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Around the Table
Chef's Apron

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More information the web at
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This week I have an important message for everyone who is buying a house or thinking about buying a house. Well maybe not everyone but anyone who is thinking of buying a house in New Hampshire or some other cold and snowy place. There are three and only three words to remember: South Facing Driveway.

Forget about bargains, distress sales and foreclosures. Don't be seduced by granite countertops, stainless steel appliances or those timeless and tasteful subway tiles. Stay strong; don't be swayed by a brand new roof, almost new furnace and dry basement. Ignore the screen porch in the back, the view of Kearsarge, the lake access and the wonderful neighbors. It doesn't matter if your best friend since second grade lives next door. In snowy New Hampshire, all those things are secondary, hardly significant when compared to a south facing driveway.

I learned this lesson long enough ago to forget it. Years ago on Trinity Court, the Maclaren's or maybe it was McLaren or MacClaren, bought the north facing house across the street. They were from Minnesota or Michigan or Wisconsin, one of those cold northern states in the middle of the country so they should have known better. Their first winter was a comedy of slipping and sliding errors.

Sometime before Christmas the first snow fell. After the storm they did nothing. Nada, zip, not a gosh darn thing. They left the nice, fluffy, white snow in their driveway. Meanwhile, my dad got out his snow blower and quickly cleared both our drive and walk. If he left any frozen bits and bobs behind, they quickly melted in the winter sun.

Within a week a new storm, this time a nasty combination of snow, ice and rain, turned the Maclaren's still snowy drive into an icy, rutted mess. Over on the sunny side of the street, all was melted and gone within a few hours. Throughout the winter we watched our neighbors slip and slide in and out of their garage. A few times their two teenage boys were sent outside to listlessly chip away at the icy mess.

The lesson here? You're on your own with a north-facing driveway. Expect no mercy or relief from Mother Nature. The next year the Maclaren's were hyper vigilant. From the first storm to the last, at all times of the day and night, they were out there doing battle with shovels, a snow blower and bag after bag of salt and sand.

I bought my house on a warm, sunny day in June. If I even thought about it (which I didn't) I was completely unperturbed that the house faced north and maybe ever so slightly east. For most of my adult life I had been living in places with far less (if any) snow than New Hampshire. Snow was something you drove to, to ski on and enjoy; not to shovel or worry about.



Five months later the first storm of the season hit. Only then did it dawn on me. I would spend every winter for the rest of my life (or at least as long as I own this house) like the Maclaren's; fighting every flake. I can be optimistic. I can be chipper and cheerful. It doesn't matter. There will always be one worry I can't leave my on the doorstep. I don't live on the sunny side of the street.

Bon appétit!

Susan

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or just look like one!

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Braised Red Cabbage

Red cabbage is one of those side dishes that no one makes anymore but everyone loves.

Even people who don't know they like red cabbage, love red cabbage. Braised in red wine and a little vinegar, it is great comfort food on a cold winter night. It goes beautifully with roast pork or duck, a pot roast or a brisket. Enjoy!

Serves 6

2 - 2 1/2 pounds red cabbage, quartered, cored and thinly sliced

2 red onions, cut in half lengthwise and then in thin wedges

2 tablespoon brown sugar

3 - 4 tablespoons butter, cut in small pieces

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

1 cup dry red wine

1/2 cup red wine vinegar

Put the cabbage, onion, brown sugar and butter in heavy large pot, season with salt and pepper and toss to combine.

Add the wine and vinegar; cover and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to low and cook, stirring occasionally, for about an hour or until the cabbage is tender. Adjust seasonings to taste and serve.

