



LIVING SEASONALLY

Mackenzie Krauter | *How watching “Little House on the Prairie” changed my family’s eating habits*

As a child, my mom would bring me to my great-grandparent's house every Thursday. I called them Nanny and Boppy. Depending on the season, our pastimes varied. In the summer we rode Boppy's moped around the neighborhood. Upon our return, we would pick raspberries from the bushes that Boppy had planted in the backyard. Filling tiny green plastic baskets, we brought them inside the house to show Nanny. She always responded with enthusiasm at the harvest we had gathered. In the winter, Nanny would prepare cozy Campbell's minestrone for lunch. I can still hear the whirl of the automatic can opener mounted to the cabinet. I loved the way the small shell-shaped noodles would cup around the garbanzo beans like a little nest. One time in the fall, Nanny gave me a needle and thread and sent me outside to collect leaves. I wove a garland of color. In the spring, Boppy and I would take walks. We walked to the rock pile in the neighborhood, filling our pockets with treasures. Occasionally, we would trek even farther to the nursery. Rows of spring blooms lined the greenhouses. We would single out one plant for my mom, and sometimes one for Nanny, usually a pink or orange begonia.

Through the seasons, one activity that never changed was watching television together. Boppy would record my favorite shows on VHS tapes and we would binge them for hours in the living room. Nanny would etch the name of the show on the label of the VHS with a blue pen. One show in particular that I remember watching with them was Little House on the Prairie. Now Nanny and Boppy have passed on. I tell my children about them. A few months ago we began watching “Little House on the Prairie” together as a family in the evenings. I watched as my children were captivated by the characters of Laura, Mary, and baby Carrie. It was surreal to see my kids fall in love with the story of the Ingalls quest out west. I did not expect that I would be watching the show in a different light. In this season of my life, I relate to the mother figure. As I studied Ma, I observed her courage in the face of the unknown. Her grit and determination. I saw her roll up her sleeves and help Pa lift logs to build their little house. I considered all the daily tasks she repeated to make their house a home. Even down to sweeping the dirt floor of their tiny cabin. Caroline Ingalls inspired me for multiple reasons, but primarily her moral character. She is collected and kind in her interactions with her children and her neighbors. She puts the needs of others before her own. She courageously responds when someone is in need. She never once complains, though they go through many trials as a family. She is resourceful and creative with what is available to her.

When my family first began watching the show, I was just coming out of my postpartum weeks with our son. I wanted to get into shape and I was trying to get to the gym, but it was a struggle. While I enjoyed the alone time and loved working out, I felt conflicted. We homeschool our children, we have property and animals to tend to, as well as creative projects. Fitness felt like this extra box that I needed to squeeze in somehow to be a healthy person. Watching Little House on the Prairie gave me a different perspective. I contemplated, is fitness a modern concept? The contemporary world feels so compartmentalized. A box to check for eating healthy. A box to check for working out. A box to check for spending time with the children. Ma didn't seem to be rushing around stressed out, trying to keep it all together to be a good mom. There was nothing like the gym in the pioneer days, probably because they did not have the luxury of living sedentary lifestyles. Every action was interconnected and purposeful. Ma chats with the girls as they all remove the beans from the pods. Mary and Laura sit at the table and do their homework as Ma prepares a loaf of bread. As I observed how Ma tended to all her responsibilities, I saw that activity and regular movement were interwoven throughout her life. The responsibilities necessary for stewardship and survival spurred her on to daily action. She often brought her family along. Relationship building was a byproduct of her action. This seemed like a better way to live. That night, after a spin class I drove home mulling over my priorities. When I pulled into the driveway I had made my decision. I took out my phone and I quit the gym.

When it came to meals, the Ingalls didn't have much variety of ingredients. They didn't take vitamins or supplements. In the winter they didn't even have many vegetables to choose from. Their activities and eating habits were interconnected with the seasons. Two things that I observed as a staple on their table were a source of carbohydrates and a source of protein. Ma is often seen over the fire preparing some sort of baked good or grain. Pa goes out hunting and brings home deer and rabbits. The rest depended on the season. In the winter, preserved foods and some root vegetables were all the available produce. This got me questioning what it means to be healthy. Do our bodies require the variety that is accessible at the supermarket? Or is limited availability based on location and season, closer to God's design? The modern world complicates things. Maybe it doesn't have to be so complicated to be healthy.

Inspired by the Ingalls, this winter I pared back and decided to purchase the basics. Dry goods, meats, nuts and seeds, and root vegetables. It felt more natural to eat this way. In

the dead of winter, I didn't want to make a salad. I wanted to turn on the stove and simmer a pot all day. Instead, of fresh veggies, I prepared cozy soups, stews, curries, and meats. Sourdough bread was on my winter table repeatedly. I started doing more research about seasoning meats in advance. Only recently have I made some of the best steaks we have ever had, from only two ingredients, salt and meat. Around this time I also took a break from social media. Instead of listening to all the current voices, I was inspired by Ma Ingalls and the simplicity of the era that she represents. My eyes were open to the beauty in my daily life and my part of the world. Whenever I leave my neighborhood, the mountain peaks loom in the distance. Sometimes wild turkeys or a family of deer cross the road in front of me. My dishes became simple and grounded in time and place. Instead of drawing inspiration from a screen in my hand, my meal plans were influenced by the weather, the animals, and the blue mountains outside my window.

Another lesson I learned from the Ingalls was resourcefulness. They didn't have the luxury of letting food go to waste. Buying the basics makes for a smaller inventory. Scraps go

to the chickens and other animals and then there is very little waste. Embracing seasonal eating creates anticipation for the next season. Now that spring is here we are enjoying some fresh produce. Eggs are more plentiful this time of year. We jaunt down to the coop and return with perfect ovals of natural hues, beige, sage, copper, and blue.

This is our first year planting a garden at our Montana property. As I clear away the brush to make space for plants, I dream of the plates of summer. In each season there is a work of preparation for the next. For the Ingalls, they didn't have to be intentional about living with the seasons. There was no other option. To live seasonally in the modern world feels countercultural. Watching Little House on the Prairie has helped me get back to the natural rhythms of life. This wisdom from the past doesn't have to stay in the past. Seasonal living is not just for the pioneers. As my family works towards finding balance, we have enjoyed the structure and the adventure of learning to live seasonally.

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Asparagus Bacon Cheddar Quiche

Ingredients:

4 slices Daily's Applewood Smoked Bacon
6 asparagus spears
¾ cup sharp white cheddar
4 eggs
½ cup heavy cream
Pinch of salt
Pinch of black pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees Fahrenheit and start a tea kettle to bring water to a boil.
2. Slice the bacon into ½ inch bits and sauté in a pan over medium heat for about 7 minutes or until the bacon is crispy.
3. Remove the bacon from the pan. Cut the asparagus into ½ inch pieces. Add the asparagus to the pan with the bacon grease and sauté for about 4 minutes.
4. Remove the asparagus from the pan and disperse the asparagus and the bacon bits evenly between three ramekins.
5. Set the ramekins in a 9x11 cake pan.
6. Grate the cheddar cheese.
7. Whisk the eggs, cream, cheese, salt, and pepper together in a bowl.
8. Pour the egg mixture over the asparagus and bacon in the ramekins, leaving some space on the top. Place lids on each ramekin.
9. Place the cake pan with the ramekins in the oven.
10. Pour boiling water into the cake pan until the depth of the water is halfway up the ramekins.
11. Bake at 325 degrees with the lids on for 20 minutes.
12. Remove the lids, raise the temperature to 350 degrees, and bake for another 20 minutes or until the eggs are cooked through.

Mackenzie's French Toast

Ingredients:

4 slices of sourdough sandwich bread
3 eggs
¼ cup heavy cream
1 tsp vanilla extract
Bacon grease or Kerrygold grass-fed butter
Maple syrup

1. Heat a pan to medium heat with some bacon grease or butter.
2. In a shallow bowl, whisk together the eggs, heavy cream, and vanilla.
3. Soak each piece of bread in the egg mixture for 5 seconds per side.
4. Transfer the soaked bread slices to the pan. Cook for 4 minutes per side, or until they are crisp and golden brown.
5. Serve with Kerrygold butter and maple syrup



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