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Contact me at susanwnye@gmail.com

If you are feeling glum with all the snow, rain, slush and ice, take heart – it's time for a party. From Venice to Basel, Rio and New Orleans, the streets are filled with music, laughter and masks. The rowdy celebrations, parades and masquerades started with *Carnevale* in medieval Rome and Venice. Too much fun to be contained, the festivities spread to France, Spain and beyond to Germany, Switzerland and across the ocean to South America, Louisiana and Québec. The names may vary, it's *Carnaval* in Rio, *Fastnacht* in Basel and *Mardi Gras* in New Orleans but many of the traditions are the same.

Although there are exceptions, Carnival is generally celebrated in the days leading up to Lent and ends with Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday falls on March 5th this year so you still have plenty of time and flexibility to organize and hold your party.

With a plethora of international themes to choose from, you can mix and match or stick to one. A wild, New Orleans-style Mardi Gras bash is tempting. Bring on the jazz, gumbo and glittery beads! Or you may prefer to take your inspiration from an elegant masked Venetian ball. After a long winter of heavy boots and bulky sweaters, a little black dress, heels and mysterious mask sounds like a good idea. Many men will resist a tie. Since we live in the country, a shave, great shirt and a mask should do it. However, dancing should not be optional. Whether you're a big group or a handful, there ought to be dancing.

Turn the lights down low and add warmth and romance to the room with flickering firelight and candles, sparkling silver and glass and elegant white flowers. Unless you prefer medieval music, welcome your guests with cool jazz and Bellinis. Invented at Harry's Bar in Venice, this festive cocktail will add a touch of continental glam to your party.

To make a Bellini: pour one part peach juice or peach puree into a champagne flute. Slowly add two parts Prosecco and serve.

Relax, mix and mingle while you sip Bellinis, enjoy the music and lively conversation. Be sure to admire everyone's masks, maybe award a few prizes, and take a turn on the dance floor. It may be the candles, the masks or the music but the evening is sure to take on a magical glow.

Carnevale wouldn't be Carnevale without a special feast, so plan on dinner. Anything Mediterranean or Italian sounds good, as long as it's a little bit special. If you are feeling courageous, you can try a traditional Italian feast with multiple courses. Just keep the servings small so your guests can enjoy every bite.

After the *Aperitivo* (those lovely Bellini cocktails), move onto the *Antipasto* or appetizer. Perhaps you'll serve crostini with pâté, charcuterie or smoked salmon. Next is the *Primo*, the first of two main courses. Pasta or risotto are *Primo* staples. And then, it's on to the *Secondo* or second course. Fish, fowl or meat with a side dish or two would be delightful. Now it is time for *Insalata* or a nice garden salad. *Formaggi e Frutta*, cheese and fresh fruit, are next but be sure to save room for dessert or *Dolce*. If you aren't sure what to serve, indulge in your favorite sweet, especially if it is something wonderfully creamy or chocolate or both. Finally end the meal with tiny cups of espresso and a *Digestivo*, a shot of grappa or brandy.

Now it's time for more dancing! Enjoy a fun and festive *Carnevale* and buon appetito!



Scaloppine di Tacchino con Prosciutto e Salvia (Turkey Scaloppini with Prosciutto & Sage)

While this dish does require last minute preparation, it is so quick no one will notice that you've left the table. Enjoy!

Serves 8

2 pounds turkey breast, thinly sliced into 16 (2-ounce) pieces
 Sea salt and freshly ground pepper
 16-32 fresh sage leaves
 16 slices prosciutto
 All-purpose flour
 Olive oil
 1/2 cup dry white wine
 1 cup chicken stock
 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut in small pieces
 1-2 tablespoons cognac



1 or 2 at a time, place the pieces of turkey between plastic wrap and gently pound with a mallet to about 1/4-inch thickness. Season the turkey with salt and pepper and top each piece with sage leaves and a prosciutto slice and press to adhere.

You can do ahead to this point. Cover and store in the refrigerator.

Lightly dust each scaloppini with flour and shake off the excess.

Lightly coat 1 or 2 large sauté pans with olive oil and heat on medium-high. Working in batches if necessary, sauté the scaloppini, prosciutto side down first, until the prosciutto is crisp and the turkey is cooked through, 1-2 minutes per side. Remove the scaloppini from the pan and cover to keep warm.

Add the wine and stock to the pan(s), bring to a boil and reduce by one-third. Add the butter to the sauce and cook, whisking until combined and thickened, about 2 minutes. Turn off the heat and whisk the cognac into the sauce. Drizzle the sauce over the scaloppini and serve immediately.