

**A week ago Monday, the day dawned** with about six inches of cement-like snow in the yard. Only the day before, cheery crocuses were blooming and an inch of two of daffodils had broken ground. It was a bit disheartening to say the least and I wasn't alone in my dismay.

**Everyone had a joke.** *Mother Nature forgot to tell Father Time it was spring. It's not the 15th of April, it's 106<sup>th</sup> of January.* After all, if we don't laugh we might cry. The snow did raise a few hopes. Would it put a damper on next month's black flies? (Unfortunately no, a hard frost in May will do that but not snow in April.)

**I don't know why these April storms surprise us.** Perhaps we are in denial and only pretend to be surprised. After a few decades away, I admit I more or less had forgotten about New Hampshire's snowy Aprils. However, my return to reality was swift and sure. The last one hundred or so miles of my journey home were in a snowstorm. It was April 22.

**Let's face it; we live in a land known for its many seasons.** In late October or early November, almost-winter begins. It is followed by winter. Winter is a great time for those of us who like to ski or snowshoe. Unfortunately, around the time the lifts close, still-winter or mud season begins. Spring, for all intents and purposes, is nonexistent.

**Okay, I will grudgingly admit it.** Sometime in late May or early June, we are not-so-blessed with a few days of black fly infested spring. Finally, there is a wonderful burst of summer, followed by a glorious fall. As lovely as these two mini seasons are, they are just that – mini. Together they barely make up a third of the year.

**When it comes to surviving mud season, here's what I got. It ain't much but it's about the best I can offer:**

**Defy all logic and smile.** Smile, even if your car gets stuck in the slush or you lose a sneaker in the mud. It's hard to be unhappy when you are smiling. If you don't believe me, try it. Still not convinced? Well, then leaf through a pile of old *Scientific Americans*; the proof is in there somewhere.

**Buy a ridiculously colorful raincoat and an even brighter pair of wellies** (also known as rain boots.) It's okay if they don't match. Both will keep you dry and make you laugh. It's hard to be unhappy when you are laughing. (See above for proof.)

**If you can, get out of town, if only for a weekend or a day.** You don't need to go all the way to the Bahamas or Hawaii for a change. Spend some time in the city – any city will do. When was the last time you visited a museum? It's been a while hasn't it? How about shopping and lunch in a smart café? Indulge a bit; you deserve it.

Happy mud season and bon appétit!



## Vindaloo Chicken

*When New Hampshire turns muddy, I have a yearning for dishes from warmer climates. Curry is one of my favorites. Enjoy!*

Serves 6-8

6-8 bone-in chicken thighs  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper  
Vegetable oil  
6-8 tablespoons Vindaloo Paste\*  
1 large onion, chopped  
4-6 carrots, chopped  
1 bay leaf  
1/2 cup dry white wine  
1 1/2 cups (14-15 ounce can) unsweetened coconut milk  
1 cup or more chicken stock  
1 pound baby spinach  
1 1/2-2 cups basmati rice  
1/2 cup chopped cashews, toasted

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Pat the chicken dry and season with salt and pepper. Heat a little oil a large, deep skillet over medium-high heat. Starting skin-side down, sear the chicken for about 2 minutes per each side. Remove the chicken from the pan and reserve.

Put the Vindaloo Paste in the pan and cook, stirring, for about 1 minute. Add the onion and carrots and cook, stirring often, until the onion is translucent. Add the bay leaf, stir in the white wine and simmer until reduced by half. Stir in the coconut milk and chicken stock and bring to a simmer.

Return the chicken to the pan with any juices and wiggle the pieces down into the vegetables. Transfer the pan to the oven and cook, uncovered, for about 45 minutes or until the chicken is cooked-through and nicely browned. Check the pan after about 30 minutes and add more chicken stock if necessary.

While the chicken braises, cook the rice according to package directions.

Remove the chicken from the pan, arrange in a deep serving platter and cover to keep warm.

Return the skillet to the stove and place over medium-high heat. Add the spinach in handfuls, toss to coat with sauce and cook, stirring, until all the spinach has wilted, 2-3 minutes.

Spoon the vegetables and sauce around and over the chicken, sprinkle with cashews and serve with basmati rice.

*\* You can find Vindaloo Paste in specialty stores, online and in some larger supermarkets ... or you can make your own.*





*Another recipe from Susan Nye:  
Is this really spring? 2018/Volume 601*

## **Vindaloo Paste**

Makes about 1 cup

1 tablespoon turmeric  
1 tablespoon coriander  
1 tablespoon cumin  
2 teaspoons fennel seeds  
1 1/2 teaspoons cardamom  
1 teaspoon fenugreek seeds  
1 teaspoon sea salt  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper  
1/4 teaspoon cloves  
6 cloves garlic, peeled and roughly chopped  
1 (2-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and roughly chopped  
2-4 or to taste fresh bird's eye chilies, chopped  
1 cup loosely pack fresh cilantro  
1/4 cup crushed tomatoes  
About 1/4 cup vegetable oil

Put the spices and seeds in a small food processor and pulse to combine and grind the seeds.

Add the garlic, ginger, chilies and cilantro and pulse to chop and combine. Add the crushed tomatoes and process to combine.

Add the vegetable oil and process until the mixture forms a smooth paste.

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