

Thursday Night
Cooking Parties

February

- 8 Romantic Dinners
- 22 Paris Bistro

March

- 1 French Country Cooking
- 15 Moroccan Nights
- 29 Tuscan Feast

April

- 12 Grazing on Tapas
- 26 More Paris Bistro

May

- 10 Another Tuscan Feast
- 24 More French Country Cooking

June

- 7 Summer Salads

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Last night I was drifting off to sleep when the news came on the television. Was I dreaming? Had I really just heard that The Ritz in Boston was closing its doors for good? When I was in graduate school I discovered The Ritz. We used to take my Cousin Grace there. Grace was actually my grandfather's cousin, was in her 90's and loved The Ritz. It was her favorite place to lunch. The Ritz was not just a great place to take little old ladies to lunch; it was a wonderful place to enjoy a martini. I also discovered martinis in graduate school. Not only did I like the taste, but I felt very grown up and sophisticated when I drank them, and all the more so when I drank them at The Ritz Bar.

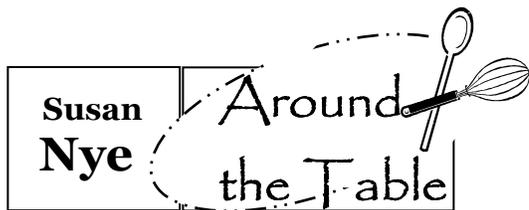
After graduate school I moved to Switzerland. During my first year abroad I traveled at least every-other weekend. Expecting to stay one year, not 17, I was determined to see as much of Europe as possible. My friend Marie-Claude was a willing travel mate. Paris was just a few short hours away on the TGV, the fast train, so off we went for a long weekend. We visited museums, went to the theater, snooped around the market at Les Halles and walked and walked and walked. Until, standing in front of The Ritz, Marie-Claude let out a gasp and informed me that she needed a break and headed into the hotel. She was making a bee-line to the bar when an officious-looking man with a name badge hurried over to us. Marie-Claude was dressed casually but very respectably. I was dressed like a tourist in blue jeans, running shoes and a backpack. Monsieur Name Badge wanted to know what we were doing in his hotel. Marie-Claude stood tall and announced that we were going to the bar for a coffee. He looked at me straight, up and down and replied, "pas avec les baskets" – loosely translated, not with your scruffy friend. In France, all sneakers, tennis shoes, running shoes and anything resembling an athletic shoe or sneaker are called baskets, short for basketball shoe. And at least in those days you did not wear les baskets in 5-star hotels, not in the lobby and definitely not in the bar.

I thought that being thrown out of The Ritz was very funny. It was a first for me. Should it ever happen again, I could honestly tell any maitre d' or bouncer or name badge that, "I've been thrown out of far better places than this." Marie-Claude did not find it so funny, not only was she tired but she really wanted to sip a coffee in a grand hotel. I apologized to my friend although I didn't really understand her disappointment. After all you didn't go to The Ritz Bar for a coffee; you went to The Ritz Bar for a martini or maybe in Paris for a flute of champagne. We had coffee at a small café, which I thought was charming.

Months later, Marie-Claude and I went on another long weekend adventure, this time to London. Again we went to museums and the theater and of course we visited Harrods. Late on Saturday afternoon our energy started to flag and I surprised my friend when I suddenly stopped and changed my shoes in the middle of the sidewalk. That morning I had passed on my regular tourist garb of jeans and sweatshirt and donned a tweed blazer for a just-up-from-the-country look. Running shoes safely hidden in my backpack, I steered Marie-Claude inside. We had been standing in front of The Ritz and I was making amends. As soon as we entered the hotel, I took off my raincoat and draped it over my backpack; I was not taking any chances. Taking my friend in tow, I made a bee-line for the dining room. I stood tall and declared we had a reservation for Nye for two for tea. Thank goodness, I passed muster and we nibbled on scones and little cakes and sipped tea in a grand hotel.



Bon appétit! - Susan



Puttin' on the Ritz

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Thursday Night Cooking
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Ginger Scones

You will have to check with James Bond for martini recipes. Try these scones and enjoy a morning coffee or afternoon tea with friends.

Makes 12-24 scones

2 ¼ cups of all purpose flour
½ cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon cinnamon
½ ground ginger
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
Grated peel of ½ orange
⅔ cup crystallized ginger, diced
11 tablespoons chilled butter, cut into small pieces
¾ cup heavy cream
2 tablespoons heavy cream
Ginger Caramel Glaze – optional, recipe follows

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Lightly butter a large baking sheet.
2. Put flour, sugar, salt, baking powder, spices and orange peel in the food processor. Blend until well mixed. Add crystallized ginger and pulse to mix.
3. Add butter and pulse until mixture resembles coarse meal. Add cream; pulse until dough starts to come together in a ball.
4. Transfer the dough to a lightly floured surface, pat together into a ball and knead gently until smooth, 8-12 turns.
5. Divide dough into thirds. Pat each portion into a ¾-inch thick round. Cut each round into wedges; 4 for large scones and 8 for small. Place the scones about 1-inch apart on the prepared baking sheet. Brush tops with the cream.
6. Bake the scones until light brown, 15-18 minutes. Drizzle with Ginger Caramel Glaze

Ginger Caramel Glaze

⅓ cup sugar
4 tablespoons water
Small pinch of salt
1½-inch piece of ginger, peeled and cut into matchstick pieces
⅓ cup orange juice
1 tablespoon butter

1. Stir sugar, water and salt in heavy saucepan over medium-low heat until sugar dissolves. Increase heat and boil, frequently swirling the pan, until it becomes a deep amber color, about 10 minutes.
2. Remove pan from heat. Stir in the orange juice. The caramel may seize, return to a boil and whisk until mixture is smooth. Remove ginger pieces. Continue to a boil for about 5 minutes, mixture will reduce slightly. Add butter and whisking constantly cook for another 2-3 minutes until mixture is slightly thickened.