

Take a Fall

As the long, humid days of summer wane and the distance grows between the day time highs and the cooler evening temperatures, my senses become attentive in ways that have been lulled by the thick, languid summer air. Once sleepy and slow from the summer heat, new energy rushes and rises throughout my body. The sheer pleasure of the crisp, newness of autumn invites me to drink it in and play.

My skin welcomes the fall breeze, its weight and texture so distinct from the clammy, stickiness of summer air. This air feels thin and light, barely brushing my face like a cluster of small feathers wisping by. Now and then threads of cold air travel the same pathway and the tiny arm hairs on my skin stand up in surprise. Arms that have been sleeveless and bare for months reach for an old, familiar denim shirt. My neck and shoulders, tanned by the summer sun, now hide beneath turtleneck shirts and long sleeves. Toes, so used to hanging over the edge of sandals seek refuge in socks and closed-toed shoes.

Mother Nature and human nature express sounds differently in different seasons. In harmony with the sensory experience of my skin, my ears tune to the sounds of fall. Insect sounds abound in summer, the buzzing of grape-sized, big-eyed flies, nectar-laden bees and the orchestration of evening frogs. Windows closed to keep the hot air out and cool air in muffle voices and sounds. Yet, in the fall windows open and voices travel. Neighbors and car wheels on gravel are heard once again. Strollers, walkers and dog walkers who shied away from the hundred degree heat parade the neighborhood as their furry friends joyously lead them forward. Take an evening drive down a rural road and your eyes will wonder at banks of tall flood lights. When the roar of the crowd meets your ears, you'll recognize the united voices of fields of fans responding to the thrill and the agony of high school football games. Across the country, state fairs pronounce fall's arrival. If the first cold winds blow just right, you will hear the shouts of happy fair-goers atop the Ferris wheel. Should your travels take you within two miles of the site, the familiar smells of cotton candy and deep fat fryers will confirm to your senses that, indeed, the season has changed.

Summer air is heavy with the perfume of blooms and pollen. Her scents are bold and profuse. Fall is more subtle, musky and damp, like the faint smell of piles of leaves from shedding trees. It calls me to be quiet on a cool, rainy afternoon in a comfortable chair with a soft afghan and a good book. Evening is announced by the unmistakable smell of burning logs and curls of smoke escaping from neighbors' chimneys which beckon me to put on the tea kettle or stir hot chocolate in a tall mug.

The tastes of fall are warm and pungent – homemade soups, deep dish pies, thick stews and sweet sausages. Beautiful apples, pears and pumpkins, products of the harvest, are baked in cinnamon, butter and brown sugar. Punctuate a cool, fall evening with a slice of homemade apple pie topped by vanilla ice cream, followed by a hot cup of coffee and your senses may explode from the sheer joy of it.

Summer's rich canopy of green leaves shading the earth gradually turns to vibrant hues of gold, bronze, orange, red and sienna. Like charms on a bracelet, the leaves on trees turn and tingle from green to gold as the days unfold. Fall is vivid in color and sensory stimulation. The reds are as full bodied as a carafe of burgundy wine and as startling as droplets of fresh blood. The wetter the fall the more vibrant the pallet. A weekend in the mountains or an afternoon on the Blue Ridge Parkway is almost too much for a pair of eyes and a camera to capture. Mile after mile the words of the poet, Edna St. Vincent Millet, reverberate in your thoughts.

*O world, I cannot hold thee close enough!
Thy winds, thy wide grey skies!
Thy mists, that roll and rise!
Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag
And all but cry with colour! That gaunt crag
To crush! To lift the lean of that black bluff!
World, World, I cannot get thee close enough!*

Article written by: Joan Hardy Eison, a consultant specializing in organizational development, training, career coaching, writing and editing. Reach Joan at reset3@sc.rr.com