

## Are You in a Rut?

Winter 2007/volume 27

### Thursday Night Cooking Parties

#### March

- 1 French Country Cooking
- 15 Moroccan Nights
- 29 Tuscan Feast

#### April

- 12 Grazing on Tapas
- 26 More Paris Bistro

#### May

- 10 Another Tuscan Feast
- 24 More French Country Cooking

#### June

- 7 Summer Salads

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603/526 7319

Are you in a rut when it comes to the kitchen? With my interest in all things culinary, I frequently find myself drawn into conversations about recipes, ingredients, gadgets and entertaining tricks and trends. My friend Susan recently lamented that she constantly falls back on the same one or two herbs when cooking, I think that her professed rut was basil and oregano. So the \$64,000 question is: how can you tell when good old habits have moved from comfort zone to a rut? To find out if you are in a rut, answer the following:

1. Do you find yourself cooking the same-old-same-old every week?
2. When was the last time you tried a new restaurant? (And I don't mean the still sort of new Duncan Donuts on Main Street.)

If your answer is yes to #1 and 1997 to #2 you are in a rut.

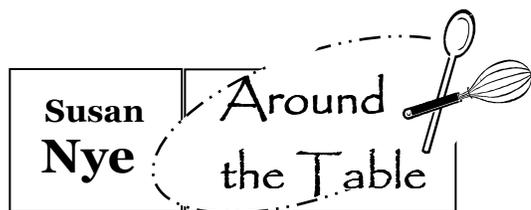
Since I was a kid I have been interested in food and cooking. Make no mistake; I was not immune to kiddly junk food like Twinkies and Milky Ways. However, I was also intrigued by the authentic Neapolitan fare cooked up by our next door neighbor, Chinese food from the Asian palace on Route 9 and anything spicy. Even at a young age, I loved the different cuisines that took up shop in neighborhood restaurants and sometimes even made their way into our kitchen. When I first moved to Switzerland, people would ask me what I missed from the States. The answer was quick and easy; my family and friends. But then there was also that longing for Mexican and Thai food and New England lobster. Happily for me, after some delay, the Swiss began adopting trendy cuisines.

When it comes to exploring new tastes and trends in the kitchen, I have been lucky. While local markets and restaurants catered largely to European palates, when I lived in Switzerland I traveled constantly. I was in airplanes every week and visited lots of interesting and exotic places. Some frequent business travelers think constant travel is a necessary evil to doing their job. For me, it was a wonderful opportunity to meet lots of interesting people and work on cool projects. And as an admitted foodie it was a chance to discover new and interesting tastes. I sampled blinis and caviar in Warsaw and Moscow, wonderful calamari and fish in Athens, chicken with preserved lemons in Marrakech and many more delights. Leading a rapidly growing sales group meant that there were lots of victories to celebrate and lots of team dinners. It's hard to get into a food rut when every week you are enjoying something new and different.

I love entertaining so I began to recreate these dishes in my own kitchen and share my discoveries with friends and families. I am a plunger; so I jumped in feet first to decipher at least some of the culinary mysteries I encountered. I chatted with waiters, chefs and cooks; I cajoled my sales managers into getting answers to some of my burning food questions from their wives and mothers; and I read cookbooks and searched the internet. I experimented and did not hesitate to learn by trial and error. The rewards were and continue to be incredible; terrific food shared with wonderful people. I have developed a particular fondness for Mediterranean flavors; from Spain through Italy, Greece and Turkey and on to the Middle East and North Africa. I love the fresh herbs and fruit and the warm, colorful spices. I have played around with hot curries and peppers, warm spices like cinnamon, cloves and ginger and lots of fresh herbs. I have fumbled and bumbled and put together lovely arrays of tapas and meze and flavorful spice and herb mixtures for marinades, sauces, soups and stews.

As we slide into late winter in New England, it is a good time to leap out of any old ruts and experiment with new tastes and textures. Surprise and delight your family and friends with something different and maybe a little bit out of the ordinary.

Bon appétit! - Susan



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Cooking Parties  
Learn & Laugh

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busy to cook? Let me do  
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### Chicken with Green Olives and Preserved Lemon

Serves 4

1 (3 1/2 to 4 pound) free-range chicken, cut into pieces  
1 medium onion, coarsely chopped  
1/2 cup cracked green olives  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper  
1 teaspoon cumin  
1 teaspoon sweet or hot paprika  
1 teaspoon red pepper flakes (or to taste)  
1 1/4 teaspoon cloves  
1 large pinch saffron  
4 cloves garlic, minced  
1 tablespoon fresh ginger, chopped  
1 cup white wine  
2 bay leaves  
1 cup chicken stock  
1 preserved lemon, recipe follows  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
Extra-virgin olive oil  
Garnish: 1/4 cup fresh cilantro leaves, chopped

1. In the bowl of a small food processor or blender, combine the cinnamon, pepper, cumin, paprika, red pepper flakes, cloves, saffron, garlic and ginger. Slowly add the wine and process until smooth.
2. Put the chicken in a large bowl; add the marinade and cover all the chicken pieces. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or preferably, overnight.
3. Remove the chicken from the marinade and reserve. In a large casserole over medium high heat add 1 tablespoon olive oil and the onions; cook until just starting to brown, about 3 minutes. Remove the onions and reserve.
4. Add chicken pieces to the casserole and lightly brown on both sides, about 5 minutes per side.
5. Return the onions to the casserole. Rinse preserved lemon. Cut the peel into strips and add to pan. Add reserved marinade, olives, chicken stock and bay leaf. Cover tightly and cook over low heat for 30 to 35 minutes, or until chicken is cooked through. Remove bay leaf and discard. Taste juices and adjust seasoning. Garnish with chopped cilantro and serve with couscous.

### Preserved Lemons

8-12 fresh lemons  
Kosher or Sea salt

1. Slice half of the lemons in eights. In a mixing bowl, toss the lemons generously with salt. Tightly pack the salty lemons into a clean, sterilized pint jar. Juice the remaining lemons and pour into the jar. Fill the jar to the top.
2. Secure the lid and let sit in a cool dry place for at least 3 days and up to 1 week. Refrigerate; the lemons will keep for at least a month.