

A Few Tips for a Simple Life

by Michael Guilfoil, *The Spokesman-Review*

Organic farmer MaryJane Butters long ago embraced Thoreau's dictum to "simplify, simplify." As a Forest Service ranger in the 1970s, she spent two summers roaming Utah's Uinta Mountains with her home on her back. Later, she maintained the most remote wilderness ranger station in the Lower 48. Today, Butters and her family live eight miles outside Moscow, Idaho, on their farm, headquarters of her mail-order dry-foods business. But even e-commerce hasn't tempered Butters' enthusiasm for simplicity.

MaryJane's

2. Homespun Hospitality

Everyone appreciates personal space while visiting others, and gracious hosts go the extra mile by offering the comforts of home. Invite relaxation with a low-watt lamp and a mesmerizing selection of reading material in the guest bedroom. An alarm clock is requisite, but how about a CD player with a couple of soothing seasonal discs? Provide a pretty take-home journal too, encouraging guests to jot notes and musings from their holiday stay. My last bed-and-breakfast stay of the summer this year, a 10-year-old left the "recipe" above in mine.

3. Relax and Recharge

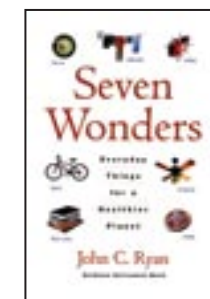
After a day of play in the brisk outdoors, gather your guests for a revitalizing afternoon warm-up. Replenish spirits with bottomless cups of homemade cocoa and organic local wine (www.localharvest.org). Add a cornucopia of satisfying winter snacks to tide hungry tummies over until the dinner bell rings. Easy and energizing munchies include dried fruits and nuts, sausage, cheese slices, and a platter of fresh-from-the-oven Walnut Raisin Focaccia Bread (order my quick Organic Focaccia Bread Mix at <http://shop.maryjanesfarm.org>).

4. Discovery Jars

Looking for an intriguing party favor to break the ice among dinner guests? Try a "Discovery Jar." Place a handful of trinkets in a lidded jar, fill jar with sand to about 2 inches from the top, tighten the lid, and attach a list of clues to help identify the buried treasures. For example: Frosty's nose was a ... ? Button! Each guest reads a clue, then shakes the jar to try and find the matching object in 1 minute. When time's up, pass the jar.

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In December 1999, a newspaper reporter from Washington called. He was writing a review of the book *Seven Wonders: Everyday Things for a Healthier Planet* by John C. Ryan. Michael Guilfoil of *The Spokesman-Review* newspaper asked me if I had my own "seven wonders." The story that ensued was headlined

"Simple Solutions." Here, then, is the continuation of that story. Each issue of *MaryJanesFarm* will feature in detail new solutions, and will give you all the information you need to make them your own.

Solutions from previous issues are available in the magazine section of my website: www.maryjanesfarm.org/Recipes-Patterns-Instructions

7 Thoughtful Gestures for Holiday Giving

Whether you're hosting this holiday season or heading out to visit friends and family, simple gestures of thoughtfulness and hospitality are a sure way to warm spirits and make everyone feel right at home.

1. Soothing Sachets

There's nothing like lavender's calming scent to relax a weary traveler. Welcome a special guest to a good night's sleep with a lavender sachet on her pillow. A quick way to make your own no-sew sachet is to place a generous pinch of lavender in the center of a lace-edged handkerchief, pull the corners together, and tie a ribbon around the bundle.



seven wonders

5. Bath & Beauty Basics

Don't wait for guests to worry that they've forgotten toiletries. Stock a cute caddy with all the "green" basics and beyond: Preserve's Recyclable Travel Set of toothbrush and razor (www.preserveproducts.com), Cinnamon Clove Toothpaste from Tom's of Maine, J.R. Liggett's Old-Fashioned Bar Shampoo, and Sun Dog's Organic Orange Lavender Body Balm (all available from vitacost.com). Include a couple of plush towels and a soft pair of slippers to bathe your guests in luxury.

6. Bundle 'Em Up

With winter visitors on the way, have extra outerwear—stocking caps, scarves, and mittens—on hand for kids and grownups so that no one is stuck indoors at sledding time. Wool socks will warm toes after the snow and make thoughtful spur-of-the-moment gifts too!



7. Spiced Sampler

Gift baskets are classic tokens of thoughtfulness, whether toward host or guest. The best offer bountiful goodies both practical and luxurious. Instead of settling for pre-packaged, create your own sampler of spicy scents that echo season's greetings with an undeniably personal touch. Thrift stores are often a wealth of castaway baskets waiting to be repurposed. Fill with anise star pods, flowering teas, votive candles, and essential oils.