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Treat Yourself to an Around the Table Chef's Apron

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

Last week I celebrated another birthday. By some strange coincidence, a day or two before turning the page to another new year I received an email with the bold title Bucket List. While I am still much too young to worry about a Bucket List, I opened the email anyway. Inside, I was invited to review a long list and check off any and all items I had completed.



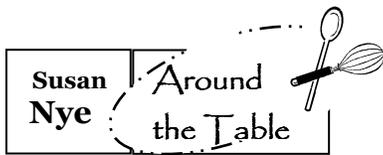
It was an interesting, if typical, Bucket List. There were exotic destinations (Australia and South America) as well as sporting accomplishments (skied in a foreign country) and youthful indiscretions (stolen a street sign) to tick off or not. A few were sad (cried yourself to sleep) and others nostalgic (written a letter to Santa). With a bit pride I discovered that I had accomplished roughly two-thirds of the list.

As with any list, there was a lot missing, some of which I've done, others not. For instance ... skydive (no), bungee jump (yes), attend a Super Bowl (no) or an Olympic event (yes), see a Broadway (no) or West End (yes) play, learn to tap dance (no) or belly dance (just a few moves), meet an astronaut (does shaking hands with Wally Shirra at Logan Airport's baggage claim count?) or flown in space (no) ... the list can be endless.

It struck me that bucket lists tend to focus on big, audacious and let's face it, often out-of-reach accomplishments. Sometimes it's a question of talent, not everyone can win a Noble prize or Oscar. If you are of a certain age, your knees or back could betray you. Or it could be matter of cash, a trip into space falls outside most budgets. I began to wonder if I could come up with activities which were meaningful, fun and interesting but did not require a genius IQ, an Olympian's body or cost more than \$25. Hey, I'm a baby boomer; I visited *Europe on \$25 a Day*, why not a \$25 limit bucket list?

While I can't claim that each and every one of my suggestion is unique, here are some alternatives to some of those out-of-reach adventures ...

1. Instead of climbing Kilimanjaro ... kiss your true love on top of Mount Kearsarge.
2. Instead of swimming with dolphins ... help kids you love swim to the raft.
3. Instead of skiing in the Alps ... learn to snowshoe on a public trail with a good friend.
4. Instead of drinking café au lait at a Parisian sidewalk café ... bring a thermos of really good coffee to a public beach and drink it while watching the sun come up.
5. Instead of dinner in a Michelin three star restaurant ... cook up your own special, night to remember. *
6. Instead of flying in a helicopter, hang glider or hot air balloon ... fly a kite with joyful abandon.
7. Instead of visiting a volcano ... dance around a bon fire with friends on Guy Fawkes Night.
8. Instead of visiting New Orleans for Mardi Gras ... get together with friends for an evening of jazz and jambalaya.*
9. Instead of flying to the moon ... howl at the harvest moon.



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Watch me cook on

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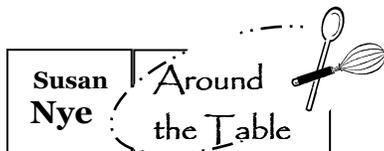
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10. Instead of jumping out of a plane ... jump rope or on a trampoline or both.
11. Instead of running a marathon ... walk a mile or three or five EVERY day.
12. Instead of caviar and champagne at the Ritz ... invite all your favorite people for a lobster boil and beer in your own backyard.*
13. Instead of watching the Bolshoi ... dance like no one is watching.
14. Instead of a cross-country motorcycle trip ... help your child or grandchild learn to ride a bicycle.
15. Instead of playing golf with Tiger Woods or Vijay Singh ... go for a long walk and listen to the birds sing in the woods.
16. Instead of winning the Noble Prize ... raise money for a cause you believe in.
17. Instead of climbing the Great Wall of China ... enjoy a good long chat with dear friends while you sip afternoon tea from your best china cups. Not once but every week.
18. Instead of walking the red carpet ... rent a different Best Picture Oscar winner every week until you've seen them all. (Yes, the total will top \$25 but, even if you have to buy some of the golden oldies, you'll still average much less than \$25 per week.)
19. Instead of attending the opera at La Scala in Milan ... sit outside on a beautiful summer morning and listen to Andrea Bocelli sing Verdi. Sing along if you like.
20. Instead of driving a race car around a track at high speed ... take a leisurely stroll up and down Main Street. Take a minute or two to stop and say hello or chat with everyone you know.
21. Instead of sailing around the world ... teach a kid to sail a Sunfish or kayak.
22. Instead of gambling in Monte Carlo ... stay in and watch *To Catch a Thief* with Grace Kelly and Cary Grant. Don't forget the popcorn.
23. Instead of sleeping in a castle ... sleep under the stars.
24. Instead of running with the bulls ... grill up really good burgers in the backyard with family and friends.*
25. Instead of worrying about lists ... laugh, smile and hug someone you love every day.

Have a grand time and bon appétit!

* I've got three parties on my list and yes, depending on how many people you invite and unless it's a pot luck, it's pretty hard to throw a dinner for \$25. However, you can certainly do it for \$25 per person (and probably a lot less), especially if your guests offer to bring the wine or beer.

Bon appétit!



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Grilled Steak with Gorgonzola Sauce

I first had this dish in one of my favorite cafés in Carouge, Switzerland. The sauce is also great on prime rib and beef tenderloin. Make the sauce with imported Italian gorgonzola if you can find it. It's worth the extra pennies. Enjoy!

Serves 6

2 1/2 - 3 pounds New York strip steaks (or the cut of your choice), cut about 1 1/2 inches thick

Olive oil

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Gorgonzola Sauce (recipe follows)

Drizzle the steak with a little olive oil and generously season with salt and pepper.

Prepare a charcoal or gas grill; the fire should be medium hot. (Alternatively, heat a grill pan over medium-high heat.) Grill the steak, about 2-3 minutes per side for rare and 4-5 minutes per side for medium rare. Transfer to a cutting board and let rest for 5-10 minutes. Make the sauce while the steaks are resting. Slice and serve with Gorgonzola Sauce.

Gorgonzola Sauce

Serves 6

1 shallot, minced

1 clove garlic, minced

1/4 cup dry white wine

1/2 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1 tablespoon cognac

8 ounces Gorgonzola cheese, crumbled

1/2 cup half & half

Olive oil

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Heat a little olive oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add the shallots; cook, stirring often, until translucent. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute.

Add the thyme, wine and mustard, season with salt and pepper to taste; cook until the liquid has reduced by half. Stir in the cognac, cook for 1 minute. While whisking, slowly add the half and half. Cook, whisking, for about 3 minutes; the sauce will thicken a bit. Gently stir in the Gorgonzola and continue to cook until the cheese is just warmed through, check for seasoning and serve.