

Savoring the Flavors of Fall

By Rebecca Holder

The first eight years of my life were spent in eastern Tennessee. Then I was snatched from the verdant bosom of Appalachia and transported to the sandspur and rattlesnake-sprinkled flatlands of Florida. That trauma accounts for my intense love and appreciation for the changing of seasons. There's winter—aloof, regal, with fits of nasty temper followed by silent gray brooding. Happy spring that flits, flutters, and flashes youth and color. And sultry summer, bathed in heat, salty, and indulgent.

But my favorite season is this time of two names—she starts out as fall, but transcends to sweet autumn. Autumn is languid, slow, and deliberate. Everything about it deepens, intensifies, builds; just like her two-name identity. It's akin to being introduced to a "Bet" or "Betsy" and once you spend time with her, it seems much more fitting to speak her full name of "Elisabeth." Autumn, for me, is about savoring. Savoring the ever shorter days and lingering warmth. Savoring the mingled palette of colors in the trees, in the sky, and in the fields. Savoring the aroma of burning leaves and mothball-scented sweaters emerging from closeted recesses. And savoring the flavors of autumn that somehow, like their season, are richer and deeper and more robust.

For a child, October and the flavors of fall center around the sugar and chocolate-fest of Halloween. But Halloween is when I learned what it was to savor something. The tiny, tiny town where I first went trick-or-treating with my father had eight to ten houses along the train track. I've long since forgotten who the people were, which house they lived in, and even what I brought home in my bag. What I will never forget is that at over half the houses, my father and I were invited in and sat down at the kitchen table for still-warm homemade treats. At one house, there were popcorn balls so sticky, crunchy, and buttery good they clung to my fingers and face as I ate like misshapen octopi. Another house offered up "real" hot chocolate made with fresh whole milk, sugar, cocoa powder, and patience topped off with a gas burner-roasted marshmallow. Yet another placed plates of warm gingerbread dripping with tart lemon sauce in front of us. Fresh baked cookies, pumpkin tarts, and fried apple pies wrapped in wax paper made an appearance.

We spent hours making the rounds that Halloween among those few houses, but it wasn't the length of time we spent that made it memorable; it was the speed of time. Without realizing it, I was savoring the experience. And savoring slows time down; it sets you into slow motion so that the details and nuances can be discovered, processed, and absorbed. The outside air was brisker, the kitchens warmer and cozier, the scent of cinnamon and pumpkin more exotic, and the kindness and fellowship of neighbors cheerier. Autumn is for savoring.

Rebecca S. Holder Consulting, LLC invites you to visit www.rshsmartaging.com to learn more about company services, follow the Age-smart Blog, or submit your questions, feedback, and suggestions for this column or other aging issues.

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October 10 - 12: Autumn Leaves Festival, Mount Airy. This festival showcases our rich musical heritage, such as Old-Time, Blue Grass and Gospel, performed by local musicians on the downtown stage; the unique arts & crafts of more than 170 craftsmen who line the streets with many demonstrating their talents and skills passed down through the generations; and food, including ham biscuits, collards & cornbread, barbeque, and more.

October 17 - 19: Carolina Balloon Fest. Bring lawn chairs and blankets (pets & coolers will not be admitted) to bask in the beautiful Carolina autumn weather as the backdrop to all the sights and sounds of colorful hot air balloons. Taste the best of North Carolina's wines and craft brews, stroll the Artisan Village and Marketplace, and enjoy great food along the way. Statesville, NC.

October 18: 28th Annual Taylorsville Apple Festival.

This festival hosts over 250 exhibit booths and provides a fantastic assortment of entertainment, food and vendors.

October 18: NC Oyster Festival. The 34th Annual North Carolina Oyster Festival features live entertainment, arts and crafts vendors, festival food, a road race, kid's area, North Carolina Oyster Shucking Championships and an Oyster Stew Cook-off.

October 21 - 25: NC Yam Festival. Tabor City, NC. www.ncyamfestival.com

October 25: NASCAR Day, Randleman. NASCAR excitement with 40,000 people coming together to celebrate racing.

October 25: 31st Annual Barbecue Festival, Lexington. Over 300 vendors featuring arts & crafts, commercial and festival foods, seven stages of entertainment, street performers, 50-ton pig-themed sand sculpture, and of course, the BEST barbecue in the world!

For more information about festivals and events throughout North Carolina, go to www.ncfestivals.com and click on Calendar of Events.