

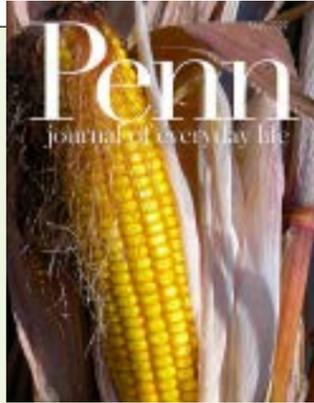
FALL 2022

Penn

journal of everyday life

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Seasonal: *Leaves and Seeds*



Fall is a time when seedpods are fully formed and dried. The beautiful leaves on the trees inspire long car rides down country lanes, not to mention photography. We have our favorite things to do and places to go in this colorful season. Here are just a few.

After we have scoured the yard for lovely

dried things, harvested the sunflower seedpods and dried them, then we think about things to make with the treasure. One of our best ideas is to cut grapevines and form them into wreaths, then tie on the seedpods. We call these nature wreaths because when finished, we hang them out on the trees for the birds and animals. Because that is our purpose, we tie the dried flowers





and tulle bags of seeds onto the wreath with twine (instead of wire that might hurt the animals). Our nature wreaths are a kind of bird and squirrel feeder.

In addition to our sunflowers, we will pick up all kinds of things to add to our nature wreaths such as nuts, acorns, pinecones, corn, wheat or other grasses. One year, we took a bunch of them to our local firehouse craft fair and donated the proceeds to the department.

The leaves are beautiful in the fall in Pennsylvania. Our favorite place to walk and see them is Confederate Avenue, part of the





Gettysburg National Park (*next pages*). We also love to drive in the Pocono Mountains to see the leaves changing. The layers of color is very special—trees, ferns and huckleberries on the ground. Piles of sunflower seeds on the back steps are fun to watch for chipmunks who fill their cheeks then run off to hide. One year, we opened a box in the garage that stores our winter boots and found each boot full of dried corn.







Day Trip: *Ephrata Cloister*



The historic Ephrata Cloister describes their mission as preserving a legacy of William Penn's Holy experiment. Beginning in 1732, and now a cherished feature of downtown Ephrata, the Cloister became known for its architecture, art, music and publications. It was a disciplined monastic lifestyle focused on their devotion to a strict life and religion.



During the American Revolution, Ephrata served as a hospital for nearly 260 soldiers. Some are buried in a cemetery nearby.

The community evolved over the years, becoming part of the German Seventh Day Baptist Church until it closed in 1934. According to Cloister history, “in 1941 the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission assumed administration and began a program of research, restoration, and interpretation of this important historic site with the support of the Ephrata Cloister Associates.”

It is a lovely place to walk, even if you do not take the tours or enter the buildings. The grounds are open to visitors and the bookshop is a treasure trove of local art and history.







Art: *George Nakashima*

Our first awareness of the work of George Nakashima was seeing a table on the PBS television show, *Antiques Roadshow*. It was a beautiful piece, contracted by the original owners directly from George Nakashima. They had visited his workshop and looked at the woods he had chosen. The table was inherited by the children who brought it to the television show, where it was appraised at an extraordinary and memorable value.

George Nakashima has influenced generations of woodworkers with his designs and attitude. *Wikipedia* writes that Nakashima “was one of the leading innovators of 20th century furniture design and a father of the American craft movement.” His appreciation for the uniqueness of each piece of wood is an education. The design of furniture maintaining a live edge is now a characteristic of many woodworkers following his lead.

We found that George Nakashima had his studio in New Hope, Pennsylvania. After his death in 1990, his workshop continued to operate and produce many of the original designs of the artist. Thankfully they also offer smaller accessories that fit the budgets of more modest wallets.

We would love to have visited the workshop—they do offer tours. But to get a reservation is next to impossible. When

we checked for times in July, the tickets were sold out for the year. Patience and persistence might be required to snag a visit to the grounds and buildings. We settled to mail order several small pieces and a catalog that we have pictured here. We will continue to try to find an open time one day to visit.

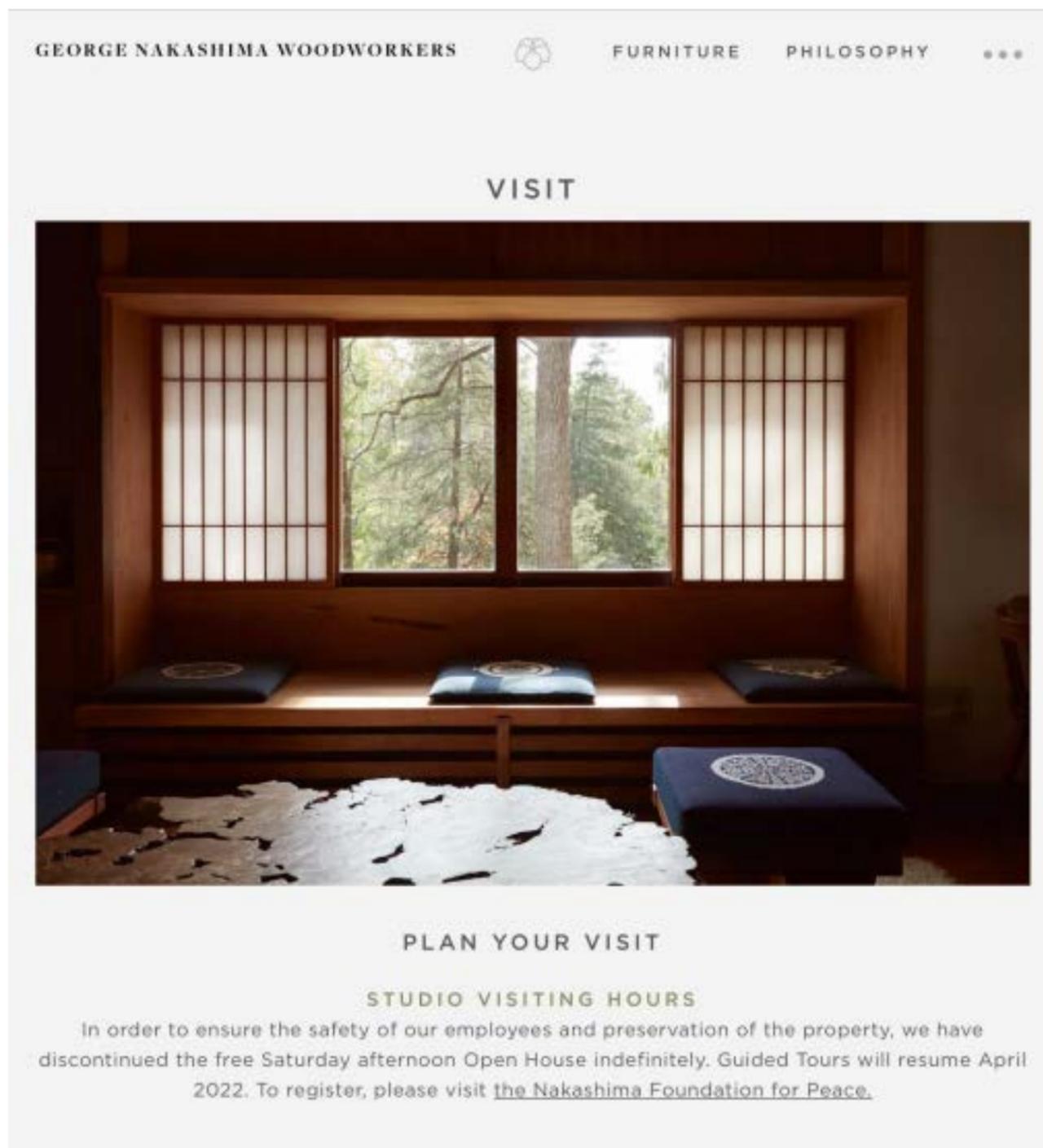
Below, Nakashima catalog page. Right, two Nakashima bread boards.





Above, Nakashima catalog cover and two design cards they include with each order. Right, catalog pages.





Above, Nakashima web page. Right, Nakashima letter opener.



Harvest: *Mushrooms*

When we found out that Pennsylvania leads the nation in mushroom production we were fascinated. We had passed mushroom farms near the highways on our travels but did not

understand how important that crop was to Pennsylvania. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture PA Preferred program, in 2011 the 69 mushroom farms in the Commonwealth grew 65 percent of the total mushrooms grown in the United States.



Harvest: *Mushrooms*

September is National Mushroom Month. (Who knew?) Exploring further, we found that Kennett Square Pennsylvania is the Mushroom Capital of the World. That led us to the Phillips Mushroom Farm, founded in 1962 and

the first commercial farm to grow shiitake mushrooms year-round.

While we don't live close enough to the Phillips farm to pick up fresh mushrooms, they gladly ship dried mushrooms and a variety of mushroom products. When we



Harvest: *Mushrooms*

shopped in our local stores, we started checking the labels for product origin and found canned varieties grown and packed right here in Pennsylvania.

We made mushroom soup using a Portobello Chowder mix from Phillips. It turned out beautifully. We made appetizers using phyllo tartlet shells

then stuffed them with fresh and dried mushrooms, feta cheese and herbs. They were perfect served with slices of fresh fig. Next, we made mushroom and goat cheese stuffed phyllo triangles to have with our soup. Working with the phyllo wasn't as hard as we had anticipated and the results were certainly worth the effort.





Celebration: *Thanksgiving*

Two of our favorite parts of Thanksgiving—dessert and the leftovers. This year, the desserts included a cupcake wreath with candy clay oak leaves and peanut butter acorns. We started with chocolate cupcakes. We iced some with chocolate fudge frosting and some

with homemade marzipan. Then leaves and acorns were placed on each cupcake and the cupcakes were circled on a wooden board on the table.

Candy clay is a fun and simple recipe made with corn syrup and melted chocolate. For the wreath we used Hershey chips from the baking aisle of the grocery store





in butterscotch, dark chocolate and Reese's peanut butter flavor. We use about ¼ cup of corn syrup to 12 ounces of chocolate. There are lots of candy clay recipes. We find Wilton's instructions successful and easy.

Once the clay is made, we cover it in plastic wrap and put it in a ZipLoc bag. We pinch off and roll out a small piece on a cutting board, then cut it with cookie cutters to shape. We press the pattern of leaf veins in the candy dough using a mold but you can use a real leaf that you've washed and dried.

To give the candy leaves a natural curl, we crumple up aluminum foil in a baking dish, gathering it in places to create high and low spots. Then the finished leaves are draped on the foil and set aside to harden. We brush the leaves with cocoa powder and



edible glitter to highlight the colors and dimensional pattern in the leaves.

We found a mold to make life-size acorns. Using melted Reese's baking chips, we filled the mold then cooled it in the freezer just enough to pop out the finished acorns. We repeat the process until we have enough acorns for our decoration.

Once the cupcakes are frosted or the marzipan circles attached, the peanut butter

acorns and candy leaves are placed on each cupcake with a dollop of melted chocolate.

The past couple of years, we look forward to getting a spiral honey ham for the holiday meals. One of our favorite things to do with the leftovers is to make ham salad. We grind up big pieces of the ham and add sweet pickles, mayonnaise or yogurt. Then we make sandwiches with a good rye bread and fresh lettuce or a salad plate on fresh kale.



Garden: *Saving Seeds*

One of the things we do in our garden at the end of every year is to gather and save the seeds for the next season. We pluck the seeds out of some of the sunflowers, then bag, label and freeze them until spring. Marking the growing year on the bag is important. The rest of the sunflowers we hang upside down to dry and then make nature wreaths or decorations with them.

The morning glories produce seeds

abundantly, more than we can use the following year. So we collect a bagful and the rest go to compost when the dead plants are removed. We separate the seed from the rest of the plant and then bag, label and freeze them until spring. This is our process for all of our seed collecting in the fall. We traditionally have pots of marigolds by the swing and bordering each raised planting bed. These are another seed we collect, separate from the plant and save.





Above, a closeup of leaves, nut, dried flowers, eucalyptus, twigs and wheat. Right, the finished hat on a table and hanging on our neighbor's door. Since these are indoor or behind glass door decorations we use hot glue and wire to attached the decorations to the hats. Animals can't get at them so we are not as careful with our materials as we are for the nature wreaths.





Crafts: *Knitted Pumpkins*



We found a pattern for knitting pumpkins in the round on the web and made a bunch of them for the fall. We used acrylic worsted yarns and polyester

stuffing. Although we have seen them made in many colors, we used primarily white or orange yarn. When they were finished, we inserted a small piece of wire into the stem to be able to bend it into a natural arch.



Crafts: Knitted Pumpkins

We chose a pattern for our pumpkins that knit them on four needles in the round. They look a little like a sweater cuff until they are stuffed and shaped.

Our local fire company hosts a craft fair in the fall, so we packed up a bunch of our knitted pumpkins in mesh onion bags to donate for their fundraising. We sent along both colors for them to sell or give away during their event.







Local Eats: *Hershey's Chocolates*



Everyone knows Hershey as a worldwide business operation, but it is headquartered and started right here in Pennsylvania. Their contributions to the community and the state go far beyond chocolate and an amusement park to include education and medical research. Though they have many products, we find Hershey Dark Chocolate Miniatures are a staple in our kitchen cupboard right beside the sugar, coffee, cocoa and spices. While we use chocolate

to make yummy desserts and snacks, that is far from the limit. We use them to make three meals a day special—even savory main courses benefit from the addition of chocolate. Then, because we admire the Zero Waste lifestyle, we save the Hershey Miniatures candy papers as a craft material to make things like a gold basket.

Snacks. When we find a batch of particularly nice, plump strawberries, we like to melt a few Hershey Miniature bars to dip. As long as the chocolate is already melted and we are snacking, we also dip



pretzels. Leftover can be refrigerated. Another fun and healthy snack is to melt the dark chocolate bars and stir in pistachios, almonds, hazelnuts and dried dark cherries. We spread the mixture on a cookie sheet lined with wax paper, cool and cut into pieces. Anything we don't serve right away is packed into containers and





refrigerated or frozen for later.

Breakfast. Our favorite breakfast often includes a hazelnut butter we make in the food processor with toasted hazelnuts and melted dark chocolate. We don't add sugar because it really doesn't need it. Then we use the chocolate nut butter inside crepes with banana slices rolled up. When we

make waffles, we put a little of the dough in a cake pop mold with bits of chocolate and bake it to make waffle or pancake poppers.

Hershey miniature bars are just the right size to roll up in a Pillsbury crescent dough before they are baked. Then we sprinkle cocoa powder or confectioners sugar on them before serving. One of our favorite



cookies is a pie crust hand pie with little chocolate bars tucked inside before sealing and baking them. Extra melted chocolate is drizzled on top to finish.

Mealtime. Believe it or not, we found a recipe for marinara with dark chocolate. It added a nice richness to the sauce, which

we serve over linguine. Our favorite bean burritos and cheese enchiladas are even better with mole sauce using melted dark chocolate. Dona Marie Mole Sauce is the base for our recipe, adding more melted dark chocolate. We like a mildly spicy sauce but you can kick yours up to any heat you





like. We serve our burritoas and enchiladas with sides of rice, a vegetable like corn or green beans and fresh salsa.

Dessert. Chocolate and mint is a classic combo. We make a cream cheese mint dough then use that to make peppermint patties and chocolate walnut brownies. While we also make shaped or pressed mints with the mint cream cheese dough, we like to dip fresh peppermint and spearmint leaves in the melted chocolate. We refrigerate them, then serve with





dessert, on ice cream or to garnish cake.

Ice cream. Whenever we make ice cream or frozen yogurt, mix-ins are popular. It's nice to have chocolate on hand to chop up and add as the last step of churning, before the ice cream goes into the freezer. This batch was made with blackberries, raspberries, blueberries and Greek yogurt. Chopped Hershey miniature bars were added before freezing. All varieties work chopped in ice cream—with peanuts, crisp rice or plain dark chocolate.

No waste. We also save the Hershey Miniatures wrappers to make candy wrapper chain baskets. (Remember gum wrapper chains as a kid?) The dark chocolate miniature collection has gold foil on their wrappers. Folded just right, they make a sweet gold basket.





Home Sweet Home: *Kutztown Recipes*

Both of us grew up in families with German immigrants no too far back up the family tree. That meant we both had memories of foods on the table that originated in German and were translated here to be Americanized. My father loved kuchen like only his mother could make. David often recited a litany of German foods he remembered and missed from the farm as a child. The result of all this is that we are constantly on the lookout for authentic recipes and trying them to see if the result measures up to the memories. We had found a bunch of recipes on scraps of papers in one of his mother's kitchen drawers, but they were barely more than a list of ingredients. Rarely were there measures assigned to each ingredient. Most often there was no indication of technique.

This year we bought the cookbook, *Festival Favorites*, from the Kutztown Folk Festival. It had the subtitle, "Guten Essen — Good Eatin'". The Kutztown Folk Festival is the oldest continuously operated folk life festival in America and famous for its offering of Pennsylvania German foods. The recipe book did contain some of the memory foods, so we tried them out.

The text reminded us of many of the church and local cookbooks we had collected over the years. They were more than a list of ingredients (like his mother's recipes) but thin on technique. In a couple of cases the ingredients were missing completely, such as a noodle recipe that forgot





to indicate flour in the list. We chose to make the meatloaf, scalloped potatoes, corn chowder and apple dumplings. Like all good recipes, the second time we made it we added things from our memories of the recipes. For the corn chowder, for instance, when we made it a second time we added carrots and celery. Still, the meals were a success from both the taste and memory perspectives. The book goes on our cookbook shelf and will be referenced again.





Best Views: *Out the Window*



Above, a view from our window in the fall. *Previous pages*, the first snowfall.

Penn, journal of everyday life

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