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Treat Yourself to an
Around the Table
Chef's Apron

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More information the web at
www.susannye.com

It's that time of year when the weather takes center stage and the lead story on the morning news. A cold wind has been blowing out of the northwest. The skies have been mostly grey. While it has been pretty chilly here, we've not been hit by earth shattering, record breaking cold. For that kind of cold you need to head south to Florida, yes, Florida.

From one end of my neighborhood to the other, half the houses are empty. My snowbird neighbors have fled to the south, looking for sunshine and warm temperatures. Many are down in Florida, the Sunshine State. What they've found, at least for now, is frost on the golf course, icicles on the oranges and the threat of flurries in the air. Not for a day or even two but several. The governor even declared a state of emergency. It's not the first time but it's the first time in decades, at least two, maybe three.

I've only been to Florida a couple of times. The first was enough to swear me off the state for life. Since that first trip, I've been forced or tricked into a couple of visits but I try to steer clear. I took my infamous Florida vacation in mid-January during a break from college.

Every year my grandparents spent October to May in a condo apartment in West Palm Beach. The apartment looked out onto a pool and the beach was just around the corner. Sounds good. My mother flew down to check up on them every month or so and she asked me to tag along. Since it was January, it was ridiculously cold in New Hampshire. The trip south was billed as a chance to get out of the cold, walk the beach and go for a swim. I had nothing better to do. I loved and missed my grandparents. I could get a tan before heading back to school. I went along.

It snowed.

Yes, snowed. Not long, not hard and not a lot, just enough to know that it had happened. All these years later they still talk about it. Every January on a slow news day, the story makes page five or six in the local newspaper, usually with a picture of an orange or strawberry dripping with icicles.

My mother and I shivered in our cotton dresses and summer shoes. At some point I think we must have started to go a little stir-crazy. I guess we took a walk. Or maybe not. With the fierce winds a gust could have easily picked us up and carried us away. We could have landed in Freeport; that's the Bahamas not Maine. It wouldn't have done much good. The islands were hit by the same deep freeze.

Throughout the three or four days we spend with them, Nana apologized often and profusely. It's amazing how women, particularly grandmothers, seem to take responsibly for all those uncontrollable hiccups that mar a vacation. My grandfather took us out to lunch. A head cold has turned my brain to mush so it's all a bit of blur right now but I seem to remember tiki torches and lots of pineapple. He also took us shopping to Nana's favorite boutique. All in all, it's best to describe the vacation as an interesting experience. Eventually it warmed up, just in time for us to head to the airport and home.

If the frigid temperatures have got you feeling cold and out of sorts, cheer up. You could be shivering in the Sunshine State. A walk on a beach may be out of the question but you can always walk the well-sanded roads around Pleasant Lake. A big gust of wind won't land you in Freeport, the Bahamas or Maine, only Elkins.

Bon appétit!





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or just look like one!

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**PO Box 1875 – New London
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Apple Bread Pudding with Bourbon-Caramel Crème Anglaise

Invite friends and family in for a cozy dinner by the fire and top it off with warm and wonderful bread pudding. It's pure comfort food! Enjoy!

Serves 12

1 cup raisins or craisins
1/4 cup bourbon
1/4 apple cider or orange juice
1 tablespoon butter
4 cups whole milk
1 cup granulated sugar
8 whole eggs
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 teaspoon ginger
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
4 apples, peeled, cored and thinly sliced
1 loaf day old crusty, country bread; cut in 1 1/2-inch cubes

1. In a small bowl, combine the raisins with the bourbon and cider; soak for at least 2 hours.
2. Butter a 9x13-inch baking dish or large casserole.
3. To make the custard: put the sugar, eggs, vanilla, cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg in a large mixing bowl and whisk until well combined. Slowly whisk in the milk.
4. Put the bread cubes, apples and raisins in a large bowl and gently toss to combine. Transfer the bread and apple mixture to the prepared baking dish. Pour the custard over the bread cubes, making sure that all the cubes are submerged (push cubes down if necessary). Set aside for 15-20 minutes.
5. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
6. Bake for about 1 hour or until pudding is set. Serve warm with Bourbon-Caramel Crème Anglaise.

Bourbon-Caramel Crème Anglaise

Makes about 2 cups

3/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup water
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
1 1/2 cups heavy cream
4 tablespoons bourbon
3 large egg yolks
Pinch salt
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract

1. Put the sugar and water in a heavy medium saucepan and cook over medium-low heat, stirring continuously, until the sugar dissolves.
2. Add the lemon juice. Increase the heat and bring to a boil, swirling pan occasionally, until the caramel turns a deep amber color, about 10 minutes. If sugar crystals form on the side of the pan, brush down the sides of the pan with a wet pastry brush.

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3. Remove the pan from the heat. Stir in 4 tablespoons cream (the mixture will bubble up). Transfer the caramel to a medium bowl. Cool for 5 minutes and whisk in the bourbon.
4. Prepare an ice bath; set aside.
5. Whisk the remaining cream with the egg yolks and salt in a small heavy saucepan. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly until it registers 160 degrees on a candy thermometer. Pour the custard through a fine-mesh sieve into the bowl with the bourbon-caramel. Whisk until the mixture is smooth. Stir in the vanilla.
6. Set the bowl in the ice bath, stir frequently to cool. Chill completely in the refrigerator and keep refrigerated until ready to use.
7. Serve warm, room temperature or cold with warm bread pudding. To reheat zap in the microwave on low, start with 1 minute and continue in increments of 10-15 seconds.