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**The snow birds are back.** No, I'm not talking about the swallows and Capistrano or even the loons and Pleasant Lake. I'm talking about our esteemed senior citizens who spend the winter in Florida or Arizona. They are just now finding their way back to New England. Many are devoted golfers who head south for an endless summer on the links. Others have just decided that, after years of cold winters, enough is enough.

For many years my parents were part of the flock of snow birds that heads south every winter for golf and warm sunshine. More often than not, when they returned north, instead of sunshine, they brought the rain. I first noticed this phenomenon when they visited me in Europe. I lived in Switzerland for almost two decades and my parents flew over for a visit every three, maybe four years. They always came in May and their timing was always impeccable. Within twenty-four hours often less, the weather changed for the worse.

**The good daughter, I played tour guide and translator** and shared many of my favorite places with them. Under cloudy or rainy skies, we hit the road. Not just in Switzerland, we drove through France and Italy and rendezvoused in Austria and Sweden. Umbrellas in hand, we toured the countryside. We wandered through churches, chateaus, museums and farmers' markets. Rarely in a hurry, we made frequent stops to enjoy the local cuisine and wine.

**American tourists have a reputation in Europe**, not all positive and not all negative. Many jaded Europeans find our energy, enthusiasm and brilliantly colored golf trousers amusing. They are mystified by our addiction to ice and preference for weak coffee.

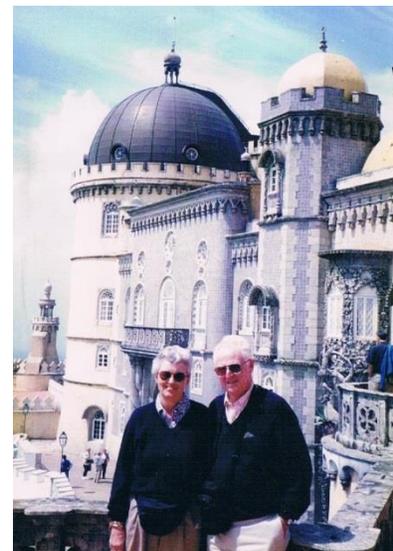
Not wanting to appear the yokel, I adopted and adapted many local habits. I more or less gave up ice, started drinking very strong coffee and developed a fondness for black in the winter and beige in the summer. My goal was to develop an air of expatriate sophistication. Did I succeed? Who knows! If it all seems a little foolish; blame it on youth and culture shock.

**The bossy daughter, I instructed my parents on packing** for their European vacations. No madras, nothing with little embroidered lobsters or palm trees and no shocking, bright colors. They more or less ignored me. On a positive note, I never lost them in a crowd.

You may have heard the Chinese curse, "may you live in interesting times." Traveling with Mom and Dad was often interesting and frequently entertaining. Dad is a friendly guy and chats with everyone and anyone; whether they speak English or not. Italians pride themselves on their excellent coffee which my parents promptly and proudly diluted with hot water. Whether it was for a coke or evening cocktails, they pestered waiters for ice again and again and again.

But despite bad weather, their very American habits and my silly attempt at Euro-chic, we always had a great time. Luckily a little wisdom was not beyond my reach and I soon figured out that my parents were just fine as is. By any measure, their preference for bright colors, weak coffee and lots of ice is not really very important. Plus I realized they were incorrigible and not about change. Not once or even twice but with every visit, Dad brought the same house gift – ice cube trays.

Rain or sun, in brilliant colors or beige, at home or abroad, I wish you good fun, good food and good conversation around the table this spring. Bon appétit!



*Susan*

## Pork Medallions with Mushrooms

*Bring the flavors of France to your table – pork tenderloin and wild mushrooms with pungent mustard from Dijon and fresh rosemary and thyme from Provence. Enjoy!*

Serves 6

Olive oil

1 pound morels or Portobello mushrooms or a mix\*, cleaned, trimmed and sliced

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

2 shallots, finely chopped

3 cloves garlic, minced

2 pounds pork tenderloin, trimmed and cut into 6 thick rounds

1 cup dry white wine

2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

2 teaspoons fresh rosemary, minced

1 teaspoon fresh thyme

1/2 cup half & half

2 tablespoons Cognac (optional)

Heat a little olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat, add the mushrooms, sprinkle with salt and pepper and sauté until lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Add the shallots and garlic and sauté for 2-3 minutes more. Remove the vegetables from the pan and reserve.

Season the pork with salt and pepper. Add a little more olive oil to the skillet. Brown the pork until golden, about 3 minutes per side. Remove the pork from the pan and reserve.



Add the wine to the pan and cook until reduced by about one-third. Remove the pan from the heat and whisk in the cognac, half & half, mustard, rosemary and thyme. Return the pan to the heat, reduce to low and simmer the sauce for about 5 minutes.

Return the pork to the skillet, top with the mushrooms and bring to a simmer. Cover the pan and simmer for about 5 minutes. Serve immediately with a sprinkle of fresh parsley.

*\* If you can't find wild mushrooms (or like mine – your dad is allergic to wild mushrooms), white or brown button mushrooms will be fine.*