrange the salad on a large platter, sprinkle with about half of the Gorgonzola and walnuts.

Slice the steak. Chop the asparagus. Top the salad with steak and asparagus. Garnish with the remaining Gorgonzola, chives and parsley.

You can prepare the steak and asparagus ahead of time or use leftovers. Remove the meat and vegetables from the refrigerator about 30 minutes before serving to bring them to room temperature.

When shopping for dandelion, look for young, tender leaves. If you decide to harvest your own, make sure the area has not been sprayed with chemicals or fertilizers.

Vinaigrette

2 cloves garlic, minced
1-inch piece red onion
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1-2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Put the garlic, mustard and vinegars in a blender or small food processor, season with salt and pepper and process to combine and chop the garlic and onion. With the motor run, slowly add the olive oil and process until smooth and emulsified.