

Spring Has Sprung – Get Out your Bicycle

Warm & Sunny Spring 2010/Volume 189

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Spring has sprung. I can tell because the cyclists are out. Dressed from head-to-toe in body-hugging, brightly colored miracle fibers, they are hard to miss. Some ride solo while others travel in packs. Or perhaps the proper term is horde or herd or gaggle.

I still remember the first time I rode a bike without training wheels. It was a glorious spring day and I wandered down the street looking for my little gang of friends. I hit the jackpot because I found more than my three best pals. There was a whole bunch of kids hanging out behind the Dodsall's house. I hadn't been on training wheels all that long but for whatever reason, one of the older girls decided it was time for me to get down to two wheels.

I was an agreeable sort so I hopped on a little two wheeler and just started riding. No drama, no fears, no tumbles or tears. I surprised myself at how easy it was, nothing like my older sister's trials and tribulations. I still remember watching my Dad and our neighbor Mr. Caruso patiently (at least Mr. Caruso was patient) teaching Brenda to ride a two wheeler. It took an entire afternoon, maybe more. It certainly took long enough for me to get bored and wander off before she got the hang of it.

Perhaps my most exciting bicycling adventure occurred a year or two later. That's when I flew into a five-way intersection at death-defying speed. My mother and sister happened to be in the front yard. They watched in terrified, jaw-dropped horror as I roared down Jefferson Road, flew across Oakland Street and Comeau and then careened into our driveway.

I was grounded for two weeks.

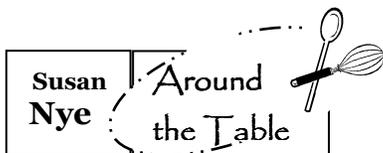
I complained loudly and blamed my high speed antics on faulty brakes. My bikes were hand-me-downs and had a tendency to rattle, shimmy and shake. They were passed down from my sister and weren't always new when she got them. But my mother would hear none of it and I was on foot for fourteen, long days.

I finally got my first new bike when I was eleven. After years of rattley old second-, third- and fourth-hand bikes, a shiny new, 3-speed Schwinn appeared under the Christmas tree. I was just entering that icky stage. You know it. That time in a girl's life when being cool goes beyond important or critical; it's a categorical imperative. Bikes were not cool in my sixth grade class. Neglected and rejected, my beautiful, blue Schwinn was relegated to a corner of the garage.

At some point in high school, bikes became hip again and I rescued mine from the dust and cobwebs. I rode it everywhere, especially to school. My bus picked up an ungodly hour. By bicycling to school, I could grab an extra hour of shuteye and still slip into homeroom before the last bell.

I rode that bike through high school and college and a few years more. It took me up hill, down dale and all over town. It eventually developed a few rattles but it was always reliable and virtually indestructible. We finally parted ways when I upgraded to a 10-speed model. But bicycles never die, they just move to someone else's garage. I don't remember who took over my no-longer-shiny Schwinn. After hundreds, maybe thousands, of miles it was a little worse for wear. Hopefully it went some agreeable sort who didn't worry too much about being cool.

Bon appétit and enjoy!



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Tequila Shrimp with Jicama Slaw

Cinco de Mayo is coming next week. Celebrate with some spicy shrimp and a refreshing slaw. Enjoy!

Serves 6

Olive oil

1-2 tablespoons (or to taste) finely chopped jalapeño pepper

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1/2 shallot, finely chopped

1 teaspoon cumin

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

1/4 cup tequila

Juice of 1 lime

About 2 1/2 pounds large shrimp, peeled and de-veined

Garnish: fresh chopped cilantro

Heat a little olive oil in a large sauté pan. Add the jalapeño, garlic and shallots; season with cumin, salt and pepper and sauté 2-3 minutes. Add the tequila and lime juice; raise heat to medium high and simmer for 2 or 3 minutes, until the liquid is reduced at least by half.

Add the shrimp and toss to coat. Cook the shrimp for 2-3 minutes or until pink, do not overcook. Sprinkle with cilantro and serve warm or at room temperature with Jicama slaw.

Jicama Slaw

Juice of 1/2 lime

1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar

1 tablespoon honey

1 clove garlic, minced

1 teaspoon (or to taste) minced jalapeño

1 teaspoon ground cumin

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

1/2 cup olive oil

1 jicama, peeled and cut in julienne or shredded

1 European cucumber, chopped

1 red or yellow bell pepper, cut in julienne

2 carrots, shredded

4-6 radishes, cut in julienne

2 tablespoons chopped cilantro leaves

In a small bowl, whisk together the lime juice, vinegar, honey, garlic, jalapeño, cumin, salt and pepper. Slowly whisk in the olive oil. Let the vinaigrette sit at room temperature to combine the flavors while you chop the veggies.

Place the jicama, cucumber, peppers, carrots, radishes and cilantro in a large bowl; toss to combine. Lightly coat with vinaigrette and toss. Let sit for 15 minutes at room temperature (or longer in the refrigerator) before serving.