



Feasting on Life

By Denise Miller

A feast is a celebration, a celebration that includes all of our conscious and unconscious senses. When we feast we are satiated, replete, have satisfied our hungers and quenched all our thirsts.

Feasting on life is a very different experience. It could include the traditional feast, but doesn't have to. Traditional feasts take place at an occasion and you can see the many circles of life before you. There is likely generational attendance and everyone is in on the jokes. The babies are passed around and in this place they become more than small people but instead are the future that resembles the past. The children get away with more than they ever have before. They disappear with cousins and only come back when it's so cold and dark that they must. The teens are traditionally belligerent and very cool. They are certain that no other person has had to put up with so much before and they let everyone know how hard done by they are. There is, of course, a meal with all the traditional foods and some surprisingly good or bad additions.

This is a time of 100 conversations all going on at the same time and of eating 100 times more than you usually eat. Of stories in the kitchen for the women and the living room or family room for the men. This is a time of setting the daily grind down and picking up the fringes of tradition for a while. The sights, smells, sounds, touches and tastes are wonderful! The debriefing with your immediate family after the event – perhaps on the ride home- is where reality begins to rear its head. The innocence is lost once again. When I remember these events it is from the place of a child. I loved it! I have always loved sensual excess and this was hugely satisfying to me. I can't say that my adult experiences have ever been this satisfying.

I have an addictive personality and have moved through a lot of different addictions. As I grew older they became less illegal and more acceptable to society. I have regulated most all of the feasting from my life in an attempt to control my latest addiction – food. This is the most difficult one. You do have to eat so you can't simply cut this substance out of your life. The other addictions seem like child's play now that I'm down to the basics, the core of it all. What am I actually trying to give myself with these substances? There are a lot of different reasons that people have given as to why we overdo anything. Sex, drugs, alcohol, control, meditation, adrenaline, and food are a part of my list. What am I attempting to get?

About a year ago I found out. I was invited to the home of Maggie and Norm. They didn't know me from Adam. I was travelling through their town and we met in a very serendipitous way. I would say now that my tremendous hunger drew me to them or them to me. Whatever, I went home with them. Maggie and I began to talk and Norm got busy in the kitchen. I began to learn about these incredible people.

Norm cooked some seafood he had just brought back from a fishing trip to B.C. and we feasted on that. He returned to the kitchen, and Maggie and I continued to talk. He came back in a little while and played a flute that he had made for us, and we continued to talk. He made us some excellent bannock and we continued to talk. He played a drum he had made for us and later showed me a picture he had drawn of Maggie before he had even met her. Maggie read me a poem she had written and she told me traditional stories from her people. There was plenty of food and it was incredibly delicious. There were beautiful sounds of flute, drum, story, song, and poem and there were the intense feelings invoked. There were the smells of smoky fires and tanned hides and of the foods Norm served us. I slept and before I moved on the next day I was given a bundle of sacred things chosen to help me draw closer to the spiritual side of my native background.

After I finished the job I was doing in a nearby town that day, we had lunch together as a small token of my appreciation. I drove away. I drove for hour after hour, stopping at gas stations along the way. I looked over the stands and shelves of snack and junk foods. Nothing appealed to me. This was highly unusual to say the least. I made it home and still had no hunger. Even the next day I ate very little.

I realized at that point what Maggie and Norm had done for me. They had fed me completely. They had feasted me physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. This was what I had always been craving. This is the hunger that I was trying to feed in so many damaging ways for so many years. I still have these cravings and I'm still working hard to interpret what is being requested and by what part of me. If I feed my body with the best, most tasty and highest quality foods and I still hunger, then I know that I must look for a different kind of food for a different part of my body. It may be my pain body that is hungry, so I look for emotional feasting.

A feast is different than a snack or a meal. A feast creates satisfaction, fullness, repletion, and it's long lasting too. It is hard at first to know how to feast. There are signs though, to help you find your feast. A feast is a celebration; a traditional occasion is not required. It may have food as a part of it, or it may not. It will not include compulsive overeating or binging which robs delight from the senses and the soul. The rules with food are that you must eat only what you really enjoy and that you must really enjoy everything you eat. Feed your body what it wants without judgement or stinginess.

What would a beauty feast look like? I feel this one on many levels. A friend decided to make sports cars part of his life. He wanted to bring in more beauty. This made me aware of places that I don't allow beauty to rule. Maybe I'll get a more beautiful vehicle next time or truly find out what I want without judgement or stinginess. It definitely will be satisfying sensually and on many levels.

What do I truly find beautiful to look at or listen too? Experiment and let go of the preconceived notions of your parents and friends. Once you know, then also know that it is worth the effort to bring that into your life. A certain sound, smell, or colour will bring so much joy to your life!

Feast on feelings. It may be a musical feast or a lovers caress. You may be dancing or stretching. You may be in bed, feeding cheesy jalapeño bread to your lover and licking away the crumbs. You may go for the spa experience of massage in its many forms, or a special pampering for your feet, face or hands. It may be the flannel PJ's on a cold night or that exactly right exquisite cup of your favourite tea.

Feast on love in all ways. You and your children, your partner, your friends all have love, so celebrate it! The sayings are so true. It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. Or : If you would be loved, then love and be lovable. Love feasts are always potlucks. Each person must bring some to the table. If you wait for the others to supply you, then you will find a most unsatisfying feast. If you feel love, show it. The feasts that include love will be the ones you will remember forever, the ones that will make you glad you lived.

You will be aware of what part of you that you are feeding and you will choose its favourite ceremonies and celebrations. Ceremony is essential to human beings. Ceremony and rituals bring a certain sense of "other" to our lives. This will make these moments special; take them out of the ordinary. This is what you actually are craving. The framing of an event with a ritual or ceremony sets the activity outside of regular life in a way that emphasizes its beauty and uniqueness. Those who participate in ceremony become more aware of the depth and meaning. You will choose positive parts of you to feed because the parts of you that are properly fed will grow and flourish. Notice and honour the sacred and wonderful ceremonies that are already in your life. Experiment and discover new ones.

The places that cry for unhealthy things, -you can feed them understanding and love, and then watch as they naturally pass out of your awareness and out of your life. These will pass away and die a natural death with very little or no struggle at all. If you focus on them, then you are feeding them and keeping them alive. Just be aware and let go....

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