



Photos by Ron Baldwin

An anchored bulk carrier catches the last rays of the late fall sun on the Columbia River.

Fall: Time for fishing, harvesting, canning and preserving

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by much of the West which actually is on fire. The orange, yellows and golds are framed by a variety of greens and accented by purples and grays here on the cool, damp west slope of the coast range. This lasts until everything turns dank and moldy, wet and cold, gray and brown. Then we're looking directly into the face of old man winter.



LEFT: A chicken of the woods mushroom clings to a twisted stump on the south-facing Washington side of the Columbia River. Some mycological specimens have amazing yields. This one totaled 11 pounds. MIDDLE: An early-turning vine maple nests between a Douglas fir, left, and a Sitka spruce, right, near Naselle. This specimen exhibits a common pattern with gold and pinky-red foliage on the top branches while retaining the iridescent lime-green leaves at the bottom. RIGHT: The autumn bounty of well-known Knappa gardeners Patti and Jim Van Osdal shines like jewels after a morning picking.



Pumpkin spice

One phenomenon that creates lots of fall tension for Northwesterners is the return of pumpkin spice. In the pumpkin spice controversy, there are seemingly two camps: those who are intoxicated by it, crave it, bathe and scrub with it, pester the baristas for its return, and those who abhor it. They figure that their only defense is to have a really bad head cold so you can't really smell anything. By Labor Day the pumpkin spice movement is in full swing with the entire spectrum of food items tainted by cinnamon, mace and clove. And not just food. Candles, oils, lotions, hair potions and all manner of paper goods scented with pumpkin spice fill the store isles. What's next? Pumpkin spice scented toilet paper? Well, thankfully no. This year, Proctor and Gamble announced that, contrary to a bizarre and viral internet meme, you are not likely to see pumpkin spice Charmin anytime soon. Toilet paper is high on my list of things that should never be pumpkin spice, which includes corn chips, hummus, toothpaste and dog shampoo. Humanity must simply draw

the line somewhere.

Seasonal activities

Early fall is the time for fishing, harvesting, hunting, canning and preserving. The human drive to fill the larder is a strong and closely held value that is present to a great degree in Northwesterners. Hunters' pickups congregate at the logging road gates as deer season gears up, archers show first, then rifle seasons. Bird hunters dusky boats dot the small waters as you hear the early morning report of their shotguns. In Chinook, where I live, salmon fishing has always been king. Humans have journeyed to Chinook to harvest the Northwest's premier food source every fall for, oh say, 10,000 years or so, and that journey is still strong today. Judging by the number of boats visible from the banks, there is no lack of fishing fervor even now. As I observe the silhouettes of the anglers seated in two rows in a modern, long, low-slung craft with an upturned bow, I am reminded of the artist's

depictions of Chinook native craft in the same places upon first contact. The images are remarkably similar. Some things change with time and others do not.

Many Northwesterners, including myself, revere fall as their favorite season. I see fall as some kind of test or warmup for winter. Ah Autumn, how do I love thee? Let me count the ways: I love thee for the sunsets, gold and orange and purple and red. I love thee for the birds returning to visit on their journey south. I love thee for the cool, clean, earthy air. I love thee for the leaves, ever trying to outdo the sunset. I love thee for the fog, as it hugs the southern shore of the Columbia at daybreak, spewing from Young's Bay and enveloping all of Astoria in its gray veil. But, most of all, I love

thee for the quieting. Walking the margins of the sloughs and creeks near Willapa Bay and the Columbia River as I do, it is thrilling to suddenly hear the "grahk" of the heron as it lumbers across the sky, the squeaky rattle of the belted kingfisher, returned from its southern holiday, and the thunder of 10,000 ducks alighting as one when stumbled upon. These are things that have not changed since those first humans stumbled onto the shore.

Fall or autumn?

The proper name for the third quarter of the year has been debated by American grade schoolers in Perpetuum. Some prefer fall while others like autumn. New Englanders refer to the season as autumn. Maybe you are in Germany, where "herbst" is used, or in Tanzania, where "vulu" is the Swahili word. In Iran, you would have a choice of no less than nine words, none

of which I can either write, spell or pronounce. Perhaps my favorite word for fall or autumn is the Finnish word "syksy." I really like words, and this is a great one, balanced and easy to utter, it's just the kind of word I can embrace. And so henceforth, I shall be referring to my fall wardrobe as my "syksy outfits."

Ron Baldwin is a musician, photographer and writer living in Chinook, Washington.

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