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Most years I greet the first day of spring with a hale and hearty guffaw. Then again, most years there are still mountainous snow banks outside my kitchen window. While the first crocus has yet to raise its perky purple petals to the sun, New Hampshire feels more like May than March. Yes indeed, it feels a lot like spring.

And with spring comes one of those longer-than-long To-Do lists.

From top to bottom, these lists are filled with all that stuff that no one in their right mind wants to do. Or at least, I never want to do. You know ... emptying every drawer in the kitchen, washing all those little plastic trays and putting everything back again. Sorting through ten years of paperbacks and, instead getting lost in a favorite old thriller, packing them up for the book sale. Same goes for organizing your sweater drawer and changing batteries, light bulbs and the furnace filter. And don't forget your taxes are due in less than a month.

Sure the first day of spring is welcomed but (unless you live to wash windows and organize old bills and bank statements) the spring To-Do list is not. Why not shake things up with some lighthearted fun and a spring-has-sprung list? Mine might look something like this:

1. Ski at least one last time and wear your favorite Hawaiian shirt. If you don't have a Hawaiian shirt, improvise. When the snow turns to wet cement, relax on the deck with a burger and beer.
2. Spend a rainy afternoon at the movies. Don't forget the Milk Duds ... unless you prefer Junior Mints or Jujubes.
3. And since there will inevitably be more than one rainy day, spend a morning at your favorite museum. Most museums have a charming and delicious little café tucked into a corner somewhere. Take a break to rest your feet while you enjoy a coffee and croissant or a lovely lunch.
4. Whether it's lunch or dinner, next time you're out on the town, skip the entrée. Instead, enjoy a gorgeous salad, wicked appetizer and decadent dessert. Do not feel guilty for one single minute. If you do, hum a little tune to get your mother's voice out of your head.
5. Pack a picnic and head to the lake to watch the ice melt. If you can't find one, start an ice-out pool. Bring a good book or a Frisbee; an ice-out is a little like watching paint dry except you're out in the sunshine.
6. When warm breezes blow and the sky is bluer than blue, fly a kite. Yes, the fields will be muddy but don't let that bother you. Throw on your rubber boots and raise your face to the sun. Afterwards, stop by that gelato shop you love or whip up a batch of your favorite flavor at home.
7. On the next warm, sunny afternoon, drive to the coast and take a walk on the beach. Stop for tea and a cupcake before you drive home again.
8. While you're in a beachy mood, turn your next dinner into a beach party. Invite everyone to dress appropriately in sundresses, shorts, t-shirts and flip-flops. Dust off your old Beach Boy albums and drag the grill out of the garage. It's time to dance and serve up your favorite warm weather dishes.
9. Or search the world for recipes from warm, sunny climes. A new chicken recipe would be good. Try something exotic with interesting herbs and spices. Invite your nearest and dearest over to enjoy it with you.
10. Invent a new cocktail (with or without alcohol) and name it *Spring Has Sprung*. Ask your friends to do the same and host a taste-off and tapas party. With a fun and festive evening of fancy drinks and good food, everyone goes home a winner.

Enjoy the early spring and bon appétit!



## Moroccan Chicken with Green Olives and Preserved Lemon

*With a wonderful combination of lemon and spice, Chicken with Green Olives and Preserved Lemon is a great dish to celebrate spring. Enjoy!*

Serves 4

Olive oil

- 4 chicken breasts or thighs or a mix of both
  - 1 medium onion, coarsely chopped
  - 4 cloves garlic, minced
  - 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced
  - 1 teaspoon cinnamon
  - 1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
  - 1 teaspoon cumin
  - 1 teaspoon sweet or hot paprika
  - 1 teaspoon or to taste red pepper flakes
  - 1 teaspoon cloves
  - 1/2 teaspoon kosher or sea salt
  - 1/2 cup cracked green olives, pitted and quartered
  - 1 cup dry white wine
  - 1 cup chicken stock
  - 1 large pinch saffron
  - 1 bay leaf
  - 1 preserved lemon (8 wedges), recipe follows
- Garnish: fresh cilantro leaves, chopped



Heat a little olive oil in a large casserole over medium high heat. Add the chicken to the casserole and cook each side for about 5 minutes or until golden brown. Remove the chicken from the pot and reserve.

Add the onions to the casserole and cook, stirring frequently, until translucent. Add the garlic, ginger, cinnamon, pepper, cumin, paprika, red pepper flakes, cloves and salt and cook for 2-3 minutes more. Add the olives, wine, stock, saffron and bay leaf to the pot and stir to combine.

Rinse the preserved lemon wedges and separate the pulp from the peel. Discard the pulp, cut the peel into strips and add to pot.

Return the chicken to the casserole and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover and cook for 35 to 40 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through. Discard the bay leaf and transfer the chicken to a serving platter or individual plates. Spoon a little sauce over the chicken and garnish with cilantro. Serve immediately with additional sauce and couscous.

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## Preserved Lemons

8-12 fresh lemons

About 1/3 cup kosher or sea salt

Slice half of the lemons in eighths. In a mixing bowl, toss the lemons generously with salt. Tightly pack the lemons and salt in a clean, sterilized pint jar. Add the juice of the remaining lemons to the jar. If you don't have enough lemons and lemon juice to fill the jar, top it off with extra virgin olive oil.

Secure the lid and store in the refrigerator for at least 10 days before using. The lemons will keep, refrigerated, for at least a couple of months.

