

Join Me for a Cooking Class!

Winter-Spring 2008 Schedule

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
30 Tapas & Finger Food

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

Private classes always available

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Contact Susan Nye at susannye@tds.net
or 603/526 7319

More information the web at www.susannye.com

Cinco de Mayo or the 5th of May is not an American holiday, but it is celebrated all over the United States with lots of hoopla, spicy treats and margaritas. I suspect that, like me, most Americans do not know much about the history behind Cinco de Mayo.

Contrary to popular belief, Cinco de Mayo is not Mexican Independence Day but instead commemorates a battle between the Mexicans and French in 1862. Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1810 and after a ten year struggle our southern neighbors won their freedom and independence. The fledgling nation continued to face political unrest and suffered severe economic difficulties. Several European countries stepped in and came to their aid with financial support. With on-going political unrest Mexico had trouble paying back the loans. Eventually the government was forced to throw up its hands and declare a temporary halt on repayment. The French ignored the moratorium and came calling for their money. If cash was not available they were more than happy to take over the country as pay back for the loans. And so began the War of French Intervention. Mexico enjoyed an early victory on the 5th of May but it was a case of winning the battle and not the war. Success was short-lived and the invasion lasted for five more years.

But don't feel bad if you don't know the ins-and-outs of Cinco de Mayo and Mexican history. Hey how many of us have more than a fleeting (if any) knowledge of the Battles of York, Lake Erie, Horseshoe Bend or even New Orleans. Regardless of our grasp of our neighbor's history, we have figured out that Cinco de Mayo is an excellent excuse for a Mexican-style celebration complete with wonderful spicy food, music and of course margaritas.



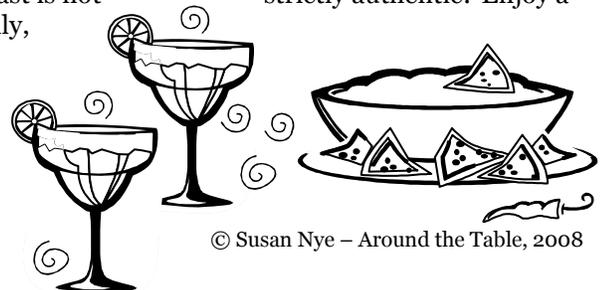
I discovered Mexican food when I was in high school. A Mexican restaurant, it probably belonged to one or another big chain, opened up a few miles down the road on Route 9. It quickly became one of my favorites. To a New England teenager Mexican food was exotic even if it was an established staple in California and the south-west. As I remember it, the food was full of flavor although I suspect that the chefs eased up on some of the spices and chilies in deference to our northern palates. While I certainly enjoyed it, I am sure that most if not all of the dishes were distant cousins of anything prepared in Mexico. Even so it gave me my first taste of food from south of the border and I thought that it was great, a wonderful change, something new and different.

When I moved to Switzerland in the mid-eighties I found that the Swiss were behind New England in discovering the delights of Mexican cuisine. I was not ready to give up the spice and heat and for several years I smuggled jalapeños, tortillas and black beans into the country. In truth, smuggling is much too strong a word for it. Every year I spent a week or two in the US and at the end of every vacation I stuffed my suitcase with goodies and schlepped it all back to Geneva. Swiss customs could not have cared less that I was bringing in a few jars of jalapeños and a bag or two of dried beans. But to the delight of my friends with just a few staples I could put together a party with the spirit and good cheer, if not the authenticity, of a Mexican fiesta.

So if you like Mexican food as much as I do, why not cook up a few spicy, south of the border treats, throw a batch of margaritas into the blender and celebrate spring and Cinco de Mayo? Who cares if your feast is not strictly authentic? Enjoy a festive evening with friends and family,

¡Salud! & ¡Viva México! -

Susan



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Corn Cakes – *Looking for an appetizer to celebrate Cinco de Mayo? Try this cross between traditional New England fare and sunny Mexico.*

Makes about 12-16 corn cakes

1 cup sweet corn kernels
1 small clove garlic, minced
1 tablespoon jalapeno pepper, minced
2 tablespoons finely chopped red onion
3 tablespoons finely chopped red or yellow bell pepper
1/2 cup yellow cornmeal
1/2 cup all-purpose flour, sifted
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 large egg, lightly beaten
1 cup whole milk
Vegetable oil
Garnish: salsa, guacamole and sour cream

1. In a medium bowl, combine corn, garlic, jalapeno, onion and bell peppers. In another bowl, whisk together the cornmeal, flour, baking powder and salt. Add vegetables to dry ingredients and toss to combine. Whisk egg and milk together; add to flour-vegetable mixture and stir to combine. Let rest for 20 minutes.
2. Place a griddle or large skillet over medium heat. Add just enough oil to coat the bottom of skillet. When the skillet is hot, drop batter in circles of about 1 tablespoon each of onto the griddle. Cook about 1 1/2 minutes on each side or until golden brown. Serve immediately with salsa, guacamole and sour cream.

Simple Salsa

1 pint grape tomatoes, roughly chopped
1 teaspoon jalapeno pepper, minced (or more to taste)
1 tablespoon cilantro, finely chopped
1/2 small red onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 yellow bell pepper, finely chopped
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice or red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon olive oil
1/2 teaspoon salt

1. Combine all ingredients. Taste for seasoning. If not serving immediately, cover and refrigerate. Remove from the refrigerator about 1/2 hour before serving.

Guacamole

1 ripe avocado, peeled, seeded and cut into large chunks
1/2 tablespoon fresh lime juice
3-4 grape tomatoes, finely chopped
1 tablespoon red onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tablespoon yellow bell pepper, finely chopped
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon cumin
Pinch of cayenne
1 tablespoon cilantro, finely chopped
1 1/2 tablespoons sour cream

1. Put the avocado and lime juice in a small bowl, mash with a fork. Add the tomatoes, onion, garlic, bell pepper and salt. Whisk with a fork to combine. Add the remaining ingredients and combine. Taste for seasoning. Serve immediately.