



Where Were You When the Lights Went Out?

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Where Were You When the Lights Went Out? Like most everyone I know (I don't know a lot of night owls), I was snug and warm under my goose down comforter. I'd been in bed for about an hour and was in that wonderful stage of deep, deep sleep. Wonderful until the phone rings.

I fumbled with the light switch to no avail and then stumbled to the phone. I was greeted by a woman with a mechanical voice telling me with some sense of urgency what various beeps in combinations of long and short meant. It was some nonsense about power outages and temperature controls or something or other. She kept repeating herself and after several long minutes, I eventually realized that my parent's house was calling to tell me the power was out. My snowbird parents spend the winter in Florida and I keep an eye on their house while they are gone. As part of the deal, I insisted they get a monitoring device to alert me if the power or heat goes out. Frankly, I would have been happy if the mechanical lady had waited until morning to call.

I mumbled something and the mechanical lady didn't answer. Instead she told me to hit some keys to acknowledge or disable or something or other. I hit some keys, said goodnight and hung up. I looked at my watch, it was 11:20. I called PSNH to let them know I was in the dark. A machine picked up.

Since I was up, I wandered around the house looking out various windows. That's when I realized that hurricane force winds were tearing through the neighborhood. The moon was almost full and to steal a line from Clement Moore, "gave the luster of mid-day to objects below". Every tree, especially the big tall ones, were swinging and swaying in the gale force winds. This was no gentle hula dance but pretty scary stuff.

Still a bit groggy, I tried to go back to sleep. Groggy or not, there is nothing like a phone call in the middle of the night to get your heart pumping and flood your system with adrenalin. I lay in bed, listening to the wind and worried about those trees. It sounded a lot like a freight train was barreling down through the backyard. Sleep was not immediate.

Just as I drifted offfffff, the phone rang. It was my new friend, the mechanical lady over at Mom and Dad's. She was calling again because, in my sleepy stupor, I had not followed her instructions properly. She patiently repeated her message about the long and short beeps and again told me to press * or maybe it was # or some combination of the two. I've never been that good at following directions so I hit a bunch of keys and hung up the phone. I wandered around the house again. The trees were still waving frantically. I put my adrenalin-wracked body back into bed and wondered if I would ever fall asleep.

I did. Just in time for the mechanical lady to call me back, again. I unplugged the phone.

She didn't give up. The next morning I had no sooner plugged the phone jack back into the wall when she called. Luckily, I'd already had a cup of coffee and, in the light of day, managed to do as she asked. Thankfully, she stopped calling.

Somewhere around 350,000 New Hampshire homes were in the dark after the windstorm. Some of us for three days, some shorter and some longer. I hope that you all survived the power outage well rested, in good health and good humor.

Bon appétit!

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

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**PO Box 1875 - New London
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White Bean Dip with Fresh Vegetables & Warm Pita

This yummy dip is great for a casual get-together. I planned to make it last weekend for family and friends ... until the lights went out. Enjoy!

Extra-virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons minced red onion
1/4 teaspoon hot red pepper flakes
Extra virgin olive oil
3 cloves garlic, finely minced
1/4 cup white wine
1/2 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
2 cups cooked white beans
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
Cucumber, peeled, seeded and cut into pieces
Red bell pepper, seeded and cut into pieces
Pita bread, cut into wedges and then split in half



1. In a small skillet, sauté the onion and pepper flakes in a little olive oil until the onion is translucent about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and continue cooking for 1 minute. Add the wine and cook until it is reduced by half.
2. Transfer the vegetables and rosemary to a mini food processor. Add both vinegars and 2 tablespoons olive oil. Process until the vegetables are pureed and the rosemary is finely chopped.
3. Add the beans; pulse to combine and mash the beans to a rough paste. Add more olive oil and season with salt and pepper to taste. Store in a covered container for 2-3 hours in the refrigerator to allow the flavors to combine.
4. About a half hour before you plan to serve, remove the bean dip from the refrigerator and preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
5. Scatter the pita wedges on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake the pita at 350 degrees until lightly browned, about 3 minutes.
6. Serve the bean dip with warm pita wedges and fresh vegetables.

If you don't have a mini food processor (or the power goes out), you can use a potato masher or a fork to make this dip. Be sure to mince the onion, garlic and rosemary very fine. The texture will not be as smooth but it will still be delicious.

