

**Banal as they may be, we use them all the time.** *Actions speak louder than words. You can't judge a book by its cover. You have to kiss a lot of frogs before you find your prince.* Then there is my mother's favorite – *What goes around comes around.* So why do we use these clichés? Is it possible that we're not clever enough or eloquent enough to share our thoughts in a more original way? Or perhaps we can't be bothered. Oh no, that can't be true. Alright, let's be generous. We all have a lot on our minds. These platitudes are a quick and easy way to send our message.



**Now just to be contrarian,** I'm going to argue with one of these platitudes. Whoever said *hindsight is twenty-twenty* didn't grow up skiing in New Hampshire. The line could be defined as oops-I-got-that-one-wrong or oops-I-guess-I-should-have-done-more-research. It's what you might say when you discover the property you bought online is not beachfront but – uh oh, is that an alligator? – a swamp. When it comes to childhood memories and February ski vacations, *hindsight is definitely not twenty-twenty.* In fact, I suspect that *hindsight is blind* or, at the very least, *wears rose-colored glasses.*

**I don't know about you but all my childhood winter vacations were good.** Once Mom and Dad built the little weekend and vacation house near Pleasant Lake, they were perfect. If anything, February was better than Christmas week. The start of the ski season could be a little iffy but by mid-February, snow was plentiful. The sun shone every day and there were never any lift lines. Okay, maybe that last one is wishful thinking ... if not an outright lie.

**Anyway, year in and year out, February vacation was nothing short of wonderful.** One year, it was even stupendous. Thanks to a couple of well-placed nor'easters, the break expanded. Instead of a much too short one-week vacation, we enjoyed three glorious weeks in the snow.

**The trouble (although I'd hardly call it that)** began five or six days before winter vacation was due to start. Gentle but persistent snow began falling Saturday night and continued through Sunday. To play it safe, we stayed put in New Hampshire. By Monday morning, more than a foot of snow had fallen. All of New Hampshire's roads were clear by noon. Across the border, snow and abandoned cars clogged the roads for days. We weren't snowed in New Hampshire but snowed out of Massachusetts.

**Throughout the Commonwealth, schools and businesses were closed.** It took at least three, maybe four days to dig out. By the time traffic was flowing, February vacation was more or less upon us. (I think we might have played hooky on the Friday. Hey, there was no need to drive all that way for one measly day of school.)

**The vacation week was delightfully snowy but uneventful.** There were no major storms or upsets, just sunshine and plenty of skiing. Then as if by a miracle, it started to snow early Sunday afternoon and showed no signs of slowing down. Using the recent debacle on Massachusetts highways as justification, we stayed safe and warm in our little house in the New Hampshire woods ... and then spent another week on the slopes.

There is nothing like a Sunday nor'easter to make a skier smile. Bon appétit!

*Susan*

## Orecchiette with Cauliflower & Bacon

*A cozy après ski dish. Enjoy!*

Serves 8

Olive oil  
8 ounces thick cut bacon, chopped  
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
1 large cauliflower, cut in bite-sized florets  
1 teaspoon dried thyme  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste  
1 medium onion, chopped  
3 garlic cloves, minced  
Pinch (or to taste) chili flakes and/or smoked paprika  
1/4-1/2 cup chicken broth  
1/4 cup dry white wine  
16 ounces Orecchiette  
Grated pecorino Romano cheese  
Fresh, chopped parsley



Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Lightly coat a large, heavy skillet with olive oil and heat on medium. Add the bacon and sauté until brown and crispy. Remove the bacon from the pan and reserve.

Put the cauliflower in a large roasting pan, drizzle with the balsamic vinegar and 3/4 of the bacon fat, sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon thyme, season with salt and pepper and toss to combine. Roast the cauliflower at 375 degrees until tender, about 30 minutes.

While the cauliflower is roasting, cook the onion in the remaining bacon fat on medium until translucent. Add the garlic, sprinkle with the chili flakes and/or paprika and remaining thyme, season with salt and pepper and sauté 1-2 minutes more. Stir in the broth and wine and simmer for 2-3 minutes.

Add the cauliflower and bacon to the skillet, toss to combine and set aside.

*Can be made ahead to this point, cooled to room temperature, covered and refrigerated.*

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook according to package directions, less 1 minute. Saving 1 cup of pasta water, drain the pasta, add it to the vegetables and bacon and toss to combine.

If the pasta seems dry, add more or less pasta water to the skillet and bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer on low for 1 minute. (If you add too much water and the pasta is soupy, don't worry. Uncover, raise the heat to high and simmer for 1 minute.)

Transfer the pasta to a serving platter or individual plates, sprinkle with pecorino Romano and chopped parsley. Pass more grated pecorino Romano for the cheese lovers.