

Annual General Meeting Report

The 15th Annual General Meeting of the Playgroup Programme took place on Tuesday the 14th of October 2008 at 8:00pm at the Crossroads Church in Ferney-Voltaire. Sixteen members (out of approximately 130 families) joined the meeting. An impressive number of the absent members signed the proxy form which allowed us to reach the quorum needed to validate the meeting.

Highlights

Colette Foort, the outgoing Director and incoming Treasurer, first presented a report of last year's activities.

Literacy Programme: Colette stepped in as the interim Literacy Coordinator in September 2007 due to the unexpected departure of Julie Parkins, who returned to the working world. Rebecca Grove then took over and was finally replaced by Jane del Pozo. Jane remains in the position and Literacy is currently running smoothly.

Registration: Placement lagged a bit at the end of last year. However, the arrival of latecomers increased our count to around 200 children participating in 2008 - 2009.

It has been brought to the attention of the Board that the French inspectrice de l'éducation is no longer excusing maternelle children during school hours despite the fact that their attendance is not compulsory until the age of 6. This will be taken into account for next years' planning because it directly affects groups meeting on days other than Wednesday.

Programming: A new Mother-to-Mother Group was started and led by Gay Richard (Midwife and Lactation Specialist). Due to its great popularity, it is continuing this year. Most people, who had joined the group, moved into the Sitting to 17 Months Group.

Review of www.playgroupprogramme.org: Gabriel Galibourg, IT Manager, is revamping the website. This is still a work in progress and everyone is encouraged to visit the site and to provide comments and feedback.

Finances: The report for 2007 - 2008 was summarized by Catrina Charlesworth, the outgoing Treasurer. A deficit of 5130 CHF was planned for but a surplus of 1748 CHF was actually achieved. Not too bad even if some allocations were over budget.

The overview of the 2008 - 2009 budget was given by Colette Foort. The funds earmarked for the Literacy Programme were not reduced even though last year's money was not all spent. Any extra money is to be invested in books and resources for teachers. In fact, most of the budgeted 5000 CHF has already been spent for the current year. It was decided to cancel the Family Picnic as an event in the spring and to re-allocate the funds in an effort to enhance the quality of our educational programmes. A slight increase in the budget was also permitted in order to make the Christmas Party a more elaborate annual event. At the end of the coming year it is planned to have a 5130 CHF deficit. PGP's bank accounts are reasonably liquid. As a point of reference, 29000 CHF is reserved for contingencies.

Location: PGP currently has a three-year contract with Crossroads Church for the use of its premises. Negotiations for the future will soon begin in order to secure PGP's continuation and budget.

Administration: The approval of the agenda, minutes, presentation and vote of the board members went smoothly.
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Three Month Calendar

Thu 1 Jan	New Year's Day	Mon 9 Feb	Mar/Apr Newsletter Deadline	Tue 17 Mar	Saint Patrick's Day
Mon 5 Jan	Back to Playgroup	Mon 9 Feb	Start of PGP Second Semester	Mon 23 Mar	Board Meeting
Mon 5 Jan	Back to School	7 to 15 Feb	School Break in Geneva		
Mon 19 Jan	Board Meeting	7 to 22 Feb	School Break in France		
Mon 26 Jan	Midyear Leaders Workshop	14 to 22 Feb	School Break in Vaud		
		Sat 14 Feb	Valentine's Day		

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We are a registered non-profit organisation.

Grape Escapes

By Alex Robak
Isabelle and Nina's Mom

The Rhône Valley

Driving down the "Autoroute du soleil" south of Lyon, there's a point where my spirits always lift. Leaving behind the grey, industrial sprawl, the pitched roofs of the north soften and houses take on the warm pastel colours of the south. Suddenly one is surrounded by hills – all of them covered in vines.

The Rhône Valley is one of the great wine regions of the world. It also boasts fantastic scenery, a wonderful climate and some great food. Even better, it's only two hours' drive from Geneva. So next time you're planning a get away, think of a "grape escape".

A bluffers guide to the wines

The Rhône Valley encompasses two distinct areas. The northern strip hugs the river Rhône, from Vienne to just south of Valence. Syrah (aka Shiraz) rules on these sheer hillsides. The star names are Hermitage and Côte-Rôtie, where it is common to blend a little of the white grape Viognier into the wine. St. Joseph and Cornas produce worthy wines, but Crozes-Hermitage is often the best value. If you prefer whites, you can choose from the heady, perfumed Viogniers of Condrieu or a rich, exotic Hermitage. There's a gap between Valence and Montélimar, where vines give way to other crops, but when they reappear, culturally and climatically you have reached the south. Think poppies, lavender and absurdly pretty hill-top villages.

Southern Rhône reds are typically blends of Grenache, Mourvèdre and Syrah in which you can taste the heat and herbs of the south. Châteauneuf-du-Pape is the most famous region, but other villages such as Gigondas, Vacqueyras and Vinsobres can offer better value. These village wines are generally much more interesting than those carrying the standard Côtes du Rhône name. Whites are made from Mediterranean grapes such as Marsanne and Rousanne; Tavel produces France's most famous rosé; and Beauges de Venise makes glorious, sweet, fortified Muscats.

Quality varies from the exceptional to the exceptionally mediocre. Unfortunately neither price, nor the name of the appellation, is any guarantee of quality. So, the best way to find a good wine is to get out and taste.

Visiting the wineries

Wine tourism is less developed in France than in the New World, so don't expect glossy tasting rooms with souvenir baseball caps and useless trinkets. However, there are a few places that are well geared for visitors. The Cave de Tain l'Hermitage (www.cavedetain.fr) is a good place to start. This quality conscious co-operative produces over twenty different wines, many of which are available to taste. Chapoutier (www.chapoutier.com), also in Tain l'Hermitage, offers another New World style cellar door experience.

Many smaller producers will only accept visitors by appointment, but some do have set opening times. Domaine Levet in Ampuis (www.coterotielevet.fr) produces three different cuvées of Côte-Rôtie.

The cellars and family home are on the main street, fronted by the tasting room. Further south, tucked away in the hills outside Séguret, is the rising star Domaine de Mourchon (www.domainedemourchon.com) where Walter McKinlay (yep, he's Scottish) crafts some terrific Grenache/Syrah blends. Domaine des Espiers (p.cartoux.free.fr), near Vacqueyras, offers some great value reds and whites. Domaine de Durban (www.domainedurban.com), set on an escarpment above the village of Beauges de Venise, produces a range of wines, including a delicious Muscat de Beauges de Venise, which is sheer liquid pleasure.

The local co-operatives in the Southern Rhône can be a great way to get to know the region's wines and find some cheap quaffers. The Cave de Cairanne is possibly the best, though the co-ops in Vacqueyras and Gigondas are also worth a look.

Other attractions ... if you really must

If you need a break from wine, there are some alternatives. Chocoholics can visit the Valrhona chocolate shop in Tain l'Hermitage. Culture vultures can explore Avignon (for its half built bridge and the Palais des Papes), Orange and Nîmes (Roman amphitheatres anyone?) or Vaison la Romaine (Roman ruins meets Provencal chic). At 1910 metres, Mont Ventoux is a magnet for cyclists, but the road to the top means we can all enjoy the views. And the western foothills of the Dentelles de Montmirail, offer some excellent walking trails.

So banish the winter blues, crack open a comforting bottle and start to plan a grape escape.

Annual General Meeting Report

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- Audrey Stirling, Director
- Colette Foort, Treasurer
- Nadine Nassif Lips, Secretary
- Deborah Luisier, Registrar
- Jane Kwiatkowska-del Pozo, Literacy Coordinator
- Kerry McCance, Crafts Curriculum and Supplies Coordinator
- Joanna McMahon, Special Projects Coordinator
- Debra Dimancesco, Member Representative
- Trish Clements, Leader Training Coordinator and Representative
- Liz Stevenson, Publications and Newsletter Editor

Planning: The new Director, Audrey Stirling, talked about her objectives for 2008 – 2009. Her main goal is to give PGP a sense of direction. Audrey's background is in the health and leisure sector of the service industry. She was a CEO and Managing Director for a community focus organization.

She would like to introduce business planning to take PGP to the next level. She believes and it was agreed that we need to concentrate on these key points going forward:

- Profiling and forecasting: To establish our needs and strategies.
- Financial planning: How to generate income? How to better manage our expenditures?
- Fund-raising: To develop activities to raise capital with the help of parents.
- Marketing and publicity: To extend the reach to families and individuals wishing to participate in PGP and thus maximize the uptake of children into all areas of PGP.

We all look forward to being a part of Playgroup Programme's future developments and establishment!

The meeting concluded with the attendees eating a lovely cake. PGP has a lot to celebrate in its 21st year of existence.

Editor's Note: This report was compiled by Nadine Nassif Lips based on the meticulous notes she must take during each meeting.

Since the Annual General Meeting, the Christmas Party was held on Saturday the 13th of December. It is safe to say that the event was a huge success. Espace Junior was perfect. There was plenty of space and fun things to do for everyone. Many thanks to Joanna McMahon for her skillful organization.

In addition, the first meeting about business planning took place on Monday, December 15. It was focused and productive. The actions needed to be taken are clear and present. If you would like to share your ideas or get involved in the advancement of PGP, then please contact Audrey Stirling at pgp-director@hotmail.com.

An Interview With Kerry McCance

Editor's Note: Kerry is the highly creative and dedicated Craft Curriculum and Supplies Coordinator.

Tell us a little about yourself, i.e. where you were born, where you live, how many children you have, your work, etc.

I was born in Aberdeen in the north east of Scotland, but grew up on the Moray coast, famous for its sandy, beautiful beaches and its proximity to two big RAF bases. How I miss those beaches! I worked in the central belt of Scotland teaching physics in a high school for three years, but gave it up when we moved to Geneva in summer 2003. Gavin, my then boyfriend, had a year's contract at CERN and I thought it would be fun to learn some French, eat fondue and see a glacier! In 2004 Gavin got a contract extension, we moved to France and got married, then 9 months later had our daughter Kim. She started Playgroup in the sitting to 17 months group and we've never looked back. Our closest friendships here were forged in that group. Two years later our son Angus arrived – now it is his turn for the sitting to 17 months group, while Kim is enjoying a 3 to 4 years group. We currently live in St Jean de Gonville which I love, especially since we can be held up by a herd of cows on our way to school in the morning – that never happened back in Glasgow!

Where you like to do your grocery shopping? Why?

I hate grocery shopping, particularly with a little boy who loves to stand up in the trolley and a girl who has recently developed a shoplifting habit. I rotate my weekly shops, as I can never get everything I want in one place. Migros is great for really strong Cheddar cheese, although I don't trust their special offers, but Intermarche does 5 packs of Crunchies! I think Champion has the best fruit and vegetables outside the local markets.

Your favourite restaurant in Geneva or environs

Our family really likes the Auberge de Satigny. We discovered it through a friend from Playgroup and have been regulars ever since. It has a great menu from kangaroo steaks through to lovely pizzas for the children. It looks posh, but they are extremely welcoming to small children and it has a lovely atmosphere.

Best of all, it is right beside a riverside walk through the woods, so we can top off a healthy stroll with a great meal.

Your favourite holiday destination

As a family, our favourite holiday destination is an island off the west coast of Scotland, where my mum grew up, called Islay. It is famous for its many distilleries, but also has great wildlife, walks and fantastic beaches. We hire a self catering cottage and divide our time between walking on the beach, making sandcastles, seal watching, and visiting my granny, whom Kim calls The Cailleach, which is Gaelic for 'old woman'! We also have fond memories of the Orkney Isles, in the north of Scotland – Gavin and I met there while helping out at a science festival and later spent a brilliant first week of our honeymoon there. We explored Stone Age sites (at one point this involved crawling into a tomb – no joke!), watched baby seals and the Northern lights, and ate lots of Orkney cheese and drank lots of Orkney whisky. We look forward to taking our children back there when they are a little older.

Your favourite sport/activity and where you do it

I enjoy cooking and baking – one day I plan to open a café so I can make 6 cakes a day before 10 o'clock! Oh, and two enormous pots of soup. I view every new recipe as a possibility for the café menu, so I'm always trying out new things, and perfecting my favourites.

I am also addicted to rummaging around car boot sales and charity shops. I have found some really good bargains over the last years and now I can't let one go by. My favourite finds have included some Cornishware spice jars for 1 euro each, anything to add to my growing collection of 1970s West German ceramic vases, and a huge tapestry of a naked couple, currently in pride of place above our bed, for the measly sum of 10 Euros! You can't get a bargain like that in Carrefour! I love to make things with Kim as well. She recently did some fantastic watercolour flowers. Look out for their appearance in next year's craft curriculum!

Your favourite place in Geneva or surrounding France

The only criteria was that it had to be within a two-hour drive of our home. This is how I discovered the **Château des Allues**. It is a charming bed and breakfast in Saint-Pierre d'Albigny. I challenge you to find such a comparable price to quality deal.

Our stay was outstanding. The owner, Stéphane, is gracious and a fantastic cook. I would highly recommend reserving your place at the dinner table. We shared meals with interesting people from England, France, Italy and Germany (many of whom were repeat guests).

My favourite outing is to take the children on a walk through the vineyards of Satigny. The roads are open only to residents and agricultural vehicles, so it is quite safe to push a pram and not hold onto a toddler's hand. We pack our water bottles and some apples and stop for a picnic on a bench which overlooks Geneva and the surrounding area. It is so peaceful and the children are consistently, for some reason, unusually calm. It always refreshes me before the return to our daily lives.

Your favourite book

I love reading. It is my one big indulgence and since having children, I grab opportunities to read whenever I can. I have so many books, that I don't have space to keep the ones I've read. I often have books looking for new homes, so if you're after any, ask me what I have available! I will read practically anything, but my favourite book to date is Audrey Niffenegger's *The Time Traveller's Wife*. I read it while suffering from insomnia during the later stages of pregnancy with Kim and I still find myself thinking about it over 3 years on.

Your favourite movie

I do almost remember the days when we used to go to the cinema – now it is DVDs all the way! My favourite films, much to my husband's dismay, are *So I Married an Axe Murderer* and *The Three Amigos*. I was very excited to discover they were being shown on Sky on the Modern Greats channel. At last they have achieved the recognition they deserve, although Gavin doesn't agree!

Your favourite TV show

It's embarrassing to admit, but I am a Holby City addict. It may not be particularly realistic but I can't get enough of it, and I'm convinced my medical knowledge has improved immensely since I started watching it. I even dream about the Holby City characters. I have also been known to dream about Henk Potts, but that's another story...

My Husband's Best Ever Excuse as to why he shouldn't take the children with him on a trip to Media Markt

"It's full of electronic gadgets and unsafe for small children, Kerry. Haven't you seen the film *Poltergeist*!?"

Besides eating, we managed to visit some historical sites (the Abbaye d'Hautecombe and the Savoyard stronghold of Chambéry). The best part was the natural beauty of the region (Parc des Bauges). We hiked to waterfalls (Cascade de Puiseaux) and through vineyards. There were also lovely paths at the Abbaye de Tamié.

If you are looking for a romantic weekend away, a relaxing escape or a family adventure, then don't miss this opportunity. The website is www.chateaudesallues.com.

Going Places - Near

By Liz Stevenson Haefliger
Newsletter Editor
Henry and Paul's Mom

Since Alex Robak decided to write about the Rhône Valley in Grape Escapes, I am inspired to include my own travel gem in the Rhône Alps region. My husband and I managed to get away for several days during the holiday break - sans enfants. This is a rare occurrence and so I had researched the web thoroughly for a great destination prior to leaving.

Volunteer Needed - New Look for PGP

PGP is seeking a volunteer to help create a more coherent look for PGP's website and publications. Someone with a background in graphic design, web design or similar fields would be ideal. The volunteer would liaise with a special committee that has been set up to oversee the project. All help is welcome even if you can only provide a few hours of your time, or just help us to get started. This is a one off project and does not call for a long term commitment.

If you are interested, or know of anybody within the membership that would be suitable, please contact Audrey Stirling at pgp-director@hotmail.com.

Funny Quotes About Coupledrom for Saint Valentine

To keep your marriage brimming,
With love in the wedding cup,
Whenever you're wrong, admit it;
Whenever you're right, shut up. *Ogden Nash*

If you want to sacrifice the admiration of many men for the criticism of one, go ahead... get married. *Katharine Hepburn*

An archaeologist is the best husband a woman can have: the older she gets, the more interested he is in her. *Agatha Christie*

Love is grand; divorce is a hundred grand. *Anonymous*

Marriage is the triumph of imagination over intelligence. Second marriage is the triumph of hope over experience. *Samuel Johnson*

I was nauseous and tingly all over. I was either in love or I had smallpox. *Woody Allen*



Literacy 1 Competition Winner

Congratulations to Lisa Harvey! Discover her prize-winning drawing above.

Miscellaneous

Fun and Games

By Kathy Dunand
Romain and Estelle's Mom

Are you interested in any good game and geography websites?

I've been playing on this game site for over 7 years now: www.goldtoken.com. What's nice about it is that it is a controlled family site and constantly monitored, even children can play on it. They have all the classic games: checkers, battleship, chess, four across, backgammon, etc. The names of some of the games are changed, for example battleship is called salvo.

There is a great geography knowledge site that has quizzes on countries, continents, capitals, oceans, states: www.mccollam.com/fun/geoquiz/.

It even has the cantons of Switzerland, a fun game for the kids to try and maybe even the parents!! They have recently updated and added many more countries but unfortunately they do not yet have France.

Like to play the game Flags of the World? You need to guess which nation is the owner of the displayed flag. Test your knowledge with clues including: capitals, anthems, continents, neighbor countries and currency: www.flag-game.com.

Do you love trivia questions? On pop music, movies, geography, science, computer, literature or classical music? Then this is the site for you: www.triviaplaza.com/quiz.php?trivia=60s-lyrics-1.

British Passport Operations

By Trish Clements
Hugh and Ronan's Mom

As some of you may have already heard, the passport operation at the British Consulate in Geneva will be transferring to Paris from 1 January 2009. From that date you will need to post your passport application to the British Embassy in Paris and will receive your new passport back by courier. Full details are on the British Embassy website (<http://ukinswitzerland.fco.gov.uk/en>). If you have any questions you can phone the passport enquiry line at +41 (0)22 918 2418 between 8:30 and 11:30am each working day, or email passportsection.geneva@fco.gov.uk. And please do spread the word among your British family and friends!

From the Literacy Coordinator

By Jane del Pozo
Anna and David's Mom

It is always nice to know a little bit more about some of our volunteers who put in so much beyond the 1.5 hours of class time each week. Most of the Literacy team's photos are on the notice board in the small toy room. This year we owe a special thanks to Sarah Umans-Bakker, a new volunteer with no children in PGP, who is teaching two Literacy 2 classes on Wednesday mornings. As Sarah is completely new to PGP she has kindly offered to tell us about how she came to Geneva and PGP.

Sarah Umans-Bakker on Sarah Umans-Bakker

I started teaching in the Literacy Programme this September after Louise Solomon asked if I would be interested. Louise and I met in Genthod, where we both live. Louise has been teaching for the Literacy Programme for a couple of years. She knew I had finished my teacher training just before the summer holiday and asked if I would be interested in teaching Literacy 2.

As I like being active and love working with children I grabbed the opportunity. It enables me to get some work experience and also lets me give back my own experience and acquired knowledge to the children. I take two Literacy 2 classes on Wednesday morning and am thoroughly enjoying teaching the two groups aged 5 - 7.

This is actually my favourite age group, during my teaching practice in Amsterdam I taught six year olds to learn to read and write in Dutch. I also taught English as a foreign language to 11 - 12 year olds.

I enjoy using different teaching techniques and combining and integrating different materials and subject matter into my lessons. The children enjoy singing and story telling. We've just finished reading Roald Dahl's *Esio Trot* in the break. The sessions last an hour and a half so I try and switch between activities and skills to make the lesson fun and lively. The main emphasis at the moment is on learning to listen, to read and the comprehension of what the children are reading themselves or are listening to. This can be listening to each other, discussing the subject matter or the children telling me and the other children about their own experiences, often sparked by the current subject of the lesson or something that they experienced during the week and want to share with us. Their communication skills are being developed in a very informal way and they learn to listen to each other and learn to speak in class. Enjoyment and wanting to learn are the key to success and I think we've made a good start.

Before I moved to Switzerland with my husband and two daughters aged 11 and 13, and Max our Airedale terrier, I lived in the UK for 11 years during my youth and then in Amsterdam for another 33 years, where I met my husband. In the eighties I studied History of Art and Architecture in Amsterdam and Delft in The Netherlands.

I moved to Amsterdam in 1975 with my parents and had to learn Dutch as a second language, as my mother tongue is English.

I worked as a freelance Architectural Historian for over 15 years writing about Amsterdam and Haarlem and working in different museums as a guide. I also enjoyed working for the Municipality of Amsterdam writing guidelines for the renovation of historic buildings; in order for the 19th and 20th Century areas of Amsterdam to be properly restored in keeping with the original architectural features. My favourite museums are the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh Museum and the Rembrandt House Museum.

I also enjoyed guiding on the canal boats for over 12 years. I even got asked to guide Lech Walesa and then First Lady Hillary Clinton; but my favourite guided tour of Amsterdam was when I got to show Nelson Mandela and the famous Dutch footballer Ruud Gullit around town on a canal boat with the Mayor of Amsterdam.

Life has changed some what moving to the much more quiet and rural Geneva area with its beautiful countryside and lake. I enjoy taking long walks through the woods with Max, our dog. You might have heard about this from the children.

I would like to thank Louise and everybody at the Literacy Programme who has made it possible for me to teach voluntarily and I hope we all have a great year.

Mother-to-Mother

By Gay Richard
Midwife and Lactation Consultant

Caesarean Section at What Cost?

Did you hear lately in the Swiss news about the number of Caesarean Sections (CS) being performed here? 1 in 3 births are delivered by CS in Switzerland. In the UK it's around 1 in 5.

In Scotland where I used to practice as a midwife we provided research based care. We gave antenatal education so women were knowledgeable and more confident. We provided good support during labour followed by several postnatal visits in the community. So what a surprise I got when I had my own 3 pregnancies here. Where are all the midwives and the support? In my experience Swiss doctors like to step in and quickly medicalize maternity care. CS cost more, hospital stays are longer, doctors are involved making it a more lucrative outcome.

My friend recently visited her Swiss obstetrician/gynaecologist. He had a notice on his desk which when translated read 'if you're pregnant and afraid then come and talk to me'. She asked him what he would do if she was in this situation. He replied, 'I would offer you a caesarean section'. Is this not shocking!

A CS is a major operation and should not be taken lightly. Being afraid or anxious is rarely an 'indication' in the UK and is also a normal response during pregnancy. Time should be spent, discussing worries and allaying the women's fears. If a CS is necessary then it's a life-saving necessary operation. When performed for non-medical reasons, women often experience physical and emotional problems due to their decision afterwards.

Possible medical indications for having a CS:

- Pelvic disproportion
- Breech (malpresentation)
- Multiple pregnancy (twins, triplets)
- Severe high blood pressure in pregnancy
- Fetal problems (pre-term, low birth weight)
- Failed induction of labour
- Repeat caesarean section (2 previous sections)
- Placenta previa (placenta covering birth canal)
- Maternal infection (HIV, herpes)

For an emergency section:

- Cord prolapse
- Failure to progress
- Fetal distress
- Haemorrhage
- Transverse lie in labour

Postnatal complications for mother:

- Post-operative problems (haemorrhage, thrombosis)
- Slower recovery
- Risk of infection

Complications for baby:

- Breathing difficulties (chest infection)
 - Harder and slower to establish breastfeeding
- Labour, unpleasant as it sometimes for the mother is beneficial to the baby in releasing hormones that promote healthy lung function. The physical compression of the baby during labour is useful in removing fluid from the lungs and helps prepare the baby to breathe air. A CS baby misses out on this.

Research has shown that in the absence of a medical indication a 'normal' vaginal birth is safer for both the mother and the baby. If you are considering a CS for personal reasons seek good professional advice and be sure of the reasons for your decision. If you're being offered an induction (intervention to stimulate labour), know what the medical reasons are, not because the doctor wants to go skiing at the weekend! Question any intervention and don't raise your risk of being 'medically managed' if all is progressing naturally and normally. Be in control, and although highly regarded worldwide, don't let the Swiss doctors get carried away!



By Amy Webster
Simply Raw Food Coach
Certified by Karen Knowler, The Raw
Food Coach, UK

Setting Up Your Kitchen for Raw Foods

In two previous articles you learned about the many health benefits of a high raw diet and how to get started with raw foods in a few basic and simple steps. This issue's article looks at setting up your kitchen to support a healthier diet for you and your family.

Eating healthy does not have to be complicated. Chances are you spend a lot of time in your kitchen fixing food for your family. Or maybe you don't and you eat out a lot or buy ready meals most of the time, but deep inside you wish you were fixing healthy meals from scratch. Raw foods are based on fresh wholesome produce which needs to be prepared just before you eat it. It may sound like it requires a lot of work, but in fact once you get started you will be amazed at how easy it can be, especially if you choose to eat simply. For example, you'd think fixing a ham sandwich with mayonnaise is the quickest home-prepared meal there is. Well here's news for you: you can prepare a delicious raw treat in the same amount of time. Take a cabbage leaf and fill it with thick slices of avocado, tomato, black pitted olives and sprouts of your choice. Wrap it up and you have a meal ready in no time! It is delicious, filling and very healthy – so you pick and choose!

As with your food program, first take stock of where you stand before making any positive changes. If you want to accommodate a raw and healthy food program – at your own style and rhythm – you will need to make space for the proper equipment and food.

Regarding equipment, there is no need to invest heavily. But you will need a good blender for making smoothies and raw soups (which can be made from blending any vegetables together and adding herbs and spices for taste). You can also make delicious raw dips and nut cheeses in your blender by simply soaking your nuts and blending with some liquids (great with cashews). There are many recipes for this. A second important tool to have is a good food processor, which is used for grinding, mixing, making dough which can be dehydrated later into bread, cookies etc. Finally, a vegetable juicer, preferably a juice extractor as this process preserves the precious nutrients, is a great addition. Good sharp knives, cutting boards and great salad bowls are musts, while tools like a citrus juicer, garlic press, mandolin for making thin slices of vegetables and any other vegetable slicer or cutter are great to have as well. A dehydrator is for those of you who are clearly into raw food for the long run.

Take a good look at your kitchen and see how it works for you. To make life more convenient and more fun, it is also worth taking a good look at your kitchen and asking yourself whether all the equipment is readily available, ingredients and spices are not out of reach and you can get to work quickly and efficiently. For example, I like to keep most of my fresh fruit and some vegetables at room temperature, depending on the season, in large baskets out in the open. It creates nice positive energy in the entire room. I keep my juicer and blender next to the sink so cleaning up is quick and easy. They are set up in such an inviting manner that it takes no effort at all to pick the right fruit and make a smoothie in just a minute, or to select some veggies and start juicing. I don't give myself a chance to want anything else but the best food! Try it for yourself and see what minor or major changes you can make to your kitchen to help you improve your diet.

Here's a recipe you can start with now to

replace the standard breakfast or snack.

Besides fresh fruit for breakfast, a great way to stop eating bread, cheese or cereal (the industrial, highly processed kind that really has very little nutritional value left despite the smart marketing that makes you believe the contrary) is to make your own **raw muesli**. Here's how you proceed. Soak 1 cup each of almonds, pecans, sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds in pure water overnight. Whole and organic nuts and seeds are best. The next morning, rinse and drain them and throw them in your food processor, adding a freshly cut apple, a few dried fruits of your choice (I love apricots or prunes), a pinch of salt, some cinnamon if you like. Grind the mixture so as to leave chunky pieces and make it look like muesli should. Put some of this mixture in a bowl with plenty of freshly cut fruit (banana works well here, so do berries in the summer) and add almond milk or fruit juice. This delicious raw muesli will take you through the morning with no energy swings and no bloating. Try it!

Listen to your body and your natural instincts. Start with these few simple steps and observe how you feel as a result. The beginning of a new year is a perfect time to make positive changes so now is a good time to get started. In the meantime, remember to always enjoy your food, give up on guilt and constraints, find inspiration in books, informative websites or support groups, and the results will be amazing!

To learn more about raw food and attend raw food classes, go to www.blog.simplyraw.ch. This blog is published in both English and French.

www.simplyraw.ch
To inspire you, help you regain energy and optimal wellness, thanks to a healthy, delicious and fun high raw food diet! Find information, classes, recipes, practical tips and personal coaching.

Children's Corner

By Jane del Pozo

Literacy 2 Competition

Draw a picture of your favourite character in a story.

Write four things that they do in the story.

The entries can be given to teachers or placed in the Literacy Coordinator's hanging file by Wednesday, February 4. As usual, there will be a small prize for the winner who will be announced in the next newsletter.

A poem to read together as we start a new year.

The Months
Sara Coleridge

January brings the snow;
Makes our feet and fingers glow.

February brings the rain;
Thaws the frozen pond again.

March brings the wind so cold and chill;
Drives the cattle from the hill.

April brings us sun and showers,
And the pretty wildwood flowers.

May brings grass and leafy trees,
Waving in each gentle breeze.

June brings roses, fresh and fair,
And the cherries ripe and rare.

July brings the greatest heat,
Cloudless skies and dusty street.

August brings the golden grain;
Harvest time is here again.

Mild September brings us more
Fruit and grain, for winter store.

Brown October brings the last
Of ripening gifts, from summer past.

Dull November brings the blast:
Down from the trees the leaves fall fast.

Cold December ends the rhyme
With blazing fires and Christmas time.

The Joy of Soup

By Soupylady
The Masked Mom

Although I don't do tinned soups in a big way (and I hail from less than ten miles from Baxter's famous soup factory) you can't go wrong with a tin of Heinz Cream of Tomato. I opened a tin for our lunch earlier this week and watched with joy as my son tucked in enthusiastically. He's only learning to use his spoon properly, but Heinz Cream of Tomato is obviously a great incentive for proper spoon control! I don't know if the high chair cover, or the clothes he was wearing, will ever recover, but he clearly loved the stuff.

He's like his mother, and takes keenly to all soup varieties, but I can't afford to keep him in Heinz tomato while we live out here. So this month I'm sharing my two favourite home-made tomato soup recipes. They're not as good as Heinz tomato in that they don't give quite the same nostalgic glow to the meal, but they are rather delicious. I hope you enjoy them if you try them.

Carrot and Tomato Soup

This was a recipe I discovered while trying to lose weight for my wedding. It's from a book called *Vegetarian Cooking Through The Year* which my mum made me take to university with me. It's a disappointing book if the truth be told, as, bizarrely, none of the delicious looking recipes pictured on the front are included inside, but this one is worth trying.

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 onion, chopped
1 stick of celery, chopped
225g carrots, peeled and chopped
½ red pepper, chopped (optional)
1 x 425g tin of tomatoes
600ml vegetable stock
2 bay leaves
½ teaspoon marjoram

Heat the oil in a saucepan and stir in garlic, onion, celery and carrots. Cook over a low heat without browning for 2 minutes. Add the pepper, if using, with the tomatoes, stock, bay leaves and marjoram. Bring to the boil, cover, reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes until the vegetables are tender. Fish out the bay leaves and blend to a puree.

Tomato and Red Lentil Soup

I've given this recipe before, but it's so good, I don't apologise for giving it again. As I said last time, my mum has made this soup for as long as I can remember. One of my earliest memories is eating it whilst in bed with the mumps.

1 onion, sliced
1 tablespoon (15ml) vegetable or olive oil
1 tin chopped tomatoes
200g red lentils
1 litre vegetable stock

Fry the onion in the vegetable oil until it's softened a little. Add the tomatoes, lentils and stock to the pan and bring to the boil. Simmer until the lentils are cooked, then liquidise with a blender.



Dyslexia

By Niamh Kromodimedjo

Sharing my knowledge and experience as a dyslexia tutor

Prior to my studies in difficulties in literacy development and to my experience working with dyslexic children, I knew very little about dyslexia. I thought it had something to do with reversing the letters b and d and I probably would have guessed that those affected had lower IQ than average. However, the fact that such famous people like Richard Branson, Albert Einstein and Leonardo da Vinci were all dyslexic proves that that assumption is inaccurate. Many dyslexics are intelligent and can excel in such areas as maths, art, design, music or sport. Dyslexia can occur at any socio-economic level however and apparently up to half of the inmates of Britain's prisons are said to be dyslexic!

Dyslexia can be present in a mild or very severe form. I have worked with students diagnosed as dyslexic who appeared to be doing well in school. However, they had above average IQ so were not performing anywhere near to where they should have been which results in extreme frustration (and can be portrayed in difficult behaviour by them). The strongest indicator of its presence is a noticeable difference between the pupil's ability and their actual achievement. The reason for their under achievement is due to phonological processing difficulties. This means their difficulty in recognising and remembering sounds and being able to use those sounds in words. Other symptoms can include some of the following:

- **A family history of learning difficulties** – reported statistics range from 50% to 67% of dyslexia being genetically linked.
- **Literacy Difficulties** – these can take the form of difficulty with reading accuracy (decoding), spelling, reading comprehension, reading fluency, reading aloud, expressive writing and copying accurately.
- **Confusion over left and right** - a fairly quick way to establish this type of confusion is to ask a child to point to your left foot with his or her right hand. If you try similar instructions - in a non-threatening environment - you will soon be able to see if this causes difficulties or not.
- **Writing letters or numbers backwards** - you will have noticed some children who mix up 'b' and 'd', or even 'p' and the number 9. These letters are the same in their mirror image, and cause regular confusion for a dyslexic person. A trick I teach my students is to make fists with their two hands with the thumbs sticking up and knuckles facing each other to spell the word bed. Although the "e" is absent from the "hand-spelling" of the word, the student can instantly recognise the direction the b faces with their left fist.
- **Difficulties with maths** – many dyslexic students are also dyscalculic (which can also be present without dyslexia). Dyscalculia is a learning difficulty involving difficulty with calculations and rapid processing of maths. Difficulties with time, measurement, and spatial reasoning can also be present.

- Playing games such as Simon, Othello, Connect 4, Quarto and Mastermind will help by developing skills in sequencing, spatial orientation/space organization, pattern recognition, visualization, deductive and inductive reasoning etc.
- **Difficulties organizing themselves** - dyslexic children and students may have genuine difficulties with planning and thinking ahead to when a book or pen might be needed next. They can really benefit from help with organizing papers and folders under a simple colour-coded system.
 - **Difficulty following 2- or 3-step instructions** – this can be due to short-term memory problems.
 - **Co-ordination and handwriting difficulties** – this may be a sign of dyspraxia (an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement).

No two dyslexic children are exactly alike. Not every dyslexic child would show all of these signs and a child that displays some of these signs does not necessarily have dyslexia. My experience has shown me that every child is different in their individual symptoms. I always enjoy getting to know each one and discovering their unique strengths and talents!

To discover if your child is dyslexic, an educational psychologist would carry out a detailed assessment. Please don't hesitate to contact me for assistance with this process. Email me at niamh@lovetolearn.ch.

What's On In and Around Geneva

By Claire Dorey
Newsletter Assistant
Lucy's Mom

JANUARY

Up to 11 Jan – OUTDOOR FAIR: Luna Park. Plainpalais is transformed into an amusement park/fairground for the holiday season.
www.geneve-tourisme.ch

Up to 24 Jan – CLOWN SHOW: Souffle d'anges (Angels' Breath). Clown theatre at its best in a wonderful little gem of a theatre. La Parfumerie Theatre, Geneva.
www.laparfumerie.ch

Up to 31 Jan – DOCUMENTARY FILM: Sur les Traces de la Loutré (In the Footsteps of the Otter). Ages 7 and up. Saturday and Sunday. Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Geneva.
www.ville-ge.ch/mhng/

Up to 31 Jan- OUTDOOR SPORTS: Ice skating outdoors on the grounds of the Château de Coppet. Skate rentals on the premises. For opening hours and information call +41 (0)79 256 4816.

Up to 1 Feb- INDOOR PLAY: If your children enjoyed PGP's Christmas Party (or you weren't able to make it) Espace Junior and its multiple bouncy castles await your children. Palexpo, Geneva.
www.espacejunior.com

Up to 4 May - EXHIBIT: De Temps en Temps (From Time to Time). An interactive exhibit explaining the notion of time and how man has measured it over the centuries. Musée d'Histoire des Sciences, Geneva
www.ville-ge.ch/mhs

Up to 14 Jun - EXHIBIT: Genève Contre Nature? (Geneva: Nature's Enemy?). A look at Geneva and its rich biodiversity. You'll be surprised by all that is out there! Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Geneva.
www.ville-ge.ch/mhng/

11 Jan – FOOTBALL: Festifoot. An all-day soccer tournament. Watch local amateur teams of children and adults play like the real stars. Patinoire des Vernets, Geneva.
www.footattitude.ch

13 Jan to 8 Feb – PLAY: La Pantoufle (The Slipper). Discover this original story at Am Stram Gram Theater in Geneva. Ages 6 and up. Reserve well in advance.
www.amstramgram.ch

20 to 25 Jan – OPERA for CHILDREN: Le Petit Ramoneur (The Little Chimney Sweep) This classic story told through an opera. Age 6 and up. Epicentre, Collonge-Bellerive.
www.epicentre.ch

23 to 25 Jan – FAIR: Salon des Vacances, Sports et Loisirs (Travel, Sports and Leisure Fair). A great way to get a wide variety of travel ideas and learn about what there is to offer in Sports and Fun in the area. Lots of demonstrations and activities for children. Palexpo, Geneva.
www.vacances.ch

24 Jan to 1 Feb – FESTIVAL: International Hot Air Balloon Festival, Château-d'Oex. This is the 31st edition with more than 80 balloons from 20 different countries exhibiting in the middle of the Alps.
www.ballonchateauoex.ch

30 Jan to 1 Feb – SHOW ON ICE: Disney on Ice. The World of Nemo. This year's show will be dedicated to the very loveable fish Nemo. All your other favorite Disney characters can be found at the Geneva Arena.
www.geneva-arena.ch

MARIONETTE SHOWS:

10 to 14 Jan – Le voleur de pluie (The Rain Thief). Yasmina and Salim take on a powerful magician to save their village. Ages 4 and up. Salle Communale, Satigny.
www.regart.ch/croquettes

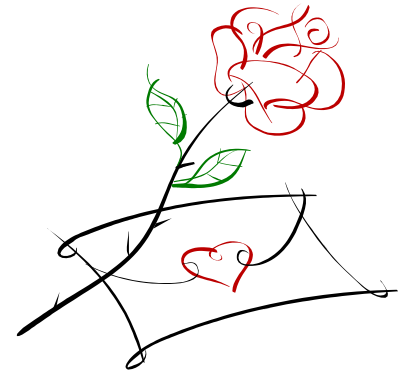
11 Jan – by Il Etait une Fois des Marionnettes. This talented puppet troupe based in the Pays de Gex offers quality shows for children ages 3 and up. St Genis en Pouilly, Centre Jean Monnet, Salle E.
www.01marionnettes.fr

21 to 24 Jan – Puceline (Thumbelina). This marionette show in French tells the famous Danish fairy tale about a tiny-sized girl. For children 4 and up. Petit Lancy.
www.regart.ch/croquettes

24 Jan - by Il Etait une Fois des Marionnettes. This talented puppet troupe based in the Pays de Gex offers quality shows for children ages 3 and up. Ferney-Voltaire, Salle du Préau (behind the town hall.)
www.01marionnettes.fr

24 Jan to 8 Feb – Les Enfants du Big Bang (The Children of the Bing Bang). See what happens to children after this big moment... Théâtre des Marionnettes de Genève, Geneva.
www.marionnettes.ch

28 Jan to 15 Feb – Un Os à la Noce (A Bone at the Wedding). If you missed this show in Geneva, run to see this children's version of Antigone interpreted by the TMG's beautifully crafted hand held puppets. Le Petit Théâtre de Lausanne.
www.lepetittheatre.ch



FEBRUARY

2 to 7 Feb – SHOW: Gramoulinophone. A comical show with real magicians, music and much more. Théâtre de Château Rouge, Annemasse.
www.chateau-rouge.net

21 to 22 Feb - FAIR: 10th Annual Feline Fair. An opportunity to see many breeds of felines and learn more about these creatures. A perfect time to ask all your questions to professionals. Centre Sportif du Bout du Monde, Geneva.
www.sfge.ch

MARIONETTE SHOWS:

12 to 28 Feb - Ca tourne (It's Turning). For children 1 and up. A show about animals put on by the Théâtre des Marionnettes de Genève.
www.marionnettes.ch

21 Feb to 8 Mar – Toc-Toque (Knock-Knock). Watch a kitchen and all its objects come alive. An ingenious combination of visual and sound effects. Starting age 3.
www.marionnettes.ch

25 Feb- Bonhomme Tiroir (The Man of Drawers). Usine à Gaz, Nyon.
www.usineagaz.ch

25 Feb to 1 Mar - Au Lit Petite Souris (Go to Bed Little Mouse). Maison des Arts et de la Culture, Plan-les-Ouates.
www.regart.ch/croquettes

28 Feb - by Il Etait une Fois des Marionnettes. This talented puppet troupe based in the Pays de Gex offers quality shows for children ages 3 and up. Esplanade du Lac, Divonne-les-Bains.
www.01marionnettes.fr

The March/April Newsletter

Deadline is Monday, February 9.

Please send your submissions to
newsletter_pgp@yahoo.com.

www.playgroupprogramme.com