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Around the Table  
Chef's Apron

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More information the web at  
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In other parts of the country and around the world, there is a certain rhythm to the seasons. Spring, summer, fall and winter more or less come and go at three month intervals. In New England, especially northern New England, we certainly have four distinct seasons but they pay little attention to dates on a calendar. Here in New Hampshire, the rhythm and cycle is more than a little lopsided.

Winter is long, about six months long. It comes early and short changes autumn on the front end. From one minute to the next we move from fall into "I can't believe it's winter already". Children in northern New England buy extra large Halloween costumes. They buy these oversized disguises not because they are particularly plump or big for their age but because they need to wear them over their snowsuits. We rarely worry about a white Christmas, most years we are already into "the dead of winter" (or if you prefer "winter in earnest") before Thanksgiving. When spring officially rolls around in mid-March, we're right in the middle of "you've got to be kidding, it's still winter".

Since I am a skier, I don't feel any particular need to rush into spring. After all spring in New Hampshire starts with a lot of mud and ends with vicious, man-eating black flies. Even though spring is weeks away, March skiing is commonly known as spring skiing. Spring skiing is my reward for putting up with those dark cold days in December. It is payback for enduring those blistering cold days in January and compensation for surviving those blustery cold days in February.

In "the dead of winter", clouds are cause for celebration and I check multiple weather reports to find out how much lovely white snow is predicted. Whether it ends up as flurries or a blizzard, I make frequent trips outside with my yardstick (I am an optimist) to check the storm's progress. Once the calendar page is turned to March, clouds are more foreboding. I still check multiple weather reports but it is with the optimistic hope of just one more glorious snowfall. Or please, if it must rain, let it be a short-lived drizzle. The worst case is a heartless downpour which washes away all the fun. Since I am more or less tired of shoveling, lots of dry sunny days and cold and clear nights would suit me just fine. It's good for the maple sugar harvest as well.

Spring skiing is wonderful because you can enjoy the slopes without looking like the Michelin man's more colorful cousin or a bank robber. It is great to pare down to a layer or two and (with sunblock!) turn your face to the sun. The truly brave or perhaps foolhardy ski in shorts. Goggles are left at home in favor of sunglasses. Baseball caps replace helmets. I'm feeling particularly colorful these days in my new Sherpa cap, a welcomed birthday gift. While it is cheerful, it doesn't really cover my ears and so would never do in "the dead of winter".

Everyone on the mountain is lighter and brighter and the smiles are dazzling. It may be selfish. It may seem unfair but I am hoping that the ground stays covered for at least a few more weeks. I offer a little shrug and my half-hearted apologies to anyone anxious for spring. I don't think I'm asking for much. Fool that I am; I'd just like to ski until the first of April!

Bon appétit!



*Cook like a chef...*

*or just look like one!*

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### Linguine with Sundried Tomato Pesto & Roasted Eggplant

*Whether you spend the day on the slopes or not, this pasta dish will bring a taste of  
sunshine and Sicily to your table. Enjoy!*

Serve 6

4-6 oil-packed sundried tomato halves, drained  
3 cloves garlic, chopped  
1teaspoon anchovy paste  
1/4 teaspoon hot pepper sauce or to taste  
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste  
Extra virgin olive oil  
1 medium eggplant, cut into bite-sized pieces  
1/2 large red onion, chopped  
12 ounces linguine  
1/4 cup large Sicilian or Greek olives (or a mix), pitted and chopped  
2 tablespoons capers, drained  
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh oregano or mint  
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley  
2 tablespoons pine nuts, toasted  
Pecorino Romano or Parmesan cheese, grated

1. Make the Sundried Tomato Pesto: Combine the sundried tomatoes, garlic, anchovy paste, red pepper flakes, vinegar, salt and pepper in a small food processor or blender. Process to combine and form a rough paste. Add 2-3 tablespoons olive oil, process until smooth. Set aside.
2. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
3. Place the eggplant and onion on non-stick baking sheet, drizzle with a little olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Toss to combine. Roast, stirring 2-3 times, for about 30 minutes or until lightly browned.
4. While the vegetables are roasting, cook the pasta according to package directions.
5. Drain the pasta, reserving a little pasta water. Return the pasta to the pot; add enough sundried tomato pesto to lightly coat. Add the eggplant, olives and capers; toss to combine. If the mixture seems dry, add a little pasta water. Sprinkle with oregano and parsley and toss to combine. Sprinkle with pine nuts and grated Pecorino Romano or Parmesan cheese and serve.

