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Contact Susan Nye at
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It's that time of year when from one day to the next you never know if spring has sprung or *spwrong*. Just a day or two ago it looked like spring was well and truly here. The ice was out of the lake. The snow was more or less gone. The mountain had closed down for the season. Skis were put away. Kids were out in fields playing soccer and lacrosse. The first pitch had been thrown at Fenway. The Boston Marathon had wound its way from Hopkinton to the Hub of the Universe.

Yes, indeed, it looked like spring had sprung. The sun was shining. Easter had come and gone. Hallmark was pitching its Mothers' Day cards. Fuzzy little buds had sprouted on the pussy willow trees. Cheery little crocuses were giving the garden a bit of color. The deer had nibbled the tops off all my tulips but the daffodils were thinking about bursting into bloom.

Looking around it was like something out of a Victorian novel. All that was needed to complete the picture was a damsel in distress and a hulking but handsome hero. I was so excited I ran out and bought pansies, lily of the valley, packet upon packet of seeds and iris bulbs. I tried to get a hulking but handsome hero but the garden center was out.

Then, before I could get myself out into the garden, a cruel wind turned my newly purchased blooms into pansicles and the spring sunshine was cut short by April's inevitable showers. Not a warm gentle summer rain mind you, but a bone-chilling downpour. Let's face it, when you live in New Hampshire, there are some days when you have no choice but to ignore the weather and curl up with a good book. (Unless of course you have a job to do, kids to get off to school, a dog to walk, a vacuum cleaner to waltz around with, dinner to cook and dishes to pile in the dishwasher. I would add lawn to mow but it's too early.)

All the while, friends, family and total strangers to the south are tracking down favorite recipes and whetting their appetites for strawberry season. And in the far west, everyone has been complaining about the heat. I lived near San Francisco for a short time and found the climate, in a word, disconcerting. My friend Julie, a native Californian, says I oversimplify, but I swear that each and every day was the same. Like a perfect day in May or June. There was constant sunshine and very little change in temperature. There was no snow; it only rained in winter and then hardly ever. There were no dazzling leaves in fall. Except for a very short heat wave or two, it was one, long perpetual spring. In a word, boring.

The weather in New England is never boring. Especially when Mother Nature wrestles with the Snow Gods to break free us from winter. It is an epic battle, hard fought every April. From one day to the next, we are dressed in shorts and reveling in the sunshine ... or bundled in coats, caps and gloves. Mark Twain said it best when he remarked, "If you don't like the weather in New England, just wait a few minutes."

In the end, regardless of the meteorologists' hocus pocus and guesswork, it is close to impossible to predict what any spring day will bring to New England. When in doubt carry an umbrella and always think positive. Rain or shine, enjoy the changing seasons and time with family and friends,

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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Pork Mole

Cinco de Mayo is coming soon. You don't have to be Mexican to celebrate. Why not invite friends and family in for a fiesta. Cold or hot, sunny or rainy, make merry with a little Mexican food, fun and frivolity. Enjoy!

Serves about 14-16

Mole Sauce (recipe follows)
6 pounds pork, cut into 2" pieces
1/2 cup dry white wine
1 - 2 cups chicken stock
1/2 cup sour cream
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
Olive oil
Cilantro leaves, for garnish

1. Season the pork with salt and pepper. Heat a little olive oil in a large heavy-bottomed skillet and brown the pork on all sides. Cook in batches if necessary to avoid crowding the pan.
2. Return all the pork to the skillet. Add 2 cups of the mole sauce, dry white wine and chicken stock to the pork, stir to combine. Bring to a simmer; reduce heat and cover. Gently simmer until the pork is cooked through, about 30 minutes. Add the sour cream and cook for an additional 10-15 minutes. Serve with steamed white rice or tortillas; garnished with chopped cilantro leaves.

Mole Sauce

Makes about 4 cups, enough for 2 batches. Freeze the extra mole sauce.

3/4 teaspoon mix of dried chili flakes; ancho, Anaheim and chipotle
1/4 cup whole almonds
1/4 cup sesame seeds
1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
1 teaspoon cinnamon
2 onions, sliced
6 cloves garlic, chopped
1-2 serrano or jalapeno peppers, stemmed and seeded
1 cup canned crushed plum tomatoes
2 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
1/4 cup golden raisins
2 teaspoons dried oregano
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1/2 - 1 cup chicken stock
Olive oil

1. In a medium skillet, toast the chilies, almonds, sesame seeds, pepper and cinnamon, over medium heat for 2 minutes. Cool the mixture and put it in a mini food processor, blender or spice grinder. Pulse the spice-nut mix to combine and finely grind.
2. Cook the onions and serrano peppers in a little olive oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat until lightly browned; add the garlic and cook for 1-2 minutes. Add the tomatoes, reduce the heat and simmer until the vegetables are soft, about 10 to 15 minutes. Cool slightly.
3. Put the spice-nut mix, vegetables, chocolate, raisins, oregano and thyme in a food processor or blender. Puree, adding chicken stock as needed, to make a smooth sauce.