

Last week I wrote a little bit about my first year at Camp Four

Winds. A Girl Scout camp, it offered an escape from the hot, stuffy suburbs. Four Winds was basic to say the least, little cabins and tents in the woods, latrines and a big old dining hall. I'm not exactly sure if there were showers. While I sort of remember waiting in line for a shower, it might be my imagination. On the other hand, I have a clear vision of soaping up in the pond on Saturday night. You know the drill, once a week whether you need it or not.

Our days were not packed with fancy lessons or special programs.

There was no horseback riding, tennis lessons, golf, dance classes or archery. At some point, we must have made a rope bracelet or gimp lanyard. We went on a hike, maybe two. Although I'd have denied it at the time, the hikes were none too arduous. One was planned as an overnight. We wimped out and returned to our little cabins when it started to rain. However, as luck would have it, the rain stopped in time for s'mores.

Come to think of it, camp was not all that different from what we did at home. We got up, we had breakfast and did chores. Of course, the chores were more onerous than those Mom gave us. My sister and I did not clean latrines back on Jackson Road. However, we did make our beds and could yield a broom. Brenda was the neater of the two. If pushed, I would eventually pick up my half of our room.

At home, we waited impatiently for Mom to do whatever needed doing before taking us to the town beach. At camp, the counselors corralled us down to the waterfront as soon as our beds were made and cabins swept. Starting with swimming lessons, most of the day was spent in and on the pond. Rain or shine, we stayed in the water until our lips were blue and our teeth chattered. Then we rowed boats and paddle canoes.

At the end of the morning, we were hustled back to our cabins to change into shorts and shirts. Bathing suits were not permitted in the dining hall. The food was unremarkable but kids gathered on the dining hall steps before and after lunch to sing camp songs. I can still sing a couple although I might mess up a verse of two.

After lunch was quiet time. Then and now, it seems rather silly. At seven or eight or however old I was, I was well past needing an afternoon nap. However, we were expected to rest or write letters home to our parents. I guess it was okay to read a book. Mostly, we whispered and giggled.

I'm pretty sure that quiet time was invented to give the counselors a break. How much do you want to bet that they spent the hour smoking cigarettes and writing love letters to their boyfriends? After resting, we were back at the pond. The remainder of the afternoon was filled with more swimming, more blue lips and more chattering teeth followed by rowboats and canoes. If you sense a pattern, you'd be right. It was not for naught. At the end of the two weeks, there was a swim meet. My crawl was hopeless but I came in second with my speedy backstroke.

Thankfully, there were more camp songs before and after dinner because the meal was as unremarkable as breakfast and lunch. At night, there were campfires, s'mores, ghost stories and more giggling. Little girls like to giggle and I was particularly good at it.

Happy summer and bon appétit!



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Blueberry Bread Pudding

You can call this *Baked Blueberry French Toast* and serve it for breakfast. Otherwise, call it delicious and serve it with a scoop of vanilla ice cream for dessert. Enjoy!

Serves 8-12

Butter for the pan

1 day-old* baguette (12-16 ounces), cubed
3 cups fresh blueberries
1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, at room temperature
3/4 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 cup maple syrup
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
8 whole eggs
3 cups half and half or whole milk
Confectioner's sugar (optional)



Generously butter a 13- x 9-inch pan. Arrange half of the bread cubes in the pan in a single layer. Sprinkle with half of the blueberries. Top with the remaining bread cubes and blueberries.

Put the cream cheese, sugar and spices in a large bowl. Using an electric mixer, beat until smooth. Add the maple syrup and vanilla and beat until smooth. With the mixer on low, add the eggs, one at time, beating to incorporate. Raise the mixer speed to medium and beat until smooth.



With the mixer on low, slowly add the half and half. Gradually increase the mixer speed and beat until well combined.

Pour the custard pour over the bread and blueberries. Cover and refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight.

Bake, covered, at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Uncover and continue baking until lightly browned and set, about 30 minutes more.

Let stand for 5-10 minutes, sprinkle with confectioner's sugar and serve with or without vanilla ice cream.

** It is okay to use a fresh baguette. Just spread the cubes on baking sheet and bake at 300 degrees for 5-10 minutes before prepping the pudding.*