

THE NATURE PLACE DAY CAMP

Summer 2017 Cookbook

Written by Eva Szigeti





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The View from the Kitchen Window



The world of The Nature Place Day Camp is wide. My own camp experience is bound to life in the camp kitchen and to what I see from the kitchen windows. Here's what the view from my windows had to offer this summer:

Every time I looked beyond the herbs on the windowsill and out of the window, I saw, of course, children; kids in bathing suits walking to the pond, campers on their way to the garden, or up to the farm to see the cows, groups heading to one of Nature's Playgrounds or to the Outdoor Classroom. Water shoes meant mucking in the stream. Children with large backpacks walking toward the field indicated an onsite overnight. Children passing by carrying fresh onions was a sure sign of Harvest Day.

One day, I saw a staff member, accompanied by a fairy, walking with a tray of jiggling green Jell-O to the barefoot zone (a favorite camp activity involving stepping into materials of different texture—Jell-O is a fun one). Looking a bit further, I saw a group of kids singing to the Cookie Tree (a huge bush under the office windows). As a reward for good singing, an invisible hand lowered a rope from the window, with a basket full of cookies on the end for the group to share. Later on, I noticed a group of excited young children carrying a troll they had found. Trolls love to hide around camp and hope to be found by children.

Another day offered an unexpected sight: a pig walking around the courtyard, followed by a duck. Even more surprisingly, when called by their names, they listened. Outragehiss Pets had to be the explanation.

On hot days, blocks of ice caught my eye. Huge chunks of it were strategically placed on the pavement for campers to "pet" or even sit on to provide relief from the heat. One time I glanced out and saw Ed with a group of campers, huddled around a block. They were observing the tiny streams of water forming from the melting ice. They then added food coloring and patiently waited for the colors to blend and for tiny rainbow streams to form. Calling it an "activity" doesn't seem like the right word to describe this scene. It was Ed doing his magic.

Then one day, like a grand finale to the show taking place outside of my window, I saw the oldest campers, group Q (Q stands for Quest) walking by. They looked tired and sort of dusty, but their faces were completely lit up with satisfaction. I knew that they had just returned from their four-night, five-day trip on the Appalachian Trail. The Quest had been completed...

The kitchen windows are large, but my view is far from complete. It's impossible to catch all the magic that is happening at camp all the time. With this cookbook, we are opening the kitchen windows for you, and inviting you in, for another view of camp life.

-Eva Szigeti

Taking Care

Taking Care Week is a tradition here at The Nature Place, and bread baking during the first week of camp has become one too. Nothing could be more satisfying than biting into a warm, freshly made roll, especially when the roll is the product of our own hands. Campers enjoyed working with the risen dough and transforming it into their very own twisted, braided, or knotted rolls. Since there is no good bread without great flour, grinding wheat berries into flour was also part of our project. It feels good to take care of ourselves and each other with nourishing, comforting food.

Herbed Rolls

Dough:

2 cups whole-wheat flour
4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
3 cups lukewarm water
2 teaspoons instant dry yeast
2 tablespoons salt

Filling:

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
¼ cup finely chopped fresh herbs
(use one or a combination of basil, rosemary, parsley, oregano, thyme)

Combine dry ingredients in a mixing bowl. Add water. Stir together with a large spoon or mix on low speed with the paddle attachment until the dough comes together. Adjust with flour or water if your dough seems too sticky or too dry.

Cover and let rest for about 20 minutes. Then, knead by hand or machine (on medium speed for 12 minutes). Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let the dough ferment at room temperature for approximately 1 ½ - 2 hours, or until it doubles in size. Push the dough down and let it proof again until it doubles in size.

Dust your counter or a large wooden board with flour. Transfer the dough onto the floured surface, divide it into 16 pieces and form round rolls. Cover with a kitchen towel and let rest for 10 minutes. Using a rolling pin, roll the balls into a rectangle about 3"x 5" inches. Brush the dough with oil and sprinkle with herbs. Starting at the longer side of the rectangle, roll the dough up. Shape it into its final shape by coiling, twisting, braiding or knotting the long piece of dough.



Put the rolls on a baking sheet, cover, and let rest for 30 minutes. Bake the rolls in a preheated oven at 420° F for about 25 minutes. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and transfer the rolls to a cooling rack. Exercise patience and do not eat while hot!

The Turtle's Back

Have you been to Turtle Island? Most likely, you're on it right now. According to several native creation myths the world was created on the back of a turtle. Some native tribes still refer to the North American continent as Turtle Island. During the second week of camp, we honored the traditions of this land by preparing a grain salad using a native grain (wild rice) and two of the Three Sisters crops (corn and beans).

Turtle Island Salad

Salad:

- 1 cup cooked wild rice
- ½ cup cooked white beans
- ½ cup cooked black beans
- ½ cup corn
- 1 medium grated carrot
- ½ cup finely chopped kale
- ¼ minced red onion
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- ¼ cup chopped green pepper

Dressing:

- 1 ½ tablespoon wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1-2 tablespoons orange juice
- ¼ teaspoon (or to taste) salt
- ¼ teaspoon (or to taste) fresh ground black pepper



Combine all salad ingredients in a large bowl. Combine dressing ingredients in a small mason jar and shake until thoroughly combined. (This is a great task for your youngest cook or the most energetic child!)

Toss salad with the dressing. Refrigerate for an hour for best flavor. For a very hungry crowd, serve immediately.



Bee a Little Boulder

This was a week of bold cooks. Our camp garden had a lot to offer, and we took advantage of it. This project was an exercise in truly local and seasonal cooking—a very practical way of honoring the incredible, life-sustaining work of the Earth’s honey bees. Campers helped to harvest greens and herbs in the garden. All the salads were made from what we had on hand. Mustard greens did very well this season, and there were lots of spicy leaves in our salad mix. The children loved them. We tried the salad greens with a variety of dressings. If The Nature Place were a competitive camp, we would have called the Honey Mustard Dressing the winner. Once again, we have our bees to thank for that!

Green Salad with Honey Mustard Dressing

For the salad:

8 cups mixed salad greens

For the dressing:

2 tablespoons mustard

2 tablespoons honey

2 tablespoons wine vinegar

2 tablespoons olive oil

1/8 teaspoon salt



Wash the salad greens. Dry the greens using a salad spinner—the most fun part. Combine dressing ingredients in a small mason jar. Put the lid on and shake the jar to emulsify the dressing. Dress the salad and enjoy!

Call Robbie and Call Lee Flower



Did you guess it? Kohlrabi and cauliflower were at the center of our kitchen and our camp this week. The campers tasted raw kohlrabi grown in our garden and prepared roasted cauliflower. Younger campers enjoyed eating the cauliflower dipped into butter they churned. Older kids made roasted cauliflower tacos.

The goal of our cooking classes is always to inspire and motivate, but also to challenge. With this recipe, the challenge was great. Cauliflower, though it may be having “a moment” in the healthy recipe scene, may not generally be a vegetable (really a flower) beloved by kids. But I knew the choice to explore it in the camp kitchen was right when a young boy came asking for the recipe. He was hoping to share some roasted cauliflower with friends at his birthday party.



1 small head of cauliflower
3 tablespoons of olive oil
salt and black pepper to taste

Roasted Cauliflower



Preheat the oven to 425 F. Cut or break the cauliflower into bite-size florets. Toss the cauliflower with the olive oil, salt, and pepper on a baking sheet lined with parchment. Roast until gold and tender, about 25 minutes. Enjoy as a snack or a side dish.

To Baa or Not Tuba

This week offered a good opportunity for some time travel right in the kitchen. *To baa or not tuba? To be or not to be?* These led us to another important question: What did Shakespeare have for dessert? Perhaps he enjoyed fresh *Shrewsbury Cakes*—research suggested. This is a variation on an old recipe originating from the time of the Bard. ‘Cakes’ in this case translate into contemporary English as ‘cookies’. These cookies will bring the smell of the winter holidays into your kitchen, but of course there are no restrictions on when to bake them.

(Shakespearean) Spice Cookies

1 stick butter
1/2 cup sugar
1 egg
1 cup + 3 tablespoons flour
pinch of salt
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
pinch of cardamom



Cream the butter. Add sugar and mix together. Add egg to the sugar mixture.

In another bowl, mix flour, nutmeg, cinnamon, cardamom, and salt together. Add to the previous mixture and quickly knead into a ball.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Roll out dough to about 1/4 inch thick (or a little thinner for more crispness) and cut into shapes. Bake 15 to 20 minutes. Allow to cool slightly before removing from baking sheet.

What We're Made Of

To celebrate the last week of camp, we opted for a crowd pleaser: Pasta. Not just boiling pasta from a box, of course, but exploring exactly what pasta is made from and how it's made. Most of us don't make pasta from scratch at home, and might not be familiar with the process. There was an opportunity to wonder: *Ooh, aah, how can it be? How do we get pasta from a blob of dense dough?*

It was so much fun to crank the pasta machine. And so good to eat! Some enjoyed their pasta with some butter and fresh basil, others tried our homemade garden sauce.



Homemade Pasta

This recipe calls for a pasta machine

2 cups all-purpose flour

3 eggs

½ teaspoon salt + more for the cooking water

½ teaspoon olive oil



Sift the flour onto a clean work surface and make a well in the center. Break the eggs into the middle of the well. Add the salt and oil. Gradually mix the eggs with flour using your fingers, bringing the ingredients together into a firm ball. Add a little water, if the dough feels too dry. Knead the dough for 3-5 minutes. Cover and let rest at room temperature for about an hour.

Using a rolling pin, roll out the pasta to ¼ inch or thinner. When rolling becomes challenging, a pasta machine becomes handy. Pass strips of dough through the machine. Start with the widest setting. Repeatedly pass the sheets of pasta through the machine, gradually adjusting to thinner settings on each pass, until the pasta achieves the desired thickness. Place the pasta on a clean tablecloth or hang over the back of the chair and let it dry a little. Cut the sheets into manageable size before shaping. Shape the pasta by passing it through the chosen cutter.

Spread the pasta out again and let it dry a little. In the meantime, boil a large pot of salty water. Throw the pasta into the water. Stir immediately to avoid any sticking. Quickly bring the pasta back to a rolling boil, stir, and boil until al dente, or firm to the bite, about 2 minutes. The exact cooking time will depend on the thickness of your pasta. Drain, put the pasta back into the pot, and immediately add your favorite sauce or enjoy simply with some butter or olive oil and fresh herbs.

Closing the Curtains... For Now!



Then came the last day of camp. It was difficult. It's never easy to part with friends and the wonderful world of The Nature Place. Our morning gathering, Morning Share, was different on this day. The Share characters, The Box [Turtle], The Flower Fairy, Robbie Danger, Robbie Safety, The Chicken, Lee Flower, Blue the Turtle, The Queen of Flying Bananas, and Soapy Steve said goodbye; and with the magic touch of our share leaders, they were frozen until they are called upon once more.

Now they are dreaming about the next magical summer at the camp, and I am too...

See you then!



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