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Chef's Apron

Contact Susan Nye at
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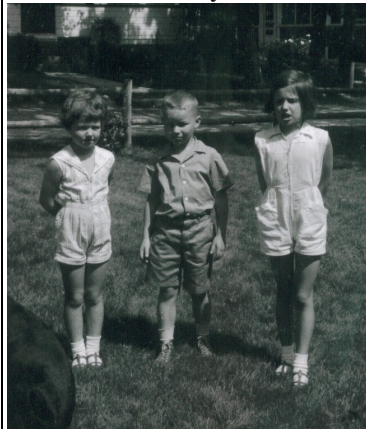
More information the web at
www.susannye.com

When was the last time you returned to your old neighborhood? The one you left when you were eight or nine or ten. Unless it's all been torn down, I'm guessing that the houses and the yards have miraculously shrunk since the last time you visited. Hopefully it's not gotten shabbier.

Last summer I took a quick one day trip to Cape Cod with my Mom and Dad. They met on the Cape and sent the first ten or twelve summers of their married-with-children life back in the old neighborhood. Even though it was a long day, we took a little time to do the Memory Lane thing before heading back north.

First we drove through the little town, past the bandstand, past the snack bar with the salt water taffy and the fish market with the lobster tank. I loved going to the fish market when I was little. I was always the brave kid in the bunch. I'd plunge my whole arm right into the tank and pull out my lobster and anyone else's. I suppose that's not allowed any more, probably breaks a health code.

Next we drove over to Mom's old beach cottage. I couldn't believe how narrow the roads had become. They were no wider than a goat trail. I don't know how my grandfather navigated his big old Lincoln through those little lanes. Nana and Grandpa's yard was definitely a lot sunnier when I was eight and Nana's big, bright blue hydrangea has disappeared.



Me, my cousin Wally & sister Brenda

The yard I remembered was not just sunnier, it was a lot bigger. I'm sure there'd been plenty of room for the Lincoln, the hydrangea and games of tag and hide-and-go-seek. Now there is barely enough room for the pile of bicycles jumbled up on the lawn. The house has shrunk as well and must have been moved. It was never so close to the road. Finally, the front porch has disappeared and the house is no longer white but these changes probably have nothing to do with my capricious memory.

After the slow drive by the Westland's, we snaked through the narrow roads to get to Dad's old house. This house has always had a special place in our hearts. The Westland's house was their summer vacation home. It had a certain charm but it was just a house when compared to the gem that Pop Nye build down the street and around the corner. My grandfather was a master carpenter and the little red cottage on Bayberry Road was a masterpiece. On the outside it was a lovely little cape. On the inside it was filled with wonderful details and woodwork.

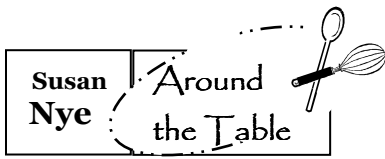
It was Nana and Pop's retirement home, built for two with an occasional visitor. Even when we were little we knew it was compact. Now it's positively dwarfed by the neighboring house. An oversized McMansion now swamps the tiny, postage stamp-sized lot next door. Thank goodness Nana is gone because this new house blocks her view of the water. Nana always kept her binoculars handy in the living room to watch the ships in the canal and approaching storms.

We were sad to see that Pop's pristinely kept house and garden were no longer pristinely kept. The house was still red but everything looked a little shabby and Pop's roses were gone. In the evening, he used to pick Japanese beetles off the roses and drop them into a jar of kerosene. Always the brave one, I helped him do it. Looking at the slightly ratty-tatty house we knew it was time to go, and quickly, before any of these new sites replaced our fond old memories.

Enjoy your summer and fill it up with lots of special memories with family and friends!

Bon appétit!

Susan



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Greek Green Beans

Enjoy this delicious alternative to plain old steamed green beans at your next family cookout.

Serves 12

3 pounds green beans, trimmed

2 medium red onions, cut into thin wedges

2 pints grape tomatoes

Olive oil

Juice of 1 lemon

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

1 cup Niçoise, Kalamata or oil cured Greek olives

2 tablespoons fresh oregano, minced

4 ounces feta cheese

1. Preheat oven to 450 degrees.
2. Put the beans, tomatoes and onions on a couple of rimmed baking sheets, drizzle with olive oil and lemon juice, sprinkle with salt and pepper and toss to coat. Distribute in an even layer. Roast for 10 minutes. Stir and toss the vegetables. Cook for 10-15 minutes longer. Beans will be dark golden brown in spots and slightly shriveled.
3. While the beans are roasting, pit the olives and quarter lengthwise.
4. Remove the beans from the oven, sprinkle with oregano and toss. Top with the olives and crumbled feta and serve.

Serve hot or at room temperature. If serving at room temperature, this dish can be made in advance and refrigerated until ready to serve. About a half hour before serving, remove from refrigerator.