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A Note from Glen

August is your lucky month! In addition to the regular recipe of the month, I have included a recipe for Ginger Cookies. It seemed fitting after an article about ginger. Why not give them a try.

Enjoy the rest of your summer. I hope you have been successful in keeping those kids busy! There are far more beneficial things for them than playing video games! Have you taken time for a picnic in the park?

Fun Facts and Trivia

The last animal in the dictionary is the Zyzzyva, a tropical weevil often found in association with palms.

Sea Otters use so much energy that they need to eat as much as one-third of their weight each day.

Brain Teaser

Which word does not belong in the following sequence: First, Second, Third, Forth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth

See page 3 for the answer.

Check Washing: How to Protect Yourself

If you are one of those people who still pay their bills by check, you need to be aware of check washing schemes. This is a somewhat unsophisticated but effective form of fraud which involves taking a check that has already been written, "washing" it with a chemical solvent and rewriting the check so that it can be reused. Most of the time, they will only change the recipient name. When you check your bank statement, you see that your check went through and the amount matches. It's only when you start getting notices from debtors that you may discover that the checks you've written were stolen. By then, weeks or months may have passed. You may have lost thousands of dollars.

The most common place for a criminal to get a check to wash is from your mailbox. And you are probably letting him know it's there! That little red flag you put up when you want the mail carrier to pick up your mail also alerts criminals that there may be something worthwhile in your mailbox. If you put your bill payments in your mailbox and leave for work, it may be hours before the mail carrier comes to pick them up. That provides abundant opportunity for someone with the worst intentions to steal your outgoing mail. So how do you protect yourself? The easiest way is to simply drop your mail off at the post office or a postal service mail box. Basically, you want to make sure your mail is secure, leaving as little opportunity for someone to steal it as possible. Another way to avoid check washing is to change the pen you use. Your standard ballpoint pen is probably the easiest to wash since the ink is dye-based. All a criminal needs is some acetone (nail polish remover), paint thinner, or bleach. The chemical solution dissolves many types of ink found in standard ballpoint pens. Once the ink from the check has dissolved completely, the check is hung up to air dry. Acetone will dry in about 20 seconds. The result, ideally, is a signed blank check, which the con artist can rewrite to suit his or her needs.

One way to protect yourself against the threat of check washing is to switch to the Uniball 207 gel pen which is specifically made for check writing. It uses special gel ink and color pigments which are almost impossible to wash. The good news is that it costs less than \$2. Here is a [YouTube video about the Uniball 207](#) and how it works. So, think twice before putting your checks in your mail box.

Tips and Techniques

When cooking, learn to estimate the small measurements of ingredients to save time. Pour the measured amount of an ingredient into the palm of your hand. Observe the look and feel of the quantity and then try to pour that same amount into your palm without measuring first. Measure the amount you poured out to see how close you are to the actual measure. Practice doing this and soon you will be able to measure the ingredients by look and feel. This will greatly reduce your prep time when cooking. Do not use this technique when measuring ingredients for baking. When baking, it is more critical that all ingredients are measured accurately.

Food Fact

Great news about a tiny, green pasta garnish. Here is more proof that good things come in small packages: The tiny pickled plant buds known as capers could do big things for your body. That's because capers, used for centuries in Mediterranean fare to add zing to fish, salads, and pasta, may have their own special heart-disease-busting and cancer-thwarting powers.

Extracts from capers, even in small amounts, did two surprising things in a recent study. First, they limited toxic and gene-mutating by-products of meat digestion. This is great news, because those by-products can spell trouble for your heart.

Caper extracts also improved the bioavailability of vitamin E. Vitamin E helps put a damper on certain cancer-causing processes.

Capers contain a bundle of antioxidants. Just don't go overboard if you're sensitive to salt, because capers also pack quite a sodium wallop.

Ginger: Not Just for Asian Cooking



Ginger is an ingredient used in almost every type of cuisine. It has a slightly sweet, peppery flavor that spices up everything from soup to desserts to beverages.

Ginger is the root of a tropical plant that is grown in Jamaica, India, Africa, and China. It is available in a variety of forms—fresh, ground, crystallized, and pickled in vinegar. Fresh ginger is available in two forms, young and mature. You can usually find young ginger in Asian markets in spring time. It is prized for its mild, delicate flavor and its tender flesh. Mature ginger is available year round. In either case you should look for firm roots with smooth skins. Wrinkled skins indicate that it is old and dried out.

Unpeeled ginger will last for up to 3 weeks in the fridge if it is wrapped well. It can be frozen for up to 6 months.

Though all forms of ginger are similar in flavor, they should not be used interchangeably. Since each type varies in strength, you should use only what is called for in the recipe.

Big Soft Ginger Cookies

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons ground ginger
1 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1/4 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup butter, softened
1 cup white sugar
1 egg
1 tablespoon water
1/4 cup molasses
2 tablespoons (or more) white sugar

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Sift together flour, ginger, baking soda, cinnamon, cloves, and salt. Set aside. In a large bowl, cream together the butter and 1 cup sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg, and then stir in the water and molasses. Gradually stir the sifted ingredients into the molasses mixture. Shape dough into walnut sized balls, and roll them in the remaining 2 tablespoons of sugar. Place the cookies 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet, and flatten slightly. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes. Allow cookies to cool on baking sheet for 5 minutes before removing to a wire rack to cool completely. Store cooled cookies in an airtight container.

The Wine Corner



Which wine glass should I use? Prevailing wisdom on the subject of wine glasses advises that it is in everybody's interest to show the wine the proper respect by serving it in the proper glass. This generally means that the glass

should be tulip shaped with a longer, slender stem. Red wines benefit more when served in a "fatter" tulip shaped glass and white wines with a "thinner" taller tulip shape. It is recommended that the glass be clear in order to best view the color and body of the wine as it is poured and sipped. Decorative, cut glass, or frosted stemware will obscure the color and clarity of the wine.

Realistically, however, you should balance the respect you show the wine with the respect you show the occasion.

There are more styles of wine glasses than ever before, so don't be afraid to make the glass casual if it fits the mood. Tumblers for barbeques or Dixie cups for picnics are perfectly acceptable!

One thing to keep in mind with whatever glass you choose is to be sure you give the wine space. It's best to fill a glass no more than half way in order to give the aromas some room to come out.

Quotable Quotes

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.

~Mark Twain

If the world seems cold to you, kindle fires to warm it. ~Lucy Larcom

Recipe of the Month

Chicken Picado

Tender pieces of chicken and bell peppers are simmered in a savory tomato sauce. This recipe is so easy and delicious. Just add some beans and rice for a great meal.

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 medium onion, chopped
1 green bell pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces
1 pound boneless skinless chicken breasts, sliced across the grain into thin slices (1/8 to 1/4 inch thick)
1 can (14.5 ounce) Hunt's® Diced Tomatoes with Roasted Garlic, undrained
1/2 teaspoon (or more to taste) crushed red pepper flakes
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
Salt

Rosarita® Traditional Refried Beans, warmed (optional)
Hot cooked rice, (optional)
Flour tortillas (optional)

Heat oil in large skillet over medium-high heat for 1 minute. Add onion and the bell pepper; cook 5 minutes, or until crisp-tender. Add chicken; cook 5 minutes, or until no longer pink in center.

Stir in tomatoes with their liquid, red pepper flakes, black pepper, and salt to taste. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low; simmer, uncovered, 20 to 30 minutes. Serve with beans, rice, and tortillas if desired. Makes 4 servings.

A Final Word

Thanks again for reading the Glen's Place Newsletter. If you have ideas or something you would like to see included, just let me know. As always, your comments are welcome and appreciated.

Did you realize that the most popular pages on [Glen's Place](#) are not food related? Actually, more Glen's Place visitors go to the three [Wine Quotes](#) pages than any other pages. Thanks to Google! Why not [take a look](#)?

Until next time remember: Positive anything is better than negative nothing.

Answer to Brain Teaser: Forth. It is incorrectly spelled.