

**I haven't seen so many teeth in all your life.** Okay, that might be an exaggeration but it's been just about year since I've seen so many and such big smiles. More or less everyone was beaming last Wednesday. At least for a day, it was not just summery, it was a perfect summer day. Blue sky, low humidity and eighty-five degrees, you can't beat it. And it was only May!

**Now here's the question** – what exactly was that perfect summer day all about? Was it a harbinger of more to come, a tease or a blip on the National Weather Service radar? Who knows? It doesn't really matter. The challenge is simple – DON'T JINX IT. Come on; don't play innocent. You know what I'm talking about – we've all got a million examples, some more memorable than others.



**Here's one ...** the first time I dressed down for casual Friday. To set the scene – it was long before I reinvented myself and became a plucky freelancer. Only a small handful of women executives worked in my employer's European operations. I was one of them. On that particular Friday morning, I'd been out the office for at least a week and I was dragging. Half asleep, I grabbed a mug of coffee, threw on a pair shorts and headed out the door. Yes shorts, take your pick; you can blame it on the nineties or jetlag. Anyway, I was no sooner at my desk that a colleague asks me to meet with his client. Oh, and not just any client, a stuffy, British, pinstripe-type and I'm dressed like Gidget on her way to a pep rally.

**Need more proof?** Well, a few years later I was on the fence, dithering back and forth on whether to stay or leave Geneva. I ferreted around, investigated a few job leads but nothing looked promising. Deciding it wasn't going to happen anytime soon, I upgraded and bought new stereo equipment. Within three months, I was house hunting in California and the stereo was on the Swiss equivalent of Craig's list.

**The list goes on.** You finally get the car washed and it rains on the drive home. There's six inches of new powder and it's still snowing. You lie, call in sick and head to the mountain. A half mile from the ski slopes, you slide off the road and wreck the car. It's overcast but you don't bother bring an umbrella to your kid's soccer game. It doesn't rain; it snows. You only run into your arch nemesis or an old flame on bad hair days. You sell Babe Ruth to the Yankees for \$125,000 and wait eighty-four years before winning another World Series. Like I said, the list goes on and on and on.

**So what does all this jinx stuff have to do with summer weather in May?** Simple, if you want it to last; don't jinx it! In other words, don't go running to the hardware store to buy a new air conditioner. Don't drag the grill out of the garage and onto the patio. Leave the lawn furniture on the screen porch. Don't swap out your winter and summer clothes. Sure, it's a pain but day-by-day, dig through your storage containers to find a t-shirt, a pair of shorts and those sandals you love. If you want good weather to hold, you'll keep tripping over that plastic box at least through Memorial Day. Flag Day, even the summer solstice, would be safer.

For the next month, maybe two, always bring your umbrella and bon appétit!

*Susan*

## Lettuce Cups with Stir-fried Chicken and Vegetables

*One of my after-the-movies, go-to restaurants took this off the menu a year or so ago. It is a great addition to any tapas-type meal.*

*Time to add it to my regular repertoire. Enjoy!*

Serves 8

- 1/4 cup dry white wine or chicken broth or a mix of both
- 2 tablespoons hoisin sauce
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon or to taste sambal oelek or sriracha
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Vegetable oil
- 1/2 large onion, finely chopped
- 2-3 carrots, finely chopped
- 8 ounces mushrooms, trimmed and finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (1-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and minced
- 2 1/2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, finely chopped\*
- 1 cup water chestnuts, finely chopped
- About 1 cup loosely packed cilantro leaves
- 2-3 scallions, thinly sliced
- About 1/4 English cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped
- About 1/2 cup roughly chopped toasted cashews
- Inner leaves – Boston or romaine lettuce, trimmed



Make the sauce: put the wine, hoisin sauce, vinegar, soy sauce, fish sauce, sambal oelek, salt and sugar in a bowl and whisk to combine. Set aside.

Heat a little vegetable oil in a large skillet or wok over medium high heat,  
add the onion and carrot and sauté for 1 minute,  
add the mushroom and sauté 2-3 minutes,  
add the garlic and ginger and sauté for 1 minute,  
add the chicken and sauté for 3-5 minutes.

Add the water chestnuts and sauce and cook, stirring, until the chicken is cooked through and the liquid has been reduced down and absorbed, 2-3 minutes.

Transfer the chicken to a serving platter and sprinkle with cilantro, sliced scallions, cucumber and cashews. Let everyone help themselves to lettuce and spoon chicken and veggies into the leaves. Fold the lettuce leaf around filling and enjoy.

\* You can use ground chicken if you want to save a little time.