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Summer comes late and leaves early in New Hampshire. Mornings have already turned chilly, the kids are back at school and Labor Day has come and gone. It seems like just last week my summer neighbors were throwing open the windows to air out musty cottages and dragging their docks and boats into the water. Over the weekend, Pleasant Lake was buzzing with activity; but sadly the key tasks were packing up and putting summer toys away.



For many years, a small fleet of boats sailed and raced on Pleasant Lake. Regattas were held to help celebrate the 4th of July and Labor Day Weekend. In between there were races every Saturday afternoon. Not the swish regattas and races of Newport or Long Island with yachts, white flannels and navy blue blazers. This group sailed Sunfishes and for the most part it was made up of guys in baggy, madras swimming trunks. These weekend Skippers were accountants, salesmen, realtors and small businesses owners. They loved to sail and race their little boats and were constantly frustrated by the fickle winds of Pleasant Lake. Most Saturdays the Sunfish flopped around in the middle of the lake while everyone prayed for even the smallest puff of wind. They were mostly disappointed until the Sail of the Century.

Late August and September fall in the thick of hurricane season. Every year or so, a tropical storm or hurricane makes its way up the eastern seaboard to New England. By the time they reach us, they have lost their category 5 or 4 or whatever status. But, as Irene showed us last week, they still can pack a lot of wind and water. I remember one particular Labor Day weekend. Much to the delight of Pleasant Lake sailors, New Hampshire was hit with the remnants of a big, bad storm.

It was a nasty weekend to close up cottages. The wind blew a gale, it rained and hail was reported. Tennis tournaments and cookouts were cancelled. The uninitiated assumed that the Labor Day Weekend Sunfish Regatta was also cancelled. Unperturbed, in fact excited, the Skippers met at the beach for the race. They were surprised to discover that the Race Officials were missing. Not particularly official, the Race Committee included my Mom and a couple of her friends. They were home keeping dry and packing up for the return to suburbia.

Calls were made and before long, a crowd gathered on the wet and windy beach to debate the sanity of sailing in a gale. The Skippers won the debate. As a concession, they agreed to sail with a crew for some added weight and stability. Choosing a crew was a new phenomenon on placid Pleasant Lake. The average Skipper had 2.3 children, so they started their search at home. Their enthusiasm was catching and most kids were happy to jump on board. My dad set his sights on my little brother. The smaller the crew, the faster the boat would fly. No surprise, my mom declared that her five year old God-loved-angel would not be sailing in gale force winds.

My little brother was left on the beach, my sister decided the whole thing was nuts so I won the draw and crewed for Dad. It was a wild ride. The Sunfish flew around the course. A few boats flipped but happily everyone got home safely and in one piece. Who won the race? I don't think that anyone remembers or really cares. As for us, Dad and I just know that it was 2 great days; wildly exhilarating, a bit frightening and loads of fun. It was the perfect end to a perfect summer!

Bon appétit!

Baba Ganoush



I always feel sorry for the summer people who pack up and leave on Labor Day. I love September on Pleasant Lake ... particularly evenings on the beach with a glass of wine and something to nibble. Enjoy!

Serves 6-8

1-2 eggplants (about 2 pounds)
Olive oil
1/2 small onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, cut in slivers
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1/4 cup tahini
1/4 cup chopped flat leaf parsley
1/4 teaspoon paprika
Kosher salt and freshly pepper to taste
Pita bread, cut in triangles
Fresh vegetables

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Cut the eggplants in half. Brush with olive oil. Cut slits into the eggplants, insert the garlic slivers and bake cut side up at 350 degrees until eggplant is soft, about 40 minutes. Scoop the eggplant and garlic out of the skin and put in the bowl of a food processor.

While the eggplants are baking, sauté the onion in a little olive oil for 5-10 minutes or until translucent.

Add the onion, tahini, lemon juice, parsley, paprika, salt and pepper to the eggplant. Pulse to mash and combine.

Bake the pita triangles at 350 degrees until crisp and golden, about 10 minutes. Serve the Baba Ganoush with warm and crispy pita triangles and/or fresh veggies.



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