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# Memorial Day on Pleasant Lake & Grilled Vegetables & Couscous Salad

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Memorial Day is just around the corner. In New Hampshire where winter comes early and stays late, the last Monday in May, Memorial Day, marks the beginning of summer. Kids are happy to get a day off from school. Many, but not all, businesses close. The notable exceptions are any and all retailers. From Main Street to the mall, they'll fly balloons and banners and run three-day sales extravaganzas. The highways and by-ways will be bumper-to-bumper as Americans flock to the mountains or beach or attempt to shop-'til-they-drop.

I grew up in the suburbs west of Boston. Unless a three-day downpour was not in the forecast, my family always headed north for the long Memorial Day Weekend. Any weekend was a good weekend if it was spent on Pleasant Lake. Saturday morning was for chores. We ran the vacuum cleaner upstairs and down, checked the ceilings for cobwebs and leaks and the cupboards, nooks and crannies for trespassers. One year my sister Brenda discovered a pile of seeds and nuts in her bed. We figured that mice had taken our absence during Mud Season as an invitation to move in.

We three kids always whipped through whatever boring tasks our parents assigned. What we lacked in care we made up in speed and escaped to the beach as quickly as possible. Brenda and I would get the jump on our summer tans while John went in search of frogs and tadpoles. Before too long, a toe was tentatively put in the lake. Dares and double dares soon followed. Then, as often as not, one or all of us plunged, shrieking, into the still freezing water.

In the coming days, all along the shores of Pleasant Lake, and lakes everywhere, empty cottages will fill up. The summer people will be back, if only for the weekend. Windows will be thrown open to clear the stale and musty air. The water will be turned back on. Floors and decks will be swept clean. Stray squirrels and mice will be chased out the door. Beaches and yards will be raked free of winter's debris. Dusty lawn chairs will get hosed off. Barbeque grills will be found and put to work. Before you know it, everything will be shipshape and ready for summer.

With a little luck, a couple of hours will be found for some fun. Favorite hiking trails will be rediscovered. Games of golf and tennis matches will be played. Boats, large and small, will be launched. Kayaks and canoes will tour the shore. Sailors will hope for breeze and settle for a snooze on the calm lake. Fishermen will pray that dinner will bite their hooks and settle for burgers on the grill. I'm sure that at least a few kids will plunge, shrieking, into the ice cold lake.

My part-time neighbors won't stay long. Late Monday afternoon they will put away their brooms and rakes. They will stow their toys, close up their cottages and head back to the city. They'll return to work and school on Tuesday with sore muscles, a few black fly bites and a sunburn or two.

Except for the loons' call, the lake will again be still.

If only for a weekend, enjoy the first delightful days of summer. However you spend the holiday, take a moment to relive a few fond memories with family and friends. And maybe, just maybe, take a mad dash in and out of a still frigid lake.

Have fun and bon appétit!



## Grilled Vegetables & Couscous Salad

*Versatile and full of flavor, serve this salad at your holiday cookout. Enjoy!*



Serves 8

Juice of 1/2-1 lemon  
 Extra virgin olive oil  
 3 cloves garlic, minced  
 Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste  
 1-2 zucchinis, sliced lengthwise about 1/2 inch thick  
 1 small eggplant, sliced about 1/2 inch thick  
 1 red onion, cut in 1/2 inch rounds  
 1/2 yellow bell pepper  
 1/2 red bell pepper  
 2 cups Israeli couscous  
 2-3 tablespoons flat-leaf parsley, chopped  
 1-2 tablespoons fresh mint, chopped  
 1 tablespoon fresh oregano, chopped  
 1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted

Combine the juice of 1/2 lemon and the garlic in a large bowl and season with salt and pepper. Whisk in 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Let the vinaigrette sit for 10-15 minutes to combine the flavors.

While the vinaigrette mixes and mingles, prepare the couscous according to package directions.

Drain the couscous and transfer to the bowl with the vinaigrette and toss to combine. Cool the couscous to almost room temperature, add the herbs, season with salt and pepper to taste and toss again.

Meanwhile, preheat the grill to medium-high. Brush or toss the vegetables in a little olive oil to lightly coat and season with salt and pepper. Grill the vegetables until tender or tender-crisp, 2-3 minutes per side for the eggplant and 1-2 minutes per side for everything else. You might like to cook the onions in a grill pan as the small rings are apt to fall through the grate.

When the vegetables are cool enough to handle, roughly chop and add the vegetables and pine nuts to the couscous and toss to combine. If the couscous seems dry, add more lemon juice and/or olive oil to taste.



Serve immediately or cover and store in the refrigerator. The salad is best at room temperature so remove from the refrigerator about 30 minutes before serving.

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