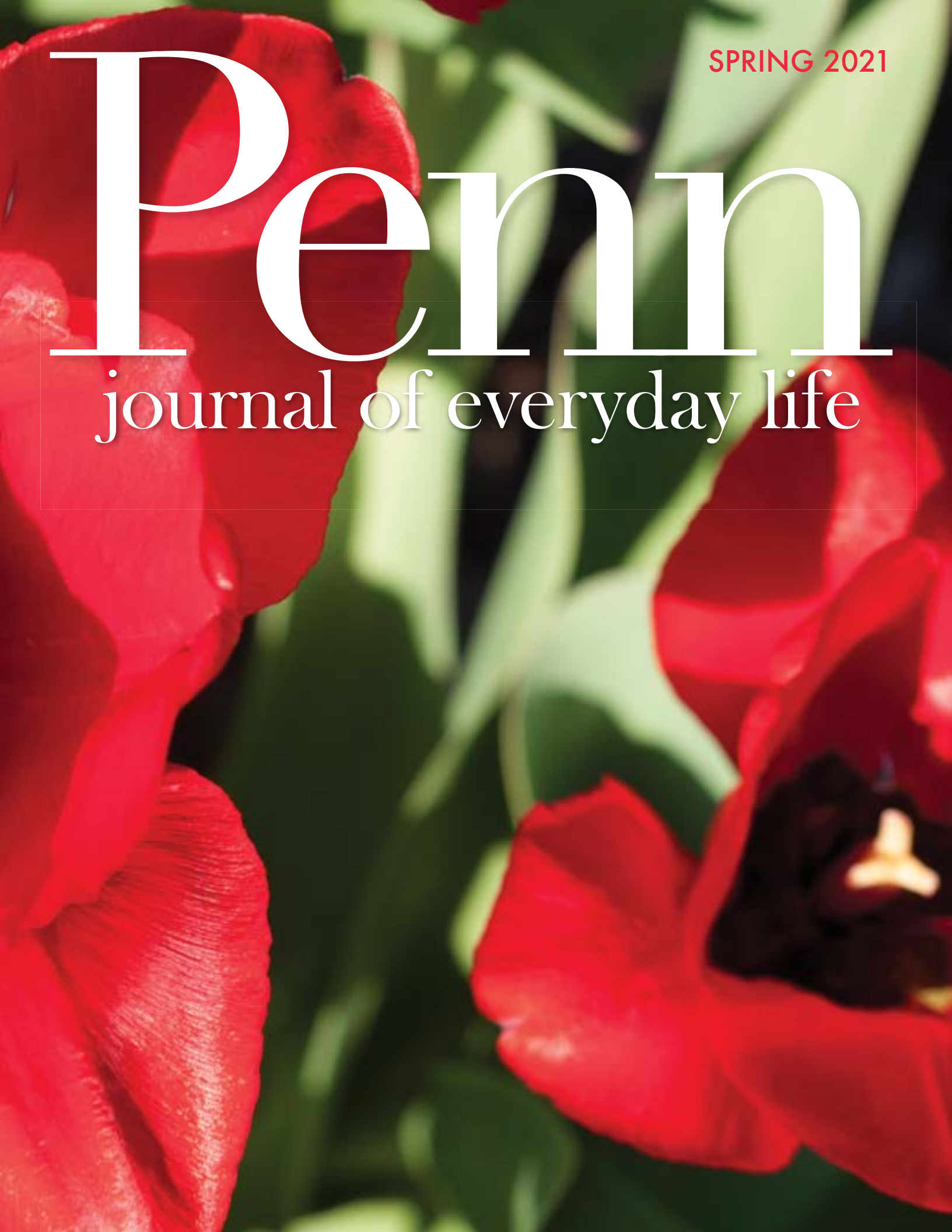


SPRING 2021

Penn

journal of everyday life





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Seasonal: *Hearts & Flowers*

As soon as Christmas is over, the search for spring bulbs popping up begins. Along with anticipation of the flowers, we take out the heart-shaped baking pans to make buttery pound cakes to celebrate the coming season. Whether elaborately iced with buttercream frosting or sprinkled

with sifted confectioner's sugar, we present the cakes using our grandmother's lace tablecloth and our favorite crystal plates with embossed hearts. We like to use real flowers to decorate our heart confections and float rose-shaped candles in a bowl (but make sure no one eats them).

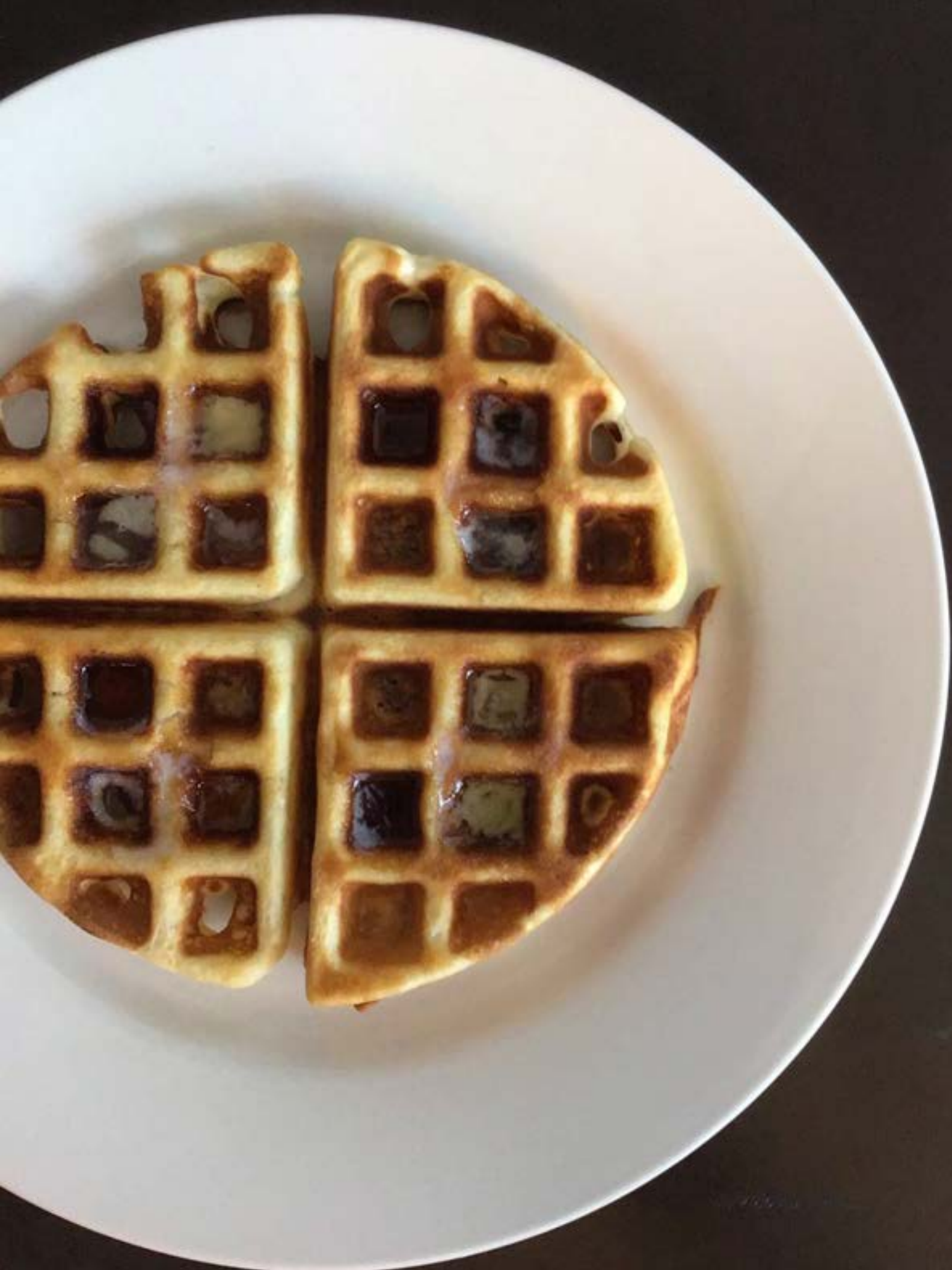


Seasonal: *Hearts & Flowers*

At the first thought of Spring, we bring out the baskets. Years ago we made a mold for Hartstone to produce this iced and edible gingerbread cookie basket. We filled it here with butter mints. For Easter, we fill it with chocolate eggs and spun sugar.

The ceramic basket is our favorite for cut flowers. This one is a vintage George Davis Nantucket Basket made for him by Bennington Potters about forty years ago. Both the mold and the ceramic basket can be found on auction sites.





(Virtual) Day Trip: *Nova Maple Syrup*

During this past year of Covid-19 precautions, we started treating ourselves to special things that tasted wonderful. Traditional comfort foods. Since we couldn't travel or shop, we looked for things that we could get delivered. It was a special bonus that our orders supported a business in our state. Nova Maple fit the bill perfectly. While we can't wait to go there in person, our joy in the discovery of their products is, for the time being, very special.

We love their maple candies and always buy extra to share in a care package for our son. We even sent him an extra waffle



(Virtual) Day Trip: *Nova Maple Syrup*

maker we had with some Nova Maple Syrup and our favorite mix. Then, the *New York Times* Food section ran a recipe for baked cider donuts that just begged for cinnamon and maple sugar to dredge the finished donut. But even the simple favorites like oatmeal with raisins are extra good sprinkled with maple sugar. Right about now, Nova is tapping this year's batch of maple for more delicious treats. The food pictures are ours, but we thank Nova for their images of the trees and the facility. Nova Maple Syrup, <http://novamaple.com>



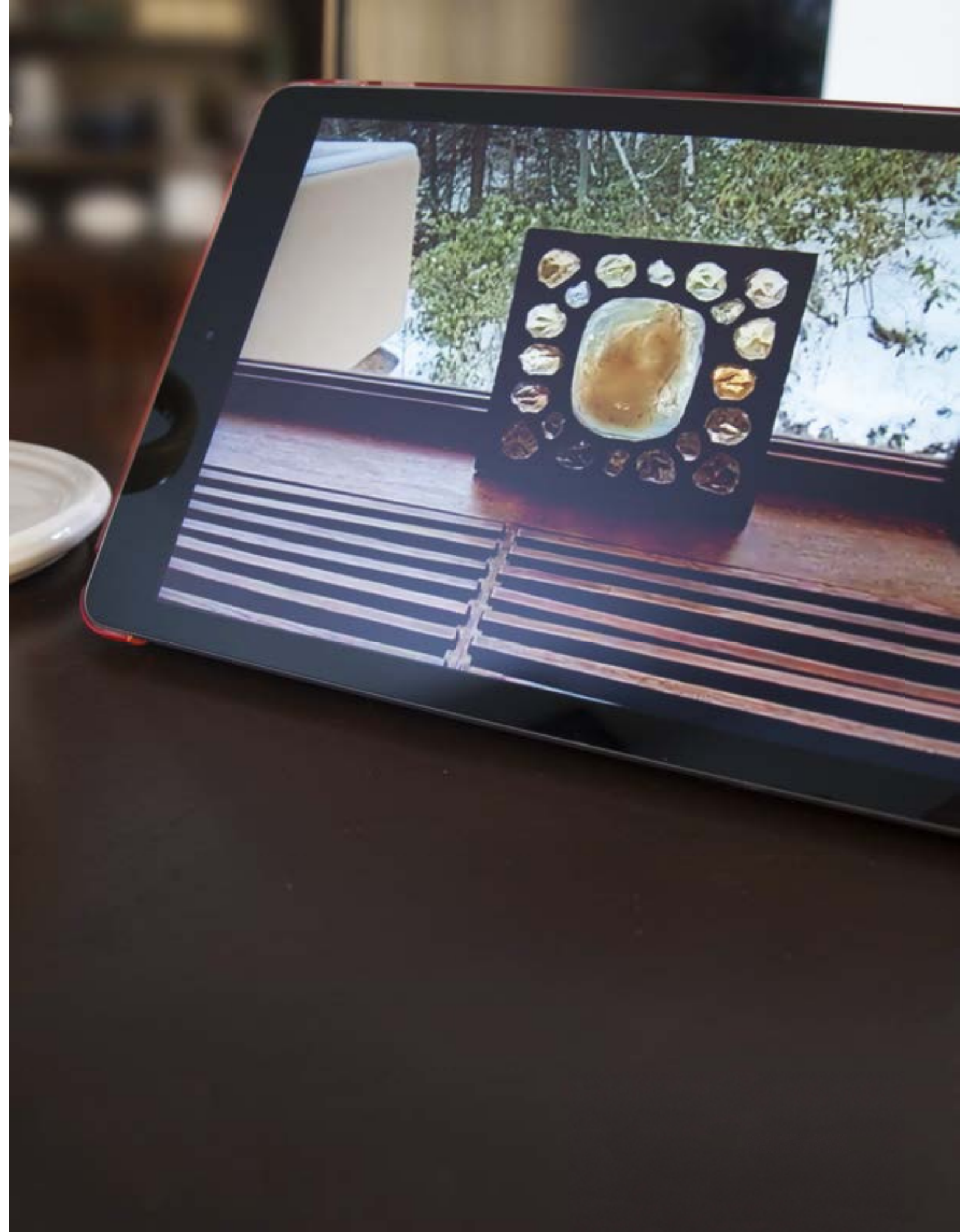
Art: *Fallingwater*



In the past, our art excursions focused on studio tours and visiting particular artists, exhibits or locations. Deterred by Covid-19, we still found ways to enjoy some of the great art in Pennsylvania. Our most recent favorite was to explore Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater in western Pennsylvania. We would rather visit, but short of that we found the next best things. First, we participated in an online livestream educational program. We chose

our first one on Tiffany pieces in the collection of Fallingwater. We were taken on a virtual tour and could ask questions during the presentation from the comfort of our couch.

Then we visited the museum store and purchased videos and a calendar to extend our experience. There is a live cam on the Fallingwater website to see the structure from a classic angle over the waterfalls. Virtual programs are many and varied. But the bottom line, Fallingwater is a beautiful



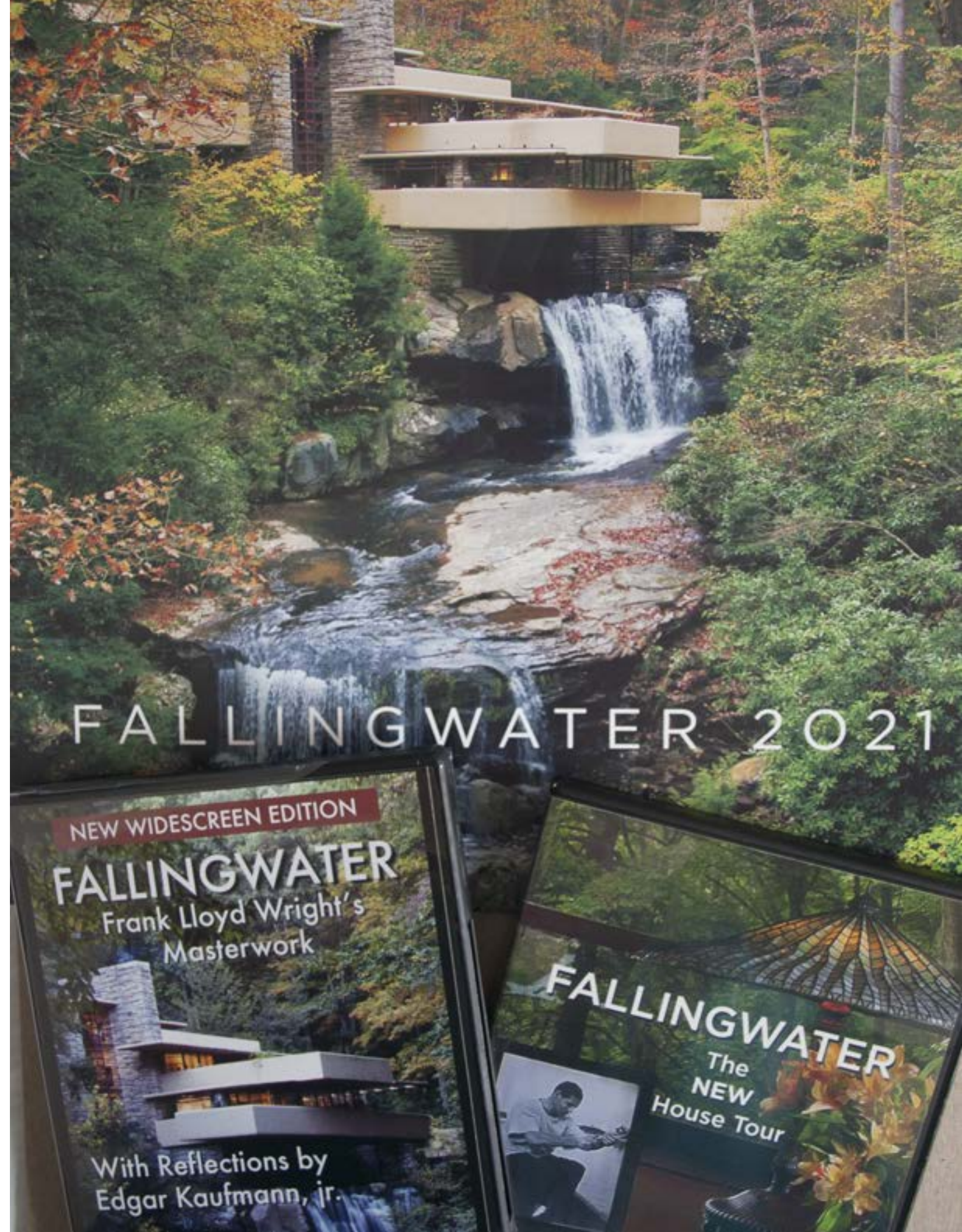


piece of historic architecture, exquisitely furnished and set in an extraordinary natural setting. February 1, the grounds opened for walks. We look forward to the time when we can travel and visit in person. In the meantime, we visit virtually. It is also a way to support organizations that have diminished incomes due to closings or that are experiencing fewer visitors.

Fallingwater was a private summer home designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in

1935 for the Pittsburg department store owner Edgar J. Kaufman, Sr. and his family. According to the website, "Fallingwater is the only major Wright work to come into the public domain with its setting original furnishings and artwork intact." <http://fallingwater.org>

Above, a view inside Fallingwater during a livestream program on the Tiffany collection. Right, our calendar, and videos from the Fallingwater Museum Giftshop.



Harvest: *Beans*

When food became scarce or difficult to acquire because of the pandemic restrictions and empty store shelves, we looked to buy things in bulk that would store well and provide good nutrition. We had read that beans are a really healthy choice so we relied on a hearty bean soup, buying dry beans in bulk and making our own mix depending on availability. For a time, canned beans were in short supply but dry beans were more readily available.

Rather than wait to soak and cook beans for hours, we also opted for an Instant Pot pressure cooker. We had heard stories of grammy's pot exploding and covering the ceiling when mishandled so were a little shy of the classic stove-type pressure cooker. The Instant Pot seemed to be a safe and effective alternative. We were not disappointed and it soon became one of our favorite kitchen tools. Porridge, rice, even hard-boiled eggs came out perfectly.

To start, 1 ¼ cup of mixed dry beans and 4 cups of water or broth were cooked at high pressure for one minute and were left to sit for an hour. Then the rest of the ingredients were added and cooked at high pressure for three minutes. We released the steam carefully following manufacturer's instructions as the liquid may still be boiling. Our simple and flexible recipe included one cup of each: carrots, onions,



Harvest: *Beans*

and celery. A little garlic, fresh spinach salt and pepper were added to taste. We tried chili powder for a kick. We add a can of tomatoes or sauce if we have it on the shelf.

We served the bean soup with grated cheddar cheese. We also like to make fresh bread to have with the soup. One of our favorite recipes was a no-knead Olive Oil and Rosemary bread. The dough was made at bedtime then left to rise over night, baked when we got up in the morning.

Right, Olive Oil and Rosemary no-knead bread. Below, bean soup garnished with shredded cheddar cheese. Far right, bean soup right out of the pot.



Celebration: *Easter*

Yes, the centerpiece of the Easter dinner was a ham with baked sweet potatoes and a roasted head of cauliflower. But the stars of the Easter meal are always the desserts. So, we begin with a buttery almond marble pound cake and a pear galette.

We made our marble cake by dividing the pound cake batter and mixing half with cocoa. Then we swirled them together in the cake pan. For our galettes, we use a traditional pie crust rather than puff pastry dough. Once the circle is rolled out, we put it on a sheet of parchment paper on



Celebration: *Easter*

a baking sheet. The first layer is a mixture of chopped almonds and sugar, then thin slices of pear overlapping in a circle. Almost any fruit will do. We paint the dough with milk, then sprinkle it all with cinnamon sugar before we bake it.

Everyone gets their favorite and we have one family member who loves apple pie. We mix tart and sweet apples with sugar and cinnamon, then use the same pie dough for the crusts as for the galettes.

David asked for old-fashioned sugar cookies, so we made a batch and iced them with sugar icing tinted pastel colors, piped with a white contrasting design. Leery of



Celebration: *Easter*

using raw eggs, we found a recipe for royal icing online that didn't use egg whites and worked just fine. The result was very sweet. We like to freeze cookies made with butter

once they come out of the oven and cool. We find they keep their crisp and flavor better. The scallop-edged cookie cutters made the cookies with the crispiest edges.





Last year the Just Born factory in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania stopped making Peeps because of Covid-19, so this year we were delighted to find they were available in time for the holiday. We ordered a bunch for ourselves and the kids in some crazy flavors (Watermelon, Fruit Punch, Hot Tamale). We also ordered Special Dark chocolate from Hershey, Pennsylvania.

We had seen chocolate-dipped Peeps but made our own by melting dark chocolate Kisses over a double-boiler. We dipped the Peeps then set them on chopped walnuts to cool. So good. We had a bowl coated in chocolate left over, so we added milk and heated it up, constantly stirring, to make hot cocoa. The finishing touch, a good dollop of whipped cream. Waste not, they say.





Garden: *First Signs of Spring*



We always plant crocus bulbs wherever we live. If the chipmunks get them, we plant more. They are the first sign of spring, many times peeking up even through the snow. The next sign we look for is the lush yellow forsythia. My mother-in-law used to force

forsythia branches if they didn't come open early enough for her family gatherings.

Tulips are another bulb we plant just for the pure joy of the color they bring. Daffodils are the essence of spring flowers—bright, yellow and fragrant. On Mother's Day, we have a hillside of lily-of-the-valley that I look forward to every







year. No bottled fragrance gets close to the sweet and green smell of these beautiful little flowers.

Rhododendron and azaleas produce the best brilliant magenta blooms and we have cultivated both. We find them at the edge of the woods and have planted them around the house. They are hearty and reliable. And they survive the harsh Pennsylvania winters in the mountains.





We look forward to finding the bleeding hearts each spring. They begin as shoots popping up from the ground. Then the arches of heart-shaped flowers appear. We have pink ones near the house and white ones in the woods. They are an especially pretty flower. But we don't pick or display them because they have toxicity to both humans and animals.

Another flower we love to see is the redbud. We first saw them on the battlefield at Gettysburg and then began to notice them on the roadside and at homes further north. They are easy to recognize because they flower before their leaves are formed, so all you see is a cloud of pink flowers in the tree. Though redbuds like full sun, we do have one at the edge of the woods that thrives and shows beautifully in the spring.



Garden: *Starting seeds*



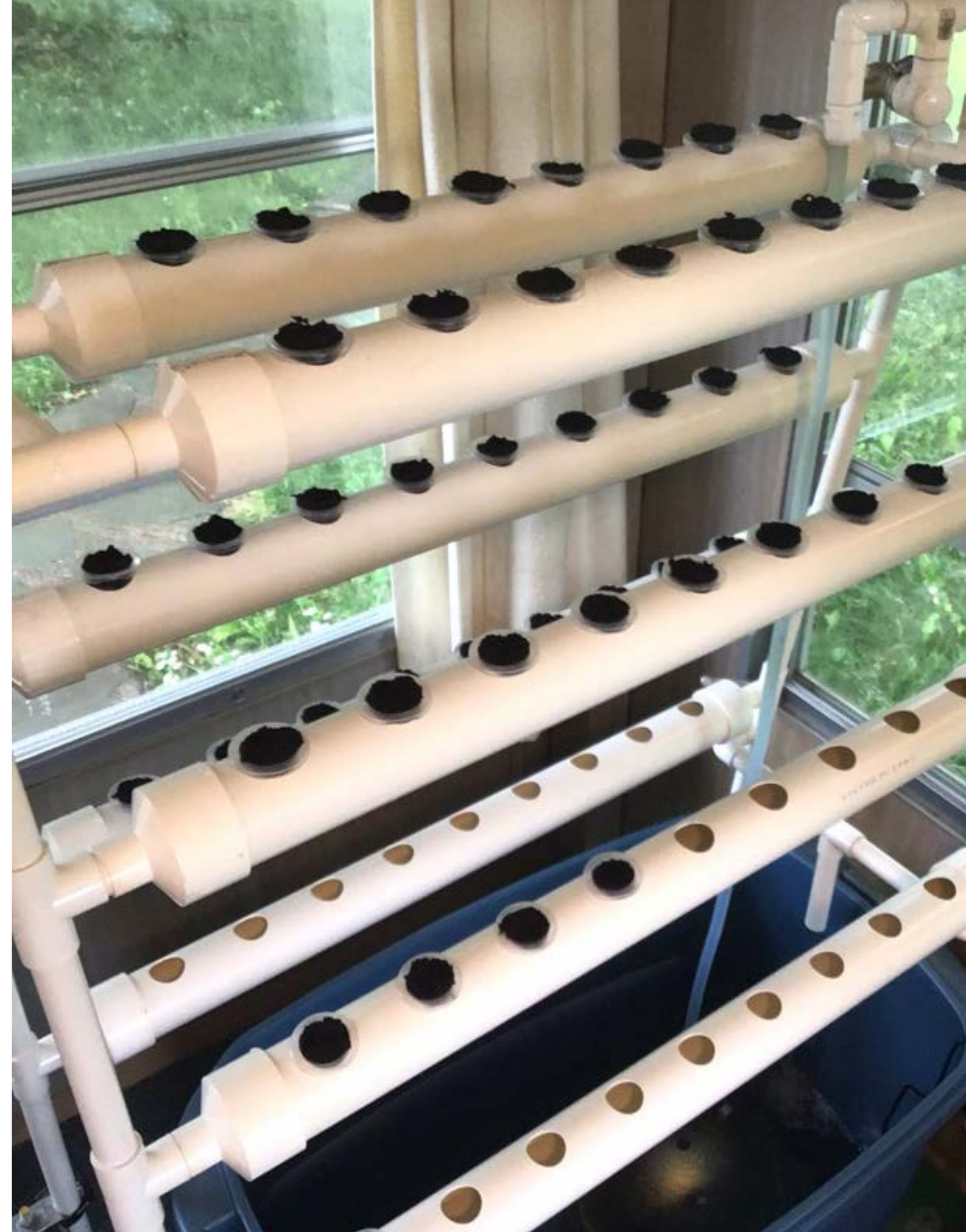
Spring is the time to start seeds for the summer growing season. With Covid-19 last year resulting in food shortages, we were conscious of choosing to plant things we would want to put on our table as well as herbs and seasonings for cooking. Just in case these things became unavailable. We also prepared to can, which apparently other people had in mind because Ball jars were in short supply in our grocery and online.

One strategy we pursued was hydroponic gardening. David got a kit of PVC piping prepared specially for a hydroponic setup. He added his own touches in putting it together like leveling it, adding a circulating

pump, filter and later a water temperature control. While we put it on a sunny porch, we supplemented the indoor garden with artificial growing lights.

We had a couple of fails before we got the hydroponic garden growing. Starting the seeds in damp paper towels didn't work. Starting the seeds in commercial foam that fit into the holders on the pipe didn't work. Finally we used peat pots that fit into holders that were placed in the holes of the hydroponic setup. This spring we went straight to the peat pots for starting our seeds on the indoor garden.

At the same time, last spring we planted seedlings in raised beds and pots and they





Garden: *Starting seeds*

produced beautifully. Our tomatoes were abundant and we have placed our spring order this year for Big Boys and Cherokee Purple heirloom tomatoes again. We had a pepper plant that we hope returns from mulched peppers. We saved seeds from the dill we will start again this spring. We ordered blueberries for our raised beds.

Left, seedlings in the hydroponic garden. Below, clockwise, starting seeds in damp paper towels didn't work for us. Starting seeds in small foam blocks also didn't work. Basil seedlings flourished in the raised beds with fresh potting soil and lots of Miracle-Gro. Mint, rosemary and dill did very well in pots outside. We wintered them inside.



Crafts: *Covid crochet*

This is something that we began long before the current pandemic, but it seemed like an appropriate response while sheltering at home. Using a simple zig-zag pattern that repeats makes it simple to memorize and produce row after row to make things of

any size. The pattern is based on a 17-stitch unit that measures a little less than four inches wide. Two units produce a nice sized scarf. Ten units produce a good size lap robe. The lap robe takes about two of the one pound or jumbo skeins. It's a good project for evening television watching. We

recently delivered ten lap robes to a county nursing home that is nearby.

The pattern is simple. Chain a multiple of 17 stitches plus one. For a lap robe we start with 171 chains. Then every 17-stitch unit is the same, every row repeats the same until the lap robe is the length you want it. Start each row with a single crochet in the second chain from the hook. Single crochet in the next six chains for a total of seven stitches. Three single crochet in the next stitch, then seven more single crochet. Skip the next two chains. Repeat the pattern to the end of the row. (Seven single crochet, three single crochet in the next stitch, seven single crochet, skip two stitches.) Finish by single crocheting a couple of rows around a four edges. My mother wanted tassels on the ends of hers. Otherwise, we like to leave the zig-zag edges of the crochet plain.



Local Eats: *Pretzels*



Every year we looked forward to the Pennsylvania Farm Show. This year it took place virtually, so we ordered one of our favorite things to buy in the PA Preferred section of the show — Hempzel pretzels. Years ago, the local farmers were not allowed to grow hemp, a cousin to the cannabis plant. They had to import the hemp to produce their

pretzels products. But Hempzels conducted educational drives, circulated petitions and eventually were granted the ability to grow the hemp domestically that they use in their really good tasting products.

We buy their big soft hemp pretzels. We bake them at home in the oven before we serve them. We like to have them with some hemp mustard. It is a breath-taking





Local Eats: *Pretzels*

variety with fresh horseradish that will knock your socks off. They say, “This mustard bites back.” We have to remember to warn people when we gift them a bottle. It is great with baked ham or a roast of beef as well as the pretzels. It’s a staple at our barbeques. After a bottle has been opened, the horseradish seems to lose some of its sting over time.

We also buy their sourdough hard pretzels made with hemp. They are a very unusual flavor. We like that they are a whole grain and have lots of crunch. These pretzels are hand made and kiln dried. We usually find them at the Farm Show, but they do have a website at <http://hempzels.com>

Pretzels and mustard are just the beginning of their hemp product line. Hempzels also sells hemp seeds, butters, flour, hemp seed oil, jam and selzers. The company is located in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.



Next two pages, The Holly Ross Pottery in LaAnna, Pennsylvania is doubly worth a trip. First the pottery has all kinds of pretty dishware, bakeware and garden pots. Lines include their own as well as Polish pottery, Hartstone and Fiestaware at deep

discounts. There are loads of seasonal pieces. They also have a beautiful swinging bridge and woody path with sawdust trails to a picturesque lake for a pleasurable walk. Bring lunch, there is a picnic table by the beautiful Taylor Creek.



Home Sweet Home: *from our childhoods*

Ever since we met, one of the things Dave remembered fondly and wished for was a milk pie like his grandmother made down on the farm. We looked through his mother's recipes. They were scraps of paper, written in pencil, with just a list of ingredients — no measures, no instructions. So we looked online. We were amazed to find that there were a lot of people in the region, of Pennsylvania German heritage, that had similar memories of milk pies.

The Allentown *Morning Call* newspaper published a couple of stories about the pies and the responses they got that were filled with emotion and memories. Many people remembered it as a thrifty pie that used up leftovers or was made when the cupboards were bare of other, richer ingredients. David called his memory a milk flatcher pie and other people called it milk flitche, milk slappies, milk flappy. The Pennsylvania

Dutch might be schlappich kuche.

Once we saw a few recipes, we chose one. David's memory of the pie was that it had a very shallow filling but we made ours a bit more full. The piecrust was rolled out, placed in a pan with pie weights and pre-baked at 450 degrees. Meanwhile, 1 cup of sugar, 2 cups of milk and ¼ cup cornstarch, were heated in a pan on top of the stove until thickened. Then ½ cup of butter and a teaspoon of vanilla was stirred in and the liquid poured into the pre-baked crust. Sprinkled with cinnamon, the pie went back into the oven until golden brown. It was cooled and then refrigerated.

Some recipes poured the milk and sugar right into the piecrust and baked it. Since ours was a little deeper, we made a kind of custard first. The important thing was that Dave took a trip down memory lane and was happy with the result. We have made it a few times since that first excursion.



My childhood recipe was a Crunch Cake. I remember that my mother got the recipe from her friend Violet Smith in Gainesville, Florida. It was such an easy cake to make, I made it as a child for a 4-H demonstration at a county fair. Lately, I have started to make it again but I hesitate when people ask for the recipe because it uses Crisco as the fat. Most people make a face. But it is vegetable shortening. It's not like it is animal lard.

The cake makes itself a crispy, crunchy

top. Sometimes I melt a little jam and paint the top, then sprinkle it with toasted, sliced almonds. If I use almonds I will substitute almond extract for the vanilla. It's that kind of cake. You can play with the flavor. I have also used orange extract and then marmalade on the top.

The recipe is very simple. Cream one cup of butter-flavor Crisco with two cups of sugar. Mix in six eggs, one at a time. Add one teaspoon of vanilla. Finally, mix in two cups of flour. Pour into a tube pan and bake for one hour at 350 degrees.





Best Views: *Our Own Back Yard*



Things are starting to get green in the back yard. Previous pages, Delaware River view from Shawnee Resort.

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