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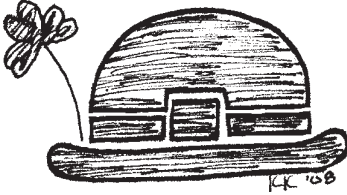
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Irish you a happy St. Patrick's Day

by Colleen Gust



St. Patrick's Day celebrates Saint Patrick (and the arrival of Christianity in Ireland), and the heritage and culture of the Irish. Wearing of green clothing or shamrocks, plus parades and festivals are common ways to commemorate the day.

Saint Patrick's Day is a public holiday in both the Republic of Ireland & Northern Ireland, and in Newfoundland and Labrador (for provincial government employees).

How did the story of St. Patrick start? At sixteen, Patrick was kidnapped by Irish raiders and sent as a slave to Ireland. Patrick spent six years there working as a shepherd, and during this time, he found God. Patrick eventually fled to the coast, where he caught a ship to take him back to Britain; and Patrick then went on to become a priest.

According to tradition, Patrick returned to Ireland to convert the pagan Irish to Orthodox Christianity. He evangelized in the northern half of Ireland and converted thousands. His efforts became the story in which he drove "snakes" (heathen practices) out of Ireland, even though actual snakes were not known to inhabit the region. On Saint Patrick's Day, it is now customary to wear shamrocks and green clothing, as he used the shamrock, a three-leaved plant, to explain the Trinity.

Today, we celebrate St. Patrick with parades and festivals, Irish traditional music, and the wearing of green attire or shamrocks. Which reminds me, what do you call a fake Irish stone? A shamrock.

Christians may also attend church. The Lenten restrictions on eating and drinking alcohol are lifted for the day. Perhaps because of this, drinking alcohol, particularly Irish whiskey and beer, has become associated with the celebrations.

One of the longest-running and largest Saint Patrick's Day (le jour de la Saint-Patrick) in North America occurs each year in Montreal. Did you know that Montreal's city flag includes a shamrock? The parade has been held yearly without interruption since 1824, so it's time to paddy like the Irish do!

The Toronto Maple Leaf's hockey team was known as the Toronto St. Patrick's from 1919 to 1927 and wore green jerseys. In 1999, when the Maple Leafs played on Saint Patrick's Day, they wore green St. Patrick's uniforms.

St. Patrick's Day gives us a reason to celebrate Irish cuisine too. Most of us immediately think of Irish stew when asked about Irish food. Slow-cooked to perfection, the meat becomes tender, and the vegetables absorb the rich broth, creating a comforting and filling dish. It's said that every Irish household has a unique twist on the classic stew, a closely guarded secret passed down through generations.

Potatoes, known as the "Irish apple," have been pivotal in Irish cuisine since their introduction in the 18th century. A favourite is colcannon, a dish made by combining mashed potatoes and cabbage with butter, a simple comfort food.


We must also pay homage to the "full Irish" breakfast, which includes fried eggs, bacon, sausage, black pudding, grilled tomatoes, and toast.

Another food staple that comes up when mentioning Irish cuisine is Irish soda bread. Soda bread, which is quick bread leavened with baking soda, has a crusty exterior and tender interior, which makes it the perfect vehicle for a generous spread of butter or a dollop of jam. And, why do Irish bakers use baking soda? It's faster than Dublin the dough with yeast.

St. Patrick's Day, a global celebration of Irish culture, serves as a testament to his enduring legacy, fostering a sense of unity and pride among the Irish and enthusiasts worldwide. Ireland, with its vibrant traditions and enduring spirit, stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of St. Patrick, embodying resilience, community, and a deep-rooted appreciation for life's simple joys.

-Colleen Gust and her husband, Kirby publish The Country Register of Manitoba & Saskatchewan, Canada. See recipes mentioned in this edition please.





Irish Soda Bread

This is quite good served with the Irish stew. I usually mix up the bread first thing in the morning, and then start chopping up ingredients for the stew while the bread bakes. by Colleen Gust

Ingredients:

3 cups all-purpose flour	1 tsp baking soda
1 Tbsp baking powder	1 egg, lightly beaten
1/2 cup white sugar	2 cups buttermilk
1 tsp salt	1/4 cup butter, melted

Preheat the oven to 325°F. Grease a 9x5-inch loaf pan. Combine flour, baking powder, sugar, salt, and baking soda in a large bowl. Blend egg and buttermilk together; add all at once to the flour mixture and mix just until moistened. Stir in the melted butter. Pour into prepared pan. Bake in the preheated oven until the top is golden brown, about 65 to 70 minutes. A cake tester inserted into the bread should come out clean. Cool on a wire rack. Wrap in foil for several hours, or overnight, for best flavor.



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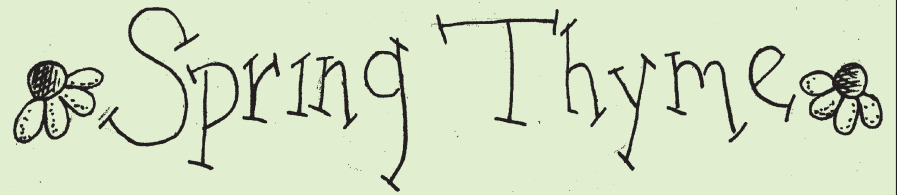
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A South New Jersey Farmer's Stories

General Stores

by Ed Cuneo

The recent opening of a Dollar General spurred a question from a neighbor.

“Just went down to the new store. Reminds me of the old general stores in a way. You have the same opinion?”

I sorta smirked.

“Yes, the diversity of products is similar to a general store. but there was more to a general store than merchandise,” I answered.

A quizzical look appeared on his face that prompted me to explain.

At one time in our area just about every hamlet had a general merchandise store. There were three stores within five miles of where we lived. The merchandise was limited to those things that a family really needed and couldn't get anywhere else. Since most of the families were farm families there was no need to get food or drink since that was produced on most farms. Meats and cheeses came from the butcher. Tools and implements were products of the blacksmith. So, things such as linens, paper goods or products used in baking were available for purchase. In my case it was the odd toy on the shelf or more importantly the display that held the pocket knives that drove my interest in accompanying my father to such stores.

It was a natural place for neighbors to meet and converse. Unlike the romanticized notions on TV or in the media, we did not have folks sitting on a cracker barrel in front of a stove every day chewing the fat in local gossip. If you were looking for that kind of action, it took place at the barber shop for the men and at the church for the women but only on select days of the week. However, a quick hello how are you or nice to see you was more common.

The experiences that I heard about or saw in those general stores was something that could not be duplicated by today's general stores.

At her store, Mrs. Matarese worked on credit as most did. But during the Depression it was not embarrassing for a neighbor to knock on her back door of the store and receive something to keep the family going. Free of charge. It was a neighbor helping a neighbor.

Mrs. Affrunti's store was well known by us kids because she carried the much coveted school book covers from legendary Philadelphia radio station WFIL but also the fact that after hours her son Bruce practiced his archery skills by shooting down the aisles of the store. Bruce later went on to represent the United States in archery competitions.

Then there was the Blatherwick store which had Topps baseball card packs for sale for this young fanatic to buy. The store was located just up the street from the diamond where we played Little League baseball. There wasn't a day after practice that we didn't walk down to the store for a soda and a pack of cards which cost 15 cents with a bad stick of gum inside which I usually threw away.

By now I think I had made my point with my neighbor.

“Just remember friend, it is more contact than content that makes a good general store.”

—© 2024. Ed Cuneo is a “Jersey Farm Boy” born and raised and still residing in Southern New Jersey with his wife, Teresa, daughter Anna and her rescue dog Henry. A retired school teacher, he owns the last 14 acres of his grandparents' farm where he has a market garden which serves as much as a place of quiet reflection as it does for its bountiful food supply.



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All Mid-Atlantic Shop Hop: Learn, Enjoy and Give Back

Shop Hop is a familiar term to many quilters. These unique events serve many purposes, benefiting quilting and sewing businesses, hoppers, and local communities. Shop Hops can vary in size from just a few shops in an area or region all the way up to a statewide event. Shop Hops are events meant to bring new customers to stores, and to expose customers to new stores.

Many of us have our “own” store. A place that’s convenient, familiar, and that carries the stuff we like. But there is a whole world of new and different fabrics, notions, equipment, and personalities you’re missing out if you don’t occasionally branch out. A shop hop provides quilters with a specific plan to do just that. A Shop Hop works to promote and support quilting and sewing stores, so we can touch and feel the fabric in person for a long time to come. Most quilters “get this” and understand how important it is to support these places if we want them available in our communities.

For Shop Hoppers, it is also about making memories. Many quilters hop together with friends, family, or their favorite “quiltie”. They’re not just shopping; they’re making memories as they travel around an area together. They not only get to see and enjoy sewing stores, they also enjoy traveling through large and small towns, discovering parts of their home (or a new place) they’ve never visited before.

The towns and cities that hoppers travel through also offer many treasures along the way. Small town main streets still exist and can evoke many fond memories. Shop hopping can also support these towns as hoppers take a break to enjoy lunch or dinner at a quaint restaurant, or someone along for the ride visits a local antique store, or boutique while hoppers are visiting a sewing store.

Hops are also about other kinds of fun. Most offer some sort of reward for visiting the participating shops like prizes or discounts. And of course, you get to express your creative side when you return home to create something beautiful with the items you picked up along the route.

The All Mid Atlantic Shop Hop is coming to the Mid Atlantic region of the United States for the first annual shop hop during the months of July and August 2024. This unique hop offers the opportunity for hoppers to choose from 85+ participating stores across Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, Virginia, and West Virginia. Start your adventure by picking up the All Mid Atlantic Shop Hop Magazine in stores mid-May 2024. This is a great resource to help you navigate the hop and something you can use all year long as you travel across the stores in the Mid Atlantic any time of the year.

Whether you hop to learn, enjoy, or give back, we hope that you’ll mark a few days on your calendar to explore the Mid Atlantic area and all that its sewing industry has to offer. To learn more, visit www.AllMidAtlanticShopHop.com and join the Facebook Group www.Facebook.com/groups/AllMidAtlanticShopHop

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Sap's Running. Head for the Hills!

by Nancy J. Nash

Every spring (or almost spring) we hop in the car and head for the hills. It's unthinkable not to. Pancakes drenched in maple syrup and slathered with berries or chocolate chips await my relatives and me at a favorite sugar house, where the syrup is produced. The time-honored tradition of tapping sugar maple trees for sap, collecting it in pails, and boiling it into syrup has been updated to include lines of tubing and high-tech equipment, but the lure of hot pancakes in syrup never changes. The warm, thawing days and freezing nights have combined to make the sap flow in our part of Massachusetts, and we are ready to go. Our journey is a family ritual that helps us bid winter farewell and welcome spring.



A year has passed since the sap was running enough to send us forth into the hill country. We're not sure of the route at first. Wasn't there a horse farm along the way? What about the tiny library we just passed? By the way, how could it possibly hold more than five books? The sign by that simple wooden church says it's 275 years old. It has a monopoly on picturesque plainness, an affordable form of beauty that farm towns seemed to specialize in back then. I think we're on the right track.

Finally, there it is – the sugar shack and the tantalizing aroma of sap boiling into syrup wafting our way. Patches of snow and old dirt ruts add to the charm of the small parking lot.

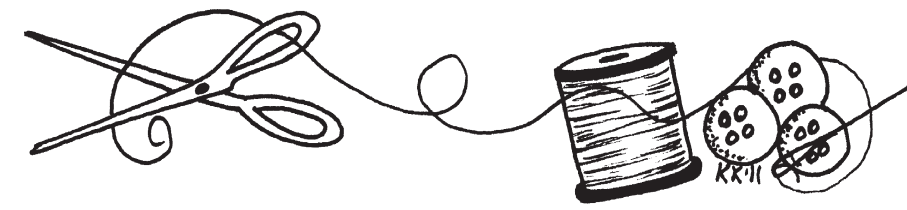
We unexpectedly meet friends who have found their way here. All of us head toward the rustic dining room, which is overlooked by a large evaporator in the throes of producing a fresh supply of syrup. Before letting us enter, a couple teenagers take our food orders and politely tell us to stand in line. We mingle with locals as well as tourists from far-away parts of the world. Then, as my dad used to say, we “chew the fat” (gab) with the owner of the shop, who has been harvesting maple syrup since he was a teenager. Now he is a grandfather.

Speaking of Dad and Grandpa, I remember the time they tapped a row of sugar maples and boiled the sap in a large pan in the back yard. Well, they got to talking, and the sap boiled too long and burned. After lamenting the loss, Dad retrieved a small unspoiled portion for me to taste. As a young child, I was quite satisfied with that treat. The burnt maple sap redeemed itself by its story being told and evoking laughter in the telling. Maybe there was a silver lining to losing that batch of syrup all those years ago. We get to remember how Grandpa and Dad made a sticky situation sweet by enjoying a joke on themselves.

As the cooks in the kitchen continue their labor, we talk in a cluster, speculating about this year's harvest. What type of syrup, we wonder, will be served on our pancakes? Will it be amber or dark? Both are flavorful and will do just fine. Did you know it takes 40 gallons of sap to produce a gallon of maple syrup? Have you heard that some old-time farmers could identify which grove of maples (sugar bush) a supply of syrup came from by taste alone?

Now we settle into our places at the long, wooden table. A container of pure maple syrup is set before us, along with plates of steaming pancakes, some in piles for the heartier eaters. I pour maple syrup over mine, sending streams of liquid gold sliding along and sinking into its depths. I take a bite of pancake. It goes down easy.

-© 2024 Nancy J. Nash is the author of *Mama's Books: An Oregon Trail Story*. and *Little Rooster's Christmas Eve*, each available on amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com. She has a B.A. in English composition from Mount Holyoke College and an M.F.A. in Writing for Children from Simmons College. She can be reached at nancynash341@gmail.com



-Lydia E. Harris is a tea enthusiast, grandmother of five, and the author of three grandparenting books: *GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids* (2023); *In the Kitchen with Grandma: Stirring Up Tasty Memories Together*; and *Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting*. All are available online and wherever books are sold.

A Cup of Tea with Lydia

Spring into TEA

by Lydia E. Harris

I grew up on a dairy farm in Blaine, Washington, where my mother served afternoon coffee and fresh homemade zwieback (yeast double buns) on Sunday afternoons. This German Russian tradition was called faspa. Often friends dropped in unannounced during that time. Mother would quickly set out a spread of sliced cheese, meats, rolls, home-canned fruit, and sweets to serve them.

My parents' hospitality made an impression. I enjoyed these spur-of-the-moment visits with church folks and wanted to follow my mother's example.

Hospitali-TEA

Years later, when a friend gave me *If Teacups Could Talk* by Emilie Barnes, I became inspired to invite family and friends for a cup of tea. Since I was also just beginning to write for publication, I decided to write a column I entitled, “A Cup of Tea with Lydia.” When I told my writing mentor about my idea for a tea column, she said, “That would bore me to tears.”

It hasn't bored me to tears. Now decades later, I still enjoy going out for tea, serving tea to others, and writing this tea column. I hope you enjoy the column too.

A friend asked me, “How do you keep coming up with ideas to write about?”

“I just keep serving tea,” I replied. I don't usually plan a teatime to have a topic for a column. But often after serving guests, I realize, “This could make a good tea column.” The tea party inspires the column, not the reverse.

If teacups could talk, mine would have many stories to tell. Like what happened a month ago when my granddaughters (13 and 20) planned to stop by. “Would you like to come for tea?” I asked. They did.

Impromptu Tea

Without much time to prepare, I planned a menu around the food I had on hand. I made crustless cucumber-and-cream cheese sandwiches, scone blossoms from my cookbook *In the Kitchen with Grandma*, and served sweets from my freezer.

Placemats, floral teacups and saucers, and a three-tier plate stand filled with foods welcomed them to the table. The bottom plate held fresh-baked scones, Norwegian krumkake, and cookies. On the side, homemade whipped cream, jam, and lemon curd accompanied the scones. The middle plate held the sandwiches and edible small trees for a garnish. A slice of summer sausage was the tree base, thin cucumber slices were folded back and forth for the tree, with a cheese star on top—all held together with a toothpick. The smaller top plate contained cupcake liners filled with fresh raspberries and small chunks of melon.

They each had their own small pot of favorite herbal tea—Country Peach Passion—and the three-tier stand rested on the table between them. What a delightful way to spend an impromptu visit! Now my teacups have another story to tell.

Spring Teas

Spring is a lovely season to share tea. How about an Easter brunch, a St. Patrick's Day par-tea, or a Mother's Day teatime? Or perhaps you have a birthday or shower to celebrate. I've included an easy three-ingredient recipe to serve. It will add a colorful sweet and salty crunch to whatever else is on the menu.

I can't wait until my next tea party! Won't you join me?



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Chicken Scratch Embroidery on Gingham Fabric

by Judy Sharer

Chicken scratch embroidery is done on gingham fabric, the checkerboard fabric in bright or pastel solid colors with opposite squares of white giving it a checkerboard look. Chicken scratch embroidery is popular on pillow cases, aprons, pot holders, and quilts dating back to the 1860s. It made a comeback in the 1930s and '40s and is becoming popular again. There are several patterns for all skill levels that combine the relaxing crafts of needle embroidery with sewing and quilting. If you're not familiar with chicken scratch designs, a simple Google search will reveal several patterns or find a book with patterns at your local quilt shop.



The chicken scratch quilt I'm fortunate to own was made by my grandmother on my father's side. It wasn't made specifically for me, but I was the lucky recipient of the quilt after Grandma passed. I know Grandma made the quilt, but I don't know when or for whom. I encourage everyone to place labels on your quilts with the date made, who made the quilt, who it was made for, and if it was for a special occasion like a wedding, anniversary, or birth of a child. It may seem like bragging when you create the label, but it is really preserving history for future generations. The label can be handmade from 100 percent cotton muslin or purchased. Remember to use a permanent marker and sew the label on the back of the quilt.

Growing up, I spent a lot of time at my grandparent's house. In fact, I remember my parents often putting me on the local bus, beginning at the age of six or seven. I sat behind the driver and always reminded him where to let me off. My grandparents lived two towns away, about 25 miles. Grandpa would meet me at the main road. It wasn't a regular bus stop, but I was a regular passenger, so the driver made an exception. Grandma taught me to embroider and was very patient. I still have the first set of pillowcases I made under her supervision. She was a good teacher and always encouraged me to try new things.

If you have a young person in your life, take the time to teach them to enjoy a craft. Help keep your favorite hobby alive for the next generation. Embroidery, sewing, knitting, crocheting, quilting, whatever your favorite, consider passing on your knowledge and skills. Remember your teachers along the way and thank them. I will always cherish my chicken scratch quilt and the memories of time spent with my grandmother learning to embroider.

-© 2024 Judy Sharer is the author of A Plains Life series published by The Wild Rose Press. The four-book series is available online wherever books are sold. If you're a quilter, you'll enjoy Judy's sweet historical romance series which has a thread of quilting throughout the family saga series. Visit Judy's website for more details. judysbarer.com.

Beachplum Quilters of Jersey Shore Announce 2024 Quilt Show

The Beachplum Quilters of the Jersey Shore, based in Toms River, NJ, have announced their biennial quilt show and competition will be held April 13-14, 2024, at the Toms River Elks Lodge #1875. The lodge is located at 600 Washington Street, Toms River, and the doors will be open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is \$10.00 and parking is free. The lodge is handicap accessible.

The theme of this year's show is Quilts in Wonderland, and this biennial event will feature up to 100 judged quilts. Two beautiful quilts made by members of the guild will be raffled on the last day of the show. The first quilt, Countryside Star, is queen sized and measures 96 x 112 inches. The second quilt, Shirley's Hexies, measures 54 x 65 inches, making it the size of a large throw. One-dollar raffle tickets will be sold throughout the show.

In addition to the large display of amazing quilts, there will be project demonstrations, door prizes, quilt appraisals and several gift baskets raffles. Vendors of quilting supplies and a variety of hand-crafted items will be present on both days. As always, there will be a Country Store selling quilting books, patterns, fabric and notions at discount prices.

For more information, please visit the Beachplum Quilters website at www.BeachplumQuilters.org, send an email to BeachplumQuilters@gmail.com, or visit the Facebook page at Beachplum Quilters.



From Lydia's Recipe File: Spring Pretzel Flowers

Colorful and easy to make.

Ingredients:

- Pretzels (square-shaped, called snaps)
- White vanilla candy melts
- Pastel M&Ms



Directions:

- Place one candy melt on each pretzel.
- Heat a few at a time in the microwave to soften, not melt (time varies, but check every 15 seconds).
- Remove from the microwave. Place an M&M in the center of each candy with the M side down.
- Add 5 or 6 candies of another color around the center as petals of a flower.
- Chill to harden the candy melt.

Make as many as you need, at least two per person.

Variation: Use round crackers or cookies (e. g. shortbread) as the base. Spread with ready-made vanilla icing. Add M&Ms.

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Wit and Wisdom

by Cheryl Potts

Is Your New Year's Resolution Not Working?

If you have not been able to keep your New Year's Resolution, maybe this book is for you.

This year, I've decided to get serious about making a New Year's resolution. However, what can I commit to that is not too painful, wasteful or dangerous? Hmm...

Perhaps losing a few pounds, or forty, would be a worthy endeavor. On the bright side, it would give me more energy, grow more memory cells, looser clothing and have enough breath to get to the mailbox and back.

This may take some dedicated research to find the best possible meal plan for a big girl like me. After scrolling down through a few sites, I found a book titled: Eat to Lose Weight. That sounded like a book I could relate to, so I ordered it. That inspired me so much my stomach started growling. I finished up a half a bag of potato chips.

In the midst of my computer research, my neighbor came over for a visit and brought a bag of cream cheese cookies. So, we had a cup of tea and I shared the bag of cookies with her.

My book arrived the next day. So, I relaxed in my recliner, ready to read and get this resolution under way. Chapter one, started out very discouraging. It listed all the diseases and consequences of eating the wrong foods. The most disturbing of all, was that I would have to give up "dairy products." There goes my daily afternoon snacks of cheese and crackers.

Chapter two, advised me to eliminate eating any meat products unless it was a three-ounce piece of salmon, squid, scrod or octopus. I started having palpitations.

Chapter three, stated that enjoying sugar of any kind was totally against the "Dieter's Bill of Rights."

At the end of this chapter I just knew that starvation was my only option. This was becoming painful. I immediately had to have one square from a chocolate Hershey bar.

Chapter four, described the layout of your dinner plate. It should consist of 2/3 vegetables and 1/3 a chicken nugget. Green vegetables will produce enough protein to fulfill your minimum daily requirement. So seriously consider eating peas, beans and broccoli. At this point, I finished eating the rest of my Hershey bar.

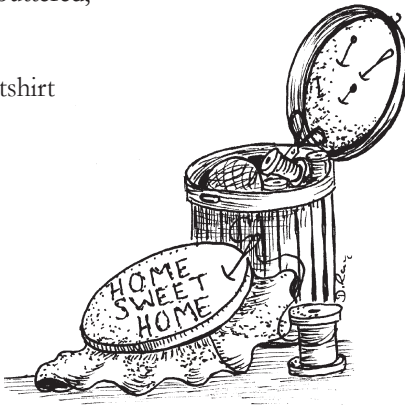
Somehow, my dietary wants don't match up to reality. I don't believe reading the next ten chapters in my book will slim this body down.

Embroidery

by Sheila Tinkham

If I had my cup of tea and a scone softly buttered,
I could imagine myself an English lady
Embroidering
I draw the design on a plain lavender sweatshirt
Or pink t-shirt
Then carefully stitch again and and again
Following the lines
A road map to a different world
A slow and steady cadence to my fingers
In and out
Breathe
Slow but soothing
And my sweet husband Richard
Places jigsaw puzzles one piece at a time
The sweet soft sounds of embroidery
And the snap of puzzle pieces
Life could not be sweeter
Or more complete.

--Sheila Tinkham lives in Lincoln, NE. She started quilting when she sprained her ankle and fell in love with the process of sewing and the focused peacefulness of making and designing quilts. Writing is her passion and she has self-published three poetry books. You can follow her on Twitter at SheilaTinkham.



On a serious note, perhaps my new resolution should be exercising at the gym at least twice a week. I would like to improve my muscle tone and flexibility. If I can bend over and touch my toes, I'll celebrate a victory! However, it's too late to look like a 20-year-old in a 70-year-old body!

Food for thought: "America has more to eat than any country in the world and more diets to keep us from eating it." and "You never realize what a poor loser you are until you try dieting."

-Cheryl Potts lives in the snow belt region of New York State.

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My First Quilt

by Sheila Tinkham

I sewed
And sewed
Stitch by stitch
Each stitch by hand
The first third all wrong
No rhyme nor reason
Then the second third carefully planned
After listening to Richard, my husband
And seeing the first quilts of Karen, my dear friend
So measured and perpendicular fine
The last third I just had fun
Weaving a kaleidoscope of color and form
Like my life messy, but strong in faith and love of family
I see the result
And like my life
I am well pleased
It is like this quilt, well sewn.



--Sheila Tinkham lives in Lincoln, NE. She started quilting when she sprained her ankle and fell in love with the process of sewing and the focused peacefulness of making and designing quilts. Writing is her passion and she has self-published three poetry books. You can follow her on Twitter at SheilaTinkham.



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NEWARK – DE

KISSed Quilts

by Marlene Oddie

Spinning Frames

Do you love cats? Cat Quilts? Cat Fabric? How about drinking wine?

Northcott has a new collection – Whiskers and Wine shipping to stores now! This includes a border print (used in the quilt) and 28 unique motifs that are cleverly framed in this quilt.

Using a half rectangle triangle shape creates a spinning design around each printed image.

Consider using the AnglePlay® template system for the easiest construction of these half rectangle triangles.

This pattern is designed to work for 5 1/2” cut squares in each frame. If you’ve got another size to use, the rectangle on each side can be adjusted to fit the shape!

The border stripe is fussy cut and gets you all the borders as shown in one piece for each side. The pattern includes mitering details.

You can find this pattern on my website or ask at a local quilt shop near you. Be sure to tag us if you make this up in these fabrics or something else. Happy Stitching!

-Marlene Oddie (marlene@kissedquilts.com) is an engineer by education, project manager by profession and now a quilter by passion in Grand Coulee, WA at her quilt shop, KISSed Quilts. She quilts for hire on a Gammill Optimum Plus, but especially enjoys designing quilts and assisting in the creation of a meaningful treasure for the recipient. Fabric, patterns, kits and templates are available at <http://www.kissedquilts.com>. Follow Marlene's adventures via <http://www.facebook.com/kissedquilts> and <https://www.instagram.com/marlene.kissedquilts>



Our Lives are Like Quilts – Bits and Pieces,
Joy and Sorrow, Stitched with Love

Wear What You Love

by Janet M Bair

Spring is near and with it comes new fashions and new colors that the fashion industry wants to promote. There are usually about three colors to choose from: celery, fuchsia, gunmetal, frost, indigo, plum, or emerald, all with enticing names to compel you to buy. However, if you don't happen to like any of those colors, you may be out of luck for a season.

One spring my seven-year-old wanted a yellow Easter dress. We looked in every store in our area but not a single yellow dress was in sight. (This was before online shopping). Plenty of pinks and turquoise but she had her heart set on yellow.

Even though I was busy working and didn't know how I would squeeze in the time to sew, in desperation, we went to the fabric store. She picked out a cute yellow cotton print and a pattern she liked. I had done a lot of sewing in high school and college but had let that part of my life slide after our two girls were born. I realized that I liked sewing at night after they were in bed.

After I made the yellow dress, I decided I ought to make my self an Easter dress too. My three-year-old said she wanted a dress “just like Mommy’s.” I was now committed to making two more dresses (with a deadline). I finished the peach print dresses in time and felt a great sense of accomplishment that I hadn't felt in a long time. That propelled me back into sewing for the rest of my life.

Life Lesson Learned: When you can't find what you want in the stores, you can always make it. You can choose the colors that look best on you and have fun experimenting with a new pattern or style or print. You can wear what you love!

Sometimes it is the little things in life that move us into the life paths we are meant to take. This spring season as you cut out new patterns or plan gardens, be aware of the One who declared that He was the ultimate path to follow. “Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me.” John 14:6

- © Janet M. Bair of Ansonia, CT. You may contact her at librarybair@hotmail.com



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WILMINGTON – DE

Picnic in the Park

by Janet Young

After a long, cold winter the season we were eagerly anticipating has finally arrived... SPRING! Fling open your windows, and let the warm spring breezes flow throughout your house. With the dawning of a new season, the awakening of the earth, and the sun-filled days of Spring, one of the best ways to celebrate would be to have a picnic.

A picnic can be as basic as your typical backyard picnic. But if you want to tweak it up a bit why not have a picnic with a theme. Perhaps, by first deciding the location it will help you determine what theme you want to execute. For example, the beach for a beach picnic theme, or a ranch or farm with a barn for a western theme. The possibilities are endless, but you get the idea.

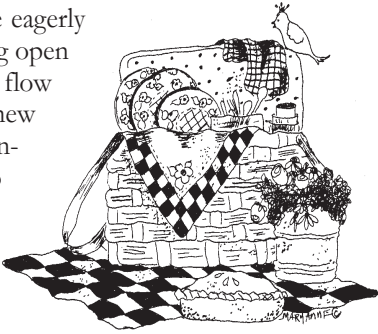
If you choose to go to a park, try to pick a spot that offers a nice scenic view. Some examples of themes at a park might be to choose colors of the rainbow and celebrate Earth Day. Or, do a Vintage Picnic which would be a perfect theme to have a tea party picnic theme. If you don't want to risk breaking your fine china, there are paper plates and cups that are fashioned to look like china plates. For a simpler menu why not try a cheese and charcuterie board.

If you want a picnic on the grass, you might want to get a tarp from the hardware store, if you do not have one. The tarp should be put on the ground first, followed by a blanket or blankets and even pillows if you want to go all out for comfort. (The reason for using the tarp is to keep any dampness from getting on your blanket.)

Next plan the menu. In the planning process, bear in mind the distance from your car to the picnic spot. If you have access to a child's wagon that would greatly facilitate and eliminate the numerous trips back and forth to the car and picnic spot. You can keep the menu as simple or as elaborate as you wish. If having a theme, you could coordinate the menu to reflect your theme. For instance, the rainbow theme could consist of colorful foods to reflect the colors of the rainbow.

Whatever you choose from location, to theme, to the menu, keep in mind what you are wanting to create. Is it a celebratory occasion, a reflective moment, or a certain atmosphere you want to portray? Whatever the reason, sit back and enjoy the dawning of Spring when all the earth comes alive again and we rejoice in this invigorating time of the year!

Happy Spring!



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- © 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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How Quilting Can Promote Relaxation and Mindfulness

by Steve Baker

We all know what quilting is, but let's explore how quilting can promote relaxation and mindfulness and share tips for incorporating these practices into your quilting routine.

The Benefits of Mindfulness in Quilting

In today's circles where mental and physical health are so important, we hear a great deal about mindfulness. It is the conscious practice of being thoroughly present and engaged in the current moment. It involves non-judgmental awareness of your thoughts, feelings and physical sensations. When you practice mindfulness, you're able to let go of distractions and focus on the task at hand. This can lead to a range of benefits, including reduced stress and anxiety, improved emotional regulation and increased coping skills.

The Comfort of Repetition

One of the key ways that quilting promotes mindfulness is through the repetition of simple, familiar motions. When you quilt, you may find yourself repeating the same stitch pattern or motion over and over again. At first, this may seem tedious or monotonous, but over time, it becomes a soothing, comforting process. Repetition is comforting because it creates a predictable rhythm that you can rely on. It can be particularly helpful when you're feeling stressed or anxious, as it provides a sense of stability and routine.

Practical Tips for Practicing Mindfulness While Quilting

If you're looking to incorporate more mindfulness into your quilting practice, here are a few practical tips to keep in mind.

1. **Create a Comfortable Space:** The environment you quilt in can have a big impact on how relaxed and present you feel. Create a comfortable, inviting space that feels safe and soothing to you. You may want to add soft lighting, calming music, or other elements that help you to feel relaxed and focused.

2. **Choose Simple Projects:** When you're first starting out with mindful quilting, it can be helpful to choose simple, repetitive projects that allow you to settle into a meditative rhythm. A straight-forward patchwork quilt or simple block pattern can be a great starting point.

3. Breathe: Breathing exercises can be a helpful way to relax and center yourself before and during your quilting practice. Start with a few deep, slow breaths before you begin to center your thoughts and continue to focus on your breath throughout the process. This takes practice so be forgiving and understanding with yourself when you lose focus.

4. **Take Breaks:** While quilting can be a soothing and meditative practice, it's also important to take breaks when you need them. If you're feeling tired or overwhelmed, step away from your project for a few minutes and do something else. Take a walk, read a book, or simply sit quietly and breathe. Returning to your quilting project with a fresh mind can help you to feel more engaged and energized.

Quilting is a wonderful way to promote mindfulness and relaxation but like all new skills, it takes practice. Give yourself grace during the process. It doesn't matter if you're a long-time quilter or a beginner, adding mindfulness to your quilting practice can help you to achieve greater emotional balance and wellbeing.

-Steve Baker is the Director of Marketing at SenEndipitous located at 1093A Albright Road in Rock Hill, South Carolina. For more information visit the website www.SenEndipitous.com



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When a House Becomes a Home

by Kerri Habben Bosman

A house becomes a home when it gets filled with memories. Add in a special blanket, and it gets even better.

On the back of his recliner my husband, Wayne, has a favorite crocheted blanket. It is a double-bed sized granny square. My grandmother made it for my parents when they bought a new sofa in 1989. Later on, we couldn't possibly keep everything she'd made as she crocheted nearly every day for 91 years. Many items were donated to hospitals or nursing homes over the years. But when Wayne and I sold my childhood home, this blanket had to stay with us. It is big, cozy, and wrapping up in it feels like an endless hug.

We frequently have family gatherings at our beach house, and our 3-bedroom home sleeps around 9 of us and entertains up to 18. We originally bought it as a second home especially for this purpose as my stepdaughter, Kira, and her family live four miles away. Both our homes get filled up with all of us, including Wayne's five grown children, their spouses, and seven grandchildren. Two Aprils ago my now 103 mother-in-law and family visited from Wisconsin, and the house still carries a special essence from that time together.

We are overjoyed when the house breathes with a precious cacophony of laughter and conversations. I once wanted to own a Bed and Breakfast as I loved feeding people and fussing about the house. Dreams evolve, and now I ensure beds are ready and serve made-to-order omelets to family. Along the way we are tucking away memories that warm us after everyone goes home. Much like my grandmother's blanket, which is now Wayne's. The blanket has served well for 35 years.

We live three blocks from Bogue Sound on the Intracoastal Waterway. When we take walks there together, often someone will turn the blanket into a cloak. Whoever is sleeping in the TV room covers up with it at night. My stepdaughter, Sanja, cocoons in blankets. I made one especially for her, but the older one remains her favorite. Every grandchild has used it, whether while playing, reading, or sleeping. Particularly the youngest, six-year-old Quinn, who is on top of the world when he is sitting in his Grampa's recliner and also under his blanket. Bring Quinn mac and cheese on Grampa's tray, and he is king of the castle.

I keep a framed photograph of my grandmother on my roll top desk. It was taken at her 90th birthday party in 1997. In it she leans forward in her favorite chair, an enduring joy emanating from her eyes. It is a happiness mingled with a spark of mischief, a timeless vibrancy, and also an undercurrent of resiliency. A combination of these traits served her well through every era of her long life.



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My grandmother passed away in 2006, but when she gazes at me from the recesses of my desk, it seems as if she is right beside me. Sometimes I just smile back at her. Other times I talk to her for a moment. Not aloud, but in my head. I tell her about Wayne, who she never met. I share with her about this beautiful family that I treasure. I tell her how I especially feel her with me when I am with the grandchildren.

I thank her for everything, especially for showing me how to love. In these reflective moments I think of Wayne's blanket and how much comfort it brings to him and our family. And to me.

The last time Sanja was here she was teasing Quinn that she had the blanket. "I've got the blanket Kerri made," she said.

"Even better," I answered. "My grandmother made it."

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