



A Year Right Here: Adventures with Food and Family in the Great Nearby

Jess Thomson

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A Year Right Here is a genuine pleasure to read, as refreshing in its localism and eclecticism as it is in its universal soul-searching.

Seattle cookbook author Jess Thomson proves that one doesn't have to travel far from home to find rich culinary culture. Her new book, *A Year Right Here: Adventures with Food and Family in the Great Nearby*, reads like a five-course meal for the mind, offering a variety of tones and flavors.

With dreams of France in the back of her head, Thomson decides instead to try an extended staycation at her home in the Pacific Northwest, focusing on local agriculture, cuisine, and tourism. Her resultant book is neatly split into chapters that reflect each month of her yearlong endeavor, in which she set out to a new place or tried a new activity with her family.

Razor-clam digging on the Washington coast, exploring British Columbia's wine country, hunting white truffles in Oregon, and raising chickens at home all provide fodder for Thomson's delightful prose and her natural ability to entertain. The end of each chapter also contains recipes reflecting the author's many adventures and diverse tastes.

Not surprisingly, Thomson writes food well. Her playful yet incisive descriptions capture the vibrancy of local ingredients and dishes, sometimes in mouth-watering detail. The ravioli at one of her favorite eateries in the small island town of Langley is "a thin triangular smear of pine-nut butter flavored with lemon-infused olive oil and enrobed in a transparent potato-starch wrapper."

But *A Year Right Here* also brims with humor and compassion. Thomson takes self-deprecatory shots at Seattle's hipster liberal culture. Building a chicken coop at home, for example, allows Thomson and her husband to solidify "our identity as true Seattleites," joining other common lifestyle goals like "commute by bike" and "raise children without toy weapons."

The best parts of the book revolve around Thomson's son, Graham, who has cerebral palsy and who joins his mother, sometimes reluctantly, on several of her excursions. Thomson addresses the challenges of disability with honesty and respect, and provides some truly touching passages in which Graham takes the initiative to try something new.

A Year Right Here is a genuine pleasure to read, as refreshing in its localism and eclecticism as it is in its universal soul-searching and earnest attempt to redefine one's relationship with home.

SCOTT NEUFFER (May/June 2017)

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