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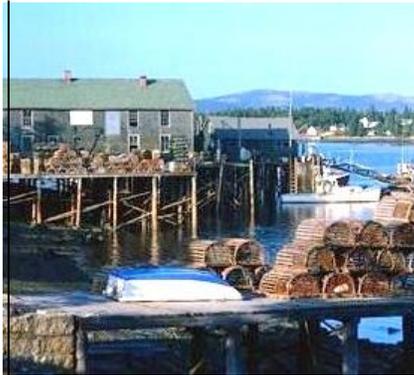
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Who'd a thunk it? That New England could be blessed with gorgeous foliage and big, beautiful lobsters all in the same month. When most people think of lobster, they think of the Fourth of July. If you've been around long enough you may remember huge clam bakes on the beach over Labor Day Weekend. How could you forget the backbreaking work of digging a giant hole in the sand and filling it with seaweed, lobster, clams, corn and sausages? Or maybe you've forgotten all the work and just remember the fun that came afterwards. Anyway most towns passed laws banning ginormous holes and open fires on their beaches two or three decades ago.

But bans and can'ts are the mother of many inventions. Several clever lobster lovers and chefs have come up with ingenious ideas for cooking these delicious crustaceans. Many involve twenty gallon trash cans, slow steady fires and seaweed. Before you melt your trash can (your old Rubbermaid won't do, you'll need a non galvanized steel model) or get cited for a bonfire in your backyard, consider cooking* them inside. You can always bring them out to the picnic table with lots of fanfare and flourish. A few theatrics will make everyone forget that you cooked them on the stove. And if anyone makes a fuss, well, just take them off your list for next year.



A big, oversized kettle will do the job in no time. And once you buy one, you'll wonder how you ever survived without a twenty or thirty quart kettle. Finally, you'll have a pot large enough to make chowder or chili for the entire neighborhood. It will also come in handy when you want to turn the Thanksgiving turkey bones into a nice rich stock. (In case it's slipped your mind, Thanksgiving is right around the corner.)

But back to lobster and why October is the perfect month for a lobster feast. A few years ago I was writing a story on eating locally and met one of New Hampshire's lobstermen. Among other lobster trivia, Bobby Nudd told me that the fall was the best time to eat lobster. That's when the catch is plentiful and therefore cheap. Sounds to me like the perfect combination for any thrifty New Englander. As we ended the interview, Bobby left me with one particularly wise piece of advice, "You haven't had enough until the butter is dripping off your elbows and you can't get out of the chair."

If we're lucky, we'll have one more warm and wonderful Saturday or Sunday afternoon before we hit nearly-winter, early-winter, well-and-truly-winter and will-winter-never-end. That'll be the day to drag the picnic table around the backyard until you find a sunny spot and gather everyone together for lobster. Can you think of anything better than one last lobster feed, especially if it is against a gorgeous backdrop of red and gold? In a week or two, a long and lazy meal outdoors will be nothing more than a sad and distant memory.

And what if the weather doesn't cooperate or too many soccer games get in the way or you just can't seem to get organized for a backyard bash? Well, you can still enjoy lobster. You might even want to take it up a notch with an elegant lobster stew or homey lobster and corn chowder. Then again with cooler weather, maybe only a comfy, cozy, absolutely decadent lobster mac and cheese will do.

Enjoy Lobster Month and bon appétit!

** You can find Joe Nye's Recipe for Perfect Boiled Lobster on my website at www.susannye.com.*

Lobster Mac & Cheese

This rich and decadent dish is best served after a busy day raking leaves or a long hike! Enjoy.

Serves 8-12

3-4 (1 1/2 pound) lobsters

Olive oil

1 shallot, diced

cheeses, grated

3/4 cup white wine

1 bay leaf

2 cups heavy cream

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

Pinch nutmeg

1 pound pasta - cavatappi, medium shells, penne or elbow macaroni

1/2 cup oil-packed sundried tomatoes, well drained and chopped

1/2 cup Panko bread crumbs

1 tablespoon butter

1 teaspoon herbs de Provence

4 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano or a 50/50 mix of Parmigiano-Reggiano and Pecorino Romano

4 ounces Fontina cheese, grated

In a large pot of boiling water, cook the lobsters for 6-8 minutes. When shells are bright red, remove the lobsters from the pot and immediately throw them in ice water. Remove the claw and tail meat, cut into bite-sized pieces and store in the refrigerator until ready to use.

Heat a little olive oil in a sauce pan over medium heat; add the shallots and sauté until translucent. Add the white wine and bay leaf. Raise the heat to medium-high and cook until the wine is reduced by half. Add the heavy cream, nutmeg and season with pepper to taste. Let the cream come just to a simmer. Reduce the heat to low and let the cream simmer and reduce for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook the pasta, according to package directions less 1-2 minutes in a large pot of well-salted boiling water.

While the cream is reducing and the pasta is cooking, melt the butter in a skillet. Add the breadcrumbs and herbs and sauté until the breadcrumbs are golden brown. Transfer the breadcrumbs to a bowl and cool to room temperature. Add 1/4 of the Parmigiano-Reggiano and toss to combine.

Drain the pasta and return it to the pot. Stir in the cream, add the Fontina and the remaining Parmigiano-Reggiano and toss to combine. Check for seasoning and add salt and pepper to taste. Add the lobster and sundried tomatoes and toss to combine. Cover and cook over low heat until the cheese has melted and the lobster is cooked through, 3-5 minutes.

Give the pasta a final stir, spoon into shallow bowls and sprinkle with the cheesy breadcrumbs.



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