



Sharable Thanksgiving

Ways to Focus on What Really Matters

by Marlaina Donato

Thanksgiving inspires a season of appreciation for what sustains us and gives meaning to life.

Share Good Food

"I think true sustenance is when our hunger for connection and belonging meet," says Sarah Ban Breathnach, the Los Angeles author of *The Simple Abundance Journal of Gratitude*. "When my daughter was small, we would purchase a complete Thanksgiving dinner for the local food pantry when we shopped for our own, saying, 'One for us, one for them.'"

Nourishment of our emotional and spiritual selves often begins with choosing simple, whole food. Rocco DiSpirito, a New York City celebrity chef and author of *Rocco's Healthy + Delicious*, reminds us, "Eat real food! Return to the basics of eating what's produced by Mother Nature. You'll become a better partner, parent and person." Cooking is more enjoyable when shared; beyond partaking together, partnering in meal

preparation is a fun way to nurture bonds with others any time of the year.

Share Life's Happiness

Common interests lessen the chasm between our to-do lists and nurturing camaraderie. Anna Maria Caldara, of Bangor, Pennsylvania, has opened her doors for intimate community events through the years. "My former home, a converted church, was a perfect space for organizing and a way to give back," says Caldara, who has hosted gatherings on local environmental issues, music performances, literary nights and annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. celebrations.

Small living spaces can be just as welcoming and facilitate simple conversation, a valuable gesture. "The art of listening is such a beautiful, but rare act of kindness. I love technology, but there's no denying that our devices have made us poor listeners," says Michael J.

Chase, of southern Maine, the founder of The Kindness Center, whose books include *Am I Being Kind* and *Off: A Memoir of Darkness, a Manual of Hope*. Each month, Chase makes it a point to visit friends and send some handwritten notes instead of using social media.

Practice Kindness

Sharing our time or talent will be remembered long after the holiday feasting. Author Nicole J. Phillips, of Athens, Ohio, author of *Kindness is Contagious*, observes, "We are literally created to be kind; it's well known that feel-good endorphins are released when we do an act of kindness. I think we often hold back because we pre-emptively determine that our resources are limited. Know your talents and gifts, and build your acts of kindness accordingly."

Marlaina Donato is a freelance writer, author and multimedia artist (MarlainaDonato.com).