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The Country Register began in Arizona in the Fall of 1988, to provide effective, affordable advertising for shops, shows, and other experiences enjoyed by a kindred readership. Since then the paper has flourished and spread. Look for the paper in your travels.

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1/2 cup of butter	3 eggs
1 cup of sugar	3 t. baking powder
1 cup of milk	1 cup of flour
Juice of 1/2 a lemon	

Cream together butter and sugar. Add beaten eggs and lemon juice. Mix the flour with baking powder and add to wet ingredients.

Bake in greased cake pan at 350° for 20 minutes.

Mix sliced strawberries and sugar to serve with the shortcake. Cover with whipped cream.

Enjoy!

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GREENTOWN - PORTLAND

Say Cheese! (Cream Cheese, That Is)

I love cream cheese. Truly. But in our house, it comes with a side of caution. For my husband, cream cheese is less “spread the joy” and more “brace for impact.” He has gout, and certain rich foods can trigger an attack. If he spots cream cheese on a menu, he’ll often take colchicine preemptively, just in case. That may sound dramatic, but anyone who has experienced gout knows it’s no small thing.

Gout is a form of inflammatory arthritis caused by a buildup of uric acid in the body. When uric acid crystallizes in the joints, the result can be sudden, severe pain and swelling. Although it’s commonly associated with the big toe, gout can affect almost any joint — feet, ankles, knees, wrists, fingers, elbows, and even the spine. In fact, my husband’s first attack struck his spine, which was both unexpected and intensely painful. Our doctor jokingly suggested taking the medication with vodka, noting he was likely in for several uncomfortable days.

So where does cream cheese fit into all of this?

Cream cheese itself is relatively low in purines compared to foods like organ meats or shellfish, which are well-known gout triggers. However, it is high in fat. While some research suggests that certain full-fat dairy products may not increase — and may even modestly lower — the risk of gout flares, moderation remains important. For us, that means enjoying cream cheese occasionally rather than generously.

What Exactly Is Cream Cheese?

Cream cheese is a mild, soft, fresh cheese made from milk and cream. Unlike aged cheeses, it is meant to be consumed fresh and has a smooth, spreadable texture. Stabilizers are often added to improve consistency, and it’s available in a wide range of

flavours, from plain to herb-infused to sweet varieties.

In the United States, cream cheese must contain at least 33 percent milk fat, giving it its rich, creamy character. Canadian standards are similarly robust. Regulations in other countries vary, but the defining feature remains the same: cream cheese is indulgent, smooth, and unapologetically rich.

A Brief History of a Breakfast Staple

Cream cheese was first developed in the United States in the 1870s. William A. Lawrence, a dairyman from New York, experimented with French Neufchâtel cheese and added extra cream, creating a richer, softer product. His innovation quickly gained popularity.

In 1879, Lawrence partnered with Samuel S. Durland to expand production. The following year, cheese distributor Alvah Reynolds began marketing the product as “Philadelphia Cream Cheese,” even though it was produced in New York. At the time, Philadelphia had a reputation for high-quality dairy products, and the name conveyed a sense of premium quality.

Reynolds later acquired the Empire Cheese Company to increase production under the Philadelphia name. After a factory fire, operations shifted to the Phenix Cheese Company, which eventually merged with Kraft. Under Kraft’s ownership, Philadelphia Cream Cheese became a widely recognized household brand.

From Dairy Case to Cultural Icon

Over time, Kraft’s marketing helped elevate Philadelphia Cream Cheese beyond a simple spread. Memorable advertising campaigns featured whimsical imagery — floating bagels, heavenly kitchens, and the well-known “Philadelphia Angel.” These ads positioned cream cheese as an essential ingredient for both everyday breakfasts and special-occasion desserts, especially cheesecakes.

The combination of strong branding, consistent quality, and clever advertising helped cement cream cheese as a staple in North American kitchens.

Canadian Production Standards

In Canada, cream cheese must be produced by curdling cream with bacterial cultures and forming the curds into a smooth mass. Specific stabilizers and preservatives are permitted within regulated limits, and only approved enzymes may be used in production. These standards ensure a consistent product while maintaining safety and quality.

A Simple Jalapeño Popper Tradition

Despite his dietary limitations, my husband insisted that I include our favourite cream cheese recipe: jalapeño poppers.

The truth is, it’s less a formal recipe and more a practical solution. One summer afternoon, faced with an abundant jalapeño harvest and no desire to visit the grocery store, I improvised with what was in the fridge.


I beat together cream cheese and Montreal steak spice in a stand mixer, then fold in grated cheddar cheese. The jalapeños are sliced lengthwise, seeds removed and filled with the mixture. I bake them in a cast-iron pan in the oven or cook them on the barbecue at fairly high heat until the peppers are tender and the cheese is bubbling.

There are no precise measurements; everything is added by feel. Despite that — or perhaps because of it — they are always a hit. I’ve served them to guests and received generous compliments, which feels slightly undeserved given how simple they are to prepare.


For us, cream cheese isn’t an everyday indulgence. It’s something enjoyed thoughtfully and occasionally. But when it does make an appearance — especially tucked inside a jalapeño and bubbling hot — it’s worth the wait.



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Sausage & Sauerkraut Balls

I was inspired to search for and try this recipe because a friend said that it was something her mom used to make. She mentioned that she’d made it once herself but that her family was eating them as fast as the balls came out of the deep fryer!

1 lb. pork sausage	4 oz. cream cheese, softened
¼ cup finely chopped onion	2 Tbsp dried parsley flakes
1 (14 ounce) can sauerkraut, well drained and finely chopped	¼ cup flour
2 Tbsp dry bread crumbs	1 large egg, beaten
1 tsp Italian seasoning	¼ cup milk
½ tsp prepared yellow mustard	1 cup dry bread crumbs
¼ tsp garlic powder	1 tsp Italian seasoning
¼ tsp ground black pepper	1 quart vegetable oil for frying

Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook and stir sausage and onion in the hot skillet until sausage is crumbly and browned, about 10 minutes. Drain grease and allow to cool slightly.

Transfer sausage mixture into a large bowl. Stir in drained sauerkraut, 2 tablespoons bread crumbs, Italian seasoning, mustard, garlic salt, and pepper. Combine cream cheese and parsley in a small bowl; mix into sauerkraut mixture. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

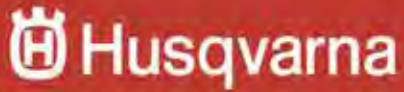
Place flour into a shallow bowl. Whisk together egg and milk in another bowl. Place 1 cup bread crumbs and Italian seasoning in a third bowl.

Heat oil in a deep fryer to 375°F.

Shape sauerkraut mixture into ¾-inch balls. Coat balls in flour, then dip in egg mixture and roll in bread crumbs to thoroughly coat.

Working in batches, fry balls in hot oil until golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Drain on a paper towel-lined plate and serve hot.

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A Cup of Tea with Lydia

Creating Beau-TEA-ful Floral Bouquets by Lydia E. Harris

Creating Beau-TEA-ful Floral Bouquets
"Your table looks lovely," my friend said as she admired the bouquet I had arranged for our teatime. My favorite part of serving tea is creating a lovely setting. If possible, I like to include fresh flowers on the table along with the pretty teacups, linens, and tasty tidbits.



Whether tea parties are simple or sumptuous, fresh flowers create a fragrant and beau-TEA-ful welcome. Would you like to try your hand at arranging a floral centerpiece? If so, here are some tips to get started.

- Quick and Easy Arrangements**
1. Select flowers and greenery from a local market or your garden. Choose mixed bouquets to complement your dishes and table linens for a spring garden feel. Or pick a single accent color for a more striking look. If possible, arrange the centerpiece the day before so you can focus on preparing food on the party day. Set the bouquet in the coolest part of your home overnight so flowers won't open and wilt.
 2. Use an upright vase that fans out at the top and allows flowers to spread naturally rather than stand at attention. A neutral or clear vase will complement rather than compete with the arrangement. Fill the vase about three-fourths full of water. Keep the flowers in water until you are ready to arrange them.
 3. Arrange the flowers in your hand, adding one flower stem at a time until the head of the bouquet looks attractive and is the size you wish. Hold the bouquet next to the vase to determine the proper height. Then use a sharp knife rather than scissors to cut the stems diagonally to the correct length. Scissors pinch the stems shut so they cannot drink water. Remove the leaves below the water line to eliminate decay and to extend flower life.
 4. Place the flowers in the vase and let them fan out. Then trim the stems of the outer flowers slightly shorter. Be sure the bouquet is low enough so guests can see one another across the table. For added color, tie a ribbon around the mouth of the vase to coordinate with the napkins. Add more water as needed and enjoy your lovely bouquet.
 5. For a spur-of-the-moment tea time or when you do not have time to arrange flowers, simply float blossoms and leaves in a glass bowl. Flowers like camellias and hydrangeas work well for this.

Creativi-TEA
Glass vases or bowls aren't the only option to use for containers. Anything that holds water will work. To make a small bouquet for a card table, use a cup and saucer, a small cream pitcher, or even a gravy boat. For a larger table, consider a teapot. One of my favorite containers is a cracked floral teapot I bought at a rummage sale for a nickel. I place a small jar inside to hold water and arrange the bouquet so ivy trails over the sides to hide the crack. Select any container with personali-TEA.

Fresh flowers perk up not only your table but your guests as well. The welcoming

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beauty and fragrance of flowers cheerfully announce that "It's Time for Tea!" To add a special touch, you could serve flowering tea at your teatime. (See Lydia's Idea File for more information.) After the teatime, I sometimes send the flowers home with guests so the beauty and fragrance of our time together can linger. I'm ready to plan a beau-TEA-ful teatime. Won't you join me?

Lydia E. Harris enjoys serving tea to family and friends. Her books for grandparents are: Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting, In the Kitchen with Grandma, and GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids. All are available at amazon.com or can be ordered through local bookstores.

From Lydia's Recipe File:

Flowering Tea Balls

April showers bring May flowers, and sometimes they even bloom in teapots. You can purchase flowering tea balls to brew tea. The tea balls are made by hand-stitching tea leaves and flowers together in various shapes before drying them. When you brew a blooming tea ball in glass cups or teapots you can watch them unfurl before your eyes, creating delicious tea along with a beautiful display. Adding them to a menu is like serving champagne or caviar—it seems elegant and a bit extravagant. Local tea merchants or tearooms may sell flowering teas. Or check the internet for other sources. Many can be found on Etsy, including organic ones. Flowering tea adds a special delight to teatimes. They also make popular gifts, especially for occasions like Mother's Day.

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Shrimp Dip

I remember having this dip back in the late '80s. I have a weakness for it, but how can you resist anything with shrimp?! This is a more upscale version than that one, as it uses frozen shrimp instead of canned.

1 pkg. (8 oz.) cream cheese, softened	2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
1/2 cup sour cream	1 medium green pepper, chopped
1/4 cup mayonnaise	1 small tomato, chopped
1 cup seafood cocktail sauce	3 green onions with tops, sliced
12 ounces frozen cooked salad shrimp, thawed	Assorted crackers

In a large bowl, beat the cream cheese, sour cream and mayonnaise until smooth. Spread mixture on a platter or bowl. Top with seafood sauce. Sprinkle with shrimp, mozzarella, green pepper, tomato and onions. Refrigerate until serving. Serve with crackers.

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A Cherished Institution**

by Nancy J. Nash

I'm sitting at a table of polished dark wood, watching as the late afternoon sun transmits a golden treasure of light through small panes of glass in a window with an arching wooden frame. I feel content here in the little municipal library I frequented as a child and frequent now as an adult, and I start thinking about how libraries function in our changing culture.

I grew up in a rural part of our small town, with a rooster crowing delightfully from a farm down the street while our chickens placidly stalked grubs not far from the backyard. The pasture behind our house invited us to explore its graceful, tall grasses. But the library was special place that welcomed us to journey through its huge storehouse of knowledge and ideas.

The heart of a small town is usually a set of buildings: a town hall, a church or two, and a library. These libraries vary in architectural style. They may be stately Victorian mansions or, in tiny hamlets, one-room wooden structures that escape the notice of passersby. Before computers and cell phones, they were havens for adults who needed a respite from working in fields and factories, and spaces for children to explore new realms of learning and imagination, to daydream and to dream.

My parents started taking me to the library when I was very young. There I encountered the Little Maid series by Alice Turner Curtis, which were fictionalized accounts of girls who helped the American cause by heroically delivering information to troops and performing other acts of bravery in Revolutionary War times. A local writer, Thornton W. Burgess, wrote such classics as Old Mother West Wind and The Burgess Animal Book for Children. I loved his warm, humorous style as well as his way of combining natural history with endearing stories of animal characters. He

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knew how to entertain his young readers while teaching them facts about the animals and plants of their world.

Somewhere on a library shelf appeared a chapter book by Grace Purdie Moon. I read it and was immediately enraptured by her story of the adventures of a courageous and cheerful pueblo girl in the American Southwest. There was a distinctiveness to Grace Moon's writing style that prompted young readers to follow her plot as it unfolded, full of danger and surprises, in the sagebrush-strewn desert. Each chapter was fittingly introduced by a poem that was lyrical and lilting, warm and beckoning, I could picture the shadowy canyons and sunlit mesas, and smell the scent of pinyon trees - so different from the landscape of my New England town.

Years later, I discovered that Grace Purdie Moon came close to winning the distinguished Newbery Medal. Her books were simply and luminously illustrated by her husband, Carl Moon, a superb artist and photographer. Together they had lived and traveled in the Southwest, working and making friends with Native Americans of Pueblo and other tribal groups. Their books brought to life stories of Pueblo, Navajo, and Mexican-American children, reinforcing values of courage, optimism, and integrity. Who knows how much of what we read as children molds and sustains character as we begin to meet the challenges of adulthood? Certainly the books of Moon, Curtis, and Burgess shaped my own imagination and attuned me to the world around me.

In my childhood, visits to the library were like nothing else in my life. To this day, I return there perhaps once a week, with the same comforting feeling of freedom to explore the unfamiliar in a pleasant, familiar place. I enter a brick building with windows that arch gracefully at the top, suggesting serenity and space for contemplation. I find staff who can answer myriad (and often complicated) questions about books, computers, and local events. Recently, the library system hosted a lecture about a part of town that many of us knew little about. Once upon a time it had been a center for small factories that produced seed packets, pocket watches, buttons, paper, and other goods. We listeners were surprised and fascinated that so much had been manufactured along the banks of the brook not far from where many of us grew up.

A small town library holds more than charm - it is a vital component of the community. It functions like a giant, open book, providing pathways to worlds outside of our sight and experience. It helps keep the residents of a community mentally alive, informed, and able to navigate through life's challenges.

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Nancy J. Nash is the author of *Mama's Books: An Oregon Trail Story* and *Little Rooster's Christmas Eve*. She has a B.A. in English composition from Mount Holyoke College and an M.F.A. in Writing for Children from Simmons College.
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Sewing On-the-Go

by Steve Baker

Decision Fatigue in Quilting: Managing Over Choice

Finding Clarity, Confidence, and Calm in a World Full of Beautiful Options

There's a moment many quilters know well. You stand before shelves filled with beautiful fabric or scroll through page after page of inspiration. You pull one grouping, then another. Everything is lovely. Everything should work. And yet, instead of excitement, you feel tired. Overwhelmed. Unsure. Sometimes you even walk away—not because you don't love quilting, but because you simply can't decide what comes next.

If that sounds familiar, you're not alone. And more importantly, it isn't a sign of indecision, lack of skill or creative failure. What you may be experiencing is decision fatigue—a very real and very human response to too many choices.

Decision fatigue occurs when the mental energy required to make choices becomes depleted. Every decision—no matter how small—uses cognitive resources. When those resources are overused, our ability to make thoughtful, confident decisions declines. In everyday life, this often shows up as end-of-day exhaustion. In quilting, it can appear much sooner, because creative decisions require deeper thought than routine ones.

Quilting asks us to make many layered choices: color, fabric, scale, value, layout and technique. Even joyful decisions carry weight. When emotions are involved, such as making a quilt for a loved one, the mental load increases further. Each choice begins to feel important, even symbolic.

Quilting is especially vulnerable to decision fatigue because it sits at the intersection of creativity, emotion and permanence. Materials cost money. Projects take time—sometimes months or years. Once stitched, many choices feel irreversible. Finished quilts are often gifted, displayed or cherished, which adds emotional significance to every decision.

We also live in an era of creative abundance. Never before have quilters had access to so many fabrics, patterns, tools and sources of inspiration. While this abundance is a gift, it also presents a paradox: more options don't always create more freedom. Often, they create uncertainty.

When choices feel unlimited, it becomes difficult to know when to stop choosing and start creating. The mind continues searching for the "best" option, even when several good ones already exist. This unbounded choice can delay starting, stall progress and quietly erode confidence.

Decision fatigue doesn't always announce itself clearly. It often shows up as repeatedly changing fabric pulls, starting new projects instead of finishing current ones, seeking constant reassurance or feeling unmotivated before sewing even begins. These are not

signs of laziness or lack of commitment, they're signals that the creative system is overloaded.

Managing decision fatigue isn't about making faster choices or being more disciplined. It's about deciding differently, with kindness toward yourself. Creating intentional constraints, trusting earlier decisions, pausing constant input and allowing "good enough" can all help conserve creative energy. Sometimes, the most helpful choice is simply to work with what you already have.

There are also times when stepping away is the healthiest response. Creativity moves in cycles. Pausing does not mean quitting; it means listening.

At its heart, quilting isn't about making the perfect set of decisions. It's about engaging in a process—one that unfolds stitch by stitch, choice by choice.

A quilt does not need every option. It only needs your next honest choice.

And that—quiet, imperfect and entirely human—is more than enough.

Steve Baker is the Director of Marketing at SewEndipitous located at 1093A Albright Road in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Visit www.SewEndipitous.com for more information.



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Clam Dip

Probably not a dip you'd want to serve to someone who isn't a seafood fan! Just a note: I've purchased canned clams at a dollar store and the grocery store. I by far preferred the grocery store brands, I found the discount clams rather gritty – anyone else experience this?

8 oz. cream cheese softened	1½ tsp Worcestershire sauce
1 (6.5 oz. can) minced clams drained, juice reserved	¼ tsp garlic powder
3 Tbsps mayonnaise	black pepper, to taste
2 tsp fresh lemon juice	sliced green onions for serving, optional

Drain clams, reserving liquid.

In a medium bowl, use a hand mixer to beat cream cheese until fluffy.

Mix in the drained clams, mayonnaise, lemon juice, Worcestershire, garlic powder, and pepper. Gradually add clam juice, 1 tablespoon at a time, until desired consistency is reached.

Refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving. Top with sliced green onion if desired.

Life on My Farm - Breezy Manor

The Disappearing Back Porch *by Donna Jo Copeland, farmeress*

My life thus far has been spent mostly living simply, farm centered. Old farmhouse with their high ceilings, drafts and tall trees. A brief time spent in a tiny apartment, formerly a chicken coop was endured. Ugh.

One of my favorite things about an old farmhouse is the back porch. Sometimes they were planned, sometimes just kind of stuck on. Whatever their construction they defined farm family life.

Where I grew up it was small, 4 steps up into the kitchen, sharp left to basement stairs. A handy place for barn coats and boots. Lots of big nails to hang odd things from. A door with a glass panel to be used in winter, replaced with screen in summer. Sort of a pass thru leading to the barn.

Our neighbors across and down the road had a glorious back porch--long and narrow, lots of small windows on the west side. Near the kitchen door space for a small table and old Hoosier cabinet. I loved visiting Bonnie and Harold, walking thru that back porch, we never used the front door. Her clothesline and chicken yard were just outside the door. The house sat on a small rise, tall trees lined the drive.

Where I live now, for over 50 years, have a magical back porch which has transformed itself many times. House was built in late 1800s with wood front and back porches. In 1960, in what seemed to be a cement pouring era, they were removed, cement floors poured, brick facing, storm windows and doors. And my back porch floor has a bump which keeps the door from opening all the way. I've tried grinding it down to no avail.

My young kids and I enjoyed many summer breakfasts there at my great grandmother's kitchen table. Then it became a brooder house for baby chicks, and still does. Then bunny cages one frigid winter.

Once I went to a livestock auction, brought home 2 day old calves, angus and holstein. Bedded them on the porch for quite a while. The chicks got moved into the kitchen--penned under the kitchen table.

When I had my goat dairy (over a quarter century) I had an old Philco fridge there filled with milk, cheese, eggs and ice cream. Customers came in, got what they wanted, left money in a coffee can.

For the last 30 years I have let the porch take on its own life. The Wool from my sheep fill shelves, a long table serves as a dye studio. A spin dryer sits on a small table. A tall chimney cabinet holds dyestuff. My hand tools nestle on a handmade corner shelf. Seedlings start in the east windows.

Lots of love, laughter and magic have happened on that back porch. The big windows bring in sunshine, fresh breezes, it's one of my happy places. The cistern with its old handpump sit just outside the door, path to the barn on the right.

Some may consider the kitchen to be the heart of a home. I think it's the back porch holding laughter, animals, boots and the soul of the family

Sadly looking at new houses today I see no back porches, just a door to the garage.

The farm back porch whether neat, messy, filled with life and laughter was where your friends and neighbors entered. The door was never locked.

You can't do that today.

For all of our advancements, we have lost so much. Old farmhouse back porches carried a life and magic all their own. And almost all gone, living in memories

At 76 I probably won't move again but should I get the chance to build a new house, the back porch would be the first design.

Late spring, early summer is absolutely delightful. Warmth, long days! Being out in the fresh air. Let's all get busy with a garden, get our hands and bare feet in the dirt, play in the mud. And grow our own food.

Peace, love and laughter!

-© 2026 - Donna Jo Copeland writes from her farm, Breezy Manor, Mooresville, Indiana where she tends her flock and creates art from the wool. Being the 14th generation of farm owner/operator, Donna Jo brings alive the struggles of farm life.



From Breezy Manor Recipe File

Three Bean Salad

1 can sliced green beans
1 can red kidney beans
1 can wax beans (or black)

Dressing.

1/2 c sugar.	1 t. Salt
1 t. Mustard.	1/4 c. Grated onion
1 T. Celery seed.	1/3 c vinegar
1 c salad oil	

Mix well. Pour over beans, chill a few hours

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7 Garden Growing Basics for Beginners

Growing your own produce is an all-around smart practice, from the money you'll save at the grocery store to the contributions you can make toward a cleaner planet.

Maintaining a garden takes some effort, but it's a project even a beginner can tackle with ease. Consider these tips to start growing your at-home garden:



1. **Select a perfect spot.** You'll want to place your garden in an area where you see it often so you're reminded to weed and care for it regularly. Find a flat area you can access easily, where erosion and other pitfalls (including hungry wildlife) won't be a problem.
2. **Choose between ground and containers.** There are pros and cons to gardening in containers vs. the ground, and there's no universal right choice. Rather, the best garden depends on your goals and preferences. A ground garden usually offers more space and may provide a better growth environment for roots. However, a container garden is often easier to maintain and may be all you need if you wish to grow just a few plants.
3. **Understand the importance of quality soil.** You may think any dirt will do, but keep in mind the soil you plant in will be the primary source of nutrients for your produce. Not only that, but quality soil provides stability so plants can root firmly and grow healthy and sturdy to support their bounty. Quality soil also allows for ample drainage. Organic matter like compost, leaf mold or aged manure all help improve soil quality.
4. **Keep water close.** Lugging water can quickly eliminate the pleasure of tending your garden, so be sure you're situated near a hose. You'll know it's time to water when the soil is dry about an inch below the surface.
5. **Plan for plenty of sun.** A bright, sunny spot is a must, since most vegetables, herbs and fruits depend on six or more hours of sun every day. Remember the sun's path changes throughout the year, and as trees and foliage grow, they may produce more shade with each growing season.
6. **Consider what you'll grow.** Starting with veggies you know you like is a smart starting point since you'll be pouring sweat equity into making them grow. Over time, you might add new varieties, but early on, keep your focus on foods you know you like so you can see a meaningful return and avoid waste. You'll also need to consider what you can grow to maturity within your area's growing season. If necessary, you might want to start transplants you can nurture indoors before moving them outside when the temperatures allow.
7. **Plant according to a calendar.** Knowing how long it takes different foods to mature will help you create a planting calendar. You don't want to harvest everything at once, and if you stagger planting and replant what you can, you'll have a garden that produces food for your family for a longer period of time.

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Consider these popular seed types and the common backyard birds they attract:

Sunflower – Black sunflower seeds attract blue jays, goldfinches, woodpeckers, purple finches, chickadees, titmice and nuthatches. Striped sunflower seeds appeal to chickadees, doves, grosbeaks, northern cardinals, nuthatches, titmice and woodpeckers. Sunflower hearts (also known as “hulled sunflower” and “sunflower chips”) attract chickadees, common redpolls, juncos, doves, finches, goldfinches, grosbeaks, nuthatches, pine siskins, titmice and woodpeckers.

Nyjer – These lightweight, tiny seeds are a favorite of goldfinches. Put nyjer seeds in a hanging feeder with tiny holes so the small seeds won't get blown away. Nyjer also attracts redpolls, juncos, doves, indigo bunting and pine siskin.

Safflower – These white seeds are slightly smaller than black sunflower seeds. Because they are bitter, grackles, blue jays, starlings – and squirrels – don't like them. However, they do attract doves, purple finches, chickadees, titmice and downy woodpeckers.

White millet – Good for scattering on the ground, white millet attracts ground feeders such as juncos, sparrows, indigo buntings, towhees and mourning doves.

Cracked corn – Popular with ground feeders, cracked corn appeals to doves, crows, jays, sparrows, juncos and towhees. Avoid getting finely cracked corn as it's vulnerable to rot and can quickly turn to mush.

When choosing a bird seed mix, pay attention to the ingredients list on the package. Bird seed is required by law to list ingredients in order of content. Some cheaper mixes have filler seeds such as wheat, red milo, red millet or “assorted grain products.” Most backyard birds won't eat those, and your seed mix could end up wasted on the ground.



Learn more about making your backyard an oasis for birds of all kinds at eLivingtoday.com. Photo courtesy of Unsplash

Find more helpful tips for managing your home and garden at eLivingtoday.com. Photo courtesy of Unsplash

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Start the New Year With the Basics of Collecting

by Jim Olson

With the New Year upon us, it's a perfect time to revisit some basic fundamentals of collecting, why we do it, how to do it well and what really matters in the long run. Whether you are brand new to collecting or have been at it for decades, the fundamentals basically stay the same:

Buy what appeals to you. Buy what you like. Buy what speaks to your heart.

And if you are collecting with the hope that your treasures may someday also be an investment, then get educated and buy the best you can!

"Collectible" means different things to different people. There are many "collectors" out there, but at the end of the day, most of their collections would not sell for much if they really needed to sell it. And, that is perfectly fine if you are collecting simply for the joy of collecting. Reminds us of the story about the guy who collected leaves — he really thought he was raking it in!

They say the difference between a collector and a hoarder is discrimination. There is a lot of truth in that. An advanced collector will only buy the best they can. But we all have to start somewhere.

In the early stages of building a collection, we tend to focus on volume. This is not necessarily a bad thing; it can actually be an excellent way to learn. Speaking of education, it is wise to learn all you can about the items you are collecting. Talk to reputable dealers, other collectors and join clubs if possible. Read books. It is probably better to spend \$100 on books about what you are collecting (and actually study them) than it is to buy a \$100 item. When you are ready to make purchases, always buy the best you can with whatever funds you feel comfortable spending.

"I believe that everyone collects. I think collecting is in our blood as humans."

— Lynda Resnick, entrepreneur.

Remember, there is more to collecting than just buying items. There is the education, the thrill of the hunt, the warm feeling of satisfaction, the camaraderie with other collectors and—if you have collected well—the monetary reward at the end of the day, should you ever need or want to sell.

A Few Basic Things to Remember When Collecting:

- **Start small and collect what you like.** As you progress, your tastes and knowledge will evolve and refine.
- **Quality is important.**
- **Things made to be collectible...rarely are.** This includes nearly all commemorative and mass-produced items.
- **If your "collectible" says "Made in China" or "Made in Taiwan," or something similar, it's not a collectible.** It's decor or a cheap knock-off.
- **There is a difference between collectibles and decor.** Decor is rarely collectible, but collectibles can sometimes make excellent decor.
- **Things that have survived for a long time and remain in good condition are generally sought after.**
- **Condition is usually a major factor in value.** Restoration is generally not desirable in most cases.
- **Rarity (or uniqueness) matters.** Items where few have survived (or items that stand apart) are often highly desirable.
- **Things do not have to be old to be collectible.** Contemporary art by well-known artists is one example. But beware of fads.
- **Always deal with knowledgeable and reputable sellers who will stand behind what they sell,** at least until you become expert enough to judge risks yourself.

"The collector attempts always to acquire the best and his knowledge of what is best is always widening. His is the task of judging between degrees of perfection."

— Arthur Davison Ficke (1883–1945), American poet and collector.

Remember, It's Not Always About the Money

I recently dealt with an elderly man who had a large collection of statues he had acquired over many years. He was finally at the point where he needed to sell them, so he sent them to auction. His final check came back lower than what he had originally spent. He was disappointed, thinking he had made a "bad investment."

I asked him what he would have done with that money over those years if he hadn't bought the statues. He admitted he probably would have just spent it along the way and would not have anything to show for it now. I asked if he had enjoyed decorating his home with his collection of statues all those years. He affirmed he had. I asked him if he had gone down to the home decor store and bought generic decorations for his home (likely mass produced in some foreign country), if he thought they would have had any value when he got ready to downsize. He said no, they probably would have just been thrown away or sold for a few bucks at a yard sale.

He then looked at it differently and felt there was definitely value in the enjoyment he had gotten from the collecting all those years. The fact that he had gotten most of his money back was an added bonus that he would not have realized had he just bought home decor instead.

On the other hand, there are many folks who purchased items and enjoyed them throughout the years and now, the items have increased greatly in value. Inflation is often our friend in such cases. There are many who have enjoyed collecting over the course of a lifetime and been able to cash in nicely towards the end, when they really could use the money. To some, it is appealing that they get to stare at their "savings" right there in their home every day, rather than have it locked away in a bank somewhere.

At the end of the day however, you should always collect for the enjoyment of collecting.

Because the best thing you get to collect is the memories — and they are priceless.

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Mother's Day Quotes

by Janet Young

It's that time of the year as Mother's Day rolls around, that we begin to switch gears and begin to focus on our mothers. We celebrate the many blessings she has brought into our life.

This year I thought it would be a novel way to share some quotes that people have made about their mother. It may make you laugh, reflect, and recall some of the remembrances you have of your mother.

Let's get started.

- Mothers can look through a child's eyes and see tomorrow. *Reed Markham*
- Mother is a verb. It is something you do, not just who you are. *Cheryl Lacey Donovan*
- All I am I owe to my mother. *George Washington*
- All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my mother. *Abraham Lincoln*
- A mother's arms are more comforting than anyone else's. *Princess Diana*
- My mother has a great deal of trouble with me, but I think she enjoyed it. *Mark Twain*
- A mother understands what a child does not see. *Jewish proverb*
- My mother is my root, my foundation. She planted the seed that I base my life on, and that is the belief to achieve, starts in your mind. *Michael Jordan*

The next three quotes are from unknown sources:

- Nothing is really lost until your mom can't find it.
- Life doesn't come with a manual it comes with a mom.
- Moms are like buttons they hold everything together.

I hope as you read these quotes some made you laugh, and some touched your heart. But more importantly, I hope it brought back reflections of why your mother means so much to you.

For those whose mothers are in heaven, may you cherish the memories and feel the love that only a mother can provide.

Happy Mother's Day

© Janet Young is a Certified Tea and Etiquette Consultant, Co-Founder of Mid-Atlantic Tea Business Association, and prior owner of Over The Teacup

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Life-to be continued.

by Wayne M. Bosman

Last year was a momentous and chaotic one for our little family with the passing of both my daughter and my mother, but life continues on. With spring's annual rebirth going on all around us comes an inspiration to see what life has in store for us in this new season of life. While I am still slowly opening my eyes and heart to the joy of life, Kerri has already started exploring hers.

For her, the place to start was to revisit things that she has enjoyed in the past. She has always loved local history and been an avid seamstress. She has spent the last few years teaching preschool to indulge her love of young children. A natural meeting point of these things fell into place for her this spring.

When we moved to the NC coast a couple years ago, a new local history opened up. Because life can be busy, we never had time to explore the history of the region. We had passed right by the History Museum of Carteret County many times, always vowing to stop in. We have time now. What we found was an opportunity for her to pursue three of her loves.

The museum started a program aimed at opening up fourth graders to how their area was settled and grew to what it is now. Kerri fit right in. Over the years she made a number of true to period dresses that she wore giving tours at historical sites. Most of them still fit, although some apparently shrank or something...

She augmented them with new dresses and aprons that she spent enjoyable evenings creating. One of her characters that she got to portray for the Museum program was a locally well-known woman who was a Civil War era spy for the Confederacy. Miss Emeline spent the war smuggling supplies to Confederate soldiers across Union lines. The voluminous skirts of the era coupled with a lady's personal modesty gave her plenty of hiding places. Kerri stitched together a slip with pockets capable of holding a pair of boots, two pairs of pants, bandages, sewing articles and an entire ham without looking out of place. She put her hair up in a way common to the era and hid notes in her hair that she gave to the fourth graders during their field trips.

The children loved it all. Opening a window for them to a time when there was no internet, no television or even radio. Telephones were not yet invented, much less cell phones. Cars? No. Malls? No. For most families, a trip to town was a major undertaking to sell what you produced or to buy what you couldn't. Kerri would come home from the museum excited and enchanted by the questions the children asked, and how some children's eyes lit up when something caught their imagination.

Kerri, for her part, started sewing things by hand whenever she could, to try to make everything as true to life as possible. No more zippers, which weren't invented yet. Elastic, invented in 1820, was technically okay, but the likelihood of it being available here was small. Buttons, hooks and ties were the order of the day. Dyeing by hand was common, especially with indigo as a local cash crop. She hasn't tried that yet.

For Kerri, Spring has sprung. For me, the first tentative shoots are emerging from my fallow soil. I hear the birds more now, insistently calling out their springtime message. I look over my unfinished projects, actually finishing some! I look out at the ocean, waiting for the schools of fish to migrate through, following a rhythm that only they understand. I stay still, grateful that I have a life to be continued.

Wayne M. Bosman is a retired auto mechanic living in Cape Carteret, NC.
His email is wbosman1@gmail.com.



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A Mother's Day Card

by Maranda K. Jones

Dear Mother Nature,
I am thankful for all that you do!
The green grass below my feet
And above the sky so blue.

Thank you for the love you give
In sunshine, clouds, and rain,
The birds chirping all around
The spinning weather vane,

The calves' moos, the lambs' bleats,
And the many babies we can hear.
Thank you for the sounds we long for
As inspiration this time of year.

You teach us to be patient
And let the little ones grow.
You endlessly encourage the
Gardens planted in a row.

You inspire wisdom and strength
Into creatures great and small.
Your power abounds in new growth,
In the plants both short and tall.

You continue to breathe life
In ways not easily understood.
We'd send you a Mother's Day card
If only we really could.



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Mixing in a Jar – Beater Jars

by Jay Mark

No matter what they are called, they represent a long-lasting, popular and still useful kitchen appliance. They go by several names, beater jars, egg beater jars, whip mixer, mixing jar and rotary food mixer. Regardless of what they are called, they all do the same thing. And, in a beautiful way.

Throughout history, the kitchen task of whisking (or mixing) eggs and other things was a laborious and time-consuming chore not popular for work in the kitchen. All that changed in 1856, when Ralph Collier of Baltimore, Maryland proudly proclaimed in his patent application: "Be it known that I...have invented a certain new and useful Rotary Egg-Beater..." While many patent applications refer to "improvement," meaning a modification or enhancement of an earlier patent, "New," as in Collier's claims, tells us this was the first patent for such a kitchen appliance.

Collier explains his interesting justification for his patent: "The beating of eggs is a common operation in every household...where eggs are used as a principal constituent in the preparation of many dishes but in a form less injurious to health than in their raw or coagulated state. Eggs prepared by beating are thoroughly charged with atmospheric air and would on account of their comparative easy digestion in this form, be used so, much more than they are, Were it not for the laborious, and fatiguing operation of beating the eggs by hand, which is usually performed with a fork or hand beater made for the purpose, by imparting to it a regular rotatory motion passing alternately through the eggs and through the air. The air is thus drawn into and incorporated with the mass in small quantities, requiring thus a long and tedious manipulation, to accomplish the complete charging with air."

Collier's common-sense invention opened the floodgates for hundreds of similar patents that would follow. The next one came just a year later. Through 1940, about 350 patents were issued in an effort to build a better "mouse trap" ...er...egg beater. Since 1856, over 1,000 different beater styles and configurations have been designed.

Varying shapes of blades, complexity of the gearing mechanisms and other operating features offered almost unlimited opportunities to earn a patent.

The first mechanical beaters, and those that ensued, were hand operated, which meant the user had to find a container in which to do the mixing without spillage or splatter. In 1884, Alfred C. Rex introduced a solution – "Egg and Cake Beater," a mixer/beater accompanied by a custom-designed tin container. In manufacture, it was often embossed "King Beater."

Rex and his partner Louis Kyser were prolific inventors; best known for at least two-dozen patents for mechanical banks, bellringer and other toys and even a novel icepick.

It wasn't long before special beater "jars" came to the market in both glass and stoneware. Many of the earthenware containers had rounded bottoms to accommodate the shape of many beaters. Another benefit to manufacturers was advertising. Many of the beater jars had paid advertisements imprinted on them.

In 1897, Sears' 786-page catalogue only offered one beater. It was made by Dover, one of the earliest and largest metalware companies. Price? 9 cents. Just for perspective, that's about \$3.54 today. Between 1870 and 1890, Dover produced about 4 million beaters, demonstrating just how popular the appliance was in the American home. By 1914 Sears was offering beaters with jars for 29 cents.

While hand-operated mechanical mixers are still manufactured, they began to be supplanted in 1919 when the popular "Kitchen Aid" brand electric beater was introduced by the Hobart Manufacturing Company.

In the 1920s, after the introduction of a durable "plastic" called Bakelite in 1907, beaters with Art Deco-styled colorful handles were introduced.

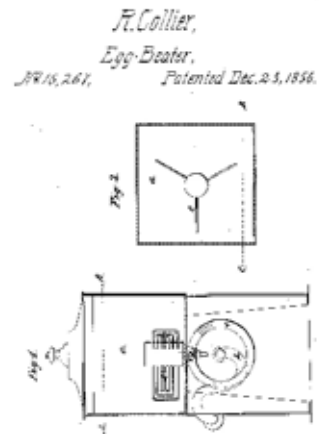
Regrettably, because of this brief article, I am unable to illustrate the incredible variety of beaters. You can view many of them on a Google image search, eBay, Facebook and other media. If you want to connect with other collectors, KOOKS-Kollectors of Kitchen Stuff on Facebook is the place to start.

An appreciation of the past. Think about this: So many early products, like beaters, were so well designed and crafted that they can still be used today. Unlike much of what we buy new today that has short lifespans. How many of those things will still be functioning a century from now?

WHAT ARE THEY WORTH: Because of the prolific number and variety of styles of beaters produced over 170 years, and that still remains, collecting these intriguing, durable, and often still functioning, kitchen tools offer something for almost everyone. New collectors can enter the field for relatively little. A recent survey of eBay showed nearly 700 listings with prices ranging from near \$10 to more than \$1000. Average prices averaged \$30 to \$60.

A GOOD BOOK: The Eggbeater Chronicles, by Don Thornton, 1999, provides the most valuable, comprehensive information about beaters with more than 1,000 pieces illustrated.

Virtually an antique himself, or maybe a "collectible," Jay Mark, has more than a half-century experience in the antiques business. He owns Those Were The Days!, an online specialty bookstore. A recognized historian, he also teaches, lectures and writes about antiques and history. Reach him at jaymarkhistorian@gmail.com



Understanding a need for a mechanical egg and batter whipping tool, Ralph Collier earned a patent for the first hand-operated mechanical "egg-Beater" in 1856.

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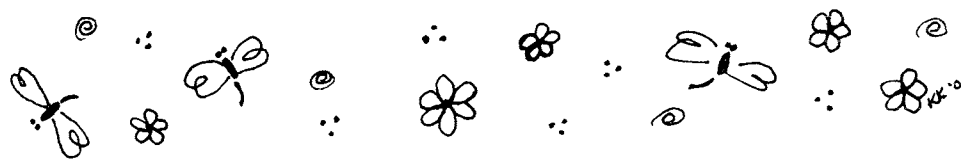
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That Old Pink Robe

by Becky Van Vleet

I was heartbroken when my beloved mother left earth for heaven in 1977 when I was only 23 years old. My husband and I hadn't even reached our second anniversary yet. It felt so unfair. I'll never forget the day Daddy asked my sisters and me later on to go through our mother's clothes and decide what to do with them. That was an incredibly difficult day. We donated some items, while others we kept as personal mementos. I requested my mother's pink satin robe. It was already missing a couple of buttons, and dangling threads hung from the satin quilting. I can't recall why I asked for it, but I saved it in a drawer for almost 40 years.

Here come the grandchildren. Six granddaughters! As I brought out the robe for them to play dress-up, fond memories of my sweet mother filled my mind. Watching that old pink robe find new life with the little ones made my heart burst with joy. However, with age and gentle play, it has become quite worn. I've had to mend the robe several times. It's much too large for my younger granddaughters, yet they adore its long length and the feel of the satin. The memories of my mother wearing that robe around the house on chilly days are still etched in my mind to this day.

To preserve the cherished garment as a special keepsake, I've removed it from the play clothes and placed it on a dedicated hook in my closet. I'm thrilled whenever my granddaughters say, "Nana, I'm cold. Can I wear your mother's robe?" I hurry to retrieve it for them. I share tidbits about my mother when the robe comes out. How kind she was to others. Her pretty brown eyes. How her homemade macaroni and cheese was the best ever.

The memories flood back. And when more than one granddaughter visits at the same time, it's not unusual to have to mediate who gets to wear it. I never imagined this would happen!

Why did I save this old robe? Back then, I wasn't sure why I wanted to hold onto it. But now it makes perfect sense. It holds cherished memories as I watch my granddaughters scampering around in it whenever they feel "cold." It reminds me of my lovely mother, and that's priceless.

I encourage all of you—grandmothers, mothers, daughters, aunts, sisters, and friends—to hold onto a piece of clothing, a quilt, a doll, a teacup, a scarf, or any meaningful keepsake you can pass along to your children or grandchildren. While the item might not seem important now, its value often grows over time. Share the story behind it. Create a cherished memory. Treasure the tale. That old pink robe brings me immense joy even today.

Memories of Mom

by Tammy Page

Oh, how I wished I had seen that the previous month's edition was about sewing and quilting because I would have loved to have written a story about my mom's legacy of making a quilt for my sisters and I and for each of the grandchildren too. But you see I've been very busy the past few months going through my parents 69 years of marriage belongings. My father recently passed away after being a widow for almost three years and I have had the chore and blessing of clearing out mom and dad's household. It's been a lot of work for sure but it's also brought me joy being able to go through some of mom and dad's things including mom's sewing basket and the many totes and drawers of quilting and sewing materials she had used over the years. I found old seam rippers that she taught me how to use carefully, patterns from my childhood and patterns of playsuits and baby doll clothes she sewed for my daughters. I found her old thimbles that brought tears to my eyes as I remember she never sewed without one. I came across her old black handled metal scissors that weighed a ton and also handmade patterns she had traced. I also discovered she had totes upon totes of material stored in the spare room where she had bought for one project or another and remnants of the quilts, she put together for each of us.

Her sewing machine was always set up in the extra bedroom for when she got a whim to start a new project. One year she made me, and my sisters, my daughters and niece set of matching Christmas runners and napkins. I found several extra sets of those in one of her sewing cabinets. I also found quilt blocks sewn together where she had started a new quilt and didn't finish it. I came across old tools I had not seen since my childhood when she taught me how to sew. A couple such items were the metal hem markers that were different colored, the many little boxes of straight pins and the spools thread of every color. I had to be careful cleaning out those drawers for all the sharp items laying at the bottom. By the way, how many bobbins can one person have?

I wasn't a quilter myself but she was and we have all enjoyed receiving her beautiful quilts. She would piece the one of a kind patterns together and send them off to a lady in Kentucky to quilt them and when completed, the lady would mail them back to mom. I didn't realize the money and work that went into each one until I found all the leftover quilt squares and the hand-written bill the quilter had charged her. It really wasn't much for such a beautiful craft but I'm sure it added up after piecing ten quilts. Today, I have several on display in my living room and bedroom.

One funny tidbit about mom and her quilts. She never wanted us to hang them up for fear of sun damage and tearing the seams. She was very particular about that but I still hung them up on quilt racks and some draped over an old wooden ladder. I wanted everyone to see her beautiful craftsmanship. Her quilts mean more to me now that both of my parents are gone. Each time I pass by one I can remember her scolding me for not having my hands in the right place on the sewing machine or making me rip out a seam on my 4-H apron.

As I cleared out mom and dad's home, I had a small estate sale and mom's sewing machine and materials were a hit. Quilters and crafters went crazy over her supplies and were still asking for more at the end of the day. A young woman bought mom's sewing machine and some of her material and I could not have been happier that a new seamstress was starting her own traditions of sewing things for her family and friends.

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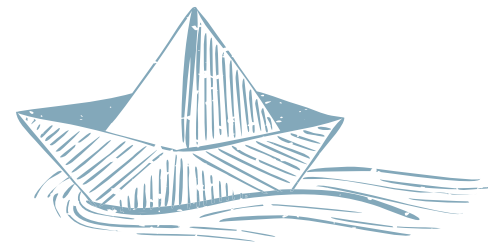


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Clutter Happens

by Julie Pirtle

Lessons From a Quilt

I am a collector of romance. Not hearts. Not Gothic novels. I enjoy the romance of items that show a long life. Do they tell a story? If not, is it easy to imagine a story befitting of their valor for withstanding the test of time?

While thrift finds are always fun, my favorite pieces are those that have been passed down by my family. I love to be the keeper of the history they shared with my ancestors. It's a feeling hard to put into words, but if you know...you know.

My favorite treasures that have been entrusted to me are quilts that were made by my great grandmothers. They hang like proud family crests on the wall of my guest room. They are uneven. The corners don't match up when folded. Some colors have faded and some hand stitching is not as strong as it used to be.

Even with all those irregularities, they are still stunning. One is a wedding ring pattern that was made for my Grandmother by her Mom. It was a gift for their wedding in the early 40's. I remember seeing it on their bed as a young child...well into the 60's.

The other quilt is a carnival of small colored scraps. It is bordered with a bright seafoam green fabric. The pieces came from old shirts, dresses, blouses...anything that could be reused to create a fabric masterpiece. (Looks like upcycling isn't such a new trend after all!)

Over the centuries, quilts have been mainstays in the lives of those who used them. Women made them for their families as a necessity. After all, running to the Department Store for a new blanket wasn't really an option!

When I see a really old quilt, I like to think about who used it. Were they traversing cross-country in a covered wagon? Was it used in a backwoods farmhouse? Did it grace the bed in a Victorian home?

As important as the usage was the way most quilts were made. In the days before any electronic diversions, people actually talked to each other! In this way, the Quilting Bee became the social club of local groups of women.

Together, they spent quality time. I imagine there was a lot of gossip, tears and laughter. All the while, their busy and crafty hands sewed stitch by stitch, making the creation a community effort.

In a time of our lives when life is uncertain and the world is a little crazy, I think we should take some wisdom from those quilts and the artisans that made them. It didn't matter what array of colors were sewn together. It was beautiful. Spending time together allows for a time of support and healing. It was also beautiful.

The stitches that connect the pieces of us together as a community are there if we take the time to see it. The seams holding those pieces together bind us as one. We humans all need the warmth of community ... and quilts.

Quilts make life softer. Old quilts make us wiser with the stories they tell. Let's make a pact to be softer and listen to those that have stories to share. We've got this. I know we do.

© Julie Pirtle lives in Eagle Point, Oregon. She is a Professional Organizer and owner/operator of Clutter Happens. She also works with clients nationally through video consultations. The Clutter Challenged can reach her on Facebook:/clutterhappens or email her directly: clutterhappens@yahoo.com

Traveling with Purpose

by Julie Pirtle

I have very fond memories of summer vacations. Looking back from a parent's perspective, it is very clear how much time and effort was spent by my parents to make our vacations fun. With that being said, my Dad was a "get there now with no frivolity" kind of guy. Me on the other hand? I wanted to stop and read historical markers and stop at every roadside wonder.

The saying "It's about the journey, not the destination" rings true with me. The journey can be just as much fun as the destination! Our country is rich with history and whimsy. Taking the time to experience it all adds such a layer of richness to a trip.

Share your route with your children and challenge them to come up with interesting (or crazy) stops they'd like to experience. Being part of the planning can give them ownership in the upcoming adventure. If you have no kids on board, challenge yourself!

Bring an empty tablet or journal and make daily entries. Include funny things that happened, places you visited and people you encountered. Encourage children to do the same.

If you are the kind of person that likes to document your trips with souvenirs, be sure to bring along a storage envelope. Make sure that it is large enough to hold brochures, maps, etc.

The journaling and souvenirs will come in very handy when it's time to make your photo album (whether it's scrapbooked or digital). It's so nice to have everything in one place and to also have written notes when it's time to create.

Be CURIOUS! Stop at the historical markers. They are there for a reason. Take in the information. Look at the scenery and imagine what it was like when history was taking place.

Have FUN! Unlike my Dad, my husband will stop to let me look at anything (bless his heart!!). The last time we did this was for a Flintstone roadside attraction in Arizona. It had life size simulations of their cars.

On that same trip, we found ourselves standing on the corner in Winslow, Arizona. Of course, we had to take photo opportunities at both attractions! It still makes me smile whenever I see the pictures.

Don't RUSH! Enjoy the culture, people and geography. It's memory making time. Packing items to make the trip more convenient is also important. Of course, ample supplies of water and weather appropriate items are a must. However, there are a few items that I always include when traveling. Hand sanitizer. A roll of paper towels for spills. Disinfectant spray for hotel rooms. Zip lock bags are great to have on hand for emergency ice packs or the shell collection you found on the beach. Chip clips for snack bags. Anything that will make life easier!

So, get on the road little doggie! Stop and look at that largest ball of string. Take a picture. Preserve the memory. You will be glad you did.

(P.S. Don't forget to strap Grandma to the top of the car before you head out. They do it in the movies, right?!?!?) We've got this vacation thing down. I know we do!

Julie Pirtle lives in Eagle Point, Oregon. She is a Professional Organizer and owner/operator of Clutter Happens. She also works with clients nationally through video consultations. The Clutter Challenged can reach her on Facebook:/clutterhappens or email her directly: clutterhappens@yahoo.com

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 Mary Johnston

Find lots more about the garden in Susan's new Summer Book at www.susanbranch.com ~ Happy Spring! 'Tis the Season!

RICHMOND

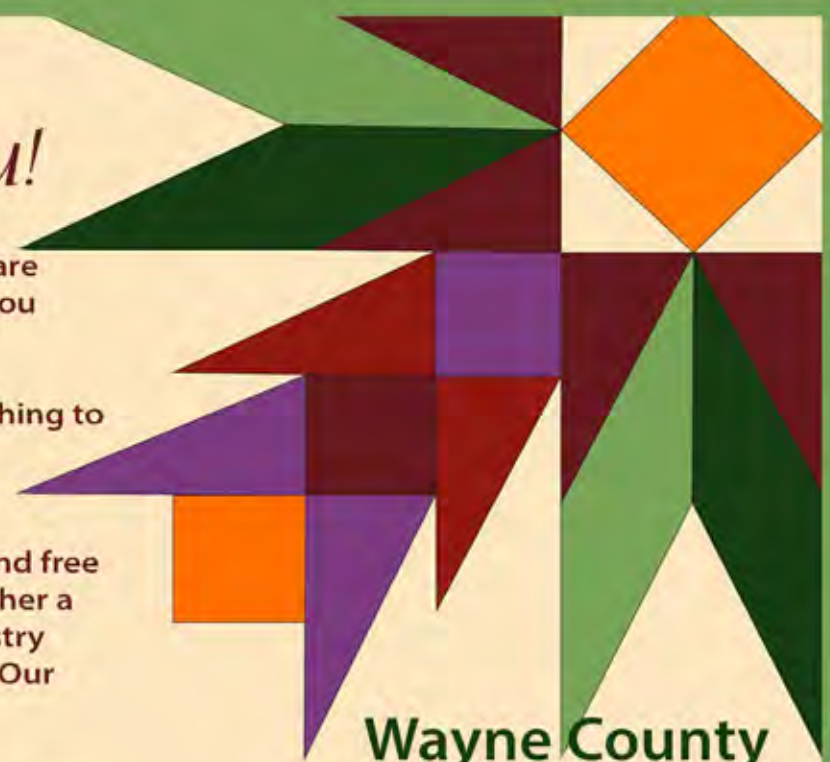
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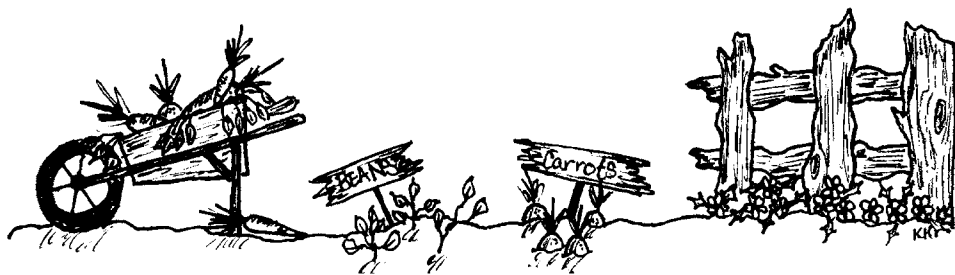

BUSY BEE

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Free Embroidery Pattern - May not be sold or used for commercial purposes. Use this pattern for embroidery, wool applique, punch needle or rug hooking, painted projects or whatever your imagination can dream up! Reduce or enlarge pattern as desired.

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VARIOUS SHOP HOP TOWNS



Frugal Gardening Tips and Tricks

Gardening can be a simple way to beautify your yard, relieve stress and save money on your grocery bill, but like any hobby, you can get carried away buying necessary equipment.

Fun, frugal and environmentally friendly, these tricks can help you create a cost-effective garden:

1. Use a yardstick and permanent marker to mark inches and feet on the handle of your rake, shovel or hoe. The next time you plant, simply lay the marked handle along the row to create perfectly spaced holes for seeds.
2. Line the bottom of a clay pot with a coffee filter to keep soil from leaking out the bottom.
3. Use empty plastic water bottles or clear milk jugs to fill the bottom of large pots. They reduce the weight of the pot and require less soil to fill.
4. To test your seeds to see if they are still viable for this planting season, place a wet paper towel inside a zip-top bag, drop in 3-4 seeds and wait a week to see if anything grows.
5. One way to help prevent weeds is lining your garden with a layer of newspaper. Just top two or three sheets of newsprint with a layer of pine needles, grass clippings or dried leaves for an eco-friendly and inexpensive weed barrier.
6. Keep gardening twine handy. Nail a funnel to your potting bench with the spout pointing downward, feed the twine through and your string will never go missing. For a more portable solution, place a ball of twine inside a canning jar, make a hole in the lid and feed the end of the twine through the hole. Now, you can take twine anywhere, tangle-free.
7. There is no need to buy expensive potting systems for starting seedlings. Place several cardboard toilet paper rolls inside a clean plastic clamshell, like those used for premade salads. Fill each cardboard tube with potting soil and plant. Once your seedlings grow too tall for the clamshell, simply tear off the top lid.

Find more ideas for creating a garden without spending a bundle at <http://www.elivingtoday.com> Source: Family Features.com

Retired and Tired

by Cheryl Potts

Since I've retired, I'm busier now than when I was working full-time! I guess that's a familiar saying among us retirees, or as we are lovingly called, "elderberries".

Not only do we get to enjoy our leisure and try new creative endeavors but we can join groups such as "Senior Stretch-n-go", "Slow-mo Quilting", and "Scrapbooking Senility", as well as going out to lunch once or twice a week with senior friends.

However, squeezed into my creative groups and lunch dates are many important outings a few times a month. I've met some very interesting people in my travels to the "Oligists" and "Scopies". For example last week I met with my cardiologist to make sure my heart was pumping properly and saw my blips on a screen. Of course, I sat in a massage chair, reading a four year old magazine, waiting a half an hour, while the nurse consulted the radiologist for my test results. The massage was wonderful. I ordered one on my phone while waiting.

Next week, I go to my dermatologist to get my skin tags, age spots, lumps and bumps examined. For this one, I have to completely disrobe while trying not to make eye contact with the doctor! Thank goodness, the office staff are all females!

Next month, I go to the ophthalmologist for my yearly exam. There's nothing worse than that "puffer" machine! It makes you blink excessively, mentally trying to avoid the puff of air into your eye, which makes you endure it five more times before getting a successful reading! Then I'm blinking uncontrollably for the rest of the eye exam. Whoever came up with that test should be scrutinized!

Part of my yearly visitations is the dentist (new word- why not). Got to keep up with my teeth cleanings and scheduled x-rays to keep the pearly-whites gleaming. That's probably the most relaxing of all the doctor visitations.

However, the worst has got to be the colonoscopy! You might be scheduled every 3-5 years, depending what they find up your...body part. In the old days, doctors would ask if you wanted to watch the exam on the TV screen. At least if I fainted I'd be on the table already. Who in their right mind would want to watch that disgusting movie? I don't even watch medical shows on regular TV!

Suffice it to say, elderberries have no life of their own after retirement, because of the many necessary, monthly doctor appointments. I'm busy enough with my regularly scheduled lunch dates, social groups and grandchildren visitations there's barely time for doctor appointments. Sometimes there's 2-3 activities in one day! My children come home, look at my calendar and my full schedule and ask me, "Mom, why did you retire?" I say, "I guess after teaching for 30 years I wanted to try something different."

"Retirement is that marvelous time of life when the sun rises and you don't."

"Retirement is when you get out of the shower and you're glad the mirror is fogged up."

Isaiah 40:31 says, "but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." Thank you, Lord.

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NEIGHBORING STATE ADVERTISERS

Taurus the Bull, Tea and Me

by Barbara Kalkis

I am not a believer in astrology or horoscopes, but I learned that some traits of my April birthday sign, Taurus the Bull, hit uncomfortably close to home. It is true that I am logical and goal oriented. I like to think I'm dependable, loyal, and a hard worker, but sometimes stubborn, and slow to accept change. (Finally! An excuse for why I've not remodeled my kitchen!) However, if I dwell too long on the longer list of a bull's "earth signs", I visualize myself on an 1800s farm, stolidly plowing a field or dragging a covered wagon from St. Joe, MO, to Sacramento gold country. Not a pretty picture.

One source states that Taureans love good food and great meals. Right! Supposedly, we are great cooks. Wrong. Unless you want 10 different ways to make canned tuna fish. My favorite meals are those with easy-to-be-with friends. One such group is my cardmaking group. Every month, we meet for breakfast in a cozy mom-and-pop café. My go-to breakfast there is two poached eggs, potatoes and rye toast with coffee. Yes, I know I'm supposed to be talking about the wonders of tea, but it's important to understand that there's always an exception to the rule. Part of it is a matter of taste. Somehow, coffee and eggs cooked any style just go together in terms of flavors. The other part is that I've never really found a restaurant that makes good hot tea.

This insight occurred to me one morning as we gathered. We all had ordered coffee, except for Denice. She had ordered tea. While we were drinking hot coffee, I observed that her tea bag was floating aimlessly around in her cup, like a goldfish in bowl. The water was just too cool for the tea's flavor and color to be released. That's when I reconfirmed my restaurant rule to drink coffee or iced tea "out" and hot tea "in".

My kitchen may be light on exotic herbs and spices, unless you count sea salt as "exotic", but I have a plethora of tea varieties, ranging from white tea to green tea to black tea to herbals; from fruited teas to florals and fermented brews. Coffee aficionados can rave about the merits of Columbian versus Ethiopian coffee beans, but those comparisons fade against tea. You cannot put a rose or chrysanthemum, ginger or peppermint in coffee unless it's the froth on top of a drink that isn't really coffee. If you have a cold, drink tea with lemon. An upset stomach? Tea with ginger. Stressed? Chamomile. Celebrating summer? Peach tea. Crave a standby at lunch? Jasmine works fine. Need a sweetener? Use honey. Tea easily adapts to flavors. Consider that Genmaicha tea combines roasted rice with Matcha tea for a smoky, tasty exotic flavor. Try putting rice in coffee and see what that gets you.

Preparation time is an important difference between tea and coffee. Coffee is fast. Place coffee grounds in a pot or pop a packet in a coffee machine and in moments you have hot coffee. Tea takes time. Boil water. Place a tea bag or an infuser containing

tea leaves into the pot. And wait. Wait until the tea diffuses the water with flavor. In shops, coffee drinkers expect their drink to be made and paid for in instants. With tea, we know that good drinks take time. Tea slows the pace of life to a moment that lets us grapple with whatever emotion we are feeling. Somehow, tea makes everything manageable. Even learning that your astrology sign contrived to hit some of your personality traits right on target.

©Barbara Kalkis, 2026. Barbara loves writing, teaching communications, and consulting on high-tech topics. Her poetry book is *Little Ditties for Every Day: A Collection of Thoughts in Rhyme and Rhythm*. Contact her at

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Clothesline Creations	424 N Main St Ste 1A	Middlebury	IN	574-825-7555
Edwards Sewing Center	6131 Rothman Road	Ft Wayne	IN	260-486-3003
Green Light Quilts	7170 Tullamore Lane	Franklin	TN	615-727-4744
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Mercantile on Main	313 Main Street	Coshocton	OH	740-622-5956
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Quilting Memories	9699N 375E	Seymour	IN	812-216-2225
Robin's Nest Quilts & More	26848 W Main Street	Edwardsburg	MI	269-663-3303
Stitch 'N Time Fabrics	2305 Miami Street	South Bend	IN	574-234-4314
Stone Soup Batiks	1355 N Bendix Drive	South Bend	IN	574-400-0258
Stitches Quilt Shop	16 Village Square	Cincinnati	OH	513-733-3999
The Quilted Bee & Bee Hive	620 N Main Street	Monticello	IN	574-297-5418
The Quilterie	126 S Main Street	Celina	OH	419-586-0910
The Quilt Shop at Essenhaus	240 US Hwy 20	Middlebury	IN	574-822-1270
The Scarlet Thread Quilt Co	1974 E 1000 S	Twelve Mile	IN	574-721-5899
Thyme to Sew	301 W Main Street	Odon	IN	812-790-0855
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Unraveled Quilt Store	381 N Fletcher Ave	Spencer	IN	812-821-0309
Zig Zag Corner Quilt Shop	7872 N Troy Road	Greenfield	IN	317-326-3115

Shop listing is accurate as of publication print date.