

And this week...

Happy Boxing Day! I know that today is the day when one traditionally takes down the tree, but I am hanging on for a few more days; I absolutely love the piney smell that it exudes. I am less of a fan of all things sparkly so I will sweep through the house as soon as I post this and remove all holiday related trinkets and tchotchkes.

Though properly familial, we had a gloomy, rainy Christmas and it looked as though today planned on being more of the same, until the sun dramatically broke through the clouds a few minutes ago. Unfortunately, it is that strange mustard colored sun that comes with a day that is meant to be gray, with an oppressively low sky, not necessarily conducive to a happy demeanor despite the holiday spirit that we are all chasing, and will be chasing until the 31st.

I have never been a fan of New Year's Eve as I find the compulsory joy and excess of the celebration really stressful but I find the forced limbo of the week between Christmas and New Year's Eve rather restful. Nothing is working at the world's usual frenetic pace and it is a lovely time to take stock, catch up with friends, relax, read, watch just one more episode of the show that one had not gotten to yet before bed, and navel contemplate...I find afternoon naps one of life's greatest free luxuries and this week is definitely the week to enjoy them guilt-free.

Of course, with a kid home from college, cooking is also a big part of the equation, especially because joining higher education does not seem to have make a dent on

my son's "hollow leg" appetite. Though he is quite happy to have meals made for him -- and has on occasion participated like our Christmas dinner's perfectly cooked steaks and quite excellent Bearnaise sauce -- his true joy seems to be carefully constructed snacks, not a big part of my repertoire since at my age they are dangerous!

As per my normal routine, my kitchen is left each night as I wish to find it in the morning when I appear to make coffee and I am trying to take in stride the myriad dirty glasses and plates and bowls that appear in my sink or on my counter overnight as though left there by evil holiday elves. I went to make grilled cheese sandwiches for lunch the other day and the cheddar had disappeared in the night as had the cookies that I had been allowing myself one of a day as a treat.

How lucky to be of an age where one can eat one's weight in fat, salt and sugar and still come out ahead! While admittedly slightly annoyed at the mess, I am also full of envy. I am happily constructing more holiday menus for friends and family that we will see over the next few weeks, but I am already planning low-calorie meals for myself as of mid-January to make up for my holiday calorie overload. Stay tuned.

Here are last week's recipes worth sharing:

White Bean and Carrot Purée
Hoisin Glazed Pork Meatballs
Holiday Grissini (or Palmiers)
Best Roast Potatoes