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 Chef's Apron

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

I'm in denial. As I tap away at the keyboard I am listening to Vivaldi's Spring. Everyone who lives in northern New England knows there is no such thing as spring. Our calendar is divided into five not four seasons ... and spring is not one of them.

After a very long winter we make a glacially slow transition to Mud Season. As the temperatures warm, country roads are turned into carnival rides of frost heaves and pot holes. Each year a few more dirt roads are paved but those that are left become mired in mud and ruts. Mud Season usually has a few winter-like flashbacks. In other words, it snows on our daffodils, at least once if not twice.

But Mud Season does offer up a few lovely surprises. Within hours of a soggy blizzard the sun comes out and the temperature soars to 70 even 80 degrees. The sun shines, everyone smiles and for the first time in a long time you get to enjoy a cup of coffee outside on the terrace.

The next day the sun is still shining. With joy in your heart and a bright smile on your face, you head out to garden or for a long walk around the lake. Within a few steps of your backdoor, a small but ardent swarm starts to buzz around your head. Mud Season is over and has given way to Black Fly Season.

Learned scientists offer the following information and advice on black flies:

Black flies sort of ease into the day. You rarely see them out in full force before 9:00. They stretch, have a bite or two and buzz around for a couple of hours. By the time the sun is high in the sky they're ready for a siesta. Gardening, dog walking and window washing should be scheduled first thing in the morning or in the early afternoon. Even if it's a balmy with a brilliant blue sky, midmorning coffee breaks should be taken inside until further notice.

After their nap black flies return in full force around 4:00 to buzz and bother until the sun goes down. Afternoon softball, lacrosse and soccer practices should be held indoors. Before you let the kids take over the living room, don't forget to store breakable heirlooms in a safe place.

If you must go out when black flies are at their hungriest and swarmiest:

Mosquito repellents are effective against black flies. Unfortunately some people are sensitive to pesticides, especially those applied directly to their fragile selves. If skin reactions, eye irritation, slurred speech, confusion or seizures occur, it's best to discontinue use.

On the other hand, you can trick black flies with some clever wardrobe changes. Since they tend to flock to basic black and other dark colors, stick to light and bright spring pastels when you are out and about. And don't forget to tuck in your shirt tail. Your mom will be happy and it will keep the black flies away from your tender tummy. Button those buttons up to your chin, secure your cuffs and tuck your trousers inside your socks. Complete this eye catching look with a shoulder-length head net. The black flies will laugh so hard they'll forget to bite you.

Stay safe and bon appétit!




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or just look like one!

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Grilled Mustard Pork Chops

Even if I have to wear a head net, warm weather is calling me to cook outside. It's time to marinate a few pork chops and get the grill going. Enjoy!

Serves 4

Marinade:

1 cup dry white wine

Juice of 1/2 lemon

2 tablespoons whole grain mustard

1 teaspoon or to taste hot sauce

1 tablespoon honey

1/2 small onion roughly chopped

1 clove garlic

2 teaspoons chopped fresh rosemary or 1/2 teaspoon dried

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

4 pork chops

Put the marinade ingredients in a blender and process until smooth. Put the pork chops and marinade in a zip lock bag, seal the bag squeezing out the excess air. Marinate, turning the bag a few times, for at least 4 hours or overnight.

Prepare a charcoal or gas grill. Fire should be medium hot.

Remove the pork from the bag and shake off excess marinade. Sear the pork by grilling both sides on medium-high heat for about 2 minutes each. Reduce the heat to low and continue cooking, turning a few times until the pork registers an internal temperature of 145 degrees, about 8-10 minutes.

Transfer to a platter and let stand for 10 minutes, loosely covered in foil.

