

A Warm Welcome Back to the Summer People & Wheat Berry Salad

Spring 2011/Volume 245

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The snow birds began drifting back a week or two ago. The post office and supermarket parking lots are already a little busier. Of course it's nothing like the summer when you have to drive to the next county just to find a parking spot. The summer people won't be here for another month or more. However, a good number of them will show up for the long Memorial Day Weekend.

I love that name, summer people. It sounds exotic but in a familiar, New England kind of way. Like Jay Gatsby and Daisy and the green light at the end of the dock. Yes, I know their story takes place on Long Island but it could just as well have happened in New Hampshire or Maine or on Cape Cod.

In another life, I was a summer person. It was nowhere near as glamorous as an F. Scott Fitzgerald novel. Then again, it began several decades and a great depression after the Jazz Age and the Roaring Twenties. That and I come from pretty ordinary stock. No multimillions. No champagne for breakfast. No cheating at golf. We didn't spend the summer in a palatial mansion with manicured lawns and gardens but in a simple brown box in the woods.

While a part of me will probably always be a summer person, I can no longer claim the title. Almost eight years ago I came to my senses and moved my whole kit and caboodle to New Hampshire. Except for the black flies I pretty much like everything about living in New Hampshire. With summer just around the corner there is a lot to love.

Memorial Day signals the end of frost danger and reassures us that summer, while slow in coming, will be here eventually. It's a good time to plant the geraniums, tomatoes and basil. If you haven't taken down your dry-as-dust Christmas wreath, it's high time you did. You can put the flag up while you are out there. It's also a good time to grab the grill from the back of the garage, dust it off and begin to enjoy a little outdoor cooking.



I love the hustle and bustle of Memorial Day Weekend. When I was a kid, a few of the local, year round residents complained about the summer people. As soon as we began to trickle in for the holiday weekend, they'd start to

harrumph and grumble. Some were none too subtle about it and made noisy, pointed complaints as they impatiently waited in line at the supermarket or gas station.

I guess I will always be a summer person at heart. Although I sometimes think it's fun to refer to them as flatlanders, I'm happy to see the summer people arrive. My neighborhood is pretty quiet throughout the winter and mud season. It's wonderful to see it perk up over the Memorial Day Weekend. My summer neighbors arrive to sweep out their cottages, chase squirrels out the attic and swat black flies. They'll get out their kayaks, sail- and motorboats. Some will fish. A few will take a plunge into the still-icy cold lake. In the evening, burgers will hit the grill and their smoky scent will mingle with the perfume of blooming lilacs. The air will be filled with laughter and at least a shout or two of joy.

By Monday afternoon the summer people will be gone again. The neighborhood will return to its sleepy off-season self. But not to worry, they'll be back. They always return in plenty of time for the boat parade, cookouts and fireworks on the 4th of July.

Have a wonderful weekend with family and friends.

Bon appétit!

Susan

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Wheat Berry Salad

Wheat berries have a chewy texture and nutty taste. They are good for you and great in a summer salad. A terrific additional to your Memorial Day Weekend cookouts - enjoy!

Serves 4-6

- 1 cup wheat berries*
- Grated zest of 1 orange
- Grated zest of 1 lime
- 6 radishes, cut in julienne (matchsticks)
- 4 carrots, cut in julienne (matchsticks)
- 1/2 - 1 red or yellow bell pepper, finely chopped
- 2-3 scallions, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons roughly chopped fresh mint leaves
- 2 tablespoons roughly chopped fresh cilantro leaves
- 2 tablespoons chopped dried cranberries

Put the wheat berries in a saucepan with 3 cups of salted water. Bring to a boil; reduce to a simmer and cook, uncovered, for about 1 hour or until tender.

While the wheat berries are cooking, put the radishes, carrots, pepper, scallions and half the herbs in a bowl. Toss to combine. Drizzle and toss with enough Citrus Vinaigrette to lightly coat and transfer to the refrigerator.

When the wheat berries are cooked, drain well and transfer to a large bowl. Add the orange and lime zest, the remaining herbs, dried cranberries and enough Citrus Vinaigrette to lightly coat. Toss to combine and cool to room temperature. When the wheat berries have cooled, add the vegetables, toss to combine and refrigerate. Remove from the refrigerator about 30 minutes before serving to take the chill off and serve.

The salad can be prepared up to one day in advance.

** If you don't have time, can't find wheat berries or they're just too chewy for you, substitute quinoa or Israeli couscous. Quinoa and couscous cook up in about 10-15 minutes and kids love them both.*

Citrus Vinaigrette

- Juice of 1 orange
- Juice of 1 lime
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 clove garlic
- 1/2-inch slice of a medium red onion, chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- Extra virgin olive oil

Put the juices, vinegar, honey, cinnamon, garlic and onion in a blender or small food processor. Add salt and pepper to taste and process until smooth. Add the olive oil to taste and process until combined and emulsified. Let sit for at least 10 minutes before using to let the flavors combine.

Cover and store leftover vinaigrette in the refrigerator. Try it on your next green or garden salad.

