

NEWSLETTER

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HOME COOKING

Thanksgiving will be here before we know it. Lots of cooking ahead.

I recently read Barbara Kingsolver's latest book, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (Harper, 2007). This is a non-fiction account of how her family subsisted for a year on food they grew themselves or was grown in their vicinity. The family was not just interested in the high quality and absolute deliciousness of such food but they also wanted to see if it were possible to avoid "oily" food which means food grown with lots of petroleum-based fertilizers and transported long distances to our supermarket thus perpetuating our astronomically high oil usage.

I am not into gardening so I won't repeat the experiment that the Kingsolver-Hopp family successfully carried out although the book sure taught me ways to increase the percentage of "non-oily" food in my market basket. I recommend it to all parents who care about the future of their kids and our nation.

For me the best part of the book was learning how cooking was a communal activity in their house, not a chore for Mom. Because their food was home-made not bought already prepared, they all peeled and chopped and invented recipes. And they TALKED to each other while doing this. For me this is what family life used to be like: doing meaningful tasks together. Not separated by chore: you do the dishes and I'll make the beds. Or by space: one in front of a computer, one on the phone, one watching TV. Barbara's family was TOGETHER in the most meaningful sense of that word, working together for the good of the family.

Lest you think cooking was all Barbara did let me point out she put in a full day's work writing at her computer before she hit the kitchen except during the weeding and canning seasons. She enjoys cooking and I think more of us might enjoy cooking if it were a communal activity.

The Kingsolver way may not be for everybody or for everyday. But this Thanksgiving might be a fun time to try your own family version of cooking together. Instead of asking Cousin Suzie to bring the pies how about asking her to come over the day before so you can make them together. Involve all the kids. Instead of asking your Aunt to bring the sweet potato casserole ask her to bring the ingredients and make them while you are doing the dressing and gravy. Think of all the talking you can do!

Just a thought.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving however you decide to cook the food!