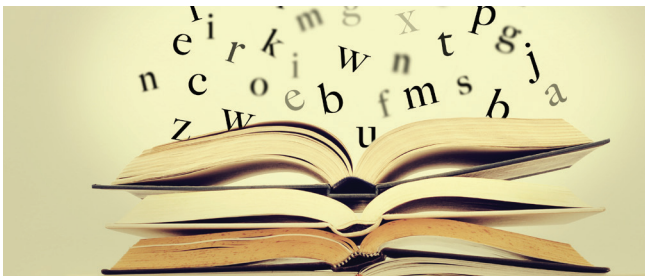

APRIL'S MENU:

MAIN COURSE, VERSE, WITH A SIDE OF EARTH



Food

These delicious meatballs are a perfect side for Shel Silverstein's spaghetti poem.



Fun

Take a bite. Create a poem. Try this game at the table tonight!



Conversation

Conversation starters on the art of possibility.



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Sure it's a month famous mostly for its rainy days, but we love April for sunnier reasons! First, it's National Poetry Month and second (but certainly no less important), it's also the month we turn our attention to the care of the planet and celebrate Earth Day on April 22nd.

With all this awesomeness packed into one 30-day period, we couldn't choose just one of these celebrations to focus on. So here we offer ideas to help you and your loved ones connect with each other, as well with the wider world, through verse, saving the earth, or both.

1 Poetry Potluck.

Poetry is often said to be food for the soul, which makes it a perfect companion at the dinner table. Did you know that reading and writing poetry reaps numerous benefits for children and adults? This is why we propose starting a poetry potluck this month: Together with your family, decide what night of the week everyone will bring a poem (an original or a favorite from a book or the Internet) to share during dinner. One of our former guest bloggers Jodie Rodriguez of Growing Book by Book offers a similar idea this month as part of her Family Dinner Book Club! Use her ideas or as a family, come up with own creative ideas for making Poetry Potluck thought-provoking and fun.

3 Eat a Poem.

Not the paper kind. The idea here is to invite your family to find a poem about food and then make that meal (preferably together) for dinner. For example, there's Shel Silverstein's poem about spaghetti, certainly a simple dish to make. Or you can branch out from poems and choose books: Green eggs and ham for dinner tonight perhaps? Or something from The Seven Silly Eaters or Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs? The library's the limit! Or check out these food poems online at Giggle Poetry.

2 Participate in 'Poem in Your Pocket Day' (say that 3 times fast).

Clean out your pockets and mark your calendars for April 30th, which is "Poem in Your Pocket Day". Here's something both young and old can participate in simply by choosing a favorite poem, carrying it in their pocket and sharing it with others throughout the day at schools, bookstores, libraries, parks, workplaces, coffee shops and other places. Or if you're shy, you can share it virtually by posting your poem on twitter using #pocketpoem. Kids in fifth grade and up can also participate in the "Dear Poet" initiative, a multimedia education project that invites young people in grades five through twelve to write letters in response to poems written and read by some of the award-winning poets who serve on the Academy of American Poets Board of Chancellors.

4 Poems for the Planet.

A well-chosen poem at the table during Poetry Potluck or anytime can spark rich conversations about important topics relevant to the wider world. For instance, read the poem "Earth Day" by Jane Yolen to spark a discussion about, well, Earth Day. Or break out Dr. Seuss's The Lorax and explore the importance of trees. As Dr. Anne Fishel writes so poetically in her book Home for Dinner, "Dinner is like a small plot of land that can be seeded, fertilized, and coaxed to yield a series of crops. Dinner is a small plot of time that can be sowed to reap comfort, fun, play and curiosity about the wider world, playful and meaningful conversation, and even action to change the world one meal at a time."

And stay tuned for lot more Earth Day ideas to come on our Website and social media this month!



Basic Meatballs

This recipe comes to us from our friend Brianne DeRosa at Red, Round or Green, where this recipe originally appeared.

Everybody has their favorite way of making meatballs, but I (humbly, of course) think mine are pretty great. It's not really just my opinion; My husband grew up in an Italian-American family, and he recently told me that my meatballs are the second best he's ever had. Considering that the "best" are the ones his great-aunt made (the ones of family legend, you know how that goes) I'll take the compliment.



Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
2. Using a microplane, grate the onion and garlic directly into a large mixing bowl — this will not only break them down very finely to mix thoroughly with the meat, but will also ensure that all the juices of the onion get into the bowl.
3. Add the eggs to the grated onion and garlic and beat thoroughly.
4. Season with the salt, oregano, red pepper, and black pepper, and stir to combine.
5. Add the oats and Parmesan cheese and mix until it's the consistency of very wet sand.
6. Add the ground beef and pork to the bowl. Using a large fork or your hands, thoroughly combine all the ingredients until you have a pretty well homogenized mixture. Set aside.
7. Pour the olive oil into the center of a rimmed baking sheet and tilt to coat the pan completely with the oil.
8. Form the meat mixture into balls about 1 1/2 oz. each (the size of ping-pong balls, sort of) and place on the oiled baking sheet about 1/2 inch apart.
9. Bake at 400 degrees for 20-25 minutes, until the meatballs are browned on top and set on the bottoms.
10. At this point, they're ready to be used in whatever way you'd like; if you're serving them with marinara sauce, I usually suggest putting the meatballs and the drippings from the baking sheet directly into your pot of hot sauce, stirring, and letting simmer for 5-10 minutes just to bring everything together.

Ingredients

(Makes about 2 dozen)

- 2 lbs. ground meat — I use one pound each 85/15 grass-fed ground beef, and ground pork
- 1 small onion
- 3 cloves garlic
- 4 eggs (yes, really)
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1/4 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper
- 1/2 cup rolled oats, ground in a food processor or blender into a fine powder
- 1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons olive oil



Food Poetry

1. Invite your kids to take a bite of food. They can even close their eyes and savor it.

2. Ask 'what does the food taste like? What is its texture? Consider its color, smell, and the memories it brings up.'

3. Have your kids say or write down the first words they think of.

4. Voila! They just wrote a poem!



Food Poetry- Write Your Thoughts Down Here:



CONVERSATION

With National Poetry Month and Earth Day this month, anything is possible! Hence, our conversation starters on the art of possibility.



AGES 2-7



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What's something you couldn't do when you were younger that you can do now?

What do you want to do when you grow up? Do you think it will be easy or hard to do?

In *The Lorax*, Dr Seuss writes "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not." Is there something you care about a lot that you would like to change?

AGES 8-13

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Do you think it's possible to change the world? Why or why not?

"After being in *Harry Potter*, I believe a bit more in magic than I did before," said actor Rupert Grint (better known as Ron Weasley in the *Harry Potter* films). Do you believe in magic?

Share a story about a challenge you've overcome- maybe something you once thought was impossible.

AGES 14-100

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Do you think it's possible to change one's self? How have you changed over the years/decades?

"You must do the thing you think you cannot do," said Eleanor Roosevelt. What's something you've done in your life that you thought you could never do?

