



WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

by Ann Drew Yu

When I pick up my sons from school, one of the first questions out of their mouths is “What’s for dinner?” Too often, my answer is, “Um, I’m not sure.” Trust me, it’s not a satisfying answer for any of us. Once again, I’m caught without a plan.

Here’s a snapshot of what comes next: we arrive home, I strap on my apron, scheme up a menu, and plunge in. Between measuring-and-marinating and dicing-and-slicing, I alternate from helping one son with geometry to quizzing the other on spelling.

This frenzied multitasking carries us straight to mealtime. The good news – the food is hot from the pan and tasty. The bad news – the kitchen is a disaster and I’m exhausted. The worse news, the cycle will repeat again in 24 hours. Argh!

Why do I repeat this last minute drama every day? Habit, I guess. But I’ve got something to say. Mealtime isn’t working for me, and I want out! (Dramatic pause). Okay, so maybe that’s not an option. My next best choice – put some intention into the dinner hour.

Dutifully, I gather my materials and hunker down for a strategy session. Armed with cookbooks and grand ideas, a plan quickly takes shape: I’ll plan meals in two-week blocks and shop to the list (of course), Sundays will be family cooking day and the boys will plan one meal per week.

Victory! In one fell swoop I’ve devised a plan for budget shopping, family togetherness, and shared responsibility. I lean back and smile. Pure genius. Single-handedly I’ve created a formula to transform the dinner hour not only for myself, but also for all of womankind.

There’s only one problem. The mere thought of implementing my brilliant initiative leaves me exhausted, again. How can this be? Hmm. I forgot one thing.

An intention isn’t a punch list. It’s not a grandiose plan-of-action. An intention is an uplifting expression of what you want to create or invite into your life. I mistakenly thought my intention was “to plan meals in advance.” Boring.

What I really want is “to create a feeling of calm and enjoyment during the dinner hour.” Wow. That shifts my energy in a flash and ideas begin to flow. I can buy a fun apron. I’ll try a new recipe a month. I’ll invest in the cookware I’ve wanted for ages. And, if I’m so inclined, I’ll try planning the meals in 2-week blocks. I’m inspired!

Do you have a routine you’d like to create or refresh this fall? Perhaps a new way to support family wellness? Here are a few guidelines to get you started:

1. *Keep your intention simple. Identify one thing you’d like to start or revamp.*
2. *Focus on positive outcomes. What do you want more of? How will it look and feel?*
3. *Have fun bringing it to life. Get creative and consider all possibilities.*

As I put away my cookbooks, I know transforming our dinner routine will take time. Change is a process, not a formula. It will take creativity, teamwork and a good sense of humor. Sounds fun. (Dramatic pause). Count me in.

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