

It will be all pomp and circumstance at the local high school on Saturday. Bright-eyed teenagers will collect their sheepskins in front of beaming parents and grandparents. Many will continue their education in the fall; others will head straight to work. There will be plenty of sage words and glib platitudes but here are a few more...

Dreams are like an early morning mist. They float and surround you but there is little to grab and hold. Work is real and makes dreams come true. No one said it would always be easy; make a plan and persevere.

Don't settle. Life is too short, too tough and too much fun to settle for dull and boring. It is much too short for cruel and meaningless.

Don't wait for stuff to happen to you. Create your own next best thing. Achieve something; learn a new skill or take an old one to new heights. Perhaps you will write a sonnet, unscramble a piece of jumbled code or build a birdhouse. Go ahead – take a step, then another and make life happen.

Of course, accidents happen and luck can be hit or miss but the future is by far and away a product of the choices you make. Good, bad or indifferent, own your choices and move on to the next.

Don't just pick your battles; pick the outcome. If you find yourself in the middle of an angry feud, you can choose to fume, forgive or forget. More often than not, being at peace is better than righteous indignation.

Life is better when you are happy. Happiness is not a deep secret or a profound mystery. You can find happiness by smiling more, laughing more and singing more. And don't forget to dance.

Given a choice between an adventure and the same old-same old, choose adventure. No matter what happens, you will learn a whole lot along the way.

Don't be an idiot. Open your mind to new people, possibilities and ideas.

Change is constant and all around us. If it wasn't, you'd still be using a rotary phone. Heck, you'd know what a rotary phone was. Technology, fashion and opportunities change but love for family, for friends and a favorite place is constant. So embrace the latest smart phone but use it to call your grandmother on Sunday morning.

Keep kindness as a core value. Throughout your life, you will experiment and explore. You may investigate different beliefs or try new approaches to life. Through all those changes and evolutions, practice simple acts of kindness to connect to the people around you.

Hug your parents. Hug your grandparents. They won't be here forever so appreciate them while you can.

Enjoy the ride and bon appétit!




Strawberry Tort

June is the month for graduations, weddings and strawberries. No, this tort can't replace a five-tier wedding cake but celebrants will welcome it at almost any other festive feast. Enjoy!

Serves 8

1/2 cup butter, plus more for the pan, at room temperature
1 cup all-purpose flour, plus more for the pan
Grated zest of 1 orange
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
3/4 cup brown sugar
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
About 1 pound strawberries, hulled and cut in half



Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Lightly butter and flour a deep dish pie plate.

Put the flour, baking powder and spices in a bowl and whisk to combine.

Put the butter and sugar in a bowl and beat with an electric mixer until light and fluffy. Add the eggs and vanilla and beat until well combined.

Add the dry ingredients and beat on low until just combined. Spread the batter into the prepared pan.

Arrange the strawberries cut side down on top of the batter. Bake at 350 degrees for about 45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.

Cool for at least 20 minutes, the tort can be served warm or at room temperature. Cut into wedges and serve plain or with a dollop of whipped cream or scoop of ice cream.