

Join Me for a Cooking Class!

January

18 French Country Cooking

February

1 Italian Country Kitchen
15 French Country Cooking
29 Italian Country Kitchen

March

7 Mediterranean Easter Feast
28 Tapas & Finger Food

April

4 Italian Country Kitchen
18 French Country Cooking

May

2 Italian Country Kitchen
16 French Country Cooking

June

6 Summer Salads

Join me in the Kitchen & Around the Table for delicious seasonal food & fun

Details & Menus on the Web

www.susannye.com

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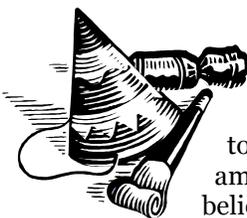
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More information the web at

www.susannye.com



My birthday is coming, in fact it's next week. I know a few people who ignore their birthdays. They complain that birthdays are depressing. I guess they think that by refusing to acknowledge the day they can somehow cheat time. Since I am always on the lookout for an excuse for fun and festivities, I believe that birthdays should be embraced and celebrated.

Birthday celebrations don't need to be huge or elaborate but everyone deserves at least a little bit of extra attention and lots of fun.

In a perfect world our birthdays would never be close to a major holiday, especially Christmas. My Dad was born on December 27th and in all honesty, most years we gloss over and pay little attention to his day. My poor nephew has his birthday in early January and after the craziness of the holidays I frequently forget it. It can be weeks, even months, before it dawns on me that he is a year older and send belated cheer. Minor holidays are fine. My sister and sister-in-law were both born on October 12th. Before most holidays were moved to Mondays we celebrated Columbus Day on the 12th with a day off from school and a parade. My sister used to brag that all the frivolity was for her.

My birthday falls in early March and so it does not have to compete with a lot of other goings-on. For years I sort of let my birthday happen around me. It was easy when I was little. My Mother organized everything and I just showed up. In college my friends took me out on the town. It was nothing fancy but they bought the pizza and the pitchers. After college we graduated from rundown bars and pizzerias and celebrated our birthdays in trendy little cafes and clubs.

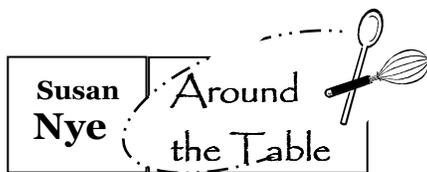
A few months before I hit forty, I decided it was time to take this birthday business a bit more seriously. It struck me that I had a few choices. I could say nothing and hope that my friends threw me a surprise party. But could I really count on someone remembering my Big Four-O? I was living thousands of miles from my family and my friends were all busy with jobs and kids and life. My friend Julie did a pretty good job at keeping track of all of our birthdays, but would she know that it was a Big Birthday. I had a new boyfriend and he had no idea when I was born or how old I was. My buddies might treat it like any other year. Or even worse, if I kept quiet my birthday might come and go with no one noticing. Julie's good but she's not infallible. I could end up celebrating the new decade alone, eating bonbons and wallowing in self-pity.

So I took matters into my own hands. I decided to end my thirties in a blaze of glory and take on the new decade proudly. I threw a big party. We danced the night away, stopping only to enjoy a birthday feast, Julie's carrot cake and of course a glass or two of champagne.

2008 is not a Big Birthday for me; there is plenty of time before the next significant milestone. This year's festivities will be low key so you will be disappointed if you look for fireworks over Pleasant Lake or a marching band on Main Street. I hope to spend my birthday skiing. The days are getting longer and warmer and it is a great time to be on the mountain. With a bit of luck the weather will cooperate and I will spend a marvelous day on the slopes with family and friends. Whether you are young, young at heart or somewhere in between, enjoy your next birthday. Have a wonderful celebration and,

Bon appétit! - Susan





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Julie's Carrot Cake

Carrot cake is my favorite and my friend Julie has generously made this delicious cake for me many times over the years. Enjoy!

Makes a 9x13-inch cake or about 24 cup cakes

2 cups sugar
4 large eggs
2½ cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups chopped walnuts
2 cups finely grated carrots
1 cup raisins
1 1/2 cup canola or vegetable oil
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons baking soda
2 teaspoons cinnamon

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Butter and flour a 9x13-inch baking dish or line muffin pans with paper liners.
2. Whisk together flour, baking soda, salt and cinnamon in a medium bowl; set aside.
3. Beat the eggs, oil and sugar with an electric mixer on medium speed for 2 minutes. Reduce speed to low. Slowly add the flour mixture and mix until just combined. Fold in the carrots, walnuts and raisins.
4. Pour batter into prepared pan or fill muffin cups 3/4 full. Bake the cake for about 45-60 minutes (cupcakes for 35-45 minutes) or until the top is golden and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Let cool completely on a wire rack. Generously spread with cream cheese frosting.

Cream Cheese Frosting

8 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
1/4 cup butter, at room temperature
2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 pound confectioners' sugar

1. Put the cream cheese and butter in a large bowl; beat with an electric mixer on medium speed until smooth, add the vanilla extra and combine. Slowly add the confectioners' sugar and mix until well blended. Increase mixer speed and continue mixing for 2 to 3 minutes, until the frosting is light and fluffy.