

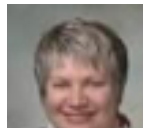
THE BUFFALO NEWS

My View: Flavors of memory engage our senses

Sharon F. Cramer

15 hrs ago

My memories just appear when my mind is at rest – like clouds in the sky, they float in. Sometimes, they push forward, offering more detailed glimpses of what was. Randomly, they blow around our mental landscapes, following the air currents outside our control.



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What if we could create a menu of memories, and select a flavor of the day to explore? Instead of the familiar, the Granny Smith apples of our past, we could bring back the unexpected, the tropical fruit Life Saver of a day forgotten?

Becoming chefs of our reminiscences, our recollections can offer us nourishment and satisfaction. Times past, everyone carried a roll of Life Savers – my mother’s favorite was butter rum. The unpredictability of the five flavors in a roll meant that we never knew which flavor would pop up next.

Some days might be right for cherry-flavored memories, offering us excursions into delicious beginnings. Starting the school year with the box of 64 crayons in years past, with new laptop computers today, holds promise of the possible. Sweet, uncomplicated at the start, some memories deliver combinations of sounds and sights that entice us.

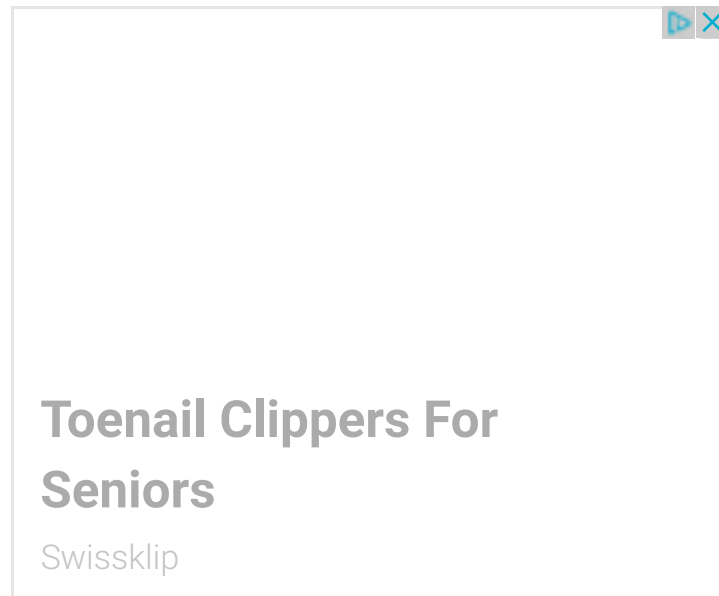


How can we summon up these simpler memories? Looking around at home, identifying objects that hold history, whose whispers we've not even heard for decades, can lead us into forgotten pasts.

Orange memories – more complicated friendships, projects, family moments – extract us from our present. Using grated orange rind in an otherwise unexceptional recipe offers a burst of fresh, prickly taste. Looking back over letters and cards and texts received, revisiting the evolution of major undertakings in our lives can give us a chance to put difficult moments in perspective. Taking pride, reaching closure,

seeing how far we have come – those orange segments of memory help us transition from then to now.

I used to think of memories as a continually enticing Pandora’s box, with curiosity edging me toward frequent unlocking of my mental cabinets. It seemed inevitable that I would get stung by troubling memories released by my own unguarded moments. Pricked by memories of loss, “could have,” “should have,” the past (with eternally escaping bothersome memories) was in charge, not me.

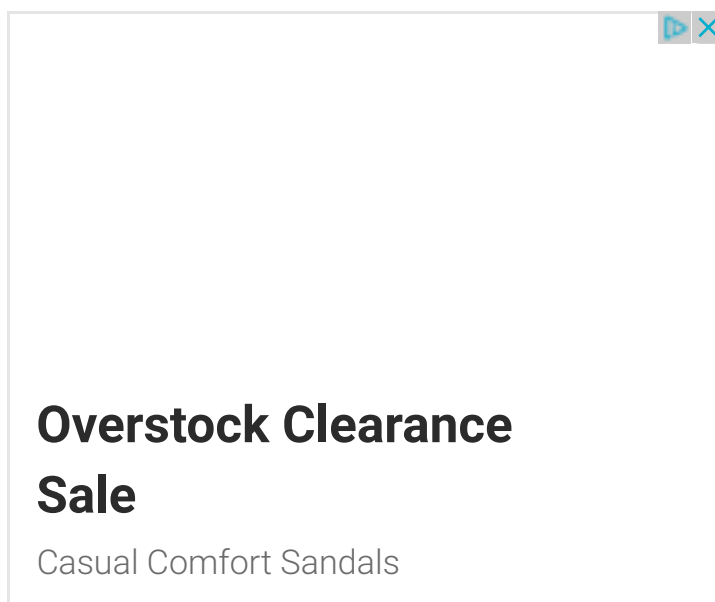


Now, choice is mine. I keep my hand on top of the Pandora’s box, and instead seek out the “flavor of the day” for my recollections. A watermelon choice offers me a way out of the snow, the pandemic, into summers of decades past. I can decide to return to summer music camp, Lake Michigan, dusk at Reinstein Woods. The watermelon eating that happened in parks or backyard picnics offers crunch

and flavor, instead of our frozen world. The conscious shift offers me options for escape.

Choosing new projects, embarking on untried opportunities, is my other way to sidestep memory. A complex teriyaki flavor – let that be associated with a Covid-inspired reorganization initiative, one that had remained imaginary until recently.

It was thought that on the tongue, four flavors could be detected – sweet, bitter, sour and salty. But this theory was ruled as obsolete several decades ago. Similarly, the idea that we are victims of the random onslaught of our memories can be eliminated, and replaced.



Become the master chef of your mind, the gourmet designer of what, when, and where you allow the taste of the past to linger. Select the flavor of your day – kiwi, lemon, coconut, hot sauce – and let your memories follow your lead, rather

than the other way around.

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