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Around the Table
Chef's Apron

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



The days are getting shorter. Hospital Days have come and gone; county fairs and harvest festivals are just around the corner. Lots of summer people, mostly those with kids, are heading back to Massachusetts or Connecticut or wherever they come from. I feel a little sorry for them. Some of the best days of summer are still to come.

It tends to get a little cooler in August or at least the nights cool down. July's heavy, sometimes stifling, humidity fades and the air is clear and dry. It is the perfect weather for a hike, a long bike ride or just a lazy day at the beach. Within a few short weeks the school bell will ring again. It is time to cram in one last sail to the island, one more turn on the water skis and one last climb up Kearsarge. Summer is a wonderful time for families to reconnect, to play, explore and laugh together.

Why not make one last stop at your favorite summer spot (or spots) before heading home to the reality of another school year? Maybe it's the Farmers' Market on the village green, that cozy little bookstore in the center of town or the funky gift shop with the great cards. It could be that wonderful ice cream stand you discovered when you got lost one afternoon on your way from here to there. The one with the fabulous homemade ice cream and amazing chocolate sauce. Or maybe your favorite is caramel.

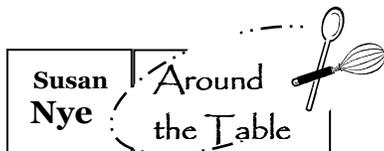
Summer's slower pace provides a great opportunity to connect with your neighbors. I'm not sure why but the corn and tomatoes are somehow sweeter when you've met the farmer who grew them. The adventure is more daring, the romance more enduring and the tales funnier when you've gotten to know the bookseller. And the ice cream is certainly creamier when you've had a chat with the cows before indulging!

It's too bad that families are forced to head south before Labor Day to start the grind of school, carpools and soccer practice. It's much too soon for summer to end. When we were kids, we left the suburbs behind and headed north within minutes of the final bell in June. Our big blue station wagon would barely get the chance to roll to a stop before we were out of the car, into our bathing suits and dashing down to Pleasant Lake. We stayed in, on or, at the very least, near the lake until the very last possible moment on Labor Day.

Finally, after one last swim, one last sail and one last (successful!) attempt to get up on a single water ski, we packed up the car and headed south. So yes, we were those kids. Every class had one or two. We showed up on the first day of school scatterbrained, disorganized and without a pencil. Instead of a brand new box of crayons and a shiny notebook we had a face full of freckles and a faraway look in our eyes.

Hoping you are enjoying the final days of summer.

Bon appétit!



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or just look like one!

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Death by Chocolate Sauce

You can feast on ice cream sundaes even when your favorite homemade ice cream stand is closed with this thick and rich chocolate sauce. Enjoy!

Makes about 2 cups

1/4 cup sugar

Pinch salt

1/4 cup orange juice

1 1/4 cup heavy cream

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

1 teaspoon instant espresso or coffee powder

1 tablespoon Grand Marnier

14 ounces good (I use Lindt) bittersweet chocolate or a mix of bittersweet and milk chocolate, roughly chopped

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Combine the sugar, salt and orange juice in a saucepan; cook over medium-low heat until the sugar dissolves. Increase heat to medium-high and boil until deep amber, swirling pan occasionally, about 5 minutes.

Stir in the cream, the mixture will bubble, and whisk until smooth. Heat over low heat until the cream is hot but not boiling. Whisk in the espresso powder and Grand Marnier.

Turn off the heat; add the chocolate and let sit for a few minutes to melt. Whisk until smooth. Add the butter and vanilla and whisk to until smooth and combined. Serve warm with your favorite ice cream.