

KINDERGARTEN  
TWIN RIDGES HOME STUDY

SECOND LEARNING PERIOD  
By Marguerite Vulfs

Contemplating Festivals  
Autumn Equinox  
World Character Day  
Festival of Courage

Circle

Free Play

Kindergarten Bread

Mathematics & Science

Story

## CONTEMPLATING FESTIVALS

Most of us grew up with some type of tradition that honored and recognized important times of the year for our families. For some, many major religions have this integrated into their calendar year. For others, school events perhaps marked a particular moment to celebrate. In addition, there are community events that are woven into the local culture. Living in Nevada County, we have a wealth of events to attend and celebrate.

I personally remember many celebrations that were key moments for me growing up. My school carnival, Advent celebrated in my home and my first Cornish Christmas in 1975 hold treasured memories. In each instance, the events brought an inner sense of warmth, a belonging to community as well as invoking wonder in me.

The Kindergarten year is the perfect moment to recognize and celebrate what is important to your family. The Science curriculum naturally follows observation of the four seasons of the year. This easily transitions to celebrations, some of which might be new to you. This year could be a moment of selecting some or all to blend into your family life.

One of the most dynamic and busy times of year is happening right now. The late Summer harvest and Autumn Equinox are a perfect moment to observe the bounty of nature and take part in the local celebrations. Farmers markets are still thriving. There are many fruit trees that need picking. Locally we have the Draft Horse Classic & Harvest Festival which is fun to attend.

The list of Autumn celebrations and activities can be a little overwhelming for some. I have found that often simple is best especially when raising young children. Simple can be changing your nature table and beginning to cook different foods that honor the season. Sometimes attending an event which someone else has organized is the best answer to celebrating. In time, you might find yourself as the organizer of an event for a group of TRHS families.

Helping your child develop their own inner compass to understanding the changing seasons can be fun. Begin with your daily walk and observe plant and tree life, temperature change, the flight of birds and clouds in the sky. Include in your walk "harvesting", from nature's bounty, cones, seed pods, leaves, sticks, etc. Store away for later use or include now in making mobiles and collages.

The nature table is a wonderful place to help observe the changing seasons and for your child's collecting. You might continue with flowers of late Summer and then, at the Autumn Equinox, change to dried grasses and pods and string some colorful leaves for a banner or add a basket of apples or grapes.

In Nevada County we are fortunate to have four distinct changing seasons. Already I have a natural inclination to gather and prepare for winter. In some neighborhoods, Autumn leaves are already turning colors and falling. The cooler mornings lend themselves to wearing slippers and sweaters. This cozy comfort is something that the children yearn for especially in our quicker paced society. For many families, celebrating is akin to that cozy sweater. It can bring together families, friends and our community to stop for a moment and slow down, savoring the fruits of life.

### AUTUMN EQUINOX September 22

The Autumn Equinox in the Northern Hemisphere occurs on September 22<sup>nd</sup> of this year. At this moment we will experience the equality of night and day and then, in turn, experience more darkness than daylight in the next three months.

In Nevada County we get to vividly experience Autumn with the changing color of the leaves on the trees as well as the abundant harvest of apples, pears, grapes, pumpkins, squash and gourds at farmers markets. The Autumn Equinox is a nice moment to plant Spring bulbs. This year as well, the Draft Horse Classic & Harvest Festival occurs on the Autumn Equinox. An easy way to celebrate!

### WORLD CHARACTER DAY September 26

This is the fifth year of celebrating World Character Day. World Character Day is an opportunity to join with people all around the world who stop to honor, recognize and celebrate character strengths.

They have developed a "Periodic Table of Character Strengths" which I have found perfect to incorporate into our Kindergarten year. You can find out more about this at [www.letitriple.org/character-day/](http://www.letitriple.org/character-day/).

World Character Day occurs right in the middle of the week this year on Wednesday, September 26<sup>th</sup>. So it is a perfect moment to celebrate the character strength of courage which we will begin with this learning period and carry through the Autumn months.

TRADITIONAL WALDORF CELEBRATION  
"Michaelmas"  
September 29

MODERN CELEBRATION IN WALDORF-INSPIRED PROGRAMS  
"Festival of Courage"  
"Harvest Festival"

As Waldorf Schools originated in Europe, they followed the seasonal Christian calendar which was also interwoven into the traditional ways of celebrating in the local culture. As the progression of Waldorf Education spread to the Western part of Europe and then crossed the Atlantic to the United States, the custom of celebrations stayed largely the same with some local community considerations. Today Waldorf Education has spread throughout the world. Each country and culture blend the curriculum to recognize the key elements of festivals that are important to them. Japan, Israel, Brazil and the Lakota Reservation all have Waldorf Schools which include festivals unique to their culture.

For most of us in America, Michaelmas (September 29<sup>th</sup>) is perhaps the least celebrated of all the celebrations. In Ireland and England it is still recognized culturally, and the term "Michaelmas" is still used today in a non-sectarian way to celebrate at harvest time. As Michaelmas is actually a religious day and season, many people in the United States shy away from it and do not understand it. However, the essence of Michaelmas is courage, and from that I have found my own way of celebrating that is in alignment with the kindergarten age child.

As a teacher of young children, I have often found myself asking, "How do I recognize this moment of the year in a sincere way that honors the young child"? For me as a teacher at Twin Ridges, I have loved the idea of using the virtue of courage to assist children gaining physical strength and emotional steadiness. Courage is needed at this time of year for some children just to attend classes. The beginning of the year is a perfect moment to focus on courage.

Courage is derived from the Latin "cor" meaning heart. When one moves physically, we exercise our heart. I have thought that for the kindergarten age child, an obstacle course is the perfect way to celebrate courage. There are elements of bravery, perseverance and enthusiasm in practicing for the obstacle course.

Much of the festival's fun and work is in the preparation. Food, décor and activities take time to create. In this same way, I have already begun to prepare the children by introducing new skills such as jump roping and throwing a ball. I build on these skills in the next two weeks which culminates in an obstacle course the last week of September. In this way we celebrate courage. We also have a morning circle with a vivid imagination of the season.

Some fun activities to do this time of year are flying kites, sailing little boats in a stream, watching the salmon, dyeing a piece of silk with marigold flowers, making a sword and/or shield, making "dragon bread", going on a scavenger hunt and trying something new.

One new event for your family might be KVMR Celtic Festival and Marketplace. It does give a flavor of what a harvest time celebration may have felt like long ago in the British Isles. The dates are September 28 thru 30<sup>th</sup> at the Nevada County Fairgrounds. My former kindergarten student Cassidy Joy will be performing both Saturday and Sunday. This is an opportunity to see a local Waldorf student, who is now a parent herself, perform.

## CIRCLE

For the transition from Summer to Autumn, the songs "Squirrel Nutkin" and "Come Little Leaves" can be added to your songs from the last learning period in the first week. In the second week, begin a transition to Autumn songs. I create quite an elaborate circle for this time period that will be difficult to repeat at home. Instead add seasonal songs that are meaningful to you. You might look at the "Periodic Table of Character Strengths" at [www.letitripple.org/character-day/](http://www.letitripple.org/character-day/) for inspiration on selecting some strengths to focus on through your songs. Some familiar songs that match this time of year are "Row, Row, Row Your Boat", "Let's Go Fly A Kite" and "Puff The Magic Dragon".

Lavender's Blue Homeschool website is filled with songs, finger plays and circles. I love that you get the verse and also a way to listen to the melody. Try to listen without your child present. This creates a connection then for your child to "learn by heart" what you have to offer. The song "Lavender's Blue" is appropriate for this moment and familiar.

## FREE PLAY

Focus for this learning period will be on the days you cook and bake. I have included a bread recipe. There are offerings in the Mathematics & Science section that you can refer to for some ideas.

The bounty at the harvest lends itself to cooking and baking. Try to introduce some new foods. Figure out a schedule that works well for snacks. This can be a rhythm exercise for you as the parent to take up. The traditional Waldorf Kindergarten snack schedule looks like this with weekly foods centered on grains.

Monday	Rice
Tuesday	Oats
Wednesday	Millet ~ Bread Day
Thursday	Barley
Friday	Rye ~ Soup Day

An alternative, since many may be sensitive to grains, could look like this. I have correlated the colors of the foods with the Color of the Day.

Monday	Blue/Violet	Yogurt with Seasonal Fruit/Blueberries
Tuesday	Red	Apples & Nut Butter
Wednesday	Yellow	Corn on Cob/Bananas & Nut Butter
Thursday	Orange	Carrots & Hummus/Baked Sweet Potato
Friday	Green	Green Salad transitioning to Soup

Meal time is a good moment to introduce habits of helping. Setting the table, clearing plates, washing and sweeping all can be introduced. Some children just love this! This routine is worth it for the future! Expect a four year old to clear a plate, but a six year old's goal could be to do it all by Thanksgiving.

## KINDERGARTEN BREAD

### Ingredients:

Rapid Rise Yeast  
Sweetener \*\*  
Oat Milk  
Oil or Butter  
Flour  
Salt

\*\* Coconut sugar is nice. Maple syrup combined with the sugar is good too but will brown it a lot at times.

You have to estimate with this recipe. If you follow the steps, it usually turns out.

Turn oven to 350 degrees to preheat

Dissolve yeast in about ½ cup of warm water that has been sweetened with 1T. sugar. Let rise.

In pan on stove warm gently about ¾ cup oat milk.  
Add oil or butter if no allergy. Set aside to cool.

When both liquid items are nearly cool, mix them together gently.

Measure about 2 cups flour and add ¼ tsp salt. Mix together.  
Slowly add flour mixture to liquid mixture. If too wet, add more flour.  
Oil a bowl and transfer bread sponge to bowl, cover and let rise.

Knead risen bread with flour but do not make too dry.  
This is a very forgiving bread. You should be able to easily manipulate lots of shapes with it.

Cinnamon can be added to the flour in the flour/salt stage. You can add gluten free flour to wet mixture, but it can only be shaped gently then.

You can let the shaped dough rise a little more before baking for 12-15 minutes depending on the thickness of shapes. Sometimes it needs 20 minutes.  
Cool a bit before serving warm with butter, nut butter and/or jam.

## MATHEMATICS & SCIENCE

Daily for Second Learning Period - Daily nature walk observing changes in trees toward Equinox and into the first weeks of Autumn. Observe flights of birds and cloud formations. 15-20 minutes a day.

- Day 1 - For week one begin to focus on introduction to number 1. Blow out one candle. Find one item in house that is the only one of its kind. Plant radishes and carrots.
- Day 2 - Draw the number 1 in various ways using sand, dirt, millet, etc. Bake bread & create a #1. Adjust recipe for Day 14.
- Day 3 - Line different things up one at a time – 1 shoe, 1 sock, etc. You can also do this with fruits and vegetables.
- Day 4 - Play the counting game “one potato, two potato”. Use real potatoes then as well.
- Day 5 - Bake 1 pie or other round item. Notice the whole pie before serving. Serve saying, “one piece of pie for you, one piece of pie for me”.
- Day 6 - Dip Autumn leaves in melted beeswax or iron between wax paper. Place in windows.
- Day 7 - Repeat several of the activities from Week One to reinforce #1.
- Day 8 - Focus on the circle in nature. This is easily done with sunflowers, the full moon, etc. You will continue to look for circles, culminating with the September Harvest Full Moon on September 24/25<sup>th</sup>.
- Day 9 - Introduce the number 2. Eat together “two at a time” something easily countable that will not choke your child. Notice pairs on body parts: 2 thumbs, 2 ears, 2 eyes.
- Day 10 - Add simple clapping game with your hands “Lily Eats Bananas”  
Lily - Slap hand to thighs  
Eats - Clap hands together in area of heart  
Bananas - Meet your child's hand midair between you.  
Make an Equinox Soup. Cut items in 2 equally if possible.

- Day 11 - Intentionally cook or bake using measuring where you measure 2 of many things such as 2 tsp herbs, 2 cups water, 2 squash, etc. Observe Harvest Full Moon. Methodist Church at top of Broad St is sometimes good place for this.
- Day 12 - Fly a kite. Western Gateway Park usually has a breeze. Notice birds flying as well. Observe Harvest Full Moon.
- Day 13 - Using the character trait of "appreciation of beauty", go on an Autumn walk. East Broad St, Nevada St and Main St in Nevada City are nice places to notice changing colors and walk in leaves.
- Day 14 - Bake bread. Create a #2 with your dough. Create enough bread to make small dragon with scales if possible. Can use currants for eyes.
- Day 15 - Celebrate the Harvest time with friends or your child. One idea is the Bishops Pumpkin Patch field trip on September 28<sup>th</sup>. Sign up early.
- Day 16 - Include any activities listed previously that you may have missed.
- Day 17 - Combine #1 and #2. Verse "one-two buckle my shoe". Add math manipulatives to your day to begin counting.
- Day 18 - Choose favorite activity from above and repeat or add your own. Check your pumpkins.

## STORY

I originally stated that I would transition to “Little Red Cap” for the second Learning Period. After meeting the children, I feel as a group that they need a different story. However, Little Red Cap is still a viable story for home for many children.

I am going to be reading “Mister Greider's Farm” to them from the book Tell Me a Story from the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America. It is a story about caring versus one of discretion and courage like Little Red Cap. I know many stories by heart, but it is also OK to read a story and not memorize it.

On October 1<sup>st</sup> I will be transitioning to “Hugin and the Halloween Turnip” from The Seven-Year-Old Wonder Book by Isabel Wyatt. I will tell this story all of October culminating with our first play. We will perform it based on the readiness of the children. Stay tuned!

## MICHAELMAS STORY

For some children, Little Red Cap overcoming the wolf with the assistance of the hunter will be too much. Another offering could be “Snowflake and the Dragon” from The Seven-Year-Old Wonder Book. It is repetitive and beautiful. You can change some of the language, as I do particularly around the dragon's conversation with Snowflake. My daughter Marija loved the “fairy cows” and “fairy butter” part of the story. It is particularly good for the dreamy descriptions that can foster much imaginative play.

Created by Marguerite Vulfs September 2018