

Body, Mind & Spirit

Cooking With Love

By DARA THOMPSON

One of my first memories is of sitting on the kitchen counter in my parents' house watching my mother peel apples for apple pie. As each long strip would fall away, I would pick it up and eat it. She said that I was her best helper, and I felt important. That experience of being in the kitchen with my mother, and the security that it conveys, has stayed with me all these years. I don't even remember eating the pie. Years later, when I worked as a cook in a rehabilitation facility for brain injured adults, I realized how many of us seek comfort in the warmth, sounds and smells of the kitchen. The people I met there

were struggling to relearn how to walk and talk and live in the world. Yet they could find a sense of peace and belonging in helping me wash potatoes or set the table. The simplicity and familiarity of those acts brought them back to a time that was simple, when they're lives hadn't been torn apart by fate.

There is art and magic and creativity in cooking. From the moment that we pick out our ingredients at the store, we mark our individuality onto the dishes that we prepare. When I prepare a meal I use all of my senses. I want the colors and shapes of the ingredients to compliment each other. There must be a variety of textures, crunchy and smooth,

chewy and soft. The sounds of water droplets on a grill, vegetables sizzling in a pan, the lid dancing on a boiling pot tell me everything I need to know about temperature and timing. The scents that fill my kitchen start my mouth watering. They bring me memories of the past and entice me with the promise of new experiences. As I cook I always taste. I taste my carrots as I slice them, measuring their sweetness. I taste my soup before bringing it to the table. I blend flavors of each dish with the others in a meal. Well-prepared food satisfies on many levels.

Cooking for yourself and others is an expression of love that nourishes the body and soul. To often, we for-

get how to feed ourselves. We become too busy to savor. Eating in the company of those you love deepens your connection to them, if you take the time to enjoy each other's company. Serve each other. Drink a toast. Talk about your day. Look into the eyes of someone dear to you, and don't rush away. Cherish what has been given to you and those who have given it.

Dara Thompson is a 2nd year student at the National College of Naturopathic Medicine; Cooking instructor at Natural Health Centers East, Natures Fresh Northwest and private, personally tailored classes. For information, please call 503/255-7355 ext.375.

Home For The Holidays

By SHARON LEE, M.S.

Whose home? In this era of remarkable proportion of divorced and remarried families in our population, how does one decide where to go for the traditional holiday dinners and gatherings. Who decides? How do we do it? And, what is fair for all concerned?

Step-families are prominent, including his, her and possibly their children. A family map for the simplest first generation second marriage may portray a group of 6 sets of grandparents for the offspring, extended families, and a combination of step-siblings and half-brothers and half-sisters.

If the grandparents are of the traditional religious and familial background, they might prefer the family to gather in their home with all the children, grandchildren and offspring surrounding them, providing the grandmother is not widowed or divorced and remarried. The old song "Over the river and through the woods to Grandmother's house we go..." still rings in the fondest background memories for some. But, hark, there may be a new husband even for grandma who may not feel like opening their (his?) home to a lively crowd of people of all ages, perhaps drinkers, smokers or possibly crying or rowdy youngsters who have not had manners taught to them as in the good old days.

In a more contemporary scenario, perhaps the parents have been civil and reasonable about negotiating time, alternate years, or wonderfully creative about spreading Christmas over twelve days or more to accommodate everyone concerned. With the decision made about where the celebrations will occur and which day or part of the day which

parent will have who--are there too many presents for the children, with parents and grandparents competing for who can buy the most toys and be the "best parent". There still may be too much stimulation, too much packed in, too little stand quiet time for each other in families gathering together for nurturing their connections and creating pleasant memories for this new generation of children to carry into adulthood to pass on to their children.

The holidays can be fraught with collisions of old and new generations of ideas, habits, rituals, marriage and remarriage cultural and subcultural differences, religious differences--all which add to the possibility of conflict, chaos and general disillusionment and unhappiness. The greatest tragedy is for parents to "fight" over their children and demonstrate behaviors that add to the distress or even trauma their children may carry for years to come.

Is holiday visitation written in "the parenting plan," decided by judge in a divorce ruling? The parents must still communicate extensively. What if there is a joint custody agreement? The parents must continue speaking regularly, deciding what is best for their children in all situations, especially this one at hand? All the sets of parents must negotiate and come to agreement on guidelines for handling the holidays? They can seek counseling and guidance or mediation. These skills are learnable and effective.

They must learn to give and take, compromise and work toward agreement more often, during the year so as to teach their offspring these skills for them to be able to deal with the conflicts of needs and wants of all concerned for all season.

Holiday HANG-UPS

Every year I dread going home for the holidays to be with my family. I usually feel angry and depressed afterwards. I'm an adult now, why can't I get over it easily?

J.K. of Northeast Portland Dear J.K.,

Perhaps unresolved issues from the past with family members are causing this emotional distress. The holidays are times of extreme stress for many families caused by pressures of the season, families doing too much for too many without the finances or energy. Sibling rivalry can peak and parental favoritism can be real or feared. Alcohol use or abuse in families often occurs at the holidays which often leads to heightened conflict or even to domestic violence. Children tend to absorb the drama, the intense stimulation and stress of the household. They often blame themselves, experience a lack of control, safety or choices and become traumatized. These negative experiences of holidays past get emotionally frozen and are felt as anger or depression when similar experiences occur in later years. These feelings are usually not explored to enable the adult to make sense of what happened. It is difficult to let go of the past when it is not understood, to forgive parents for their ignorances or mistakes or to accept themselves for not being able to make it different. With these insights, the adult hopefully can move to self-acceptance, confidence and control of their own emotional safety and well-being.

Sharon Lee, M.S.
Family and Marriage
Counselor

DEAR J.K.,

We know that the outside events that typically occur during family visits (e.g. change in level of activity to prepare for the visit) affect our mood. However, unconscious forces are also at work. Unconscious means what is part of your inner world that is forgotten or inaccessible to your awareness. Something goes wrong during your annual visit to your family. Your inner world is demanding a hearing and is doing so by not letting go emotionally. The repeated and lingering anger and depression are letting you know that the manner in which you consciously approach and deal with the family visit is not what your true nature really needs. How is your life changed or disturbed by the

visit? Is there an unresolved psychological situation in regards to the relatives you are visiting that you are not tending to? How are old ways of behaving, thinking, and feelings reactivated? A family visit can set unconscious psychological dynamics in motion which stand in the way of healing or developing in new ways. The repeated anger and depression become allies pointing to a resolution which will satisfy the guiding force within.

Dr. Dominique Marguerite
Jungian Psychologist

DEAR J.K.,

As an adult, you can "get over" these feelings but you must be willing to make some behavior changes. First, identify where the dread is coming from. Are addictive substances involved? If drinking gets out of hand, excuse yourself and go for a walk. Find a 12 step meeting and go. You can't change the behavior of others but you can change the way you act and react. If safety is an issue, stay home. Send a fruit basket. Remember, going home often means spending time with family members who still treat you like a child. You have choices now. Determine what subjects you're willing to discuss and steer clear of the rest. Set boundaries. Don't expect a cold, aloof parent to lavish you with affection. Nurture yourself instead. Don't engage in arguing. Spend time with family members you en-

joy; limit your time with the rest. The bottom line is "taking care of yourself." Enjoy a candlelight bubble bath, read an uplifting book and maintain a positive attitude. Making these changes will add meaning and pleasure to the experience of returning home.

Wynne Boylan
Intuitive Counselor & Ad-
dictions Counselor

DEAR J.K.,

We have learned well to repress our feelings which cause emotional, physical and spiritual journey. The very act of repressing painful memories from the conscious mind serves a temporary holding pot until a conscious act brings them forth again. Unconsciously many choose an easy way out by ignoring what causes pain and by looking the other way. Repressing painful or unpleasant memories can block the flow of energy in the body causing numbness and psychological dismemberment. WE have come to a time in history when we need to really listen to the stirrings of the heart. Family is all about relationship and connection, the mirror through careful and honest introspection, anytime I felt pain, sorrow, frustration, anger, helplessness, or hopelessness, the root cause was fear. Fear of speaking my truth, fear of not being heard, fear of being judged wrongfully, fear of fear itself. To be conscious of that which brings pain and discomfort is an important step toward healing the root

cause. You might ask what elementary steps can be done to turn the situation around? Stop running. Breathe, be yourself. Speak the truth. Take your healing seriously. Simplify. Meditate. Laugh. Love. Play. Lessons of the heart are the best teachers and forgiveness of ourselves and others is the key.

Donna Selby
Ethereic Healer and Mother

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