

Private Chef, Catering & Cooking Classes

I'd be delighted to help you with any and all of your celebrations.

Join Me Around the Table for an Eat Well-Do Good Dinner! Support the fight against Alzheimer's Disease & Enjoy delicious food & fun!

Treat Yourself to an Around the Table Chef's Apron

Cook like a chef or just look like one!

You can find lots more information on the web at www.susannye.com and www.susannye.wordpress.com

For cooking tips, recipes and more, connect with me on FaceBook www.facebook.com/swny or follow me on Twitter at twitter.com/susannye Watch me cook on www.youtube.com/susannye

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It's one of those questions that pops up from time to time. In college, it was asked late at night. Fed up with studying, we'd close our books and mull over a beer and a bowl of popcorn. Today it might get asked over dessert and coffee towards the end of a dinner party. Then and now, it almost always guarantees that no one's going to bed anytime soon.

Stranded on a desert island, who would you want to have with you? I'm sure that many people would go for one of the hunky carpenters on the do-it-yourself channel. Or a brainy scientist for a flashback to the professor and Gilligan's Island. Sure I'd be happy to have one or both along but I'd also bring my mom. She would make a great companion on a desert island. Besides with Mothers' Day on Sunday, I wouldn't want to spend the day without her.

"Your mother?" You ask incredulously. "Really, your mother?" You ask again. Not wishing to seem rude, you pause, change gear and politely ask, "Does your mom have some kind of special, super hero power?" Well, sort of. My mother's special power is her undeniable, indefatigable exuberance for life. She won't go all MacGyver on you but she is the ultimate optimist.

Mom has Alzheimer's and requires 24x7 care. Last summer, we were forced to realize that it was past time for her to move into assisted living. Our dad was in the hospital, so my sister and I made the arrangements and helped her move. After getting Mom settled in, Brenda and I paused in the parking lot to share a tearful hug. Just because something is inevitable doesn't mean it won't make you feel very sad. It somehow made it worse that Mom has always been the one to cheer us up and reassure us that everything would be alright. We hugged again.

If you have ever met my mother, it will not surprise you to learn that Mom has indeed found ways to let us and everyone around her know that everything's going to be alright. True, her memory has failed her. Language sometimes fails her as well. But her smile never does. Her good heart never does. Her optimism never fails her.

My mother is one of those people who walks on the sunny side of the street. And, whether you want to or not, she'll gently take your hand and bring you along with her.

So yes, I would bring my mother to that desert island. She doesn't carry a Swiss Army knife or duct tape. She won't find a dozen coconuts and some driftwood and turn them into a sturdy, seaworthy raft. Don't look to Mom's help when it's time to build a hut or catch a fish. Or even cook that fish.

Instead, she'll smile her beautiful smile and tell you that you are the best. Mom knows that she doesn't need to build anything or catch anything. She has complete and utter confidence in you and your ability to do it.

So watch out, her optimism is infectious. Before you know it, you will be climbing up trees for coconuts and starting fires with two sticks. Plus she'll have you laughing and singing songs you haven't thought of in years. Yes, I would want Mom with me. She'd make sure I stayed on the sunny side of the island.

Happy Mothers' Day Mom and a big hug, kiss and thank you! Bon appétit!



Lemon-Lime Squares

Mom loves lemons and limes and these tart squares are among her favorites. They'll make a great dessert after a casual Mothers' Day lunch. Enjoy!

Makes 24 squares



Shortbread Base

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup light brown sugar
1 teaspoon salt
12 tablespoons (1 1/2 sticks) butter, cut in small pieces

Lemon-Lime Topping

4 large eggs
3/4 cup 50/50 mix of freshly squeezed lemon and lime juices
1 1/2 cups sugar
Pinch salt
Grated zest of 1 lemon
Grated zest of 1-2 limes
1/3 cup all-purpose flour

Garnish

Confectioners' sugar

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Lightly butter a 9x13-inch baking pan.

Make the shortbread base: Put the flour, brown sugar and salt in the bowl of a food processor and pulse a few times to combine. Add the butter and continue to pulse until the dough begins to come together in small lumps. Put the shortbread dough in the prepared baking pan and press evenly into the pan.

Bake the shortbread at 350 degrees in the middle of the oven until golden, about 20 minutes.

Prepare the topping while the shortbread is baking: Put the eggs, citrus juices, sugar and salt in the bowl of a food processor and process until well combined. Add the zest and flour and process again until well combined.

Remove the shortbread from the oven and pour the citrus mixture over the hot shortbread. Reduce the temperature to 300 degrees and return the pan to the oven. Bake for about 20 minutes or until the topping has set.

Cool completely in the pan and cut into squares. Sift confectioners' sugar over the squares before serving.