

Saturday Meanderings



I hope everyone enjoyed the nice, long holiday weekend. Each year we head to the mountains where the July 4th holiday is extra special. Everyone's cabin and golf cart is adorned in red, white and blue and there is a strong sentiment of patriotism and love for our country. And, I do feel like I got some relaxing in! Welcome to this week's Saturday Meanderings, where we just chat about all good things.



Patriotic Bear

I am always amazed at the energy and creativity residents put into decorating their homes and participating in the parade. From highly decorated trucks and trailers to innovate dance routines, the Bull Frog Loop parade doesn't disappoint. And I think this year's parade is extra special after a year of lockdowns.

Hosting a Brunch



Fruit/croissant board

Since our cabin is on the parade route, we always host a pre-parade brunch. With about 30 guests, I did rely on the same menu that I do every year. My egg casserole ([here](#)) and a blueberry coffee cake ([here](#)). Since we have a large rectangular wooden surface, I made this fruit/croissant board. Mimosas and bloody Mary's add to the festivities.

Bringing the Dogs



Cooper

This trip we did bring Cooper and Sox up to the mountains, and of course, it takes a few days for them to adjust to all the activity. But as you can see, it didn't take Cooper long to dominate the sofa.



Sox

Our pocket beagle, Sox did celebrate his 14th birthday. Our sweet old guy can't hear as well and his eyes are getting cloudy with cataracts, but he still has puppy moments.

New Baby Birds



Bird nest before

Last Saturday, I did share this picture of a nest found in one of the large geranium planters. It's been hard not to peek but I just couldn't resist and yes, the birds have arrived!



Bird nest after

Each morning, I sit on the front deck with my coffee and watch the parent birds fly back and forth with food for their babies. The marvels of nature.

Using Puff Pastry



Tomato Tart

Pepperidge Farm puff pastry is a staple in my freezer as there are so many easy recipes you can whip up at the last minute. This week I did try a tomato tart from Twigg Studio. With caramelized onions, goat cheese, thyme and lots of lovely tomatoes in a puff pastry, isn't this tart beautiful? Click [here](#) for the recipe.



Using up the apricots

Having an additional puff pastry sheet, I did use up the rest of the goat cheese, sweetened with honey, and ripe apricots for this tart. Drizzle a bit of honey on the top and bake. Since I did this on the fly, I didn't measure anything but in retrospect, I would add more honey as the apricots are a bit tart. 400 degrees for 30 minutes (but note: this is high altitude cooking here).

Personal Gourmet



Individual servings of protein

For many years I use the services of Personal Gourmet. Locally, Chef Jimmy Watters delivers restaurant grade protein to our home. This service has been a life saver with being able to have chicken, salmon, steaks, fish, meatballs, shrimp and similar proteins always on hand. Individually shrink wrapped and stored in the freezer, I cook up what we need and only have to make a salad or provide a vegetable side dish for a complete meal.



Personal Gourmet

This is such a convenient service, especially with our growing family or even now, just for the two of us. Before leaving for the cabin, I placed a large order with Jimmy and now I have both freezers filled with things to eat. Since I prefer to cook at home vs. going out to eat, I know we are getting high quality choices for lunch and dinner.

It appears that Personal Gourmet may be located in California, Texas and North Carolina, in addition to Arizona. For more information about this convenient and delicious service, contact Chef Watters at **602 -339-2059**.

Finally Painting again



Vase of flowers

I haven't picked up a paintbrush since my Christmas painting of our cat, Donovan. Yikes. For something that I enjoy doing, I cannot seem to be disciplined enough to make time for it. But, being at our cabin with a more relaxed schedule, I am able to start a new painting! This painting's inspiration is actually an arrangement of wisteria and lilacs done by my friend, Barbara from Mantel and Table.

It is not done yet, but it does feel good to put brush to canvas.

Watercolor Tutorial



Finding Silver Pennies tutorial

Danielle from Finding Silver Pennies is a talented artist and designer. In one of her latest blog posts, she has a tutorial on painting mini watercolor seascapes. The video is 6 minutes long, and it is a fun way to experiment with watercolor paints.



My attempt at mini-seascapes

With limited supplies, I did Danielle's video this week. I do not use watercolors very often but practicing with her guidance is a good start! See Danielle's post and video [here](#). Danielle and her son (a young and inspiring artist) sell their artwork and various items on the Finding Silver Pennies website. Check it out [here](#).

If you are in need of a watercolor set, there is a nice selection [here](#). It helps to paint on [watercolor paper](#). And don't forget watercolor paint brushes [here](#). Happy painting!

Laughter Therapy



Image from The Return of the Modern Philosopher

It's fun to share a good laugh, but did you know it can actually improve your health? After a very long and challenging year, it's more important than ever to laugh and be happy.

It is true: laughter is strong medicine. It draws people together in ways that trigger healthy physical and emotional changes in the body. Laughter strengthens your immune system, boosts mood, diminishes pain, and protects you from the damaging effects of stress. Nothing works faster or more dependably to bring your mind and body back into balance than a good laugh. Humor lightens your burdens, inspires hope, connects you to others, and keeps you grounded, focused, and alert. It also helps you release anger and forgive sooner.



Image from Quartz

As children, we used to laugh hundreds of times a day, but as adults, life tends to be more serious and laughter more infrequent. But by seeking out more opportunities for humor and laughter, you can improve your emotional health, strengthen your relationships, find greater happiness—and even add years to your life.

So go out there and laugh! It will make your face look younger too!



Beautiful view at White Mountain Country Club

Cheers to you from the White Mountains of Arizona! Have a wonderful rest of the weekend.

Mary

If you missed my blog posts this week, see them below.



Gathering Seeds



Refinishing Outdoor Furniture