

Family Living Focus

By
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"Why do we always have turkey on Thanksgiving?"

"Well . . . because it's tradition."

"What's a tradition?"

"Something we've been doing so long we can't even remember why!"

So goes the cartoon script of Hi and Lois as their family sits down to their Thanksgiving feast.

In some respects, traditions may indeed be something the family has been doing so long no one even remembers why. However, traditions are an essential ingredient for any strong family. Traditions give all family members, especially children, a sense of belonging, fitting into their family. Research has shown when families don't share traditions, the children aren't as likely to have a sense of "roots."

Of course, there are some traditions that change over time, so it's important for a family to be flexible. Think of Christmas and the tradition of Santa Claus. If the children have believed in the mythical character as youngsters, once they figure out that indeed it is myth, they may want to help pass along that magic to a younger sibling. Long after my brothers and I didn't believe in Santa, my

mother, just for fun, would still fill our stockings with goodies from the jolly fat man in a red suit simply because it was tradition.

Sometimes traditions have to be compromised. A friend of mine shared that in her family birthdays were always a cause for a big celebration. The honoree got to choose their favorite meal with presents and tons of attention! However, in her husband's family, birthdays were no big deal. If cards were exchanged that was the extent of the festivities! To say the least, the first couple of years of their marriage both parties were frustrated with birthdays. After some "lively discussion" they compromised so that both of them could be happy. Hence, they started new traditions for their family.

Traditions have become a very important aspect in our family. My husband and I are both from the upper midwest so we are far from extended family. For us it has been imperative to start some of our own traditions with our children since we are not typically able to be part of the extended family traditions.

To help them feel connected to their grandparents and cousins, we have filled many photo albums in sharing pictures across the miles.

The albums are also easily accessible for the children to browse through and recall memories shared or to hear stories about their family.

Stories are another excellent means to pass along traditions. We often share tales of our days of growing up and the things we did with our parents and brothers. (Of course, since we're telling the tale, the account may be a bit one-sided and there's no one around to correct it!) Stories can be shared orally as well as being written in a memory book or put on tape, either audio or video.

Family reunions also provide a perfect opportunity to share family traditions and stories. I remember several years ago we were making the trek back to North Dakota for a family reunion and a 50th anniversary in my family. Along the way we had been talking about the proverbial "family tree." Somewhere crossing Iowa, my son then six looked at me and said "Mom, where is our family tree planted?"

After a bit of a chuckle we explained to him what a family tree is. I'm sure in his mind there was a great oak planted somewhere with the family name engraved on it!

As I said earlier, we have started many traditions that are special and maybe even unique to our family. For instance, every Saturday night we have a "pizza picnic." We put a plastic tablecloth on the floor and eat pizza picnic fashion. The children know on Saturdays that they "set the floor!" for dinner. The tradition can be traced to 1985 when we were living in a small, student housing apartment in St. Paul, Minnesota. It was the dead of winter and we

were trying to relieve cabin fever and think warm! (Remember this was a Minnesota winter).

We decided to have a picnic but to give it a twist from which the pizza picnic was born. We've been doing it ever since, no matter how hot or cold it is outside, after all it's tradition! We have even invited friends to join us. However, quite honestly I don't think they appreciate the significance of the event quite as much as we do.

Another very special tradition is that on birthdays, Mother's Day, and Father's Day, the V.I.P. of the day gets breakfast in bed. Of course, a couple of days ahead of time the menu is planned by the individual with the rest of the family obliged to deliver. It didn't take long for our eldest to figure out that the children only got breakfast in bed once a year and mom and dad got it twice. So at the age of 3½ he decided we needed Brother's Day and Sister's

Day. So a new tradition was born. The July calendar in our home has two extra holidays!

There are many other traditions that we celebrate throughout the entire year as well as special traditions for the holidays. As Charlie Brown once said to Linus, "All families have traditions, some families always go to the opera, some families always go to the mountains, our family always says 'home again Finnegan'."

Indeed all families do have traditions. No matter how significant or insignificant you may think your family traditions are they are all important to who your family is. Maybe on one of those hot steamy summer nights when it's too hot to do much else, or when you're confined to the car and trying to break the boredom you could talk about what traditions are special to each of you and who knows, maybe you'll start some new ones!

Preserving Fruits

(Continued from Page B6)

CROCK DILL PICKLES

- 35 to 40 pickles
- 2 tablespoons mixed spices
- ¾ pound dill

Brine:

- 2 cups coarse (kosher) salt
- 2 gallons water
- 2 cups apple cider vinegar

Wash pickles. Boil salt, water, and vinegar for 2 minutes. Cool to room temperature. Put grape leaves in bottom of crock then a layer of pickles, a little mixed spices and dill. Then a layer of grape leaves again and keep doing in layers all the way to the top of

crock. Cover with grape leaves and pour brine over pickles and be sure they are all covered up. Put a plate on top with a heavy stone on it. Cover with a towel and tie it on with a string. They will be ready in 4 to 6 weeks. Keep checking for a scum on top of the brine and take it off when it forms or the pickles will spoil. Keep crock in a place where it will be at room temperature.

After four to six weeks, you may take pickles out and use as needed.

I keep my crock in the kitchen. These are very good.

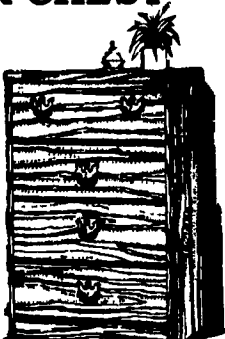
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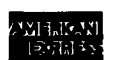
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