

Join Me for a Cooking Class! Summer 2008

During the summer I'll take a break from open sessions.

I am always available for private classes. Get a group of family and friends together for

Summer Salads

or

Chillin' & Grillin'

or

Tapas

Or a

Summery Feast from the
Mediterranean or the South of
France

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the Table for delicious summer
food & fun

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

More information the web at
www.susannye.com

Just on the heels of the 4th of July comes Bastille Day. Quatorze Juillet or the 14th of July commemorates the storming of the Bastille, a legendary prison and armory, in 1789. While the ancient stronghold only contained a handful of captives at the time, its fall was highly symbolic. The battle was the tipping point for the French Revolution. Like the Boston Tea Party for America's revolution, the Bastille became an icon of the French Republic, a symbol of the French freedom.

A major financial crisis was at the root of France's civil war and battle to end the age old monarchy. Ironically, the high cost of supporting the American's War of Independence against the British played a big role in France's financial woes. To make an already bad situation worse, an unfair tax system sent tempers flaring and over the edge. Unlike Robin Hood, the French monarchy followed a practice of taking from the poor and middle class and giving it to the rich. By the summer of 1789 the French bourgeois, or middle class, had had enough. They took matters in their own hands and went to work on a new constitution. Within a short time a new republic was formed and King Louis the XVI and his wife, Marie "let them eat cake" Antoinette, lost their heads.

Since Quatorze Juillet falls in summer, it is a wonderful time to enjoy outdoor festivities. For many years I lived in Geneva, Switzerland, well within earshot of Bastille Day fireworks. One year I joined a group of friends and celebrated Bastille Day in the tiny medieval village of Yvoire. On the shores of Lake Geneva, Lac Léman if you prefer, Yvoire is the perfect place to spend a summer evening. Narrow cobble stone streets wind through the town and lead to a picturesque village square and a charming port with a beautiful old chateau. The little fishing port is known for its lovely flowers and gardens. It's also known for its cafés and filet de perche.

We started the evening on a lake front terrace, sipping the local white wine, watching the boats sail by and the sun set. We continued with dinner, filet de perche of course and a little more white wine. We thanked goodness it was Friday and were not in any hurry. After dinner we lingered over coffee, hoping to keep our table to watch the fireworks. Contrary to common practice in France we were eventually shooed away. After all it was a holiday and there was a long line of people waiting for our table.

While we had been enjoying the view and the filet de perche, the port had been filling up. The square was filled with local families and a few expatriates and tourists. As soon as it was dark, fireworks were launched off the pier. It wasn't one of those big extravagant displays like you might find in Paris or Nice. There was no patriotic music, no deafening finale. If you had been even a few minutes late, you would have missed the entire display of colorful rockets. It was just what you would expect in a little country town. It was just enough to let you know that it was Quatorze Juillet.

We soon learned that the festivities were far from over. A DJ arrived. Anyone thirty- or forty-something or older made a hasty retreat, dragging excited and exhausted children home to bed. The music started and the square was packed with teenagers. Rather than take the end of the fireworks as our cue to leave gracefully, we took it as our cue to stay and act foolishly. By far, the oldest dancers in the square we attracted our fair share of pointed looks and stares. Not to worry, it was Friday night, the air was warm, the sky was clear and we saw no reason to mix age with wisdom. We stayed far too late and danced to French rock and roll into the wee hours of the morning.

At least once before Labor Day, I hope that you will find an opportunity to act a little foolishly or dance in the moonlight or both! Enjoy all that summer has to offer,

Bon appétit! - Susan

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Filet de Perche Meunière

If you can't spend Bastille Day on Lac Léman, you can at least treat yourself to a traditional lake dinner. Enjoy!

Serves 6

1 1/2 pounds fresh lake perch, skinned and filleted
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
1 teaspoon paprika
Olive oil
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
2 tablespoons white wine
Juice of one lemon
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves
Lemon wedges

1. Mix flour, salt, pepper and paprika together. Lightly dredge the perch filets in the flour, shake off any excess.
2. Set a large sauté pan over medium-high heat and add a little olive oil to the pan. Once the oil is hot, cook the fish in batches. Carefully place the fish fillets in the pan and cook for a few minutes per side. Remove the fish from the pan and place on an oven proof platter; set the platter in a warm oven while you cook remaining filets. Once all of the fish are cooked, make the Meunière Sauce.
3. Reduce the heat to medium. Melt the butter in the skillet. When the butter has melted and starts to bubble, whisk in the white wine and lemon juice. Cook for about 30 seconds, swirling the pan once or twice.
4. Remove the fish from the oven and pour the sauce over top, sprinkle with parsley and serve immediately with lemon wedges.