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Chef's Apron

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More information the web at
www.susannye.com

When I was a teenager, my friends and I got together every summer and organized a dance. We did it for fun and for something to do. I was one of the summer people. We headed to Pleasant Lake as soon as school got out in June and stayed until late afternoon on Labor Day. We kept pretty busy, particularly during the day.

The nights were a different story. The town was pretty quiet then, I guess it still is. When it came to night life, there was a bowling alley, a few places to buy an ice cream cone and not much else. We joked that the public works department rolled up the streets every night at 8:30.

Most nights we hung out on the beach. From time to time we'd go out on the lake in someone's motorboat. We'd cruise around and get as close to the rocky shore as we dared. There was a girls' camp about halfway down the lake and I think some of the boys were hoping to catch them skinny-dipping. They might have succeeded once but I'm not sure. Even if they did, I don't think they saw much. I'm guessing their flashlights' batteries were either waning or dead.

Our parents took pity on us and every year they let us organize a dance. We got away with it because we always gave our few dollars of profit to the hospital and Hospital Day. We swept the Annex, a big old barn-like building. We made posters and put them up all over town. We hired a band. We were forced to hire the police for traffic control. A few parents grudging volunteered to chaperone. I was always thankful that my parents never did.

Townies and Flatlanders alike, we decked ourselves out in skimpy mini-skirts and bell bottoms. We all dressed to impress, praying we wouldn't get stuck on the sidelines like a row of forlorn wall flowers. I agonized over my curly hair, trying to straighten it. As the sun set, the air turned cool and damp and my flattened curls was transformed into halo of fluffy frizz. Eye liner, mascara, pale lip gloss and a flowery mini-dress completed my look.

Every year 100 or more kids showed up to dance. The turnout was particularly good when Aerosmith played. I'm not positive but I think we got them two years in a row. Then they moved to Boston, hit it big and never played in our funky old Annex again. I can't say that I blame them. We never paid them more than \$25, maybe \$50, hardly motivation for a return engagement.

At the time I think we realized that Aerosmith was better than the other garage bands that played at our summer dances. It might be my imagination but there was a lot more energy and the crowd was much better looking when Aerosmith played. We danced better and looked hotter, or at least we thought we did. I'm sure their music knocked the frizz right out of my hair. Plus the chaperoning parents stayed outside to save their ears from the deafening blast.



When Aerosmith got their big break and first record, we rushed to the store. For most of us, there was more than a little vicarious delight in having "our" band make it. We were teenagers, dividing our time between Boston's suburbs and rural New Hampshire. The closest we'd ever come to fame or anyone famous was, well, nowhere and no one. (Except for my brother John. Bobby Orr was the guest speaker at his father-son Cub Scout dinner. But that doesn't count because Johnny wasn't a teenager yet.)

Here's hoping you dance, not once but many times this summer.

Bon appétit!

Susan

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Roasted Red Pepper & Walnut Dip

Roasted peppers, yogurt and crunchy walnuts combine in a deliciously different spread. Enjoy it with a glass of wine on the deck or lakeside.

Makes about 2 cups

- 2 red bell peppers, cut in large chunks
- 1 small red onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1/4 jalapeno pepper or to taste
- Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon minced thyme
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon allspice
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons honey
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1/2 cup walnuts, toasted lightly and finely chopped

Toasted pita triangles

Fresh vegetables

Drain the yogurt. Place the yogurt in a coffee filter set in a sieve or colander over a bowl. Set aside in the refrigerator for 2 hours or longer until thickened. Discard the watery whey.

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees.

Put the peppers, onion, garlic and jalapeno pepper on a rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with thyme, cumin, allspice and season with salt and pepper to taste; toss to combine. Roast at 450 degrees until the vegetables are caramelized about 20 minutes.

Remove from the oven and add the lime juice and honey and toss to combine.

Let the vegetables cool for about 15 minutes. Put the vegetables in a food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Add the yogurt and process until well combined. Add the chopped walnuts and pulse to combine.

Refrigerate until ready to serve. Serve with fresh vegetables and warm pita wedges.

