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 Chef's Apron

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More information the web at
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My dad always says that I am the luckiest person he knows. I'm one of those people who discovers that I need duct tape or another gallon of paint just minutes before the hardware store is due to close. I dash out the door and make it to the store with seconds to spare. Standing in the checkout line I realize that in my hurry I've forgotten my wallet. Now here's the lucky part. A frantic search almost always inexplicably leads to a crumpled twenty in my back pocket. It's probably been there for weeks and gone through the wash at least a couple times. That's the kind of luck I have.

My luck doesn't always hold when it comes to the weather, especially at Easter. For many years I lived in Switzerland where Easter weekend goes on for four days. Businesses shut down Thursday evening and stay closed until Tuesday morning. Most everyone leaves town and heads to the beach, mountains or Euro Disney.

Four days in early spring, what could be better? Well, I'd argue four days in winter, summer or fall. Throughout much of Europe early spring is not unlike New England, chilly and wet. My first year in Switzerland, I followed the crowds, jumped on the train and headed south to the Mediterranean and the Côte d'Azur. I imagined palm trees, sunshine and bikinis. It was overcast, with gale winds and cold rain.

Not to be daunted, I tried again and went farther south to Tunisia. I imagined walks by the sea, swimming in the surf and tropical drinks by the pool. There was plenty of sun but it was too windy and cold to hang out on the beach. The hotel pool was empty.

Since my search for a beach blanket bingo holiday was not working, I headed to the mountains. Snow would not be a problem. Skiing in the Alps begins in mid-November and ends in early May. The snow was fine but the lift lines were endless and the cafés were packed. And the weather? Four days of drizzle and fog.

After beachcombing in the wind and rain and skiing in the fog, I gave up. Geneva was a ghost town but I decided to stay put. Luck was with me, a handful of friends stayed home as well. Saturday evening we got together for some good food, good wine and even better company. Over dessert, we hatched a plan for Easter Sunday. A bike ride.

Easter morning was picture perfect. It was warm and sunny, a great day for a bike ride. We were a bit of a motley crew. Kevin and I rode often and our bikes were in reasonable shape. My friend Julie borrowed a bike. I'm not sure where she found it but I suspect it belonged to Miss Gulch from the Wizard of Oz. Her elbows flapping, she was quite a sight riding along the country roads. Thankfully we didn't come across any little dogs. Mark had his own bike but I think he bought it from Miss Gulch's brother at a garage sale.

We headed out across the fields above the Lake of Geneva. At midday we coasted down to a lakeside park. After a delightful picnic we took the lake road home. Hot and thirsty but grinning ear to ear we road into Geneva and topped off the afternoon with a festive toast at a lakeside café.



From then on, I made it a point to stay home for the long Easter weekend. More often than not it was rainy or overcast but I always managed to find a few friends for a little fun and feasting.

Wishing you and your family a happy Easter and a wonderful Passover,

Bon appétit!

Susan

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or just look like one!*

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Asparagus Risotto

*Asparagus Risotto is a wonderful addition to
Easter dinner or any spring feast. It pairs
beautifully with grilled lamb, fish and chicken.
Enjoy!*
Serves 8-10

2 cups Arborio rice
1 1/2 pounds asparagus, cut into 1-inch pieces
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 cup dry white wine
5-6 cups hot chicken stock
2 ounces grated Parmesan cheese, plus more to garnish
2 tablespoons cream
2-3 tablespoons butter
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
Olive oil

Heat a little olive oil in a heavy saucepan. Add the onion and cook over medium heat until translucent. Stir in the rice and sauté for 2-3 minutes.

Add the wine, salt and pepper to taste and simmer, stirring often, until the wine is absorbed. One cup at a time, add the hot chicken stock and continue to simmer and stir.

After simmering and stirring for about 15 minutes, add the asparagus and combine. Continue to add stock and stir until the rice is al dente, tender but still firm. Total cooking time is about 20-25 minutes.

Stir in the parmesan cheese, cream and butter. Check for seasoning. Serve immediately and pass more grated Parmesan cheese for those that like a cheesier risotto.