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Slippery Year Author to Read at Orinda Library

By Andrea A. Firth



Melanie Gideon, author of *The Slippery Year*.
Photo Jonathan Sprague

thor of the 2009 best-selling memoir *The Slippery Year, A Meditation on Happily Ever After*.

"I had slipped out of my life, and I was on the outside looking in," says Gideon, whose book chronicles a year-long journey spent working her way back into her own life. Described as simultaneously poignant and hilarious, *The Slippery Year* is an entertaining and joyful read. "I'm not that funny or witty in person," admits Gideon, but she has found a way to translate what's amusing in the ordinary onto the page.

Gideon, who lives in the Oakland hills with her husband and 11 year-old son, had previously written two young adult fantasy novels, a genre that she loved reading in her youth. *The*

Slippery Year is her first venture into nonfiction and subject matter based on her personal experiences. "I had been writing dark fantasy fiction, and this voice just emerged from me like it had been waiting for a chance to come out," says Gideon.

The memoir is a collection of her observations of the everyday life events of a mother, a father, and young son. In contrast to another popular midlife memoir of today, Gideon did not travel to exotic countries to eat delicious food, pray at ashrams, and meet mysterious men; instead she focused on the ordinary things around her. "I didn't want to write a misery memoir," says Gideon, who finds humor in situations like the carpool line at school. "The small, mundane things in life are where the gold is."

The catalyst for her story was her husband's spontaneous purchase of a used, behemoth-sized camper van. Gideon first assumed that her husband was having a midlife crisis—replacing the more predictable Porsche with a family-style truck that has tinted windows, captain's chairs, and a toilet that requires emptying by hand. "I thought he was having a midlife crisis, but I was the one having the crisis," she says, adding, "He was taking risks and enjoying it, and I was sitting on the sidelines reluctant to be pulled in."

Today Gideon is more conscious to be present in the moment and does take more risks, although she admits that she hesitates with things that are physically adventurous. (It doesn't look like she'll be skydiving

any time soon.) She acknowledges that publishing the memoir was a risk in itself, "I have had to deal with a level of vulnerability. There was no hiding once the book came out." Recently released in paperback, *The Slippery Year* has also been translated and distributed inter-

nationally. Gideon's next book, a novel for adults called *Wife 22*, has an anticipated release date in 2012.

Gideon will be doing a reading and question and answer session at the Orinda Library on September 22nd from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Fabulous Foods for Fall

By Dr. Theresa Tsingis, DCMS

"For man, autumn is a time of harvest, of gathering together. For nature, it is a time of sowing, of scattering abroad."

Edwin Way Teale



Autumn isn't fall at all when it comes to delicious foods, it rises to the top of culinary lists. The colorful fruits, roots, tubers and vegetables of harvest time also contribute to make us healthier as we go towards winter. They're loaded with phytochemicals – pigmented antioxidants and vitamins that support immune system health during the change of seasons and influx of "germs." Taking vitamins is no replacement for treating your-

self to the produce we are lucky to have in farmers markets and grocery stores. As you can see below, there are many fabulous foods in fall. Venture into these when dreaming up "what's for dinner":

- Apples, pears, figs
- Beets -- orange, red, yellow
- Carrots, Turnips, Parsnips
- Cabbage, Brussel sprouts, Broccoli
- Cranberries, Pomegranates, Persimmons
- Sweet potatoes or yams

- Pumpkins, winter squash (acorn, butternut, etc.)

A tasty and smart way to benefit from these natural foods is to combine several colors in recipes. Plenty of mouth-watering fall recipes exist and have wide appeal. Let yourself wander through websites and cookbooks and have some fun. Here are several recipe ideas:

- Tri-color beet salad with feta, toasted walnuts & oregano
- Figs braised with cabbage, apples & balsamic vinegar
- Greek stuffed cabbage with turkey meat & avgolemono sauce
- Pumpkin soup with shrimp*
- Cauliflower Marranca*
- Tunisian Vegetable Stew*
- Gluten-free Pasta Fagiolo (pasta & bean soup)
- Dr. T.'s Special Chard Saute' (See below)
- Pears Poached in Red Wine

Dr. T's Chard Saute'

(The contrasts of these ingredients appeal to even chard-avoiders.)

- 1 bunch Swiss chard, sliced in 1 inch ribbons
- 3 yams or sweet potatoes, diced in 1-in. cubes
- 3 leeks (whites) chopped, or 2 medium onions, large dice
- 1 apple, peeled & diced
- 3/4 lb. organic free-range bacon (pork or turkey)
- 2 Tbs. high-heat canola oil

Directions: Fry or microwave bacon til crispy, chop coarsely and set aside. Steam or microwave sweet potatoes for about 5 minutes; set aside. Heat oil in large skillet, add onions or leeks and saute til very soft and almost caramelized, then add chard, yams, apples and bacon. Saute' til fragrant and yams are cooked through. Serves 4.

Pears Poached in Red Wine*

From <http://www.whats4eats.com/desserts/poires-au-vin-rouge-recipe>

- Note: The pears can be poached ahead of time, & stored in poaching liquid)
- 4 Bosc pears
 - 3 cups red wine
 - 1/2 cup sugar (or Xylosweet)
 - Long strip lemon zest
 - 1 cinnamon stick

Peel the pears, leave stem attached, slicing small piece off bottom of pears so they'll stand up straight. Add wine, sugar or Xylosweet, lemon zest & cinnamon stick to large saucepan and bring to a boil over medium flame. Stir to dissolve sugar completely then reduce heat to very low. Place pears in simmering wine & poach for 15-20 minutes, carefully turning from time to time. Do not overcook pears. Remove pears to individual plates. Bring wine to a boil again and reduce to about 1 cup. Strain the liquid, pour over the pears and serve. The poet George Eliot wrote of fall, "Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird I would fly about the earth seeking successive autumns." Enjoy your seasonal bounty and you will be healthier.

*For more info:
<http://www.whats4eats.com/seasons/fall-recipes>
<http://pnwmg.org/pdf/mgfallveg.pdf>
<http://epicurious.com>
"Moosewood Cookbook", Mollie Katzen, Tenspeed Press, Berkeley
"Moosewood Collective Cooks at Home", Moosewood Collective, Simon & Schuster, N.Y.



Dr. Theresa Tsingis, DCMS specializes in functional medicine, a branch of nutrition focused on prevention, medical research and therapeutic lifestyle change. Her practice, Lamorinda Nutrition, is located at 251 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette CA. Tel. 925.283.Well -or-drTsingis@comcast.net

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