



ILLUSTRATION BY MARY KIRKPATRICK

Our annual First Day Feast starts the year off right

FIRST PERSON

We realized the celebration of locally sourced food was much bigger than just a fun meal and had the potential to join Thanksgiving as a cultural event, **Robert Butler** writes

If you have been around as long as me, you will have noticed how each year blends with all the others; Thanksgiving is chased closely by Halloween and before we know it Christmas arrives just before we slide into a new year.

One year, my wife Sharon and I decided to change the holidays up with a First Day Feast. This was not going to be just another celebration of food and festivities; all the food would be locally sourced. The First Day Feast was going to make us think, in a fun way, about our choices for the rest of the year.

I posed a crazy question: could an entire meal be made from food around the Salish Sea – the body of water between mainland British Columbia and Vancouver Island?

There should be lots of choices where we live in New Westminster, east of Vancouver. Our house overlooks the Fraser River, one of the world's greatest salmon-producing rivers. Beyond that are farmlands growing vegetables for local stores and markets. Honey is produced on some farms, cattle churn out butter, milk and cream on others which supply local cheeseworks. Sea salt from along the shore and wine from grapes on the Gulf Islands add to the flavour of our good times.

We would invite our family to witness the feast on the first day of the year. I hoped the feast might support local sustainable food production but if it didn't, at least the attempt would be fun.

Sometimes, locating locally produced

food in December seemed daunting. If we wanted to include bread, where would we find local flour and yeast? And what about spices? No pepper. No cinnamon. No nutmeg. No cloves. No olive oil!

We dropped by the market on Granville Island in downtown Vancouver where a lot of local produce was sold. To our surprise, we could get many fresh vegetables. In our garden we grew rosemary, thyme, sage and onions. We checked the fine print on labels and spoke to merchants to discover locally produced beef, seafood, sea salt, wine and fruit. Their eyes lit up when we explained what we were trying to accomplish. We rejoiced when they suggested substituting honey for sugar, herbs for spice, and hazelnut oil for olive oil.

But what about bread? Were we going to be defeated by the absence of any bread? We found locally produced flour but we needed yeast. Bread had an ancient history so Sharon thought we might resort to growing our own yeast. On the internet, she found how to make yeast from potato water that she later added to a dough for a boule.

The First Day Feast was launched on Jan. 1, 2013, with our family in attendance and the table overflowing. Outside the dining room window against a garden wall a giant No. 1 lit up the yard. Before us on the table simmered a prime rib roast from the Fraser Valley, steaming potatoes from Pemberton farms, honey from Vancouver Island fireweed, hazelnut oil from orchards in Agassiz, tangy cheese from Qualicum, flour and noodles from Chilliwack, farm fresh eggs from Richmond, salt from Cobble Hill, zesty cranberry juice from Delta, and sprouts from Courtenay. For the vegetarians, Sharon baked a pizza with vegetables, cheese and herbs.

The dessert course was a large apple

pie with a hidden secret inside. We could find no apples grown from around the Salish Sea (although we knew they existed). Our nearest source was from an orchard in Cawston over 200 kilometres away. For this one item, we had broken our own locally sourced rule! The family laughed at some of our attempts to find local sources and had no complaints as they dived in with gusto.

Since that first feast, we have held numerous others, including potlucks where friends were given the same challenge – each with varying success and necessary confessionals.

We concluded that the First Day Feast worked with our family but would it work as a bigger event, we wondered?

We realized that the First Day Feast was much bigger than just a fun meal. The Feast had the potential to join Thanksgiving as a cultural event, at least in our West Coast community. Even across the country, anyone anywhere could contribute in a fusion of festive ideas. If fresh locally produced food in winter is not an option where you live, just serve a single dish or preserve some local foods ahead of time.

First Day Feasts could be a cultural impetus to preserve the land, the livelihoods and the resources.

While cleaning up after our first First Day dinner, Sharon and I talked about how the meal was a hit and it got me thinking about a culture connected to nature. "It was what Indigenous people have been saying forever," I said.

Robert Butler lives in New Westminster, B.C.

First Person is a daily personal piece submitted by readers. Have a story to tell? See our guidelines at tgam.ca/essayguide.

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At the stroke of midnight, the new year gives a clean slate for long-elusive resolutions

BOBBY CAINA CALVAN DANIEL KOZIN NEW YORK

It's an annual end-of-year exercise in futility for many. But a clean slate awaits at the stroke of midnight for the next round of resolutions.

From the first spray of fireworks to the closing chorus of *Auld Lang Syne* 366 days into the future – 2024 is a leap year – it could be the year for finally achieving long-elusive goals, fulfilling aspirations and being resolute on all those New Year's resolutions.

"As humans, we are creatures that aspire," said Omid Fotuhi, a social psychologist who is a motivation and performance researcher.

"The fact that we have goals, the fact that we want to set goals is just a manifestation of that internal and almost universal desire to want to stretch, to want to reach, to want to expand and grow," said Fotuhi, the director of learning innovation at Western Governors University Labs and a research associate at the University of Pittsburgh.

"New Year's resolutions are one of those ways in which we do that," he said. "There's something very liberating about a fresh start. Imagine starting on a blank canvas. Anything is possible."

If so, could this be the year to run a marathon, vanquish (or make peace with) old foes such as the bathroom scale and a thickening waist? Maybe learn Mandarin or register to vote, and actually vote? So

many questions, and so much time to delay.

Tim Williams used to issue himself a panoply of resolutions: lose weight, drink less, exercise more and yada yada.

Now, he doesn't bother. "In the past, I would make them, and I would fail or give up on them or whatever," said Williams, a part-time resident of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Carla Valeria Silva de Santos, a Florida transplant from Brazil, wants to learn to play the guitar. A native Portuguese speaker, she wants to learn Spanish and improve her English.

With any resolution, she said, the ultimate goal is "to improve your life and be in peace with yourself."

Josh Moore, another Fort Lauderdale resident, sees things in line with the natural philosopher Sir Isaac Newton and physics. For every action there must be an equal reaction.

"If you do something like eat a bunch of candy or a bunch of desserts at a holiday party, go run," he said while interrupting a jog with his dog. "Maybe you went out drinking too much and you might have a hangover. But then next day when you're

feeling better, go to the gym."

Too many people are too soft on themselves, he posited. "You've got to actually hold yourself accountable."

Resolutions don't have to be big, grandiose or overly ambitious, Fotuhi said.

Even if they are, he said value should not exclusively be derived from the achievement but also be measured by what you become by trying to better yourself.

"Goals are only there to serve a function to get you started," Fotuhi said. "If they don't do that, then maybe that's not the appropriate goal for you."

In other words, it is a time to recalibrate goals and expectations, he said, adding that some people hang on to outdated goals for way too long.

"If you set a goal that's overly ambitious, that doesn't have the effect of getting you excited and making you believe that it's possible, then maybe you should think about a goal that's a little bit more within your reach – starting with a 5K for instance, then moving up to 10K," Fotuhi said.

OMID FOTUHI SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGIST AND MOTIVATION AND PERFORMANCE RESEARCHER

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paula Abdul sues American Idol producer for alleged sexual assault

LOS ANGELES

Paula Abdul has accused former *American Idol* producer Nigel Lythgoe of sexually assaulting her in the early 2000s when she was a judge on the reality competition show, according to a new lawsuit.

The lawsuit filed Friday in Los Angeles also accuses Lythgoe of sexually assaulting Abdul after she left *American Idol* and became a judge on Lythgoe's other competition show *So You Think You Can Dance*.

A lawyer for Lythgoe did not immediately respond Saturday to an e-mailed request for comment on the allegations.

In a statement Saturday, Abdul's lawyer Douglas Johnson applauded the singer and dancer for speaking out publicly.

"It was clearly a difficult decision to make, but Ms. Abdul knows that she stands both in the shoes and on the shoulders of many other similarly situated survivors, and she is determined to see that justice is done," Johnson said.

The lawsuit states Abdul remained silent for years about the alleged assaults out of fear of retaliation by "one of the most well-known producers of television competition shows."

Before *American Idol* and *So You Think You Can Dance*, on which Lythgoe served as a judge for 16 seasons, he was a producer on the British show *Pop Idol*, which became a global franchise that includes the U.S. iteration starring Abdul.

According to the lawsuit, the first sexual assault occurred while Abdul and Lythgoe were on the road filming auditions for an earlier season of *American Idol*, which premiered in 2002.

Abdul says Lythgoe groped her in the elevator of their hotel after a day of filming and "began showing his tongue down her throat." Abdul pushed him away and ran to her hotel room when the elevator doors opened.

"In tears, Abdul quickly called one of her representatives to inform them of the assault," the lawsuit says, "but ultimately decided not to take action for fear that Lythgoe would have her fired from *American Idol*."

Abdul, a Grammy- and Emmy-winning artist, starred as a judge for the first eight seasons of the show, leaving in 2009.

In 2015, Abdul became a judge on *So You Think You Can Dance*, appearing alongside Lythgoe.

Around that time, Abdul alleged in the lawsuit, Lythgoe forced himself on top of her during a dinner at his home and tried to kiss her. Abdul said she again pushed Lythgoe away and immediately left.

Abdul left the reality show after two seasons. She has not worked with Lythgoe since.

The lawsuit also accuses Lythgoe of taunting Abdul about the alleged assaults, saying to her years later that "they should celebrate" because "the statute of limitations had run."

Abdul filed the suit days before the Dec. 31 deadline of a California law that opened a one-year window to file lawsuits involving sexual abuse claims after the statute of limitations has run out.

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TODAY'S SUDOKU SOLUTION

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8	9	2	6	5	3	4	7	1
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5	7	9	3	8	1	2	4	6
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1	2	8	4	6	5	3	9	7

TODAY'S KENKEN SOLUTION

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	2	6	3	5	1	4			