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...too busy or too tired to cook ...  
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Treat Yourself to an  
Around the Table  
Chef's Apron

Contact Susan Nye at  
[susannye@tds.net](mailto:susannye@tds.net)  
or 603/526 7319

More information the web at  
[www.susannye.com](http://www.susannye.com)

After almost seventeen years in Switzerland and another three on the west coast, I drove 3,000 miles across the country to New Hampshire in late April 2003. It was snowing as I slipped and slid into the State, exhausted but happy to be home. From the time I was ten, New Hampshire had always been my home-away-from-home. It was a place filled with happy memories of summer and ski vacations.

I decided to take some time to get my bearings. I did a little consulting and a lot of kayaking and skiing. I reconnected with family and friends, cooked a lot and became famous for, among other things, an incredibly rich and decadent chocolate birthday cake. I rediscovered the seasons as only New England has them.

Most if not all of the daffodils and tulips were wilted and gone when I pulled out of Seattle on Easter weekend. Four or five days later when I arrived in New Hampshire, the ground was covered with snow. Eventually spring came, bringing frost heaves, mud and black flies, as well as my favorite daffodils, tulips and lilacs. Spring turned to summer, the black flies disappeared and Pleasant Lake was as magical as ever. Fall was brilliant; the Technicolor spectacle was as good if not better than I remembered.

And then winter came. I knew that New Hampshire winters were cold but I had forgotten how cold. I tried to adapt. I began dressing-like-an-onion in layers of long underwear, flannel and wool. To answer the question that I'm sure is on your lips ... no it is not this cold in Switzerland. Winter temperatures hover between 30 and 40 degrees in Geneva. It doesn't snow a whole lot; it's mostly grey and rainy. Yes, there is lots and lots of glorious snow in the Alps but it rarely turns as bitterly cold as a typical January day in northern New England.

From a young age, I was taught to ignore the cold and get my money's worth out of my season ski pass. Our family skied in arctic temperatures, gale winds and blizzards. When I lived in Switzerland I was hard pressed to find anyone to join me on bitter cold or stormy days. Frigid days were for snuggling up by the fire with a good book. It was wonderful!

Returning to New England triggered something. It might have been old guilt or just a return to old habits. The far-away voice of my father rattled around in my head, telling me to get out on the slopes! And so, in early January of my first winter back I headed for the mountain on a colder than cold morning.

No surprise, the mountain was mostly deserted on that frigid Friday. By the time my chairlift reached the top, I was a block of ice. Given the temperature and the gale force winds, I didn't hang around to admire the view. I immediately started down the trail. About half way down I came to an abrupt stop. No, I didn't need to rest or catch my breath. The wind was blowing so hard up the side of the hill that it stopped me dead in my tracks. I froze through a few more runs and then reminded myself that my Dad was playing golf in sunny Florida and rushed home to a hot shower and warm fire.

Perhaps it's the wisdom of age or a fear of frostbite but since that day I have become something of a fair-weather skier. When the wind is howling and the temperature plummets below zero, I leave the mountain to the true die-hards. And just in case my Dad checks up on me, I still figure I took about 800 runs last year at about 50 cents apiece!

Bon appétit!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Susan'.



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*or just look like one!*

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### **Four Cheese Lasagna Bolognese with Spinach**

*Lasagna is great when you have a houseful of hungry skiers. This classic comfort food is perfect after a cold day on the slopes. Enjoy!*

Serves 12 or more

About 6 cups of Bolognese sauce (recipe follows)

1 1/2 cups Béchamel sauce (recipe follows)

15 ounces ricotta cheese

12 ounces shredded whole-milk mozzarella cheese

4 ounces grated Parmesan

4 ounces grated Pecorino Romano

1 pound frozen leaf spinach, thawed and drained

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

About 8 ounces lasagna noodles – 12 noodles, enough for 4 layers

1. Make the Bolognese and Béchamel sauces and set aside
2. Combine the mozzarella, Parmesan and Romano cheeses and toss.
3. Cook the lasagna noodles according to package directions.
4. Spread 1- 2 cups of Bolognese sauce in the bottom of a large, deep ceramic or glass baking pan (about 13 by 10 by 3-inches). Arrange 3 lasagna noodles on top of the sauce. Top the noodles with 1/3 of the ricotta, 1/3 of the spinach and 1-2 cups of Bolognese sauce. Sprinkle with 1/4 of the cheese mixture. Repeat with a second and third layer of noodles-ricotta-spinach-Bolognese sauce- cheeses.
5. Arrange remaining noodles on top and spread with Béchamel sauce. Sprinkle with the remaining cheeses. Tightly cover the baking dish with foil. You can store in the refrigerator for several hours or bake immediately.
6. When you are ready to bake the lasagna, position the rack in the center of the oven and preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake the lasagna for 45-60 minutes, if the lasagna is cold from the refrigerator it will take longer. Remove foil, continue baking uncovered until the sauce bubbles and the top is golden, about 15 minutes longer. Let the lasagna stand for 15 minutes before serving.

### **Classic Bolognese Sauce**

Makes about 4 quarts, *for at least 2 or 3 lasagnas, you can freeze the extra sauce.*

3 cans (28 ounces each) crushed tomatoes

1 large onion, finely chopped

1 medium carrot, grated

1 red bell pepper, finely chopped

4 cloves garlic, minced

1 tablespoon dried Italian herbs

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Pinch crushed red pepper (optional)  
1 cup dry red wine  
1 bay leaf  
1/2 pound Italian sausage; hot, sweet or a mix, casings removed  
1/2 pound ground beef  
3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil (optional)  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper  
Olive Oil

1. Heat a heavy casserole over medium-high heat. Add the sausage and ground beef to the pot, breaking up the meat into bite-size pieces, cook until brown about 5 minutes.
2. Remove from the pan. Drain the fat and reserve.
3. Add a little olive oil in the pot and heat over medium high heat. Add the onion, carrot, pepper and garlic, sprinkle with Italian herbs, red pepper, salt and pepper. Sauté until vegetables are tender.
4. Return the meat to the pot. Add the crushed tomatoes, wine and bay leaf. Bring to a simmer, reduce heat to low and simmer for 45 minutes. Stir in the chopped basil.

### Béchamel Sauce

2 tablespoons butter  
1 1/2 tablespoon all-purpose flour  
1 1/2 cups whole milk  
Pinch of nutmeg  
1/2 teaspoon dried Italian herbs  
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

1. Melt the butter in a heavy small saucepan over medium heat. Add the flour and herbs; cook, whisking constantly, for 1 minute. Gradually whisk in the milk. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until the sauce thickens, whisking often, about 5 minutes. Whisk in the nutmeg. Check for seasoning and add salt and pepper to taste.