

Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View

Dear Listener:

Thank you for stopping by for a visit at Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View podcast! To make it easy, you will find a transcript of each episode. I hope you enjoy the visit!

Episode 57 - Summer Fun and Games

Summer is headed our way. The kids will be out of school. You need a break from work. We want to find something we can do together as a family – but one look at the checkbook and you know the expensive vacation destinations won't work for this year. You still want to have fun and make some memories, but what can you do? It may be time to consider having a Staycation.

A Staycation is a vacation where you stay at home. It is amazing how much money you can save, but still have a fun time. With a little bit of planning and preparation, you can do as much or more on a staycation than you can on a vacation, yet still feel like you have had a break. And even better, you won't have piles of laundry to do before you can go back to work.

Just as you would for a vacation, it is very helpful to have a plan and budget in place if you are staying home this summer. Some things, such as having a game day, picnic, or even a movie night at home won't cost much. But you may want to take a few day trips.

The first thing you need to do is talk to your family ahead of time. Allow each person to choose up to three things they would like to do. Give them a few parameters, such as within a one-to-two-hour drive, cost limitations, and what they want to do when they get there.

Once you have their lists, you can do a bit of research. Call or look at websites to determine ticket prices, amenities, and more. Some places, such as zoos, amusement parks, and games zones may have a place to eat lunch, or at the very least, a snack bar.

When you design your budget, keep these extras in mind. Or you can save money by preparing your own snacks and a picnic lunch. Check first with that establishment, as some places don't allow you to bring your own – movie theaters are a prime example.

Now that you know how much things cost, narrow it down to one or two destinations, and then plan the rest of your staycation doing fun things at home. If you aren't sure what that would be, here are a few things you can do.

If you have kids, design a Treasure Hunt. Create clues that will lead the players to between 5 and 10 places throughout your home and yard. The final clue will lead to the Treasure, which can be a simple bag filled with candy and small items, such as a deck of cards, a small toy or colors and coloring books.

Have a backyard campout. You will need a small tent for this, but everything else is relatively inexpensive. Consider building a fire in a fire pit, then roasting hot dogs, marshmallows and making S'mores. Then tell stories, play word games, or have a competition for the best or worst jokes.

If you are creative, choose a favorite board game, such as checkers, chess, or Candy Land and design a life-size version. You can use stepping stones or wooden squares for the board, make dice out of blocks of foam, and have each person be their own playing piece. If there are spaces where additional instructions are required when they land on them, write them down on a piece of paper or an index card.

You can also have a Movie night. Pop popcorn, buy small bags of each person's favorite candy, and settle in. Or you can challenge the kids to create their own play. Allow them to write the storyline, find costumes, and use their creativity to design the props. Then be their audience!

If you don't have children, you can still have fun on a Staycation. Take a few tips from the suggestions we've already mentioned – choose one or two things you would like to do outside of the house, such as going to a play or a bit more elaborate date night than normal. Spend a day doing something you love, such as going to a festival or a flea market.

Another thing you can do is choose a meal you love, or one you have been wanting to try. Head out to a local farmers' market and find fresh produce. Once it's cooked, you can either set the table with candlelight or turn it into a picnic. Another option is to get with a few friends and have a Progressive dinner.

One thing I will say about a couple's style staycation. You may be tempted to use the time doing chores around the house. And that's fine. But save at least one or two days to do something fun. It will make your time off work much more enjoyable, and you will go back to work better rested.

If you are single, a staycation is still a great way to spend time off of work. Find a friend and have a play day. Use your time off to take a short class and learn something new. If you love to cook, set aside an evening to invite friends over for dinner and game night. You could even offer to host this year's neighborhood picnic.

Keep in mind - just because you are single doesn't mean you have to stay home. Some of us just enjoy having a day all to ourselves. Go ahead and visit a favorite place to go or do something you don't get to do very often. Spend a day at the museum, flea market, or just take yourself to a special lunch.

And it doesn't matter if you are single, a couple, or even an entire family. One great thing to do during your Staycation is host a family reunion, a neighborhood picnic, or even a potluck. These are all fun things to do with a group of friends and family!

Summer doesn't have to be boring. Vacations don't have to be expensive. By planning ahead and working from a budget, having a staycation can be just as much - or more fun than leaving home. All it takes is a little forethought, a bit of creativity, and a readiness to have fun!

If you want to learn more about the topic at hand just visit my website at www.thefarmwife.com.

If you have questions or just want to stop in for a visit, you can do that through email at thevirtualporch@gmail.com. And be sure to subscribe - you don't want to miss a single conversation. I'll be sitting on the porch every Monday morning waiting for your visit!

Thanks again for stopping in. I will see you next week on Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View. And while you are waiting on the next episode, grab that glass of refreshment, pull up a rocker, and sit back for a while. It's time to

Relax & Enjoy!

julie