

Won't You Be My

BY KATE ANCELL

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PVE DESIGNS

NEIGHBOR?



Finally! The sun, it is out! The grass, it is green! And the mosquitoes, they have returned! (In droves, here at Crooked Towers—if anyone has a few bats they'd like to send over, I'd be happy to take 'em). And with all this warm weather comes the season of Being Outdoors—a lot. So, to pass the time as I hang the ferns on the porch and cover the winter woodpile, I've been thinking a lot about what it really means to live as a part of a close-knit community. Here on the North Shore, that's what it's all about, after all: The kids ride their bikes to school and run between houses in packs; you can't go to the local grocery store without bumping into at least three people you know (The Grand in Winnetka, I'm looking at you...); and, as a friend once mused aloud on the playground, "This is a bad place to try to have a secret." Now that we've all

emerged, blinking like moles into the sunlight, I thought it would be a good idea to take a few minutes to lay down some ground rules. Reminders, if you will. About being a good neighbor, doors open, into the sun, ready to rejoice in the season. Together.

GOOD FENCES MAKE GOOD NEIGHBORS

Have truer words ever been spoken? Especially this time of year, when we open our windows and doors to let the sweet early-summer air stream in...and our grievances, personal comments, and sweet, dulcet tones (as we implore our little ones to go to bed, turn off the TV, get off the video games...) out. And even here on the North Shore, where we've been trained since we were tykes to be nice (or, otherwise, say nothing at all), sometimes our baser natures get the better of us and we...raise our voices. A little bit. A tidge. Or, as my husband said to me the other day, "You know what—with that

pitch in your voice, it's no wonder Little One can't hear you. Because only dogs can."

And this is why, during these warm-weather months, we have to re-embrace Invisible Urban Living. Remember your city days, when you were separated from your neighbor by only a thin wall? And you pretended that they weren't there, *no matter* what, even as the most personal things were being expressed only six inches away? (We used to live next-to-and-over an Italian restaurant, and when Sandro wasn't making garlic bread at 8 a.m., he was holding raucous Chianti-fueled parties well into the early hours with his "lovelies." Which, by way of apology, actually earned us quite a few free pizzas, so who's complaining?) This is the season when we get our deaf on—the season when, unless one is being directly addressed over the fence or through the door, we pretend that we simply can't hear a thing. Especially not you, neighbor, grounding your teenage son *again*. What was that? I'm so sorry—I was so focused on harvesting my tomatoes, I simply didn't realize you were there. Were you speaking to me?

ROCK AROUND THE BLOCK

Do you all have block parties in your neighborhood? We do! (Okay, only once a summer, but never mind). We all get together, kids included, and put on a spread, right the way down one complete block. (Apparently we used to grill, too, but then the guy with the grill moved away, or got divorced, or something, and for whatever reason, now we don't. Which is a shame, really. I like grilled stuff.)

And here's where it gets sticky—sometimes, literally. Now, I don't think I'm tell-

ing tales out of school when I say that in my village, cocktail hour is a venerable institution and one that you can take away when you snatch the watered remains of my last G&T out of my cold, clammy hands. And usually we're all very well-mannered—no, no please, you-firsting, here-let-me-help-with-that-cork—but somehow, being at a block party can sometimes seem to encourage...cheating. People arrive, say, with a covered salad or plate of sandwiches—and a filled glass of wine. And then somehow, that glass stays filled—which must be a miracle of the loaves and fishes variety, because lo, no bottle is to be found amongst the others.

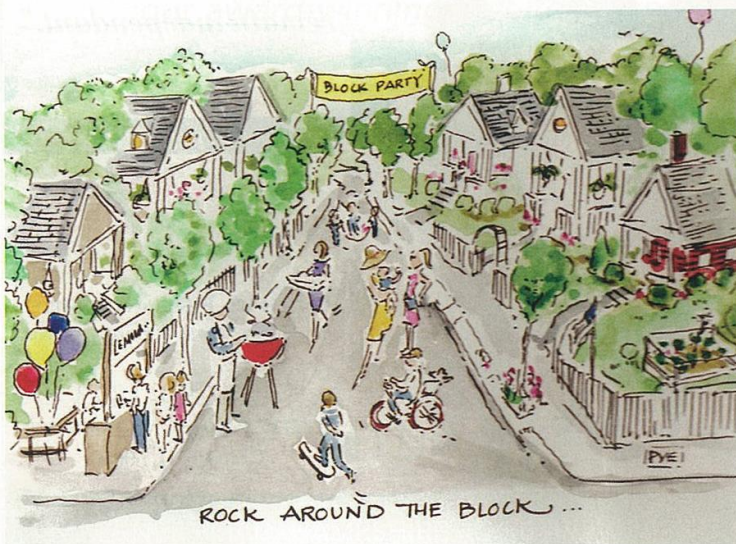
Ladies and gentlemen, this is bad form. The rule of thumb is, *always*—if you're going to eat or drink *anything* at a block party, *even if you're only staying a "few minutes,"* you have to bring a plate or bottle to share. This is called Potluck, and in my day, was the kind of dinner that you got to go to if you were really unlucky or eating with the elderly.



BOUNTIFUL HARVEST

Back when I lived in a tiny English village (this was *before* the pizza-place home, sadly), local gardeners used to leave piles of freshly picked produce—surplus from their gardens—lined up on the stone wall that led into the High Street, for anyone to have. (When I explained this to an American friend she was horrified—there could be razor blades in those runner beans!) Now that gardening is the new Bunco here on the North Shore, I'd like to see a return to this neighborly, vitamin-rich, delicious habit. Last year, Little One and I made "a garden"—by which I mean that we filled a bunch of mismatched pots with soil and threw some seeds into each—and grew so many herbs, and so much arugula, that I was giving it away by the sackful—and don't get me started on how much resentment I had, thinking about every over-priced leaf I've purchased from the grocery store: Arugula is a *weed*, and it grows like one, too. Try it—you'll be shocked!

This summer, let's all be locavores, and live lightly on the planet and try to grow at least some of our own food. Oh, and share your extra tomatoes with me. I'll trade you for some basil... □



ROCK AROUND THE BLOCK ...

Good Eats

In summer, the key word for food and drink has got to be fresh—as in, from a garden. Or, at the very least, from a farmers' market (which we have many of here on the North Shore, especially my favorite—the Saturday morning Evanston market. Yummy!). With that in mind, here is a recipe that makes the most of this season's bounty, easily enough to share with a neighbor or two.

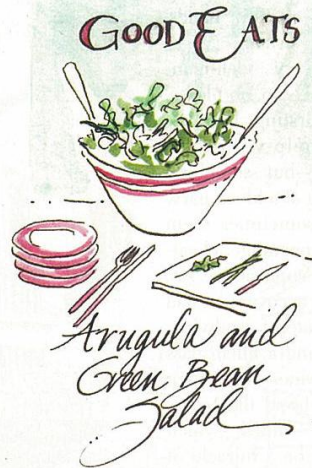
Arugula, Potato, and Green Bean Salad

Adapted, barely, from *smittenkitchen.com*, who adapted it from Martha Stewart. Who knows who she got it from?

Makes eight small salads or four larger ones.

- 0.5 oz. walnuts (about 1/4 cup)
- 1 lb. fingerling potatoes, cut crosswise into 1/2"-thick rounds
- 6 oz. green beans, trimmed and cut into 2" segments
- 2 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp. coarse salt
- freshly ground pepper
- 2 tsp. walnut oil
- 3 oz. baby arugula

Toast walnuts in a non-stick pan or skillet over medium heat until fragrant. (Do



not wander away from the stove here. Once they turn, they turn.) Let cool slightly, then coarsely chop and set aside.

Bring a medium saucepan of water to a boil. Add potatoes and cook until tender, about 10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer potatoes to a colander to drain and cool. Set aside.

Prepare an ice-water bath; set aside. Return pan of water to a boil. Add green beans and cook until tender and bright green, about 3 to 4 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to ice-water bath to stop the cooking. Drain.

Whisk together vinegar, yogurt, mustard, and 1/2 tsp. salt in a small bowl; season with pepper. Add oil in a slow, steady stream, whisking until emulsified. Set dressing aside.

Arrange arugula, potatoes, and green beans on a platter. Season with remaining 1/2 tsp. salt and 1/4 tsp. pepper. Drizzle with dressing and sprinkle with toasted walnuts; toss to coat.