

Cocktails Anyone?

Fall 2007/volume 60

Cooking Parties & Classes

The New Fall-Holiday
Schedule is on the Web!

September

- 12 French Country Cooking
- 26 Italian Country Kitchen

October

- 10 French Country Cooking
- 24 Italian Country Kitchen

November

- 7 French Country Cooking

December

- 5 Tapas & Finger Food

Join me in the Kitchen &
Around the Table for delicious
seasonal food & fun
Details & Menus on the Web
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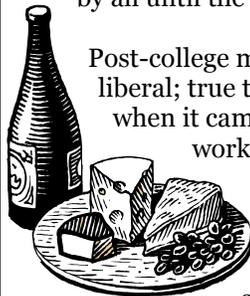
603/526 7319

December may be the darkest month of the year, but without question November is the greyest and the wettest. When I was in middle school rainy weekend afternoons were spent watching old movies. In the days before cable, channels 38 and 56 in Boston showed old black and white movies, providing an innocent, impressionable teeny-bopper with a glimpse of Hollywood glamour and sophistication.

Elegant cocktail parties with champagne and martinis played a significant role in the glamorous mystique of Hollywood in the 1930's and '40's. My favorites included William Powell and Myrna Loy as Nick and Nora Charles in *The Thin Man* series. Sleuth Nick and his madcap, society wife Nora sipped martinis while trading quips and solving capers. And who can forget Katharine Hepburn; tall and elegant even as she stumbled back into love with ex-husband Cary Grant in *Philadelphia Story*. Or star-crossed lovers Ingrid Bergman and Humphrey Bogart sipping champagne in *Casablanca*.



My first cocktail party paled in comparison to the vision of George Cukor. My three college room mates and I threw a party in our dorm room on a frigid January night. My alma mater, St. Lawrence, is just a few miles from the Canadian border, so instead of elegant evening gowns and tuxedos our guests were bundled in goose down, wool and Bean boots. No elegant hors d'oeuvres were served; the menu was limited to beer and popcorn. However, the hostesses were delightful; the chatter cheerful and fun was had by all until the keg ran out.



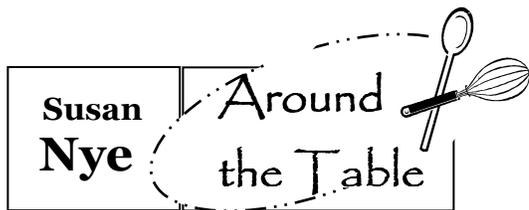
Post-college my cocktail parties took on the style of the times. A wine and cheese liberal; true to form, I served wine and cheese. We all dressed a little better, but when it came to cooking and entertaining, I was still a rank amateur. Busy with work and graduate school, I wasn't really paying attention when Martha burst on the scene with her books on entertaining. However, I did manage to take my first tentative steps as a hostess.

After graduate school with diploma in hand and loaded with enthusiasm, I moved to Europe. Traveling far and wide I discovered all sorts of wonderful dishes and entertainment ideas. With a little research, a little luck and lots of experiments, I was able to recreate many of these treats at home for friends and family. Over the years, there have been lots of hits and, yes, a few misses. My parties still lack the glamour of Hollywood's golden days but they more than make up for it with delicious food and drink, lively conversation and lots of laughter.

A grazing menu is perfect for a relaxed, comfortable evening. I like to create a variety of bits and bites for my guests to munch on while they mingle. While I gravitate towards Mediterranean and Middle Eastern flavors, I also like to throw in a taste of Asia and Latin America. Lemon-garlic shrimp, baba ghanoush and goat cheese pizza are all among my favorites. Salsas, summer rolls and Tandori chicken are tasty additions to any party. I am always on the look-out for dishes which add a new or different twist my party fare.

The holidays are just around the corner and will soon be upon us. It is a great time to host a cocktail party. Whether you are planning a crowd or an intimate get-together, I wish you good fun, good cheer and may you be 40 years in heaven before the devil knows you're dead.

Bon appétit! - Susan



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Wednesday Night
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Warm Lemon-Garlic Shrimp

Want a change from the traditional shrimp cocktail? Try these tasty shrimp at your next party. Enjoy!

Serves 8-12, about 3-4 pieces per person

1 - 1 1/2 pounds large shrimp, shelled and de-veined
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon minced shallot
1/4 teaspoon salt
Freshly ground pepper to taste
2 teaspoons herbs de Provence
Pinch of red pepper flakes
2-3 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 cup dry white wine
Juice of 1/2 lemon

1. In a large sauté pan, cook the garlic, shallots, salt, pepper, herbs and pepper flakes in olive oil over medium heat for 2-3 minutes. Add the wine; bring to a simmer and continue to cook until almost dry.
2. Add the lemon juice. Raise heat to medium high and simmer for a minute or two.
3. Add shrimp and toss to coat. Cook the shrimp for 2-3 minutes or until pink, do not over cook. Serve warm or at room temperature.