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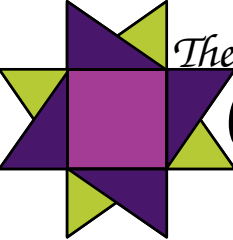
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Weeding the Summer Garden

by Kerri Habben Bosman

I weeded our garden this summer morning before the swelter of the day snuck in. I worked beneath a nicely overcast sky, surrounded by a quiet breeze with the slightest hint of rain in it. I migrated from garden bed to garden bed, welcoming each arriving thought as I listened to the world breathe.

I talked to the tomatoes and smiled at the watermelon. I checked the cucumber plants, happy to see that more were growing after yesterday's harvest. I shook my head at the plethora of mint, swiping my hand across it to bring forth its aroma. I pondered the tiny purple flowers on the thyme. I transplanted seven pepper plants to a better spot, silently apologizing as I uprooted them. I secured them gently but firmly into their new place, and watered them right away with a promise to come back soon.

My husband, Wayne, says it is an act of faith to plant a garden. Each winter as our seedlings sit in the front window, we eagerly await each new stage of their development. We plant dormant seeds with prayerful hopes, hoping that our care, their environment, and uncontrolled circumstance will support their growth into the best plant they can be. We rejoice from the first tendrils to the last vegetable or flower when autumn is coming upon us. We clear out for the last months of the year and wait to start all over again.

Much of our summer garden began on a winter's day in January when I brought out all the seeds we'd saved from last year. Zinnias, marigolds, peppers, and tomatoes. The beans, carrots, sugar snap peas we had to buy. And of course, I bought plants. Except for spoiling grandchildren, we are frugal. With Scottish and German backgrounds between us, we cannot escape it. However, putting me in a plant nursery in late April with a credit card is possibly more dangerous than sending a shopaholic to the mall. Thankfully I have a lot of willpower, but often something beautiful and new to me simply jumps into my cart.

We bought our cucumber plants from our 16 year-old-grandson, Hunter. He grew them in his high school horticulture class, and then they had a plant sale. Cucumbers don't always grow well here at the coast. Because he planted the seeds and nurtured them, we especially wanted them to bear fruit. Even if it was just one cucumber, his efforts would be a success. We are grateful to be enjoying many a cucumber salad.

And, like I said at the beginning of this article, I plucked out the ever-tenacious "Pflanzeichwillnichtus." (This is my very own botanical name for a weed. It is a combination of German and Latin, meaning "plant that I do not want.") Along the way, I made mental notes as to how the plants I do want are growing, deadheading as I go. I find a bit of irony in weeding-as I meticulously cull a concentrated area, I am also focusing on the entire garden. I feel the surrounding beauty and the grace of being alive. This creates a precious cohesion, an acceptance of all that is and all that is not.

Our garden of life these last few years has been partially fertilized by loss and sorrow. They churned up the soil of who we are, and these emotions are still breaking down into nutrients that will somehow serve us. Yet, through it all, we resettled our roots, trusting the journey in this strange soil, and we were given enough water and enough light to grow into a new season.

Now, I must go to check the transplanted peppers, smile at the cucumber plants, and pause gratefully at the tender, tiny flowers of thyme.

Kerri Habben Bosman is a writer living in Cape Carteret, NC.

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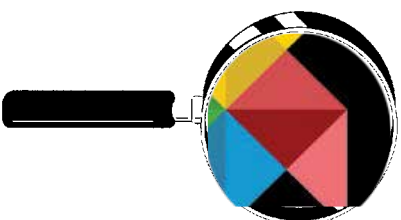
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Building Harmony
A Stormy and Furry Night

by Jeff Cappis

It was one of those stormy Friday nights. The rain was driving down and lightening was flashing constantly all around, Cathy and I were intrigued by the storm as the thunder rattled our house. Our dog Waldo didn't take it quite so easily though. He either tried to find a place to hide, (like behind a toilet) or huddled close to us when the thunder clapped. We had to keep an eye on him so he didn't piddle on the floor in fear. That was fine with him. He liked to stay close.

Later on that night Cathy grew tired and went to bed but I was still watching the storm. Something about these storms draws me to them. There is a smell to the rain and the sound of it driving down. The flash of light and eventual boom. Wow. I decided to step outside to experience it first hand.



There is a good spot for this just outside the garage door. The eaves protected me (barely) from the rain and I got a good view of nature's fury. The trees on our property were whipping around with the wind. I was in awe. Then I heard the door close behind me and latch.

I was locked out. Drat. I considered ringing the doorbell but this would mean waking up Cathy. After careful consideration I looked for another option.

At least I was mostly protected under that eve for the moment and the show was spectacular. Every time the Forrest lit up I could see every leaf and every blade of grass for just an instant. Between lightening flashes the Forrest was mostly dark, except for a small solar light some forty feet away.

Boom! Cool! Flash! Wow! Boom..... This was going on for a while when I noticed something out of the corner of my eye. Something moved in front of that solar light. It cast a silhouette towards me through the mist.

In the brief flashes of light I could see it was close to the ground with spiky wet fur violently shaking off water. Between the flashes it let out out a horrible howl. Then the Forrest would go dark again.

Still I could tell through that faint shadow in the mist, that it was getting bigger, or closer. I was blinded by another lightening flash. Again, darkness and a sinister howl.

Now I could hear it panting. It even let out an occasional snort. I tried the door. Still locked. I dare not move or make a noise. Perhaps it hadn't seem me. With the rain driving down, the wind a few blinding flashes, the immediate booms and all that howling I was getting pretty unhinged.

Now I could smell what ever it was and it was rank and close by. There were noises all around and I wasn't sure what to trust.

Suddenly it leapt at me... knocking me to the ground hard. I could feel it's weight as it landed on me and even more: it's claws on my chest! It growled and howled. It drooled on my face as it came ever closer.

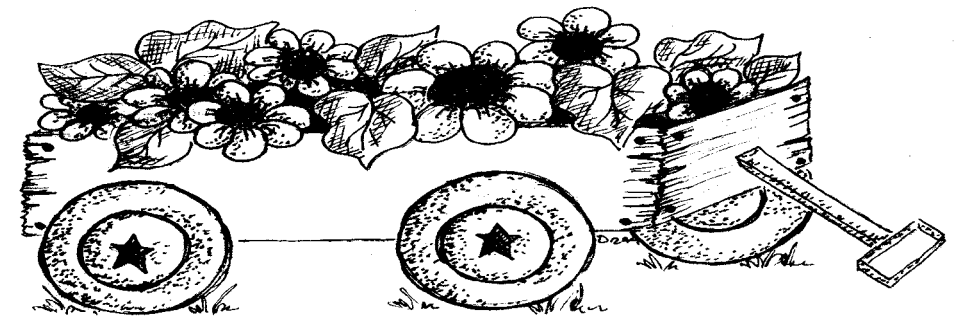
In the lightening flashes I could see it's spiked wet fur and it's teeth up close. It's breath stank. It gave out one last howl as I prepared to lose my entire face and then... It licked me.

Then it wagged it's tail. What? After a moment my heart settled down. Turns out Waldo had sneaked outside with me and got lost in the rain. He was wet, lost and scared but more than happy to find me. He tried to lick my entire face off. Things went from scary to just kinda gross.

The door stayed locked so we hung out under that eve and watched the storm. Waldo even started to enjoy it. He was soaked, but we had fun.

All of this made me wonder: Why do dogs smell when they get wet?

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Ecclesiastes 3:11

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Beauty is often only thought of as external, like a person, a landscape, a moment of grace, but it is clearly connected to the mind, heart, and spirit.

GIRLFRIEND WISDOM: True beauty goes beyond what we see because it shines through in our actions, and our kindness. Let that smile come into full expression the next time you "feel" a thing of Beauty!

Joy & Blessings, Jody

Girlfriend Wisdom is written and illustrated by Jody Houghton®.
Color files of this writing and artwork are available: www.JodyHoughtonDesigns.etsy.com

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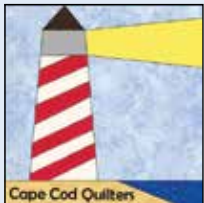
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A Celebration of Strength

In 2026 with the approach of the height of the year, we have so much to be proud of. As our nation celebrates its 250th year, one of the best ways to proclaim our patriotic pride is through decorating. Our yards this time of year are naturally filled with the beauty of green lawns and gardens filled with color. The stands of red beebalm that attract the hardworking hummingbirds are in full bloom now. Our blue hydrangeas that are always lush and vibrant are all part of the backdrop of a spectacular and especially patriotic summer.

To decorate our porches, gorgeous primitive bunting of red, white and blue expand our décor and lend historic appeal. Small bicentennial flags lined along our fence let people know we are truly celebrating our nation's proud history.

To make our enthusiasm even more evident, we might even create historical decorative vignettes that are unique and have an even stronger colonial appeal. A huge copy of The Declaration of Independence paired with a Revolutionary cloak and tricorne hat can be placed next to an inkwell with a quill and American flag. It's a way to celebrate freedom and to honor history.

Participating in the Past

Taking part in our town's 250th celebrations will no doubt be a time to remember. Whether it is a tour of the local museum's bicentennial collection curated just for this year, or an historic home tour designed with 250 in mind, the activities for this very special summer abound. Summer favorites such as the July 4th parade or the quaint shoreline town's boat parade will be received with exceptional fanfare and enthusiasm this year because this historic milestone deserves it.

Spirit of 1776

So as summer gets into full swing and festive events start to gain momentum, consider taking part and enjoying the "Spirit of 1776" fun. As people who are naturally passionate about history, colonial antiques and the legacy of our nation's past, this summer is a time to bring our absolute best.



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Back Porch Break

by Nancy Brummett

Salon Sagas

I had my first manicure in a nail salon when I was in my late fifties. I only went then because my two little granddaughters who were visiting one summer wanted to go. When the woman who answered the phone said she would give the girls a "free flower" I thought that was very kind and expected them to come home with a long-stemmed rose or a carnation but no, it was a daisy painted on each small thumbnail.

That was about 30 years ago, but since then I've become a semi-regular client at several different nail salons. You may think that the best "people watching" may be found at airports, malls, or ER waiting rooms, but I assure you, the clientele at nail salons can be most bemusing and amusing.

People become very loyal to their nail technicians, and I've followed my favorite to three different salons as his job changed, but I've noticed many similarities in terms of clientele at the different locations. It always warms my heart to see a



faithful daughter or caregiver bringing in an older woman to get a manicure or even more rejuvenating, a pedicure for her ailing feet and hard-to-cut toenails. I also like seeing men getting pedicures to make their wives happy!

But you can see some strange things in nail salons, too. One time a fortyish business woman was on her phone the entire time she was getting her pedicure. She also had her laptop open on her lap and was conducting business as if she were seated behind a mahogany desk in a high-rise office building. I actually overheard her offering a job to someone. They were negotiating salary, vacation time, job title, etc., and everyone in the salon could follow along with each discussion point. In the end the fellow on the other end of the phone evidently said he'd talk to his wife and let her know, so we were all left wondering if he took the job. It's been a while since I was in the corporate world, but is this the new business etiquette? I hope not.

Keeping up with the life events of manicure seekers is entertaining as well. You overhear that someone wants bright orange because they are headed to Mexico on vacation, or you witness a giggly bridal party coming in to get their nails done for the wedding. Recently two little girls proudly held out their hands to show me the ice blue polish they got because they were to be flower girls in their aunt's upcoming wedding. Much of life can be witnessed in a nail salon, and seeing those two little girls reminded me of two others many years ago. I guess salon sagas can be sentimental, too.

Nancy Parker Brummett is an author and freelance writer in Colorado Springs, CO. Follow her on Facebook, Instagram and Linked In or subscribe to her blog posts at www.nancyparkerbrummett.com.

Treasures, cont. from page 4

handkerchiefs edged with pink tating. I added a folded lace-edged handkerchief in one corner. This will give my daughters and granddaughters an idea of the lovely embroidery you seldom see any more.

When I first showed the cloths to my quilting friends, we weren't sure if the embroidery was done by hand or by machine. The stitches are so even it appears to be machine done. I decided to do a little research to see if that was possible.

White embroidery thread on white fabric has been around since the 1500s but it became very popular in the late 1700s and even more so in the early 1800s. Hand sewn cottage piecework provided a small income for women in Ireland, Scotland, France, and India. A variety of laces were made for women's accessories such as collars, chemisettes, bonnet frills, caps, and underwear. A most popular item was a baby's robe.

India was a primary source of cottons and embroidered goods during the Georgian and early Regency periods. But with the Industrial Revolution, the United Kingdom took over as a source of cotton textiles. A hand embroidery machine was invented in Switzerland in 1828. By the 1850s, machine embroidery was equal to hand embroidery.

I think we take machine made lace for granted today, because in the past if you wanted a beautiful trim for your clothing, you had to make it yourself or find a talented person to do it for you.

No stories remain from my family regarding what was saved. I can only guess. My Italian grandmother died when I was nine. But I am pretty sure the hand tating on the handkerchiefs was done by my other grandmother. I am planning on showing this piece in our spring quilt show so that others can enjoy the beauty of white embroidery on white, a lovely art which should not be forgotten.

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Life in Skunk Hollow
Christmas in July

by Julie A. Druck

I've been thinking a lot about Christmas lately – more specifically, about Christmas trees. The thoughts have been coming as I wander through the newly-planted Christmas tree field on the hill above our little house. I've taken to walking through the grassy field most evenings at dusk, praying over and blessing the trees – that they would grow strong and well as they work their way to maturity over the next 7 years.

In addition to a growing beef cattle herd, our son, Caleb, and his wife, Abby, are trying this new venture on the fifty-acre farm on which both our families live. Our son is a thorough researcher and meticulous implementer of any new project that he takes on. So, after much planning and paperwork, he purchased 1,100 Canaan and Douglas Fir seedlings. And over a period of three days in late spring, our family helped put those baby trees into the ground. Four generations from Caleb and Abby's families turned out to help at various times over those days. From Caleb's grandfather who helped dig holes to little nieces and nephews who watered the baby seedlings with cups from a bucket, it truly was a family affair.

Caleb told me that he heard 7-year-old Joshua gently talking to one of the trees as he watered its base. Josh's encouragement of "Grow, baby, grow!" is the same desire of all those who helped – from the ones who babysat Caleb and Abby's toddler son (who was more interested in eating dirt than planting trees), to Abby's sister who helped tuck trees into the ground while her newborn son was tucked into his swaddle against her, to those who golf carted bucket after bucket of water to the field, and the ones who dug (seemingly) countless holes. We're all eager to see the growth and harvest of the crop.

And therein lies a tendency I recognize within myself – that of wanting to jump to the end of a process – no matter if I'm making something, reading a book, or waiting for trees to grow. The process can sometimes feel like an interference to the ending. Sometimes I just want to have the gift without the bother of opening it! And yet, I'm slowly realizing (in a lot of areas of life) that the process, the journey, IS the gift.

You know, the length of time we have on this earth is unknown to us. There's no guarantee that I'll actually see those trees grow to fruition or ever have the privilege of having one decorate our home during the holiday season. But if I focus on the beauty of the process instead of jumping ahead, I realize that seeing the end of the trees' maturity isn't the only, or even the primary gift. One gift that's already been realized because of these Christmas tree seedlings has been the blessing of family working together for a common purpose. And that purpose goes far beyond a farming venture. For this year, we planted more than just trees. We planted common memories – memories of the joy and sweetness there is in helping one another. The process of doing a job together is just as valuable and as precious as tall, mature Christmas trees. And so, in a sense, beauty has already begun coming to fruition, and these seven years of waiting will provide more opportunity to discover, delight in, and be thankful for all the gifts that will surface in the process.

Julie Druck is from York, Pennsylvania, and writes from her farm in Skunk Hollow. She'd welcome your comments at thedrucks@netzger.com.



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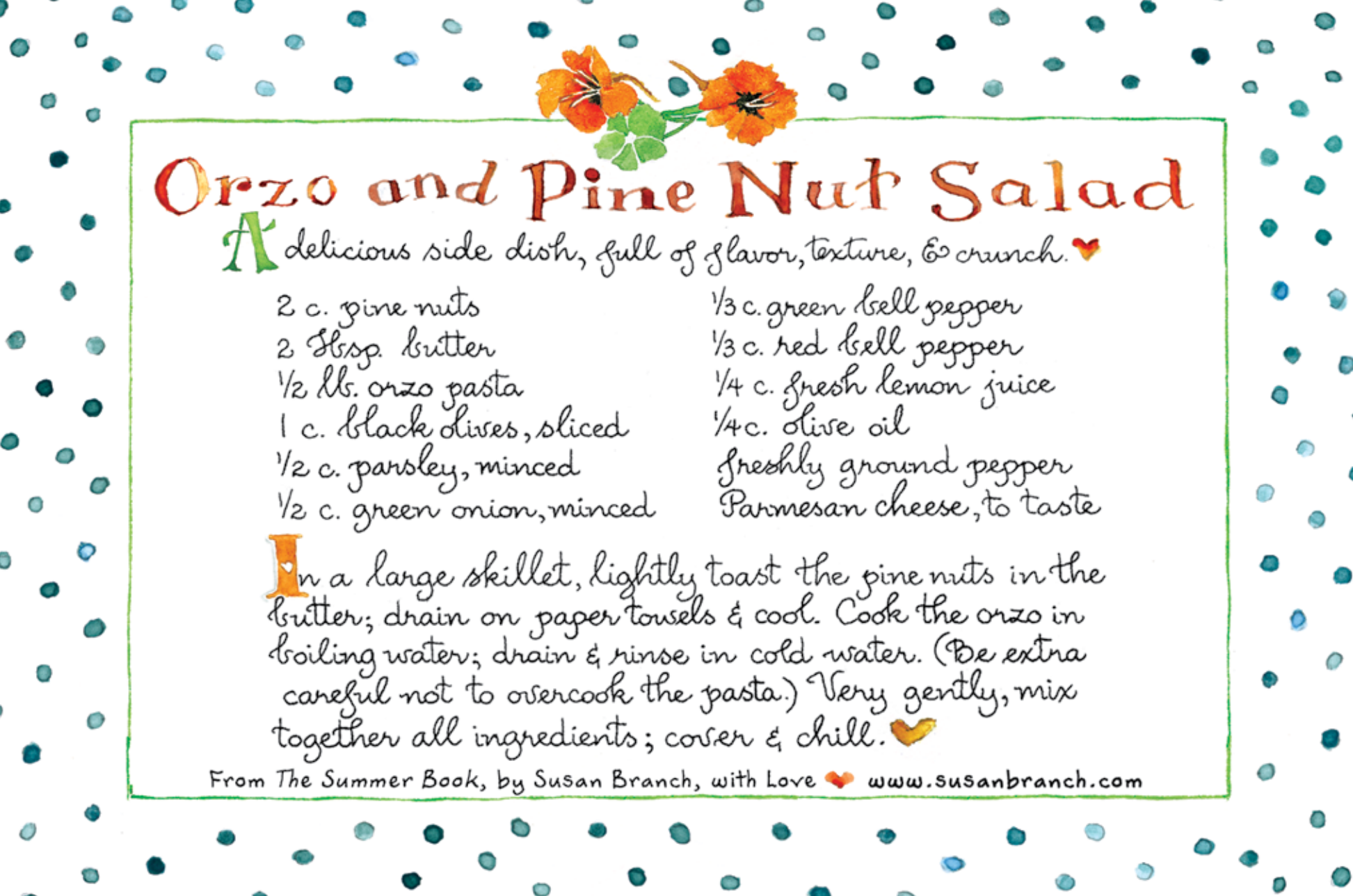
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Orzo and Pine Nut Salad

A delicious side dish, full of flavor, texture, & crunch. ♥

2 c. pine nuts	1/3 c. green bell pepper
2 Tbsp. butter	1/3 c. red bell pepper
1/2 lb. orzo pasta	1/4 c. fresh lemon juice
1 c. black olives, sliced	1/4 c. olive oil
1/2 c. parsley, minced	freshly ground pepper
1/2 c. green onion, minced	Parmesan cheese, to taste

In a large skillet, lightly toast the pine nuts in the butter; drain on paper towels & cool. Cook the orzo in boiling water; drain & rinse in cold water. (Be extra careful not to overcook the pasta.) Very gently, mix together all ingredients; cover & chill. ♥

From *The Summer Book*, by Susan Branch, with Love ♥ www.susanbranch.com

Reader Shares!
Finished Project!



Here are a couple photos of my recently finished slow stitch project. It's composed of various fabrics, buttons, embroidery floss, yarn, and lace that I had in my sewing stash.

Shared by reader B. Fratoni of Leominster, MA



About The Cover Artist
Linda Spivey

Linda has had a passion for art her entire life. She is known for her sweet vintage images and down-home style of painting. Linda loves everything old: movies, music, books, recipes, manners, furniture, crocks and rustic wood signs. She paints what she loves, primarily in watercolor, pen and ink, and sometimes acrylic. Her heartwarming designs can be found on a wide variety of items, such as dishes, flags, rugs, kitchen and bath ensembles, as well as Christmas cards, bags and wraps. She has also written and illustrated a number of books, including a cookbook of her family recipes. She and her husband Dan have two grown sons and four wonderful grandchildren.

She strives never to forget that God has given her this ability to be creative, and tries to live by two favorite Biblical verses. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you." Matthew 6:33. And "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord." Colossians 3:23



To view Linda's art prints, go to www.PennyLanePublishing.com or call Penny Lane Publishing at 800-273-5263 for more information.

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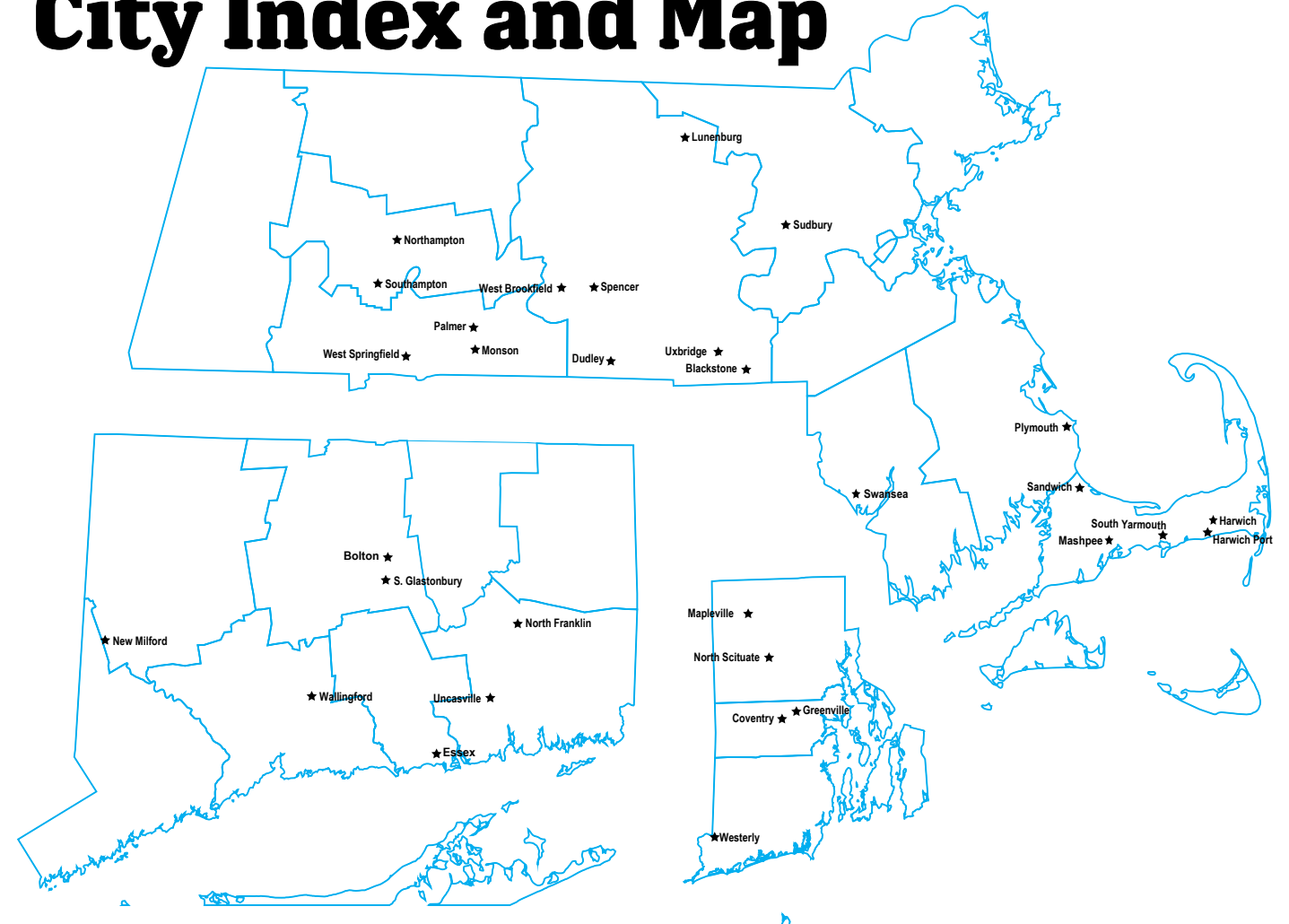
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Those Were The Days!

Look What Just Pop-(corned) Up!

by Jay Mark

Who would have thought that a staid publication like the Wall Street Journal would introduce me to a brand-new collectible. That’s what happened recently, when the Journal took me by surprise as it reported on a collectible that just “popped” up out of nowhere.

Maybe I am just out-of-touch. Until the article, I didn’t know that popcorn was being sold by movie theaters in containers especially branded to the theme of a film on the screen. And at astronomical prices, too.

Before we get into that, it is interesting how popcorn made it into movie theaters. Centuries ago, the peoples of Peru and Mexico learned how to explode their maize kernels. Wherever it was introduced, popped corn was an instant success.

As theaters evolved in the 20th century, theaters began selling snacks that helped add to their bottom line. But they stayed away from popcorn, because of concerns about the noise of patrons rustling bags and crunching on the delight. Plus, they weren’t happy about the necessary extra cleaning. Especially in the luxurious movie palaces.

The effect of the Depression was hard on theaters. Finally, they relented and began allowing popcorn sold by vendors outside the theater. But it didn’t take long for the operators opting to begin making money for themselves. First in paper bags and cardboard with advertising. Later, tins and plastic were added.

By any measure, popcorn has always been the most popular concession in theaters. That demand led to large tubs – cardboard and later, reusable materials.

(Spoiler alert!) \$9.50 is the average profit theaters generally make on a regular \$10 bucket.

Disney, the ultimate in innovation, is generally credited with introducing novelty popcorn buckets in the 1990’s at their theme parks. Theaters were slow to catch on to the Disney idea. But when they did, it was with a bang.

R2D2 was the first movie tie-in container that AMC Entertainment introduced for the 2019 release of Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker. The cost? An astronomical \$50! But it took a little more time to create a demand.

Just six years later, AMC was making \$54 million on the sale of “collectible concession vessels,” as they are officially named.

Most are designed and manufactured by the Zinc Group based in Shakespeare’s hometown. Produced under license from the movie studios, the themed containers are then sold to theaters in edition numbers ranging from 20,000 to 100,000. It can take as long as a year-and-a-half to go from design to manufacturing to reaching theater’s concession stands. Prices range from \$20 to \$50.

Dune 2’s 2024’s Sandworm bucket is the one that went viral. But for reasons you might not think. In part, it was because of its unintended sexually suggestive appearance. Just a year later, the original \$50 bucket has been offered on eBay for \$805!

How long does it take for a fad to explode? Well, in just a short time, there may be as many as a hundred themed containers already in the market. And more are coming. The Fantastic Four: First Steps, the next Marvel movie, is selling a \$79.99 popcorn container.

National chains like AMC, Cinemark and Regal, along with local theaters like Harkins Theaters are driving the demand.

And of course, if eBay is the barometer for collecting, Bucket Banditz has an eBay store devoted strictly to branded popcorn buckets. A recent look at eBay listed more than 1800 containers. Prices range from less than \$20 to north of \$100. And likely to go up over time.

Not surprising with a burgeoning number of branded theater popcorn buckets, a collector’s group would form. You can find the brand-new Theater Popcorn Container & Bucket Collectors on Facebook. Started in August 2024, they now have reached more than 1,000 members.

Before the Internet, it took some time for a fad to take off. Now, with social media, in less than a year themed movie containers have become the hottest collectible today.

And I had to learn about it from the Wall Street Journal. I’ll see you at the theater fighting you for the latest on my popcorn “bucket list.”

Virtually an antique himself, or maybe a collectible, Jay Mark, has more than a half-century’s 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 © 2025

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