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Around the Table
Chef's Apron

Contact Susan Nye at
susannye@tds.net
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More information the web at
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It's a busy week; taxes are due. More important, in case you've forgotten, Wednesday is National Wear Your Pajamas to Work Day. Maybe it's part of the thank-goodness-I-got-my-taxes-done-on-time celebration or a light hearted protest against a crazy hectic life. Some of us don't need a holiday to wear our pajamas to work. We wear our pajamas to work on a regular basis. Like almost every day.

You may be wondering, who are these pajama clad workers? And how do they get away with it? Some are part of a new invention, the telecommuter. More than fifteen million telecommuters have been delighted to dump the cubicle and ditch the traffic. Instead, they shuffle into their home office every morning. Fiber optics links them to their employer, colleagues and customers. Like air traffic controllers, headsets are permanently affixed to their noggins. They may look like ground control but the headset is just an extension of their telephone. Most telecommuters split their day between talking on the phone and tapping away on their keyboard. Come to think of it, a good part of the time they are doing both; which may explain all typos, misspelled words and grammatical errors. Not to mention the hemming and hawing when asked a direct question during a conference call.

I used to be a part-time telecommuter. I'd go into the office on Monday, just to make sure that no one forgot what I looked like. Then I'd be gone, on the road for three, sometimes four, days. Fridays, I'd work from home. Working from home was great, especially if I didn't get in until late Thursday night, which was more or less every Thursday. If you don't have to drive to the office or worry about looking professional (details like combing your hair and putting on a suit), you can manage at least an extra hour of shut-eye, probably two.

I spent the day tethered to the phone, checking spreadsheets and writing emails. Sometimes, if I was lucky, I had a little extra time late in the day. When that happened, I took a break and picked up my goddaughter at preschool. By some lucky chance, her school was two doors down from my house. We shared a little time together, maybe took a turn on the swings and slide or squeezed in a story or project before her mom collected her. Then it was back to conference calls, spreadsheets and emails.

I still work in my pajamas but I'm no longer a telecommuter. Now I'm the other kind of pajama-clad-work-from-home person. We are freelancers, consultants and small business owners. What kind of businesses? Really small businesses, so micro that it's a one-man or one-woman show operating out of a garage, basement, kitchen or spare bedroom. In my case, a spare bedroom and sometimes my kitchen.

And my look? Most of my work ensembles are not technically pajamas, meaning I don't actually sleep in them. Unless of course I accidentally doze off in the middle of the day. However, when I'm writing my attire could easily be described as bedtime. No, not silky "I'll slip into something more comfortable" nightwear, I'm much more ratty-tatty. When sitting down to write, my outfits are best described as anti-fashion statements. When it's cold, I favor baggy sweatpants, old turtlenecks, misshapen sweaters, fleece, heavy socks and slippers. In the summer, I rely on old shorts, sloppy t-shirts and flip-flops. The kind of clothes your mother never let you wear out of the house or even in the yard.

Whether you toil in PJ's, earn your living buttoned up in suit or something in between, I hope you enjoy your day at work today and every day. I know I do. Have a great week and,

Bon appétit!

Susan

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just look like one!

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Apron

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Chicken Provencal

Just because you stay in your PJs all day, doesn't mean you have to eat breakfast for dinner. Why not try this quick and easy dish; it's filled with the sunny flavors of Provence.

Enjoy!

Serves 4-6

10 – 12 black oil-cured, Greek or Niçoise olives
1 1/2 – 2 pounds skinless boneless chicken breasts
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 medium onion, thinly sliced
Pinch of chili pepper flakes
1/2 teaspoon herbs de Provence
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 anchovy fillet, mashed to a paste
1/2 cup dry white wine
16 ounces canned crushed tomatoes (in season use fresh plum tomatoes, peeled, seeded and finely chopped)
3/4 cup chicken stock
1 tablespoon capers, drained
1 tablespoon finely chopped, fresh basil
Olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

1. Pit the olives. If you are using Greek olives cut in quarters, if Niçoise cut in half. Reserve.
2. Combine flour with 1 teaspoon each salt and pepper. Pat the chicken dry and dredge it in the flour, shake off excess flour.
3. Heat a little olive oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium-high heat; cook the chicken, turning once, until golden and cooked through, 6 to 8 minutes total. Transfer to a platter and cover.
4. Add the onion, chili pepper and herbs to the skillet and cook over medium heat, stirring, until the onion is translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and anchovy paste and cook for another minute. Add the wine and bring to a boil, scraping up the brown bits. Stir in tomatoes, stock, capers and olives. Simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the sauce thickens, 8 to 10 minutes.
5. Add the chicken and any juices back to the skillet and simmer for 2-3 minutes. Sprinkle with basil and serve.