

# FLYING DUO

## Traveling with just one of your kids can forge bonds in new ways

By **MELISSA RAYWORTH**  
Associated Press

Something wonderful happened when Lauren Asnis took her younger son, Danny, to Philadelphia for a weekend trip. Beyond visiting the Liberty Bell and devouring some tasty cheesesteaks, mother and son really got to talk and listen to each other. They bonded over the adventure of exploring a new city together, while her husband, Jon, and older son, Zach, spent time together at the family's New York City home.

For the first time, Danny "didn't have to worry about being 'the younger brother,'" Asnis says. And as just two travelers instead of a group of four, they could change plans as they wished.

"We didn't have to worry about anybody else's timeline," she says. "With a group of four, sometimes spontaneity can't happen."

Added bonus: By being apart for a few days, her boys got a chance to miss each other.

So while they still plan whole-family vacations, Asnis and her husband now prioritize short trips with each of their boys throughout the year.

If you have more than one kid and haven't done this before, give it a try: Plan a trip where one parent takes one child away for a few days, or longer if possible. Even a quick overnight close to home can be a surprisingly powerful opportunity to get to know each other in a new context, says Erin Boyd-Soisson, professor of human development and family science at Messiah College in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

"Every child needs one-on-one time with both of their parents," she says.

Gary Bingham, an associate professor at Georgia State University who studies adult-child interactions, agrees that any time you can spend individually with one child can be beneficial and lets parents "pick up on different things" going on with each child.

### STEPPING OUTSIDE THE GROUP

Family vacations are often an exercise in compromise: Bingham says he was never a fan of camping, but his family did it often. So in planning individual trips with each of his four children, he chooses activities that include their interests.



This May 5, 2016 photo shows Wyatt Anthony silhouetted under a sign while awaiting a flight at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport. Wyatt occasionally travels with just one of his parents while his sibling and other parent remain at home — a type of trip that offers valuable opportunities for bonding, says Dr. Gary Bingham, an associate professor at Georgia State University, who studies the impact of high-quality adult-child interactions.

AP photos by Ted Anthony



LEFT: In this May 7, 2016 photo Wyatt Anthony is shown at Buddha Park in Laos.



RIGHT: This Nov. 27, 2015 photo shows Mason Anthony at a hawker center in Penang, Malaysia.

George Scouten of Columbia, South Carolina, takes trips with each of his three boys. With his 17-year-old, he might spend the day at a football or baseball game. With his middle son, 14, it might mean a quiet weekend at the family's mountain cabin reading books and cooking dinner together. Whatever the activity, Scouten finds

that one-on-one trips allow for moments of connection and deeper conversations than might happen on a whole-family vacation.

"When we're all in the car together," he says, there's often "this sort of jockeying for attention" among the siblings. But "when you travel with just one person, it's just calm. ... There's no need for one-upmanship."

Solo trips also help kids learn more about each parent. Stacey Funt, a mother of 13-year-old twins on New York's Long Island, was a frequent international traveler before she had kids. She and her husband now take summer trips to a quiet lake in New Hampshire with the twins. But as the kids have gotten older, she's also begun taking them on more adven-

turous trips that suit her style, including a trip with her daughter to Guatemala that included horseback riding.

Her husband supports her interest in taking overseas trips with each child — something Bingham says is vital in making solo trips work for a family.

"I think most children have very little sense of what their parents do in general,"

Bingham says. "Any chance the parent actually gets to flex their muscles at being competent at something can be really beneficial."

### PLANNING TOGETHER

Boyd-Soisson recommends letting children help plan their solo trip with a parent. When she travels with her daughter, she says, "having her plan it can tell me as a parent a lot about

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— **Erin Boyd-Soisson**, professor of human development and family science, Messiah College

her and her likes and what her personality is developing into."

Especially with teenagers, it's good to see what they like, "and they're getting to tell us, as opposed to us saying, 'You've always liked the beach,' or 'We've always liked hiking as a family,'" Boyd-Soisson says.

### BALANCING

Siblings and parents alike might get jealous if others seem to get the more exciting trips, or have more time with each other, so try to keep things fair.

Funt took her daughter to Paris, and then planned to take her son to Washington, D.C. "After we got home and he saw the (Paris) photos, he was like, 'D.C.? I get D.C.?' she remembers.

Fortunately, the best trips can sometimes be the least expensive. On a drive from New York City to Lenox, Massachusetts, last summer, Asnis stopped for a few hours with her older son at a treetop zip-line course.

"I'm 44 and I'm afraid of heights," she says, but her teenage son encouraged her and talked her through the scariest moments. As they made it through the course together, she realized, "the roles are changing now, and here's my son becoming this young man. ... and I realized, I actually loved zip-lining!"

Those hours forged a connection that no full-on family vacation could have accomplished.

## Pumpkin coconut squares

By **SARA MOULTON**  
Associated Press

Here's a scrumptious treat for Halloween. It happens to be too delicate to give away to the trick-or-treaters, but it's just right for y-o-u and your family and friends at a Halloween party or dinner.

Preparing Pumpkin Coconut Squares takes some time, but it's mostly waiting time, not hands-on time. This beauty is four layers thick, and two of them require time to set up. There's a gingersnap crust on the bottom, a layer of pumpkin/coconut milk puree, a layer of tart cream cheese and a topping of toasted coconut flakes.

If you've ever dug into a pumpkin pie or dessert and wondered where the flavor went, I can pinpoint the problem: Pumpkin puree is terribly watery whether it's fresh or canned. It occurred to me that draining it would concentrate the flavor, and here's how to do it: First, wrap it in a layer of cheesecloth, then tie the cheesecloth like a hobo's sack to a chopstick, skewer, or dinner knife, and finally hang the sack over a deep bowl. Let it drip, drip, drip for eight hours or overnight. Afterward, there will be a fair amount of water at the bottom of the bowl — and even more in the cheesecloth. Squeeze the cheesecloth gently to remove the additional water. When you're done, you will have captured and eliminated anywhere from ½ cup to ¾ cup water from the puree. (If you don't have cheesecloth, a coffee filter will do the trick.) Be sure to use pumpkin puree, not pumpkin pie filling, which is presweetened.

If you're inclined to lighten up the recipe, swap in light coconut milk, one-third-less-fat cream cheese and unsweetened coconut flakes for the specified full-fat



This Sept. 25, 2017 photo shows pumpkin coconut squares in New York. This dish is from a recipe by Sara Moulton.

Sara Moulton via AP

ingredients. Then again, it is Halloween and these Pumpkin Coconut Squares are an old-fashioned holiday treat. Feel free to enjoy the uncensored version.

#### Directions

Start to finish: 11 hours, 20 minutes (30 active)

Servings: Makes 36 squares

One 15-ounce can pumpkin puree (not pie filling)

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided, plus extra for buttering the pan

1 1/2 cups finely ground gingersnap crumbs (about 35 2-inch cookies)

2 large eggs

3/4 cup well-stirred unsweetened coconut milk (stir the coconut cream at the top of the tin down into the rest of the milk to incorporate it before measuring)

2/3 cup packed dark brown sugar

1 3/4 teaspoons ground cinnamon,

divided

1 3/4 teaspoons vanilla extract, divided

1/2 teaspoon ground ginger

1/4 teaspoon table salt

6 ounces cream cheese, softened

3/4 cup confectioners' sugar

1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons toasted sweetened coconut flakes

Cut out a square of cheesecloth large enough to wrap around the puree with about a 4-inch border on all sides. Spoon the puree into the cheesecloth, tie the ends of the cheesecloth together to form a bag (like what we used to call a hobo sack) and thread a chopstick, skewer or dinner knife through the opening at the top. Place the chopstick over the top of a deep bowl and let the bag hang over the bowl. Chill for at least 8 hours or overnight. After the draining period, squeeze the cheesecloth gently to extract even more water, discard all the liquid at the

bottom of the bowl and set the puree aside.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Butter a 9-by-9-by-2-inch baking pan. Melt 1 1/2 tablespoons of the butter.

In a medium bowl, stir together the gingersnap crumbs and the melted butter and pat the crumbs evenly into the bottom of the pan. Bake on the middle shelf of the oven until the crumbs begin to darken, 6 to 8 minutes. Remove from the oven.

Meanwhile, in the same bowl you mixed the crumb mixture, whisk the eggs until they are beaten lightly, add the coconut milk, brown sugar, 1 teaspoon of the cinnamon, 1 teaspoon of the vanilla, ginger and salt, and whisk until smooth. Stir in the drained pumpkin puree and spread evenly over the crumbs.

Bake on the middle shelf of the oven, until the center has set, about 25 minutes. Remove and let cool completely on a rack. In a medium bowl combine the cream cheese, the remaining 4 1/2 tablespoons butter, confectioners' sugar, remaining 3/4 teaspoon cinnamon and 3/4 teaspoon vanilla; beat until very smooth. Spread the mixture evenly over the top of the cooled pumpkin filling and sprinkle the coconut on top of the cream cheese frosting, pressing it down lightly. Chill until firm, about 2 hours. Cut into 36 squares and serve.

Nutrition information per serving: 99 calories; 47 calories from fat; 5 g fat (3 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 21 mg cholesterol; 76 mg sodium; 12 g carbohydrate; 1 g fiber; 9 g sugar; 1 g protein.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Sara Moulton is host of public television's "Sara's Weeknight Meals." She was executive chef at Gourmet magazine for nearly 25 years and spent a decade hosting several Food Network shows, including "Cooking Live." Her latest cookbook is "HomeCooking 101."