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Enjoy delicious food & fun!

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French Country Cooking

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...too busy or too tired to cook ... let me do it for you!

Cook like a chef or just look like one!

Treat Yourself to an Around the Table Chef's Apron

Contact Susan Nye at susannye@tds.net or 603/526 7319

More information the web at www.susannye.com

I lived in California for a short time and found the climate, well, disconcerting. Every day was same and felt like a perfect day in May. There was constant sunshine and very little change in temperature. In a word, boring. There is lots of weather in New Hampshire and it's anything but boring.

Don't get me wrong. I love New Hampshire. I love the changing seasons. But let's face it the Granite State is not at its best in April. Not to sulk but in Washington spring arrives with a burst of cherry blossoms. Savannah, Charleston and New Orleans are all in bloom. Even boring northern California where the weather never changes is covered in wild flowers. While here in northern New England, the first signs of spring are frost heaves, potholes and mud. Lots of mud. Yes, mud season has arrived.



Years ago I taught art at a private school in the Upper Valley. This was no upper crust boarding school set on the idyllic banks of the Connecticut River. In the 1930's or '40's it might have been described as a school for wayward boys and girls. When I was there, the school's brochure described its students as bright underachievers. The school's most famous student was a Kennedy cousin. His sojourn at the school was short, only a few months. He's now at a different kind of institution, doing twenty-to-life. Anyway, the school was built high

on a hill in the middle of nowhere with magnificent views. In a former life, the school's dining room had been a ski lodge and there was an ancient rope tow out front. Once a year, someone somehow managed to get the tow going for an hour or two and we'd take a few runs.

Teaching bright underachievers was a challenge but I think mud season on top of a mountain was an even bigger challenge. As winter turned to spring, melting snow turned the school's long, unpaved driveway into a bubbling brook. As soon as the sun went down the temperature plummeted and the brook turned into a sheet of ice. As spring progressed and the weather got warmer, the driveway became a sea of mud both day and night.

Just out of college, I drove a cute but aging 1973 Pontiac Firebird. During mud season I could only hope to drive it. My little car skittered on the ice like a drunken roller skate and had little if any traction in the mud. The Firebird spent most of the spring marooned on a small island of dry land near the dining room. After weathering my second mud season on the mountain, it was clear I needed to make a decision. Dump the car or find a new job. I was twenty-four, I kept the car.



For the next month or so, northern New England will be a muddy mess. We'll deal with dirty boots, soggy sneakers and wet dogs. It can be a bit daunting but don't let mud season get you down. Take a culinary vacation and celebrate the longer, warmer days and defy the chilly nights with sunny dishes from balmy climes. Give your taste buds a treat with some exotic spices from the Caribbean or Morocco. Or imagine yourself in the sunny south of France with some of my favorite dishes from Provence.

Enjoy and bon appétit!

Susan

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or just look like one!

**Treat Yourself to an
Around the Table Chef's Apron**

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Enjoy an evening of fun!

Learn, eat and laugh!

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For cooking tips, recipes and more,

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Watch me cook on

www.youtube.com/susannye

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Tapenade

This wonderful spread from Provence is a staple in my kitchen - you can always find a jar in the back of my refrigerator. It's great every day as well as for parties, both planned and impromptu. Enjoy!

- 8 ounces dry pack, oil cured black Greek olives, pitted
- Grated peel and juice of 1/2 lemon
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2-3 tablespoon dry white wine
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 teaspoon anchovy paste
- 1 tablespoon capers
- 1 teaspoon herbs de Provence
- 1/2 teaspoon hot pepper flakes or to taste

Throw everything into a small food processor. Process until the mixture becomes a nice paste; you may need to add a little more olive oil. Cover and let sit for up to 4 hours at room temperature or overnight in the refrigerator before using to combine the flavors.

Serve the tapenade with raw vegetables and flatbread crackers, spoon a dollop onto grilled chicken, fish or lamb or use it to add a bit of punch to sandwiches and pizza.