



Dog Daze & Grilled Chicken Salad Provençal

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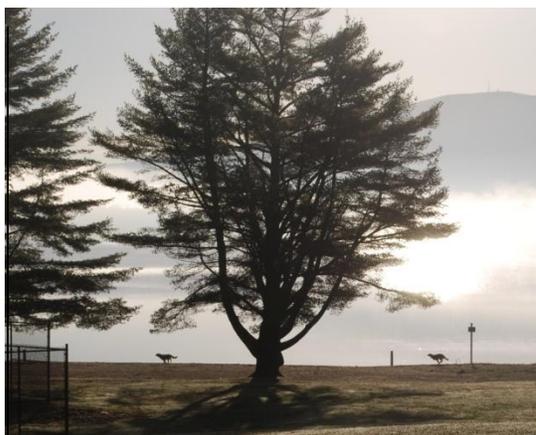
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If there was ever a summer for dog days, this is it. Yes, it's been one of those summers. It happens from time to time. The heat waves roll in one after another and another. The air gets thick and heavy and the hot hot sun is merciless. I guess it was to be expected this year. After all, our first day of summer was back in mid-March. In New England we make much of our endless winter. We joke that summer is a warm day in July. But for a balmy ides of March? We got nothing.

On these hot, humid days, most of us want nothing more than to laze around under a tree or float in the lake. As far as I can figure, there is no better place when the temperature skyrockets than Pleasant Lake. As is fitting for the dog days of summer, when we were kids we brought our dogs to the beach. No one wanted to leave their pooch in the house all day, hot or lonely or both. It was their vacation too!

Our four-legged friends happily trotted along to the lake to swim, retrieve sticks and keep us company. The water patrol did not accept dogs as spotters for water skiing but many were invited onto Sunfishes for leisurely afternoon sails. They were generally agreeable as long as they could abandon ship and swim back to shore when the fickle winds on Pleasant Lake inevitably died.

Eventually after one too many territorial disputes, dogs were banned from the beach. Our dog Eeyore was a lot like his namesake, the donkey in the Winnie the Pooh books. A loveable black Labrador retriever, he was born old; a little cantankerous, a little melancholy. As he did with most things, Eeyore accepted his exile to the house with dignity.

Forced indoors, he searched out cool places to snooze away the long afternoons until his family returned. On hot days, Eeyore wrapped his big, old, Labrador body around the toilet to stay cool. On really hot days he climbed into the bathtub. As he got older and more arthritic it became one of life's unsolved mysteries as to how he got up and into the tub. How he got out was not a mystery. It took at least three of us to wrestle seventy-five pounds of awkward dog out of the bathtub.

While he never managed to turn on the faucet for a cool shower, Eeyore was probably more comfortable lolling in the tub than his humans down on the beach. On sweltering days, the tennis courts were empty by noon and boats stayed on the shore. We kids wanted nothing more than to flop down under the trees. We barely moved; except to complain. When we couldn't take a minute more, we summoned our courage, dashed across the blistering sand and dove into the water for a leisurely swim to the raft.

That worked for maybe a day. Maybe two. Too hot days always made our mothers nervous. It wasn't the heat or the humidity. It was the lying around and doing nothing. They lived to see us busy. We were constantly pushed onto the tennis courts, into sailboats or into doing good deeds. But when the mercury hit ninety and then ninety-five or more, we refused to pick up a racket or aimlessly drift off shore in the sweltering sun. Alas our moms were formidable opponents and would not be outdone by the heat and our sloth. They put us to work washing cars to raise money for Hospital Day. Or insisted the life guards organize a swim to Blueberry Island. Anything to keep us busy. None of us were particularly bad kids but our moms were convinced that too much free time would lead to mischief.

They were probably right.

Enjoy all that summer has to offer and bon appétit!

Grilled Chicken Salad Provencal

This colorful salad is as beautiful as it is delicious, perfect for a hot summer night on the deck or on the beach. Enjoy!

Serves 4-6



- 1 – 1 1/2 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- Sun-dried tomato marinade (recipe follows)
- 1-2 romaine hearts, torn into bite sized pieces
- 8-12 cherry or grape tomatoes, cut in half
- 8-12 Greek or Niçoise olives, pitted and roughly chopped
- 3-4 radishes, chopped
- 3-4 scallions, white and light green parts only or 1/2 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 – 1 cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped
- 1/2 red or yellow bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh, chopped basil
- 2 tablespoons fresh, chopped parsley
- Sun-Dried Tomato Vinaigrette (recipe follows)

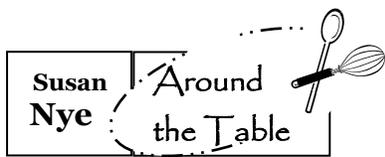
Put the chicken in a large, heavy-duty plastic re-sealable bag. Add the marinade and seal the bag, pressing out any excess air. Marinate the chicken in the refrigerator, turning every few hours, for at least 4 hours or overnight.

Preheat the grill to medium high. Remove the chicken from the marinade. Arrange the chicken on the grill. Reduce the heat to medium and grill, turning once, until cooked through, 3-5 minutes per side. Remove the chicken from the grill and let rest for 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, put the romaine, tomatoes, olives, radishes, onions, cucumber and pepper in a large bowl and toss to combine. Sprinkle with half the herbs and toss again. Just before serving, add enough vinaigrette to lightly coat and toss to combine.

To serve: arrange the salad on a large platter. Thinly slice the chicken and arrange on top of the salad. Drizzle a little vinaigrette over the chicken, sprinkle with the remaining herbs and serve.





Sun-Dried Tomato Marinade

2 cloves garlic
1/2 shallot

2 halves oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes
1-2 sprigs thyme
1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary
1 teaspoon or to taste sea salt
1 tablespoon hot pepper sauce
1 cup dry white wine

Put all the ingredients except the wine in a blender and process to combine. With the motor running, slowly add the wine and process until smooth.

Sun-Dried Tomato Vinaigrette

2 halves oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes
2 cloves garlic
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
Extra-virgin olive oil to taste

Put all the ingredients except the olive oil in a blender and pulse a few times to mince and combine. With the machine running, slowly add the olive oil and process until smooth and combined.

Makes about 1 cup, store extra vinaigrette in the refrigerator.