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This week makes one hundred and fifty. That's one hundred and fifty stories and recipes. It started as a little newsletter to family and friends and grew into a newspaper column. When I started I wasn't sure how long it could last. I figured I couldn't have more than a dozen stories to tell but here I am, tapping away on the keyboard for the one hundred and fiftieth time. Readers have asked me, "Where the heck do you come up with this stuff???" and I confess I don't really know. I do know that inspiration doesn't always come easy but it often comes in a flash. Take this week. After wracking my brain for several days and coming up empty, this story revealed itself in a just-in-time instant.

Stumbling into the bathroom this very morning to brush my teeth I was confronted by a horrifying sight. No it was not a burglar or a giant spider; it was a wild and wooly mop of unruly hair. I looked like a cartoon character who had stuck a finger in an electric light socket or maybe Gilda Radner doing her Roseanne Roseannadanna bit on Saturday Night Live. While frightening, it was hardly surprising. It was just another day in a long run of bad hair days. I have woken up to this same mess every morning since early June. That's when all this blasted rain began.



Now, well into July with temperatures rising, it is going from bad to worse. The problem is not just that my hair is very curly. No that would be too simple; it is also very, very thick. When summer's heat and humidity hit my hair expands. The warmer and steamier it gets, the bigger it gets. Sometimes it gets so big it could have its own starring role in a horror film ... "The Thing That Took Over Toledo" or "Return of the Mop Heads".

When I was a self-conscious teenager I thought I was the only person in the world with bad hair. Looking around I was sure that everyone else had beautiful hair; long, straight and shiny. Or at least my sister Brenda did. Everyone else seemed to have long legs too, but that's another story. Surrounded by these straight-haired beauties, I was always fussing and blow-drying my wayward locks.

Eventually I outgrew my awkward teenage stage (or at least I'm working on it) and discovered I'm not alone. All women hate their hair. Well maybe not all, but at least 99.99%. We wage a lifelong battle against our hair, spending billions and billions and billions of dollars in a valiant, frequently futile, effort to achieve a movie star mane. For some it's too flippy or floppy. For others it's too limp or lifeless. Ask any woman and you'll hear the litany, it's too big, too fine, too curly, too straight, too dark, too red, too dull or too drab. The list goes on and on until, eventually, we add too gray to the list.

A few years ago I decided to surrender. I waved the white flag and cried uncle. I might be strong but my hair is stronger, tougher and a lot meaner. I decided that life was too short to worry about a bad hair day, or month or three. I still comb it and wash it, I even blow-dry it, but I refuse to agonize over it. It sits on the top of my head, an unruly, uncontrollable mess of curls, while below the rest of me goes about my business and enjoys the summer.

Whether you sport a mass of curls or not, enjoy all that summer has to offer and,

Bon appétit!

Susan

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Grilled Chicken with Shallots & New Potatoes

Forget the humidity, ignore limp or wild locks and celebrate summer with a delicious cookout with family and friends. Enjoy!

Serves 6-8

2 (3-4 pound) chickens, cut into pieces
1 – 1 1/2 cups dry white wine
4 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, roughly chopped
1 tablespoon fresh thyme
1 bay leaf
6 or more shallots (1 or 2 per person), cut in half
2 pounds new potatoes
Olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

1. Put the white wine, garlic, mustard, rosemary, thyme, bay leaf and salt and pepper to taste in a small bowl, whisk to combine. Put the chicken in a large, heavy-duty plastic sealable bag. Add the marinade and seal the bag, pressing out excess air. Marinate the chicken in the refrigerator, turning every few hours, for at least 4 hours or overnight. Longer is better.
2. Preheat the grill to medium hot.
3. Remove the chicken from the marinade. Arrange the chicken pieces skin side down on the grill. Cook, turning every 5-7 minutes, for a total of 20 minutes or until the chicken reaches an internal temperature of 160 degrees. Remove the chicken from the grill, cover with foil and let rest for 5-10 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, toss the shallots and potatoes in a little olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Put the shallots in a grill basket on the grill and cook, stirring once or twice, for about 10 minutes or until they are nicely browned and tender. Cook the potatoes, turning once or twice, in the grill basket or directly on the grill (whichever is easiest for you) for about 10 minutes or until they are nicely browned and tender.

