

Appreciation for the simple pleasures

Brock's Banter

By Brock Weir

Despite any attempts to swim against the current, this was, for me, another Easter weekend of inadvertent tradition.

While many families enjoyed the first 'normal' Easter since the pandemic began, thanks, for better or worse, to the lifting of public health restrictions, I might have to look ahead to 2023 or 2024 for a return to some of the more familiar traditions that were once inextricably associated with our family's Easters of yore.

As I wrote in this space last week, our first two COVID Easters were very different from what we were used to, as was the case for most families who celebrate the occasion.

There were no big family gatherings for obvious reasons. Instead, the three-person bubble hunkered down for a meal which might have been best served on Good Friday: a good ol' pile of fish and chips.

For the very same reasons which necessitated this completely different spin on an old tradition, a do-over was in the cards for COVID Easter II, turning this fish and chip dinner into an unlikely and not necessarily wanted pattern.

COVID Easter III was set to be a welcome return to the familial 'and familiar' warm and fuzzies. As has become customary in recent years, dinner was to be hosted by my aunt in Toronto. The guest list had been drawn up, the meal plan was in place, and a list had been drafted on family occasions within a one-month window either way of Easter that could be marked all at once in a celebratory pile-on.

But, as one has become used to in the time of COVID, it's somewhat of a fool's errand to plan too far ahead.

Unfortunately, a family member who had, for a couple of weeks leading up to the holiday, been battling a serious health issue, contracted an equally serious bout of COVID-19, which sent them into ICU for several days. Then, it emerged that both their spouse and their child had been in close contact with them within a day or two of their admission, sending them both into quarantine for a number of days.

Thankfully, all three are now on the mend, but several other dominos continued to fall in the wrong direction in the days that followed and a decision to put all plans on ice until things were better was made; it was the right call no matter how you looked at it, but disappointing nonetheless. It was time to give in to the inevitable.

The aforementioned bubble was reinstated out of sheer numbers and necessity and, once again, fish and chips came to the rescue.

Now, I fully recognize this is a delicious problem to have, and certainly a problem one is fortunate to have as well, but it's always nice to have a meal that isn't wrapped in newspaper where there's very little chance of finding your own words looking back at you when you're sticking your fork into a sizzling piece of cod. Maybe that's just me?

But in all seriousness, while the occasion didn't quite turn out as planned, it was a lovely day. As it progressed, it was hard not to smile at how what was once an alternative to the norm that was less than ideal was now on the road to becoming a new tradition that, dare I say, is one to look forward to rather than be resigned to.

Will I thumb my nose at a slice of ham around this time next year?

Certainly not.

Will I do everything in my own power to ensure that the show goes on in the face of both logic and logistics?

Nope, bring on the fish! I'll take my traditions where I can get them these days.

I wonder how many of you feel the same way.

Collectively, we lost a hell of a lot in the first two years of the pandemic.

In recent weeks and months, many of us have done our damndest to get as much back and re-establish things that have fallen by the wayside, but, aside from the COVID-15s, COVID-20s, COVID-30s some of us have acquired over the last 24 or 25 months (this is a judgement free zone!) we've gained a hell of a lot as well.

We needed to find untold reserves of patience within ourselves in the earliest days of the pandemic to get through the weeks and months of so much ?much? and so much nothingness at the same time. It was a matter of re-learning ways of life which had become familiar patterns, perhaps patterns that were too familiar. We had to have patience as we learned, adapted to, and re-adapted to new things that were expected of us and, in the face of new information, had to re-learn, re-calibrate and re-calculate.

If you've been able to maintain that over the course of the pandemic, congratulations! That will put you in good stead for any situation.

This same effort to find patience where there was none before might have given you new or renewed appreciation for the people around us, whose work we might have previously taken for granted. This new perspective can only be a good thing.

Maybe this fresh perspective helped you when all of our worlds collectively shrunk and helped you rediscover some of the simpler pleasures of life that may have become routine, underappreciated, and perhaps even rote; that grand gestures, outgoing cash flows, and expensive trips aren't really the front-of-the-line ingredients in making happy, long-lasting memories.

Shortly after last week's paper went to press, for instance, I went for another walk along a local trail. Despite devoting a few paragraphs in this space that week bemoaning the lack of colourful rocks with messages of encouragement that once dotted the path, a new purple pebble wedged in the fork of a tree trunk caught my eye. Who knew a painted stone could inspire such joy?

We didn't go too far afield on Sunday other than a lovely and leisurely car trip around the shores of Lake Simcoe, we didn't shell out too much dough, and the sweet treats were kept satisfying and simple ? and I knew by the time the sun began to set on another Easter, I knew it was a day I would be looking back on with many fond memories.

Here's to making the best of things and the lessons we learn along the way!