

Food for Thought:

## 🌿 a *Recipe for Happiness* 🌿

by steven august papa

Do you have dreams so real that you can almost taste them? Are you hungry for new ideas and inspiration? If you're willing to get in the kitchen and rattle those pots 'n pans then you can create a successful *Recipe for Happiness*.

Begin your journey today and be proud of yourself!

We've all experienced those times when we'd rather stuff our feelings. Overwhelmed, we munch on Denial Burgers and Negativity Fries. (And who among us hasn't washed it all down with a Pity-Party Milkshake?) Eventually, tired of junk food and denial, we come to our senses. Of course it's better to eat, drink and think healthy but that requires changing our habits and negative ways of thinking. Changes, both in the home and on the job, bring about anxiety. It's only natural to feel hesitant and apprehensive.

🌿 "Change means movement. Movement means friction." -- Saul Alinsky

🌿 "Things do not change; we change." -- Henry David Thoreau


It's time to get real. Time to accept "what is." Take stock and ask those big life questions. What's working? What's not working? Tasting the good along with the bad gives us perspective. Facing and accepting our personal truths to the best of our ability frees us to discover a new way of looking at life. When we're willing to take on the world as it is, we'll find it much easier to cope with personal challenges.


Stop criticizing. Give yourself plenty of credit for the wonderful insights and experiences already gained on the road you've traveled so far. Adopt a "live and let live" philosophy. Choose to move forward in peace with forgiveness and respect. Be proud of yourself for having the courage to face your issues and the conviction to pursue your goals and dreams. With reality on your side, you'll find it easier to prepare and enjoy your own unique *Recipe for Happiness*... Begin your journey today!

Today, with passion and courage, choose to move forward.

Money-motivated enterprises (worried about *their* bottom line, not ours) practically guarantee personal fulfillment if we follow their advice, join their group or buy their products. Unfortunately, countless purchases and false starts later, the lure of instant gratification invariably leaves us empty-handed and feeling forsaken. The good news is we've learned that the same old ways yield the same old results. We recognize it's time for a change. There's no reason to feel embarrassed; we've all tried to take the quick route and buy pre-packaged happiness.


Honestly? And, as much as we might wish otherwise, there simply aren't store-bought dreams or just-add-water goals. Achieving dreams and goals requires rolling up our sleeves and looking beyond the box for fresh inspiration. The best-tasting confections are made from scratch with real ingredients. Our personal *Recipe for Happiness* must be prepared with our individuality, originality and humanity.

 *"If you can't stand the heat, then get out of the kitchen." -- President Harry S. Truman*


 *"Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently." -- Maya Angelou*

Have you ever stopped to think that long before they mastered the culinary arts, every cook has prepared untold less-than-savory meals? No matter how frustrating the process became, they were inspired to keep going until they arrived at a winning recipe. With time, passion and courage they went from experimenting to being excellent.


Remind yourself to frame experiences as part of a learning curve from which you'll grow rather than viewing them as mistakes. Appreciate and respect every experience that comes your way. Change your way of thinking from what's wrong to what's right. Learn to listen. Find your passion. Search for inspiration. Make moving forward a priority.


 *"Learn to get in touch with silence within yourself, and know that everything in this life has purpose. There are no mistakes, no coincidences, all events are blessings given to us to learn from." -- Elizabeth Kubler-Ross*

In order to move forward and explore our potential, we've got to live in the present moment and start letting go. Rehashing the past is usually a recipe for disaster and yet that's exactly what so many of us do. It's understandable: we reason that if we can only figure out what went wrong "back there" then we'll be able to change what's going on "right here." Doesn't work. We actually think more clearly, maintain better focus and make sound decisions when we're living in the present moment. It's in our best interest to let go of experiences we don't understand and can't figure out. Don't worry. You'll find that one day, usually when you least expect them, the answers do appear. Until then? Accept what's happened, face the situation as best you can, let it go and keep moving forward.

 *"Let go. Why do you cling to pain? There is nothing you can do about the wrongs of yesterday. Why hold on to the very thing which keeps you from hope and love?" -- Leo Buscaglia*

Until those answers arrive, concentrate on living in the present and free yourself from the heavy voices of yesteryear. Be gentle and kind with your past. Make peace with it. Let it go. Forgive yourself. Forgive others. Accept responsibility for your actions and apologize when appropriate. Learn to listen to yourself and listen to others. Today, with passion and courage, choose to move forward and discover the possibilities.

 *You cannot find yourself by going into the past. You can find yourself by coming into the present." -- Eckhart Tolle*

 *"Living in the moment means letting go of the past and not waiting for the future. It means living your life consciously, aware that each moment you breathe is a gift." -- Oprah Winfrey*

## Lighten your load. Set yourself free!

You don't have to continue living in denial or suffering in silence. Face the issues as best as you can. Address the heavy unresolved situations you've been carrying in your heart and soul. Lighten your load. Change your attitude. Set yourself free!

True, it's a new way of thinking and you're apprehensive, but promise yourself to constructively face the real issues of your life by:

- talking to a counselor, therapist or spiritual advisor;
- communicating with trusted family members and friends;
- reading inspirational books, essays and articles;
- attending support groups with those facing similar issues and experiences;
- and, perhaps most importantly, embracing gratitude for all you've been given.

A grateful heart feels hope while a heart filled with regret feels left behind.

🌿 *"Make up your mind to be happy. Make the best of your circumstances. No one has everything and everyone has something of sorrow intermingled with the gladness of life. Don't hold postmortems. Don't spend your life brooding over sorrows and mistakes. Don't be the one who never gets over things." -- Robert Louis Stevenson, Creed for Positive Living*

🌿 *"Our happiness or our unhappiness depends far more on the way we meet the events of life than on the nature of those events themselves." -- Wilhelm von Humboldt*

## a Recipe for Happiness...

Both simple and complex, the following five directives can help refresh, rethink and revitalize your personal *Recipe for Happiness*. Ready to start cooking!? Then let's get in the kitchen and rattle those pots 'n pans!

◆ **Develop a unique and personal creative strategy;**


◆ **Find the courage to create;**

◆ **Believe in the power of vision;**

◆ **Commit to finding a fresh perspective;**


◆ **and accept change makes the world ever new.**

## Dream *big dreams*!

 “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”  
-- Eleanor Roosevelt.

Put on a treasured t-shirt, get into the kitchen and turn on your favorite music. Pull back the curtains and allow the warm rays of creative strategy to fill the room. Open the back door, fling up the windows and savor the sweet smell of a fresh start.

Find your *Joy of Living* cookbook. Wasn't it next to the “But-I've-Always-Done-It-This-Way” quick-fix index cards? Oh, there it is, on top of the 36-piece kitchenware set you bought during an infomercial and always planned on using but never did. Yes, it has been a while since you've embraced the *Joy of Living* so blow off the dust. Pull up a chair and settle in at the kitchen table. Get comfortable. Relax. Brew a pot of coffee or tea. Maybe pour some wine. Toss some ice cubes into a glass of soda. Mix a martini. It's your time. It's your recipe.

 “Remember happiness doesn't depend upon who you are or what you have; it depends solely on what you think.” -- Dale Carnegie


Open your *Joy of Living* cookbook and turn to the first blank page. In large letters, write: *Recipe for Happiness*. Congratulations! You've taken the first step toward achieving your personal and professional goals! Next, believe that change makes the world ever new. Let go of your past. Let go of your control issues. Resolve to go with the flow. Be open to the possibilities. Investigate what it will take to reach your goals and then find a way to achieve them. You've got the passion and the courage to develop a unique and personal creative strategy. Now, take action and get what you want out of life. Go for it! Search the Internet. Sign up for seminars and classes. Visit book stores. Explore. Explore. Explore. You have the power to visualize the best life has to offer. Harness the power of your vision in thought, word and deed. Dream *big dreams*!

 “Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage.” -- Anaïs Nin

## Time to start cooking...


Pre-heat the oven by setting the dial to courage-to-create. Keep in mind that your creative strategy, your *Recipe for Happiness*, is a flexible and evolving guide; you'll add, subtract and revise continually throughout your life journey. Prepare a *marinade* of equal parts physical, emotional and spiritual ingredients. Begin gathering up spices, utensils, bowls and pans. Pause. Reflect on the items in front of you.

Before combining elements, take the time to hash, re-hash and ultimately throw out bad memories from family life, school and work. (Read the labels carefully and you'll notice they are way past their expiration dates.) Not quite ready to let them go? Then count on trusted friends, family, colleagues, counselors and spiritual advisors for assistance.

 "Today is life - the only life you are sure of. Make the most of today." -- Dale Carnegie

In a large saucepan, begin mixing your unique talents and extraordinary personality. Savor and stir with style. Liberally sprinkle in humility and humor. (Don't scrimp on the fresh perspective!) Baste with a *demi-glace* of desire. In favorite roaster; place your vision for the future in the center of pan and surround with passion. Decorate your dreams à *la nage* with individuality, originality and humanity. Place squarely on oven rack and turn dial to rest-of-my-life.

Arrange the table with your finest qualities and talents. Don't forget to create a beautiful centerpiece of gratitude.

 "Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow." -- Melody Beattie

Relax. Family, friends and colleagues will be arriving shortly. Before they swing by, take your seat at the banquet of life. Take great pride in your *Recipe for Happiness* and your courage to move forward and live life to the fullest.

Celebrate by pouring a glass of fabulous and toasting:

 I deserve the best life has to offer! 

From this moment on, I'm going to live my life in the present moment. I'll do my best to learn from, and accept, past experiences and then let them go. Bravely facing the future, I'm excited about my plans and goals. I believe in myself.

I'm going to: develop my own unique creative strategy for living; find my courage to create; believe in the power of vision; commit to finding a fresh perspective; and accept change makes the world ever new.

I deserve the best life has to offer. I'm going to follow my dreams.

## a note from **the author**



**Collaborate. Communicate. Conceptualize.** “There are three essential personal abilities that, when cultivated, empower us to step outside of our proverbial box and experience change making the world ever new. Whether we’re at home, school or the workplace; our willingness to collaborate, communicate and conceptualize makes all the difference in achieving our professional and personal goals.”

With inspirational and motivational conversations, essays and short stories, Steven August Papa warmly illustrates the power of vision as a key component to happiness and success.

## | the **power** of vision



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 *Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did.*

*So throw off the bowlines.*

*Sail away from the safe harbor.*

*Catch the trade winds in your sails.*

*Explore. Dream. Discover.*

*-- Mark Twain*