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I grew up in rural southern Vermont spending a good majority of my childhood outside. As soon as the thick blanket of snow receded I was barefoot in our backyard stream building dams, forts, and immersed in a world void of Nintendo, Seventeen Magazine, and consumerism.

For many spring and summers I'd spend a week with my grandparents. They had been quite old when they finally had their only son, my father, and were well into their 80's as I remember them. Weeks at their 1780's timber-frame cape could, at times, drag on. The house seemed suspended in time. In the morning I would hear the pine floorboards creak as a kettle was put on. The interior doors would get propped open with black antique irons and you could smell the kerosene heater that was warming the living room.

I'd roll over on the, somewhat rock hard, horse-hair mattress with a crunching sound and flip on the old Zenith radio. Most of the days were spent swimming, picking Concord grapes, reading, eating sandwiches, gardening, and foraging together.

My grandma had come from a hard-working Irish immigrant family that came from lean means. The Depression had hit her generation hard, and the Depression hit rural Vermont extremely hard. I'm not sure if her knowledge of foraging came from making-do after the "Black Tuesday" stock market crash in 1929 as a young adult, or just

growing up Vermont where: Thrift and Resiliency are broadly woven into our unique character and culture because that's what it takes to survive.

Late springtime pre-supper walks down the driveway were something to pass the idle hours for me and a way for Grandma Ella to fill our bellies...all while slyly indoctrinating me to the traditional ways of Vermont.

We'd fill an aluminum colander with spring morels, fiddleheads, dandelions, and wild watercress. She'd have an old paring knife in one hand and often my hand in the other. I'd roll my eyes at the outdated terms she'd use while we'd work: slacks, dungarees, and icebox not knowing that in 25 years later during a pandemic I'd find those foraging skills she had inconspicuously passed on come in quite handy!

If you didn't grow up foraging with Grandma there's still an opportunity to pass on knowledge of how to "Eat the Weeds" with your family. One of the safest and most plentiful plants to try is the mighty Dandelion. She's an easy to identify, nutrient- dense powerhouse. Her greens are amazing when well washed and raw with a garlicky-apple cider vinegar dressing in the spring before she graces the landscape with her golden-yellow flowers. Throughout the summer and fall the blooms, stems, and roots have a multitude of liver supporting elements. Beware though the greens get a bit more bitter as the summer drags on!

With each clump of dandelions I pass on the way to doing evening chores is a comforting reminder that there's always something to eat and something waiting to be turned into a meal Grandma Ella would be proud of.

