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One day last week when I was driving home from the post office it hit me. It's fall. From one day to the next, Indian summer was over. Without warning, we fell headlong, tumbling and fumbling into fall. Forget the cool nights and warm, sunny days. It's been downright cold at night and those warm, sunny days just up and vanished. Adding insult to injury, we've had a run of nasty weather. When it's not raining, it's threatening to rain.

The wonderful upside of a chilly New England fall is the foliage. From one minute to the next, or so it seems, the leaves change. Not long ago, the trees had only hints of red and gold. Now they are blazing with color. Since I love New Hampshire in the fall, it should cheer me immensely. It does, except when the sky is grey and spitting out chilly rain drops.

Back from the post office, I barely had time to settle down to work again before my Dad arrived at the door. He was fussing and grumpy and looking for a cup of hot tea. His golf game had been cut short. Chilled to the bone after only five holes, he and his buddies decided to call it quits.

My parents are snowbirds and it's that time of year when they start to yearn for Florida. Every fall they debate their departure date for the sunny south. Last year Mom and Dad went down a little early, before Columbus Day and missed the peak foliage. Dad complained for weeks about the heat. This year they are leaving a little later so he can complain about the cold here until late October.

Mom and Dad are not alone. It's starting to get very quiet up and down Pleasant Lake. The summer people are long gone. A few come back for a weekend or two but they are definitely fair weather friends. Now, the snowbirds are packing and getting ready to head south. It only takes a few days of cold rainy weather and they can't fly out of here fast enough. Off they flock to North Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

Speaking of birds, the geese are squatting in the cornfield down the road. They are taking a break and feeding on stray kernels before continuing south. The loons are still here. At least I heard them call a few days ago on my walk around the lake. Of course the wild turkeys stay the winter. As always they are wandering around the neighborhood, dumb as a stone and oblivious to the approaching holidays. It is a mystery to me why Benjamin Franklin would suggest them for our national bird. Could it have had something to do with Pilgrims? Meanwhile, the chipmunks are bustling about, collecting acorns and seeds to bring home to their burrows. The bears have not gone into hibernation yet and continue to attack bird feeders; packing on extra pounds in preparation for a long winter's nap.

And me? How am I doing on my fall chores? Well, the beach bucket, chairs and towels are stored away for the season. However, I still need to get out there and clean up all my dead and dying flowers, mow the lawn one last time and plant bulbs. If I don't get to it soon, I will certainly regret it. Every year I kick myself that I don't find the time on those sunny September afternoons. No, I wait until it is cold and grey, maybe a little drizzly. Instead of curling up in front of the fire with a good book or inventing new soup recipes in my cozy kitchen, I shiver and shake, whack weeds, plant bulbs and put the garden to bed. Stay warm, enjoy October and,

Bon appétit!



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**Curried Eggplant Soup**

*Great for lunch or a light supper on a chilly day! Enjoy!*

Serves 6 - 8

2 tablespoons butter  
1 medium onion, chopped  
4 cloves garlic, minced  
1 tablespoon curry powder or to taste  
2 pounds eggplant, peeled and cubed  
1 1/2 quarts chicken or vegetable stock  
1 cup coconut milk  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste  
Garnish: freshly chopped chives and/or fresh chopped cilantro

1. Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté stirring occasionally until soft. Add the curry powder and garlic and cook over low heat for 2 minutes.
2. Add the eggplant and chicken stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 45 minutes or until the eggplant is soft. Let the soup cool for 15-20 minutes.
3. Working in batches, puree the soup in a blender or food processor until smooth.
4. Return to the soup to the pot, add the coconut milk and salt and pepper to taste. Cook over medium heat until steaming. Serve garnished with chives and/or cilantro.

*The soup is even better if it's made 1 day ahead. Cool to room temperature, cover and refrigerate.*