

CELEBRATING SEASONS *rather than* HOLIDAYS



by Lauri Boone, RD

Holidays have a tendency to evoke sentimental attachments and visions of perceived abundance, whether we feel emotionally or financially ready or not. Quickly, we are approaching the time of year when platters of sweets are baked and waiting for guests and stockings are hung by the chimney with care to be filled with gifts and toys for little girls and boys. A once meaningful holiday has turned into a strongly consumer-driven event where shopping for happiness is taken for granted.

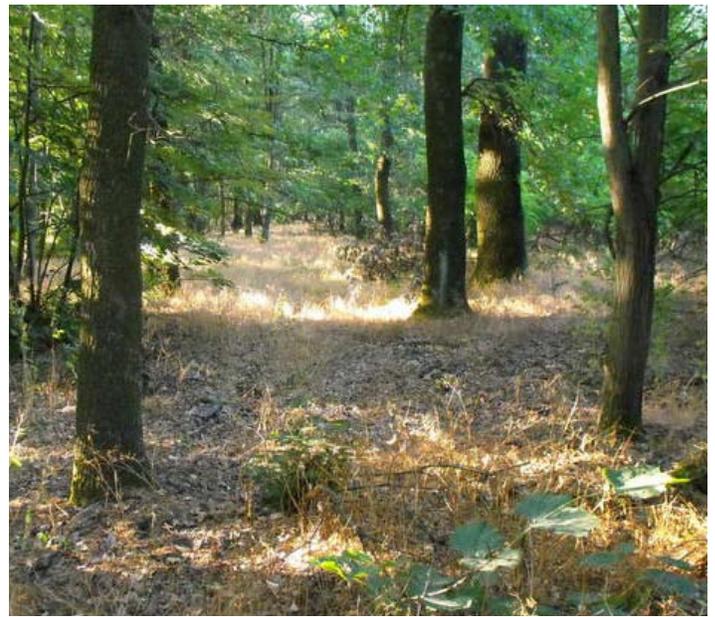
In much of the “Western” world, natural abundance has become rapidly replaced with acquiring must-have objects of desire, focused on gift giving rather than the simple spirit of giving itself.

A decade ago my husband and I began to gradually embrace simplicity, slowly taking it all in. It started innocently enough with eliminating the festive tree and decorations. Instead, we went on a winter hike to celebrate our treasured time together. A few years later, we stopped buying gifts for each other because we knew deep in our hearts that we already had enough. In another leap, we left the realm of conventional gifts behind altogether. No more plastic, no more packaging, no more stress to find the “perfect gift” for ourselves or others.

In giving up calendar holidays, we gained the endless chances and diverse opportunities to celebrate the ever changing seasons.

Moving to a thirteen-acre homestead in Hungary eight years ago was our biggest catalyst for change. The organic garden provided us with fresh greens to add to wild (foraged) salads, sun-ripened tomatoes livened up a midday snack and seasonal fruits from the market inspired pies and cakes. They helped us to celebrate for no other reason than having guests over to share in the local flavors of the land or to simply enjoy the small pleasures in life. With wonderful ingredients, cooking becomes a





great pleasure, so cook we did! Not just on one special day, but every day enjoying the nutritious food gathered on the table.

When squash is in season, we don't only eat one Thanksgiving pie; we consume the sweet, orange, fibrous vegetable pie after pie with different crusts and different spices no two tasting the same. Diversity takes over and your taste buds adapt to relish in delight, not in sameness, but in experiencing subtle differences making each baking unique.

Simple living is an unconventional approach to life that is followed by few, yet read by many perhaps intrigued by

the thought of living with less. For us, it isn't possessions we value; it is a sense of place and community nutrient-dense food and inspiring conversation with like-minded others that we hold in high regard. There is so much more to life than wielding a handheld device, a life well lived is about living in the moment surrounded by realness, connections to nature and the lightness of just being.

Celebrating a sheep shearing with new wool to be spun into yarn for sweaters or felted into curtains can be as entertaining as an apple or cherry harvest or, yes, even Christmas.



Events that can be shared throughout the year strengthen and build relationships without putting pressure on finances or trying to outdo the last holiday performance. There are plenty of reasons to be festive across the seasons, so why put our precious energy into a few hours at the table or our savings under the tree. Perhaps all we really need is all that we already have.

If time is really money, then our seasons and holidays will be spent on family, friends, experiences and love, not on colorfully wrapped presents that we forget in a year or two.

We are creating memories this holiday season, walking, conversing, reading, playing games and eating preserves from the pantry - a continued celebration of our summer harvest.



Cheryl Magyar is a sustainable life designer living a gluten-free and holistic life in accordance with nature, sharing her thoughts on Handcraftedtravellers.com. Find her on Facebook (www.facebook.com/Handcraftedtravellers) for inspiration on living simply and living well.