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When you're little, there was something quite thrilling about being outside after dark. And even better if it is past your bedtime!

I grew up in suburbia, about twenty miles west of Boston. The houses on our street were all fairly small and overflowing with kids. Lucky for us, life in a small house, not to mention the times, encouraged outdoor play. Those houses could hold only so many toys and there were no computers, computer games or Disney Channel. If it wasn't raining and the sun hadn't set, our mothers shoved us out the door. Summer was pretty simple. There was nothing to do but play and nowhere to go but out.

We played hopscotch and four-square, rode bikes and climbed trees. We built houses and forts in the woods and staged elaborate games of make believe. There were epic battles of hide and seek, tag and Red Rover. Since every house had at least two children, and usually three or four, there were plenty of kids to join the fray.

My all-time favorite game was something we called Starlight. I later learned that kids in other neighborhoods called it Ghost or Graveyard or maybe Sardines. It was special for a variety of reasons.

Starlight could not be played with a handful of kids. A decent game more or less required the entire neighborhood. Most days and with most games, age lines were drawn and boys and girls didn't mix a whole lot. A neighborhood melee didn't happen all that often, making it all the more grand.

Running around in the dark was a real treat. My mother had this boring rule that we had to come home as soon as the streetlights came on.

And finally, no doubt about it, Starlight was an absolutely terrifying game. At least if you were six.

Unlike today's playdates, these battles were far from perfectly planned events. More often than not, Starlight was play on the fly. It would start when, for no particular rhyme or reason, an impromptu gathering occurred. Warm weather drew families outside for a walk or game of catch. A group would form to admire a new car or welcome a family back from a cross-country vacation. With any luck, the adults moved onto the porch for a nightcap. Before our parents could stop and think about bedtime, we kids disappeared into the darkness. Out of sight, we were out of mind; at least for an hour, maybe more.

Starlight was a simple game. Someone was IT; I think we called this person The Ghost. One big kid or another, often my sister, always wanted to be IT first. The Ghost drifted off into the backyard and hid. Then everyone else carefully crept around the house. Each step was more frightening than the last. Just as our terror reached a fevered pitch, The Ghost leapt out of the bushes and tagged as many kids as possible.

Those who escaped returned to the front stoop, regrouped and did it all over again. If caught, you were declared dead or some such thing. Anyway, you then joined The Ghost and helped chase down the escapees. Eventually, the last kid was captured and became The Ghost in the next round. The game went on until blood, tears or both were shed or our parents realized it was after ten o'clock.

The summer always seems to end before we know it. Day or night, enjoy the outdoors and bon appétit!



Susan

Grilled Corn, Black Bean & Cheese Quesadillas with Fresh Tomato Salsa



The season for local corn and tomatoes is short so indulge often.

These quesadillas are great for lunch, a casual supper or appetizer.

Enjoy!

Serve 4-6 for dinner or lunch and 12, maybe more, for appetizers

2-3 ears (enough for 1-1 1/2 cups kernels) fresh corn
Olive oil

About 1 1/2 cups (15-ounce can) black beans, drained and rinsed

About 1/4 cup chopped red onion

About 1 tablespoon or to taste minced jalapeño pepper

1 clove garlic, minced

1/2 teaspoon cumin

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

8 ounces cheddar or Monterey jack, shredded (about 2 cups)

1/4 cup sour cream

6-8 large or 10-12 medium flour tortillas

Preheat a gas or charcoal grill to high. Brush the corn with a little olive oil. Lay the ears directly on the grill and, turning to cook evenly, cook for about 15 minutes or until nicely charred and tender. Remove from the grill. When the corn is cool enough to handle, use a sharp knife to remove the kernels from the cobs.

Can be prepared in advance, covered and stored in the refrigerator.

Put the corn, beans, onion, jalapeño and garlic in a bowl, season with cumin, salt and pepper and toss to combine. Add the cheese and sour cream and toss again.

Preheat the oven to 200 degrees.

Set the tortillas on a work surface, evenly spread about 1/3 cup of beans, corn and cheese on one-half of each tortilla and fold the tortilla over the filling.



Heat a large griddle or skillet over medium-high heat. Brush with oil and, working in batches, place the tortillas on the griddle. Flipping once, cook until the tortillas are golden and the cheese melts, about 5 minutes. Transfer the quesadillas to an ovenproof panner and keep warm in the oven while you cook the next batch.

Cut the quesadillas into wedges and serve with Fresh Tomato Salsa.

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Susan Nye – Around the Table at www.susannye.wordpress.com

Fresh Tomato Salsa

1/4 cup or to taste chopped red onion
1/2 red or yellow bell pepper, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon minced (or more to taste) jalapeño pepper
1 pint cherry tomatoes, roughly chopped or about 12 ounces tomato, seeded and roughly chopped
2 tablespoons cilantro, finely chopped
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice or red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon olive oil
Sea salt to taste

Put the red onion, pepper, garlic and jalapeño in a food processor and pulse until combined. Add the tomatoes, cilantro, lime juice and olive oil, season with salt and pulse until well combined and finely chopped.

If not serving immediately, cover and refrigerate. Remove from the refrigerator about 30 minutes before serving.