

Special Days

Tina Hollenbeck

One day a couple of years ago, we ate “dragons-in-a-blanket,” tomatoes, potatoes, grapes, and milk for dinner. We weren’t clearing out leftovers or biding our time until shopping day. Rather, the menu had been chosen—on purpose—by my then-5-year-old daughter, Abigail, as part of her “special day.”

When my girls were babies, I got the idea of creating “special days” for them. I realize now that similar traditions exist in many families. But I’d grown up eating convenience food on TV trays, so even the practice of a regular family mealtime—let alone special celebrations—was fairly revolutionary to me.

Our current practice is very simple, by design. First, each family member gets a “special day” each month, in our case the anniversary of his or her birth. So my husband’s special day is the first of every month, because he was born on February 1.

On each child’s special day, I take her picture to later mount in a scrapbook. (If I didn’t scrapbook, I’d create a framed photo display documenting each child’s growth through a year.) The same could be done for adults.

In addition, the special day celebrant chooses the evening dinner menu, which explains why we were enjoying our family’s version of pigs-in-a-blanket that day. But that menu was actually a departure for us because most of the time both girls choose pancakes and eggs. Yes, that means having breakfast for dinner twice a month. But the girls’ joy in controlling the menu is worth it.

My husband inevitably chooses spaghetti. And for me? It seemed only fair that, as the primary family chef, I shouldn’t have to cook on my day. So we’ve designated my special day each month as “restaurant night.”

The best part of each day comes right before we actually eat, when we sing a song to the special one. In our case, my husband once sang (to the tune of *Frere Jacques*) a ditty that—in its simple goofiness—has stuck with us:

*You are special. You are special.
Special you. Special you.
Very, very special. Very, very special.
Special you. Special you.*

Whether your child is 2, 8, or 15, I encourage you to institute some kind of “special day” tradition into your family life. Yours will look different than mine, but the intent is the same in every case: to let each child know that he is a unique, cherished, and honored part of a family.

Biographical Information

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Tina Hollenbeck and her husband, Jeff, are raising and homeschooling their two daughters in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Tina is staff writer for Celebrate Kids, Inc. (www.celebratekids.com), a regular contributor to The ChatterBee (www.thechatterbee.com/), and also operates a small in-home daycare. When not teaching, she enjoys working out, scrapbooking, and singing on her church's worship team. To read more articles like these, visit her blogs at <http://tinahollenbeck.blogspot.com/> and <http://tinahollenbeck-celebratekidscolumns.blogspot.com/>.