

## **Schools Out...Let Fly The Chicken Salad!**

I am a hideous, insensitive father who is admittedly cruel beyond words and deserving of anything that social services can dish out as punishment for the terrible thing that I have done. Just ask my 12-year-old son and he'll tell you.

What action could provoke such a strong reaction? Am I guilty of physical cruelty? Perhaps it is more psychological and could leave emotional scars in my son that may never heal. How could any parent be that down right hound dog mean?

On Friday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 5:31 p.m. I shut off his AOL Instant Messaging for the summer.

Just between me and you, I have a grand plan for both of my sons that includes fresh air, outdoor exercise, and maybe a little yard work to help mom and dad out. I've stocked tons of sunscreen, gallons of bottled water, and managed to eliminate almost all of that green stuff from the swimming pool. By golly, we are going to roll back the years to 1965 when kids spent the summer in the great outdoors and television was limited to maybe an hour each night before they passed out from exhaustion.

Maybe I need my head examined but that's my story and I'm going to stick to it.

The way I figure it, if I am even marginally successful this summer, I'll need to keep healthy, self-serve lunch foods on hand to fuel the effort. One of my sons all time favorites is a chicken salad recipe that I developed for our restaurant back in 2002. If quantity sold is an indicator, people loved it and I'll share it with you this week. I hope you and your family enjoy it, too!

### **Winedog's Zesty Chicken Salad**

(Makes about 8 large servings)

6 medium boneless, skinless chicken breasts  
2 cups of Goya Mojo Criollo poultry marinade  
1 large red bell pepper, seeded and chopped into half-inch pieces  
1 small bunch of green onions (about 10), chopped fine  
4 stalks celery, chopped fine  
1 ½ cups light mayo  
½ cup honey mustard  
sea salt and fresh ground black pepper, to taste  
Everglades Seasoning, to taste



First, I'll tell you that you can pick up the Mojo marinade and the Everglades Seasoning at Jungle Jim's and I would, once again, urge you to stock both of these wonderful condiments in your pantry. I use them a lot year round, but particularly for summer foods. The Mojo is the key ingredient for barbecuing Cuban style chicken or pork while the Everglades Seasoning will become "our" little secret for jazzing up lots of dishes.

Start out by preheating your oven to 350°F, place your chicken breasts in a roaster pan and pour the Mojo Marinade over them. Place them in the center of your oven and bake for approximately 45 minutes, until just done. The Mojo will provide a subtle flavor of citrus and garlic to the chicken and helps to keep your chicken breasts very moist. This is key to really great chicken salad. Dried out, over cooked chicken breasts just don't cut it, if you know what I mean.

Allow the chicken to cool and then cut it into  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch cubes for the salad. Place the chicken in a bowl and add the bell pepper, onion, celery and about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cup of the marinade from the roaster pan. Toss all of it until well mixed. Add the mayo and honey mustard and stir until everything is well distributed. Lastly, put on your final touches with the salt, pepper and Everglades Seasoning. Use them to your taste and be sure to try the salad as you are seasoning it to make sure your pleased with your results. I've found that if you will make your chicken salad a head of time and allow it to chill for at least 3 or 4 hours before you serve it, the flavors work together better and you'll enhance the quality.



This salad will hold up in the refrigerator for about a week. Feel free to double it if you like as it does make a great "help yourself" lunch or snack for those hearty appetites. It can be served on wholegrain bread or croissants with lettuce, tomato and thinly sliced sweet onions or heaped on a bed of crisp iceberg or romaine lettuce with some white seedless grapes and some cashews mixed in. Use your imagination.

Last year about this time I mentioned that I would never be caught during the summer without a fresh herb garden to delve into and I would once again urge all of you to grow your own herbs for your kitchen table in whatever way you are able. I have a raised planting bed just outside of the kitchen but I know of friends that are very successful growing their herbs in a window box or in containers on the porch. The containers actually work out great if you want to bring them in during the fall and extend your growing season.

My selection for seasoning dishes includes dill, flat leaf and curly parsley, chives, oregano, rosemary, thyme, summer savory, sage, cilantro, lavender, marjoram, sweet basil, tarragon, and nasturtiums for their attractive edible flowers that really dress up some of your summer dishes. I simple can't stress strongly enough the joy I get out of keeping an herb garden and the incredible difference it makes in many of my summer dishes.

One more great summer wine to add to your June shopping list is produced in the magnificent historical hilltop town of San Gimignano nestled in the heart of Italy's Tuscany region southwest of Florence. The town is noted for its impressive towers and a decidedly medieval atmosphere, which makes it a terrific stop for anyone hoping to experience the feel of "old" Tuscany. The *Strozzi Vernaccia di San Gimignano* is a pale white wine pressed out from Vernaccia grapes. It is crisp in style and offers delicate hints of melon and subtle citrus nuances with just a smidgen of the grassy character you'll normally find in the Sauvignon Blanc grape. It is best served well chilled and will perfectly compliment summer salads, shellfish, simple pasta dishes such as a pesto based angel hair, or as an aperitif to enjoy before a meal to get those taste buds ready for the feast to come.

Please let me know if you need any help locating this perfect wine of summer or if you have any recipe questions we can assist you with at 888-288-0668. You can always visit us on the web at [www.winedog.com](http://www.winedog.com). I hope you are as excited as I am at the prospect of all that magnificent fresh summer produce coming our way over the next few months. It will certainly provide us with lots to talk about in coming visits.

Incidentally, in 1965 catching lightning bugs in a mason jar was a whole lot more fun than watching reruns on the boob tube. Maybe one of the "mean" adults in your house could catch the first one of summer or kick off a snappy round of hide-and-go-seek with the kids of 2006. Allee Allee In Come Free!