

Thanksgiving minus the key ingredients = true gratitude?

BY NIKKI ROSS

THANKSGIVING WEEK is traditionally a busy one for Twirl staff, as we'd normally be getting ready for our annual Twirl Aglow party. Our preparations begin with a trip to the woods to find the perfect Christmas trees for the courtyard. We start the day early, meeting at southside Lotaburger to pick up breakfast burritos in our trucks packed with families and dogs, flasks of hot chocolate and treats, axes and chainsaws. Then we head up State Road 518 to our secret tree-hunting spot! When we arrive, we take a moment to find

AT HOME WITH TWIRL

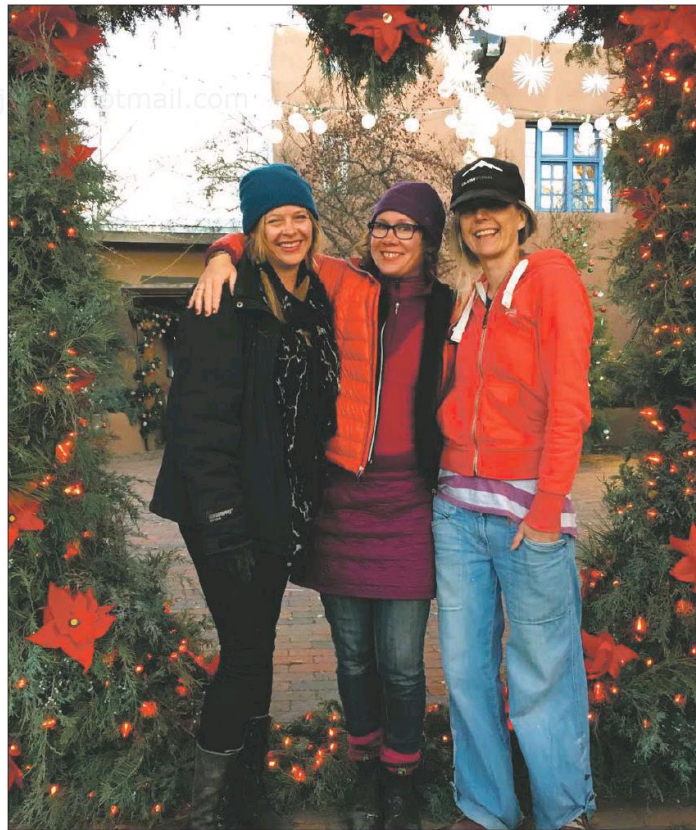
and Friends

our bearings, eat our burritos and watch the kids goof off, before dispersing into the forest, each of us hoping to return with the best tree. There's always competitive hunting and the years when it snows are the most magical, even though it makes finding the perfect tree that bit harder.

I share this story because it's a tradition that the Twirl team has enjoyed for the past 13 years. It is one we have come to rely on as a rare opportunity to step away from the daily work bustle and enjoy the quiet magic of the forest together. It is true to say that we are mourning the loss of this annual tradition. I can almost smell the pine and hear the crunch of needles under my feet, mingled with the distant sounds of a dog barking and kids laughing.

This year, everyone's Thanksgiving traditions will be upended in some way. Here in New Mexico we are required to keep our celebrations to immediate household members, an especially tough task on a holiday that is all about gathering with extended family. It baffled me when I first came to the US that people would endure all the chaos of holiday travel in order to spend one or two days with their family, before making the long journey back home. Now I get it. Thanksgiving is unlike any other holiday and I cherish its simplicity of purpose: the opportunity to spend quality time with loved ones and to

reflect on what we are grateful for.



COURTESY PHOTO

Anais Rumfelt, Nina Silfverberg and Nikki Ross of Twirl Taos in 2019.

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So how can we honor the traditions of Thanksgiving whilst abiding by a public health order that keeps us apart from loved ones in order to protect them?

Thankfully, the capabilities for connecting virtually are better than ever. Most people hadn't even heard of Zoom at the beginning of 2020. Now it's become an everyday verb and a lifeline for many. If there are school-aged kids in your household, they will most likely be adept at navigating a Zoom, Face-time, Skype, Google Meets or Teams meeting by now! While hosting a virtual

Thanksgiving dinner will never replace being together in person, a carefully-positioned laptop can ensure Grandpa still takes his place at the head of the Thanksgiving table. Sure you might not be enjoying Grandma's awesome sweet potato dish, but you can reminisce about how good it tastes and how much you're looking forward to it next year. Or maybe someone will confess that they never really liked it anyway and are glad they don't have to eat it this year! Perhaps it's time for someone else to do their own take on her famous recipe.

Have people share their funniest

or worst Thanksgiving stories, but tell everyone to be prepared to take some ribbing! Talk about what this Thanksgiving in particular means to you and what this year has taught us about gratitude, family, community, service and sacrifice. Give special thanks to our frontline workers who are keeping us safe. The best way to show them our appreciation and gratitude is to stay home this year. Twirl's Amber Vasquez is doing a fun gratitude scavenger hunt for Theater Play on Thanksgiving Day. Tune in 11a.m., Facebook Live or try these:

- Find something that is your favorite color
- Find something that makes you happy
- Find something that smells good
- Find something that makes you laugh
- Find something that reminds you of the people you love.

The best way we can teach our children to be grateful is to model gratefulness in front of them. Perhaps you've saved money not traveling for the holidays. Maybe you're not doing a big Thanksgiving meal. Consider making a donation to Taos Feeds Taos to help the increasing number of families experiencing food insecurity. Drop off a safely-prepared dinner for someone you know will be feeling especially isolated this year. Even in normal times, the holiday season can be difficult for many people, and now there are the added mental strains of extended physical distancing. Not being with our loved ones will be hard, but the alternative could be harder still.

Maybe the silver lining in the cloud hanging over this year's Thanksgiving is that it presents an opportunity for us to be deeply grateful for all that it is not. In a year when we have been forced to recognize how many of life's little things we take for granted, it is a poignant reminder to be mindful of each and every moment that brings us joy. By doing so, we will experience gratitude every day, not just on Thanksgiving.

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