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 Chef's Apron

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More information the web at
www.susannye.com

I am a bookworm. Whether it's the latest best seller or something more serious, I love getting lost in a book. When I went off to first grade I soon discovered that the best thing about school was not recess but trips to the library and learning to read. Of course picture books were great but I became absolutely, positively hooked when I graduated to "chapter books". It was wonderful to escape into new, interesting, even magical worlds. Life in my quiet suburban neighborhood was nothing but dull compared to the fascinating lives of Pippi Longstocking, Nancy Drew and Mary Poppins.

By the time I was in the fourth grade, the Upham School library was one of my favorite haunts. That's where I discovered history. There were at least a couple of shelves devoted to the biographies of famous and not-quite-so famous Americans. I'm pretty sure I read them all from Louisa May Alcott to Booker T. Washington. Thanks to those books I aced the history questions in Trivial Pursuit. I read about humanitarians, inventors, patriots, politicians, soldiers, activists, artists, educators and writers. I learned about the revolution, George Washington and Paul Revere. I read about fascinating inventions and Eli Whitney, Thomas Edison, Benjamin Franklin and George Washington Carver. I was particularly interested in the stories of famous and a few not-so famous women. There were the nurses, Clara Barton and Florence Nightingale. There were the reformers, including the likes of Betsy Ross, Lucretia Mott and Helen Keller. And there were even a few colorful divas; the courageous and ever so lively Dolly Madison, the unsinkable Molly Brown and the charming Juliette Gordon Low.

I always had a special fondness for anyone who chose an unusual path, a road less traveled. I still do. Johnny Appleseed certainly fell into that category. Before I read his biography, I think I might have assumed that Johnny Appleseed was a myth or fictional character, the Jolly Green Giant of all things apple. Truth be told, Johnny Appleseed's story sounds a bit more legend than fact. However, unlike Paul Bunyan, the Headless Horseman and Rip Van Winkle, Johnny Appleseed was a real-live folk hero. At eighteen he left New England and headed west to become an itinerant horticulturist and preacher. For sixty years he wandered barefoot through the countryside sowing apple seeds, cultivating orchards and preaching. Rumor has it that some of his orchards still exist today.

While apples are available from China and South America throughout the year, there is nothing like a tart, juicy, locally grown apple. Along with the spectacular foliage, a crisp, McIntosh or Cortland is the very definition of fall in New England. Picking-your-own is a wonderful way to enjoy an afternoon outdoors. Family farms can be found throughout New Hampshire and many open their orchards to the public in September and October. While you are there, don't forget the apple cider. It's wonderful cold and just as wonderful mulled with a little cinnamon, cloves and ginger.

Enjoy apple season. Take a long walk through an old orchard and pick a bushel or a peck. Next fill your kitchen with the fragrant perfume of apples, cinnamon and nutmeg and delight your friends and family with a delicious old fashioned crumble or pie.

If you don't feel like baking, grab one of those just picked crispy apples and settle down with a book in your favorite armchair for a good read.



Bon appétit!

Susan

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or just look like one!

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Old-Fashioned Apple Crisp with Cranberry Coulis & Ice Cream

This is a wonderful fall dessert. It is an easy crowd pleaser, a favorite of young and old alike. Enjoy.

Serves 10-12

5 pounds Macoun, Granny Smith or McIntosh apples, peeled, cored and cut in wedges

Grated zest of 1 orange

Grated zest of 1 lemon

Juice of 1/2 lemon

1-2 tablespoons calvados or Apple Jack

1/2 cup light brown sugar, packed

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground ginger

1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg

2 tablespoons butter

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Generously butter a large baking dish.
2. Combine the apples with the zests, lemon juice, calvados, brown sugar and spices. Pour into the buttered baking dish.
3. Sprinkle the topping evenly over the apples. Put the crisp on a baking sheet to catch any drips and bake for 1 hour until the top is brown and the apples are bubbly. Serve warm with a spoonful of cranberry coulis and vanilla ice cream.

Topping

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 cup light brown sugar, packed

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

Pinch nutmeg

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

12 tablespoons (6 ounces) unsalted butter at room temperature and cut in pieces

1 cup oatmeal

1. Combine flour, sugar, salt and spices in a food processor; pulse to combine. Add the butter, pulse until the mixture resembles coarse corn meal.
2. Add the oatmeal and pulse a few times to combine.

Cranberry Coulis

2 cup fresh or frozen cranberries

2 cups apple cider

1 tablespoon calvados or apple jack

1/2 cup brown sugar

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon ground ginger

Pinch nutmeg

1. Combine all ingredients in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and gently simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat and cool.
2. Transfer the cranberry sauce to a blender and process until smooth. If the sauce seems too thick, add a little more cider. Strain through a sieve into a bowl; discard the seeds and skins.
3. Cool completely, then cover and refrigerate until ready to use. Freeze any leftover coulis in a plastic container for up to 1 month.

