

A Fish Story

by Lisa Marie Lindenschmidt

Mo has this uncanny ability to make the supposed mundane have great spiritual significance. Take the fish incident.

Over the past 13 years or so, my family has moved through a myriad of dietary choices. We've gone from vegetarian to vegan to raw vegan and are now focusing on a whole food approach. We still consume a lot of raw vegan foods, but have been experimenting with incorporating raw, local, organic dairy (such as homemade goat's milk kefir and chevres and raw butters), local eggs, and sprouted and cooked whole grains. We have had amazing success with this, I believe, because we cleaned out our systems first with a high raw vegan diet. Also, after reclaiming our stomachs and their true needs, we've all gained a new perspective on appropriate portions. Now, when we eat, it is from a place of true appreciation – for the taste of the food, yes, but more for its medicinal value. Our food consumption has truly become ritualistic in nature... something I've been striving for for years.

So, when the idea of meat came up, we had to talk. Mo, who's been a vegetarian all her life, decided she'd like to try some fish, specifically salmon. She told us that she's been getting signs from the Divine that are all pointing her towards salmon. We listened. We talked a lot about what bringing home salmon, cooking it, and consuming it would mean for our family. We are the family that has never had meat touch our dishes, our utensils, or any of our cookware. Would this change anything spiritually for our house? Would it be possible to do this in a way that fostered honour and reverence for all involved – including the fish?

The night we decided to do this, we had a massive rainstorm. The wind was howling and the rain was being slashed sideways. Mo said, “I think it's cool that it's raining outside. The Water energy wants us to pay attention tonight.” In our religion, the Water Element symbolizes emotions, flexibility, growth, change, fluidity. It was a great observation given the situation. This was the weather I ventured into to find our fish.

Because fresh salmon is hard to find this time of year, I went to a natural foods store and picked up a pound of the best salmon I could find. (We have a great market here that carries amazing “natural” meats.) I brought it home and we all stood around while I opened the package. “Wow, it smells strong,” said Mo. “Can I touch it?” Jim and I encouraged her to touch it, pick it up, notice the way that the fish felt in her hands, and think about how those muscles needed to move in the environment it was living in. Jim discussed the way that salmon can move from fresh water to salt water. We talked about the symbolism of the fish jumping upstream to mate and the mythology inherent in the salmon's wisdom.

Jim and Mo then rubbed melted coconut oil, garlic, lime juice, black pepper, and sea salt into the fish, covered it, and baked it. Before we sat down to eat, we said a prayer to thank the fish and to ask for some of its wisdom.

As we were sitting down to take our first bite, Mo said she was nervous, that this was a huge step for her. This was hard for me. I was raised on meat and had a familiarity with it that she's never had. I had none of this trepidation. She took the first bite and said, "Wow. It's really good. It kind of taste like mushrooms." I loved the irony: a vegetarian kid trying to fit the fish into the only world she's known!

She ended up eating only half her portion, claiming that it was really rich – which I thought was cool of her. She's always been so good at listening to her body. I asked her how it felt to eat it: did she feel different energetically? How did it feel in her stomach? "It's a lot to process. There's a lot going on at one time," she said. I let it go at that.

The next morning she came to me and said, "I've done a lot of thinking and praying about this, and I think that I don't want to eat meat. I'm glad I tried it, but I don't think it's for me right now." I told her that was absolutely OK and that I probably wouldn't be eating it again for a while myself. "It was pretty intense, hunh?"

Maybe that salmon did pass some of its wisdom onto us after all.

Lisa Marie Lindenschmidt is a raw foods chef and teacher and owner of Rite Food and Company (www.ritefoodandcompany.com), which offers workshops on intentional and joyful eating. Lisa Marie and her homeschooled daughter, Mo, record a weekly podcast – called Sweet Peas Podcast – chronicling their raw foods journey together.