



**Is it spring yet?** As a matter of fact, it is. Don't believe me? Check your calendar, March 20 is the vernal equinox. I'm sure you figured it out long ago but vernal is just a fancy name for spring; like autumn is for fall. Anyway, the equinox is when the sun is directly over the equator. It happens twice a year, on the first day of spring and the first day of fall. On these two days, daytime and nighttime are each twelve hours long. Well, approximately and somewhere but not here. My sunrise/sunset guide tells me we'll have twelve hours and eleven minutes of sunshine today. Think of it as a reward for living in northern New England.

**Anyway, I've started to notice something in recent weeks.**

While not everyone agrees, there seems to be two types of people who, by chance or design, spend the winter in New Hampshire.

**The first group absolutely, positively loves it here.** They live to ski, snowshoe and ice skate. These intrepid chionophiles throw caution to the wind and head to the slopes in the middle of a nor'easter. If there is fresh powdah, they are fearless when it comes to slippery highways and byways.

**While some might think them brazen or reckless,** they can't contain themselves. There they go, posting selfies on the first chairlift. Do they realize it's a Thursday? I guess they must. Otherwise, why shout to the world; make that flout that they are working out of the Danbury (or Sunapee) office. (And by the way boys and girls, the world includes that green-eyed tattletale of a colleague and your boss.) In any case, their joy is infectious and their smiles a wonder to behold.

**The second group stays away from gleeful selfies in the snow.** They post pictures of beaches with blue skies and bluer water. Wistful captions read, "Wish I was here!" Sometimes, in a total funk, they share the view from their kitchen windows – a photograph of the fifteen-foot snow bank at the end of the driveway or a video of Sisyphus shoveling the deck. Oh wait, that's not Sisyphus. That's their fourteen year old.

**Instead of shouting or flouting, they rail and rant, pout and sulk.** One minute they are howling, "ENOUGH" and ordering the snow gods back to Siberia. Then, only minutes later, fearing reprisal, they try a new tact and beseech Mother Nature, Jack Frost and Old Man Winter to have pity. Throughout the winter, they ask time and time again, "Why do I live here?"

**A few days ago, I shared my Two Types Theory with a couple of friends.** They protested and disagreed. Although neither are skiers, both professed to loving New Hampshire in winter. They have no desire to take flight with the rest of snowbirds. A six-month stint in Florida is not on their winter wish list. However, ... there's always a but in there isn't there ... they suggested that a shorter winter without those awful subzero temperatures in January would be nice.

**So, here is where I am betwixt and between.** I agree that we could all do without the polar vortex or arctic cyclone or whatever you want to call the beastly cold that comes down from Canada. I'm more than delighted with sunny days that make it feel warmer than the thermometer's readout. However, ... here's my predictable but ... I'd be happy if the ski season went until the first of May. There is nothing better than spring skiing when the days are long and the sun is shining.

See you on the slopes and après ski! Bon appétit!



## Cheesy Eggplant Parmigiana with Spaghetti Marinara

*The calendar says it's spring but the thermometer and snow in the yard tell a different story. There is still plenty of time to gather friends and family for cozy comfort food. Enjoy!*

Serves 10-12

About 4 cups Marinara Sauce (recipe follows)

4 medium eggplants (about 4 pounds), trimmed and cut in rounds

Olive oil

1 teaspoon dried thyme

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

About 4 ounces mozzarella, shredded

About 4 ounces fontina, shredded

About 1 ounce Parmigiano-Reggiano, grated

About 1 ounce Pecorino Romano, grated

24 ounces spaghetti

Additional grated Parmigiano-Reggiano and Pecorino Romano for the spaghetti (optional)

Make the Marinara Sauce (recipe follows).

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Brush both sides of the eggplant slices with olive oil and arrange in a single layer on a baking sheet. Sprinkle the eggplant with thyme, season with salt and pepper and bake at 400 degrees for about 10 minutes. Turn the eggplant and continue baking until tender and browned. Lower the oven temperature to 375 degrees.

While the eggplant bakes, put the cheeses in a bowl, toss to combine and set aside.

Top each round of eggplant with a generous tablespoonful or 2 or 3 Marinara Sauce and sprinkle with the cheeses.

*Can be made ahead to this point. Cool to room temperature, cover and refrigerate. Bring to room temperature before baking.*

Bake the eggplant at 375 degrees until the cheeses are bubbling and golden, about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook the spaghetti according to package directions. Drain the pasta and return it to the pot with enough Marinara Sauce to coat. Don't drown the pasta in sauce. Cover the pot and let the spaghetti sit for about 1 minute to absorb some of the sauce.

Divide the spaghetti among shallow bowls, top each with 2-3 slices of eggplant and serve. Pass additional grated Parmigiano-Reggiano and Pecorino Romano for the pasta.



## Traditional Marinara Sauce

Makes about 3 quarts\*

Olive oil  
1 large onion, chopped  
1-2 carrots, finely chopped  
4 cloves garlic, minced  
Pinch or to taste dried chili pepper flakes (optional)  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper  
1/2 cup dry red wine  
9-10 cups (three 28-ounce cans) crushed tomatoes  
2 sprigs fresh thyme  
1 bay leaf  
2 tablespoons each chopped, fresh basil and parsley

Heat a little olive oil in a heavy saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the onion and carrot and season with pepper flakes, salt and pepper. Sauté until the onion is translucent. Add the garlic and sauté 1-2 minutes more.

Add the wine and simmer until reduced by half. Add the crushed tomatoes, thyme and bay leaf to the pot. Bring to a simmer, reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Stir in the basil and parsley and simmer for a minute or two more.

*\* You'll want to make plenty of sauce. It freezes beautifully and can always come in handy.*

