



Here Comes Peter Cottontail & Moroccan Spiced Grilled Lamb with Roasted Eggplant Salsa

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As a little girl, I always looked forward to Easter. Even if Easter was early and there was snow on the ground, the holiday was the perfect excuse for a spring shopping spree. All women love party dresses and little girls, at least my sister and I, were no exception. For several years, my Dad's cousin Virginia ensured that we were the best dressed little girls in New England, if not the world. Or rather it was Ginny's friend Frances, a buyer at G. Fox & Company, who scoured the samples and latest arrivals in the children's department.

Like most young couples, my parents were more or less living from paycheck to paycheck, juggling a mortgage, car payments and all that goes with raising a family. They welcomed the help and, time and time again, Frances delivered. Years later, Mum admitted that she and my Dad were a bit rag-tagged but her girls were always dressed to the nines. Whenever she told the story, her smile beamed with pride.

We debuted our fancy spring dresses and bonnets at the Maugus Club's children's party. A few miles from our house, the Maugus Club was not a swanky country club. A big brick building, it had bowling lanes on the ground floor and a big room upstairs. We bowled there on many a rainy Wednesday afternoon. Once a week for an interminable hour, Mrs. Ferguson took over the big room. She taught the waltz, foxtrot and cha cha to the town's fifth and sixth graders. I don't know her success rate but I failed miserably. Although it was a great excuse to wear a party dress, I was a terrible dancer.

But before I ever stumbled around the dance floor, my sister and I donned our new spring finery and spent Easter Saturday in the Maugus Club's great room. Bedlam reigned throughout the afternoon. Hordes of kids enjoyed games, music, sweet treats and a visit from the Easter Bunny.

Yes, the Easter bunny. Every year some poor dad was cajoled into dressing up in an Easter Bunny costume. The costume's oversized rabbit head had enough blind spots to leave the wearer virtually helpless. The fake fur suit was warm enough to keep him toasty on even the coldest winter day. Towards the end of the afternoon, the hapless volunteer hopped into the party to a rousing chorus of *Here Comes Peter Cottontail*. After circling the room and patting a few heads, Peter passed out chocolate eggs and then hopped out again.

Mr. Cottontail's departure signaled the end of the party. Kids high on good cheer and bright yellow Peeps were left in his wake. Cars began to fill the parking lot. Coats were retrieved, stray kids were tracked down and a few tears were inevitably shed. Slowly, the herd of children was corralled out the door and carted home to recover from the sugar rush.

Not to be outdone, more often than not our parents would soon head out for their own celebration. We never heard all the facts, in truth we've never heard any facts, but I'm pretty sure that a good time was had by all. One particular year stands out.

The details have always been a bit sketchy; we were only told that Dad lost a bet. As the looser, he was obliged to walk all the dogs in neighborhood dressed in the Maugus Club rabbit costume. Late Easter Sunday afternoon he donned the heavy white suit. Barely able to see, he paraded down Jackson Road in hazy splendor, tripping over a tangle of dogs and leashes. Most of the neighborhood kids joined in the fun, waving carrots, shouting and laughing.

I was all of five or six and thrilled that MY dad was dressed up as the Easter Bunny. The day was glorious, warm and sunny more like summer than spring. Dad almost melted in the heavy suit but as far as I was concerned it was the best Easter ever!

Have a wonderful day with family and friends and maybe even a giant rabbit, Happy Easter and bon appétit!



Moroccan Spiced Grilled Lamb with Roasted Eggplant Salsa

Serves 6-8

1/4 cup olive oil
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
Zest and juice of 1 orange
6 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 small red onion, minced
1-2 tablespoons Harissa
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon allspice
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
3 pounds well-trimmed boneless leg of lamb



Put the olive oil, citrus zests and juices, garlic, onion, Harissa, herbs and spices in a bowl, season with salt and pepper and whisk to combine.

Add the lamb to the citrus and spice mix, turn the meat to coat evenly with the marinade. Cover and, turning a few times, marinate the lamb overnight in the refrigerator.

Prepare a charcoal or gas grill. Fire should be medium hot.

Remove the lamb from the marinade. Grill the lamb, turning 2-3 times until a thermometer inserted in the thickest piece of meat registers at 130 degrees, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board and let stand for 15 minutes, loosely covered in foil. Slice the lamb and serve with Roasted Eggplant Salsa.

Roasted Eggplant Salsa

1 1/2 teaspoon paprika
1 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
3 medium eggplants (about 3 pounds total), cut into 1-inch cubes
1 red bell pepper, roughly chopped
1 yellow bell pepper, roughly chopped
1 red onion, roughly chopped
Extra virgin olive oil
4 garlic cloves, minced
Juice of 1 lemon

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*Another recipe from Susan Nye:
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1/3 cup raisins
1/3 cup pine nuts
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees.

Combine the spices in a small bowl.

Put the vegetables in a large bowl, sprinkle with the spice mix, season with salt and pepper and toss to combine.

Spread the vegetables on baking sheets in a single layer, drizzle the vegetables with enough olive oil to lightly coat and toss to combine.

Roast the vegetables until tender, about 20 minutes. Remove from the oven, add the garlic and toss to combine. Let sit for a few minutes.

Transfer the vegetables to a bowl, add the lemon juice, raisins and pine nuts and toss to combine. Cool to room temperature, check for seasoning and add the chopped herbs. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate. Remove from the refrigerator about 1 hour before serving to bring to room temperature.

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