

Private Chef, Catering & Cooking Classes

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Join Me Around the Table for an

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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

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It's that time of year. Yellow school buses are again on the road. Back-to-school ads are flooding the media. A few days ago, I met a woman and her five children. I don't know about the kids (they were too busy running around to stop and chat) but their mom was more than ready for school to start.

I get it. More than New Year's Day, even more than the first day of spring, September just feels like a new beginning; the first days of a new adventure. It doesn't matter that the harvest is at its peak, the geese are flying south and the leaves are starting to turn. The fall holds tremendous promise for a fresh start. I guess nineteen first days of school with new teachers, notebooks, pens and pencils, calculators and penny loafers, then hiking boots and finally Nikes will do that to you. To top it off, for another fifteen years, I worked at a company whose fiscal year began in the fall.



So, what are your thoughts for a new adventure this fall and beyond? Will you plot, plan and train for a trek through the Himalayas and climb Mount Everest? Maybe you'll start a new business or learn to knit. Big or small, re-invention or fine-tuning, it's all good.

Not sure where to go or what to do for your next adventure? Take your time. Chances are pretty good that you won't sit down one fine afternoon and get it all together in time for dinner. Don't expect some brilliant epiphany. Whether it's a new job, discovering your next passion or picking up a hobby, figuring things out can take a while.

More often than not, it will take longer than you think to contemplate, percolate and incubate your idea. And then, you still need to come up with a plan. Don't worry if you make more than a few false starts, hit more than one dead end and get snarled up in some twists and turns. There is no one perfect answer. What works for me could very well be the worst possible choices for you. Get clear on who you are, what's important and where you want to be. After all, many adventures and life choices look wonderful from afar.

There is a certain romance to living in a foreign country, running your own business or learning to weave. Until you move to an exotic island and realize you are hopeless with languages and desperately miss football. Not to mention the change of seasons. Or maybe you start that business and soon discover that you hate selling. Or your new loom takes up the entire living room. Oh, and let's not discuss the fortune in chiropractor bills and physical therapy when your back rebels.

Take the time and care to look behind the curtain. You'll never know everything there is to know about your new adventure but ask questions. Lots of questions. And then some more. So you adore the work of Georgia O'Keefe or Paul Gauguin? Well, you might want to experiment a bit before quitting your job and moving to New Mexico or Tahiti to paint. Especially if you've never held a paintbrush.

Same goes for ... writing a novel, running a bed and breakfast, buying a bookstore, hanging out your shingle as the next Sam Spade or becoming a wedding planner. Play around with your idea before you invest everything you own in a new way of life or passion. Or not; because, regardless of what your kindergarten teacher told you, it's okay to color outside the lines.



Have a wonderful fall, a grand adventure and bon appétit!

Susan

Savory Parmesan Shortbread with Tomato Jam

Looking for a new appetizer? Take advantage of all the wonderful local tomatoes with these savory cookies and jam. Enjoy!

Makes about 3 dozen

1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
About 3/4 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
(about 2 1/2 ounces)
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1/4 teaspoon or to taste cayenne pepper
1 cup (2 sticks) chilled unsalted butter, cut into
small pieces
Tomato Jam (recipe follows)

Put the flour, Parmigiano-Reggiano, salt and
cayenne pepper in a food processor and pulse to
combine.



Add the butter and pulse until the dough starts to come together in a ball. Remove the dough from the food processor and divide in half. Roll each half into a log about 1 1/2-inches in diameter, wrap in plastic wrap or parchment paper and chill in the refrigerator until firm, at least one hour.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line baking sheets with parchment paper or silicon mats.

Slice each log into 1/3-inch rounds. Arrange the shortbread rounds about 1-inch apart on the prepared baking sheet.

Turning the pan midway through baking, bake the shortbread until the tops are dry and bottoms are golden brown, about 15 minutes.

Cool in the pan for about 5 minutes, transfer to a rack and cool completely. Serve with a dab of Tomato Jam.

The shortbread can be made ahead and stored in an airtight container at room temperature for 1 week or frozen for up to 1 month.

Tomato Jam

Makes about 2 cups

Olive oil
1/2-1 small carrot, very finely chopped
1/2 small onion, very finely chopped
1-2 cloves garlic, minced

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Pinch red pepper flakes
About 2 cups seeded and chopped plum tomatoes or chopped grape tomatoes
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1/4 cup dry white wine
1 teaspoon fresh thyme
1 bay leaf
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
1 tablespoon finely chopped basil

Heat a little olive oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the carrot, onion and pepper flakes and, stirring frequently, sauté until the onion is translucent. Add the garlic and cook for one minute more.

Meanwhile, put the tomatoes in a food processor and pulse until finely chopped.

Add the tomatoes and herbs to the pan, season with salt and pepper and bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to low and, stirring occasionally, simmer until the jam is reduced by about 1/3. Add the vinegar and wine and reduce again until the tomatoes are thick and jam-y.

Let the jam cool to room temperature and stir in the basil. If you prefer a very smooth jam, transfer to a food processor and process until smooth. Serve immediately or store in the refrigerator. Bring the jam to room temperature before serving.

Any extra jam will be delicious on your next burger or serve it with brie or goat cheese on a plain cracker.