



1. What We Pass Down Matters
2. The Monsters History Tried to Forget
Surprising but Ticket-Worthy
Driving Offenses
3. Don't Let a Bad Decision Steal the
Spotlight
Silky Chocolate Mousse
4. Secrets to a Stress-Free Family Picnic

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Spring Family Picnics Made Easy

DITCH THE STRESS, EMBRACE THE FUN

When was the last time you gathered the family, threw down a blanket, and enjoyed a meal together in the warm sun? A picnic is the perfect springtime activity, but the planning and food prep can make it seem like more hassle than it's worth. The truth is, however, that picnics don't have to be complicated. Here are four tips for planning easy family picnics.

Pick the perfect picnic spot.

When choosing a location for your picnic, think about how your family would like to spend the day. A park with open fields and playground equipment keeps kids entertained between bites, but a park isn't the only option. The beach, a local lake, or drive up to the Hill Country area are all fantastic places for a family picnic. Just remember bug spray! And on hot days, bring sunscreen and find a shady spot.

Don't overthink the menu.

Picnics are all about the food, but that doesn't mean you have to fuss over the menu. Keep things simple, and choose items that can withstand time outside the cooler. Easy-to-eat options like sandwiches, fruit, and finger foods are tasty and quick to prepare. Add variety with veggies and hummus or cheese and crackers.

For an extra treat, grab premade cookies or brownies. Lemonade, juice, and fruit-infused water are refreshing options and keep everyone hydrated without the caffeine. Bring an insulated cooler for drinks and food, and don't forget wet wipes for easy cleanup.

Create a cozy, kid-friendly setup.

The picnic blanket is a great start, but you can take things up a notch with a



few extras. Plush blankets, throw pillows, and camping chairs offer comfortable sitting and lounging options. Pack entertainment as well; outdoor games, like Frisbee and ring toss, and a portable speaker to add to the fun.

Don't forget — it's about family!

Family outings shouldn't be stressful; the best ones are sometimes the simplest. Instead of worrying about perfect details, focus on spending time together outdoors, relaxing, and enjoying good food and even better company.

The PACKARD PRESS

A collection of thoughts and stories to educate, entertain, and inspire.

'IT'S IN YOUR BLOOD'

The Power of Knowing Where You Come From

I still remember when my mom sat me down at age 8 or 9 and said, "Michael, it's in your blood." This was a loving warning that was passed down from my grandmother. Mom was telling me that addiction ran deep in our family history, that both of her grandfathers were full-blown alcoholics. Even one drink could hook me for life, and it was a risk I couldn't afford to take. That conversation has stuck with me for over 35 years, long after she passed, because my mom knew something powerful: Understanding where we come from helps us navigate where we are going.

May is Personal History Awareness Month, and it's all about recognizing the struggles, strengths, and stories that help shape who we are. Taking the time to learn and collect our family stories is one way we can bond with our family members and personally grow at a deeper level.

When we know more about our families and our histories, we learn more about who we are. To this day, I have never had a drink of alcohol, and I never will. As part of my faith, I don't drink. But even putting that aside, what my mom shared with me solidified my decision. She knew alcoholism was in her genes, and when her parents got married (my maternal grandparents), they decided they weren't going to bring that addiction to their family. I am grateful for the conversation my grandmother had with my mom roughly 60 years ago.

Our personal family histories provide more than warnings; they give us answers and deep insights about ourselves. They can give an awareness of what tools we are working with and what weaknesses to watch out for. We can learn about our tendencies, predispositions for specific illnesses or addictions, or common positive traits. The more we know about our history, the better framework we have to understand the world. For example, music is one of the greatest joys in my life because it's in my genes. My mom, dad, siblings, wife, and kids are all musicians. Music has been an important part of my entire life (and the lives of those before me). It's no wonder my wife and I got married! She wanted music in the home as well.

As a lawyer, I'm a curator of stories, and I've recently decided to take that to the next level. I've started making audio and video recordings of

my family sharing stories. There are so many I don't know yet. And this isn't just for me, but for my kids and even future generations. It began with collecting stories from people who knew my mom, and it grew from there. I once interviewed one of my older relatives, Larry, who was also roommates with my dad in college. Larry and his wife got married around the same time my parents did, and they were dear friends. Years later, Larry's son, Danny, and I went to law school together and even married sisters. (My cousin is also my brother-in-law!) Through the interview with Larry, I learned something about my own family history. For years, Danny had been making an old family recipe for homemade pudding, but he was unaware of its origin until that day. As it turns out, Danny got the recipe from his mom, who had learned it from my mom. (I had never seen my mom make this pudding before; she had stopped making homemade pudding long before I was ever born!) Danny's eyes lit up, and he made the pudding that night! I tasted my mom's pudding for the first time as I watched Danny change the name on his recipe card from "Danny's Famous Pudding" to "Sarah's Famous Pudding."

My siblings and I get together every other month over a recorded Zoom to bond and share stories. Sometimes, we learn about the history of an inside joke or the origin of a commonly uttered phrase in the family. Other times, we share beautiful experiences of hardship, triumph, and just everyday life. All the stories are important because they help us see who we are and where we've come from.

I encourage you to have (and record) story time with your family. It's as simple as pressing the record button on your phone. I think Mother's Day weekend is the perfect time to do this. Just call your mom or invite her over to talk and ask if you can record it. Years later, the stories you collect will be cherished treasures — proof that our past isn't something we just leave behind. Rather, it is something that lives on in us and shapes who we become.

—Michael Packard



MONSTERS LOST TO TIME

Weird, Wild, and Once Feared

Monsters have always been prominent in popular culture. Looking back through history — long before today’s iconic monsters — people had vivid and often bizarre ways of describing the monsters of their folklore. These strange creatures that time forgot may not haunt our collective imaginations today, but their names and stories provide a fascinating glimpse into the fears of the past.

Bycorne

Bycornes were a popular monster from the mid-1500s with the body of a plump cow and a human face. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) definition of Bycorne describes the beast’s specific diet, which consisted of “patient husbands” who kept him “always fat from the abundance of his diet.” The OED also describes Bycorne’s spouse, Chichevache, who “fed upon patient wives and was always lean.” The legacy of Bycorne shows how folklore often blended humor and fear with ideas about marriage and other cultural norms.

Polyphemus

“Polyphemus” is best known from Homer’s “The Odyssey,” in which the one-eyed giant terrorizes Odysseus and his men. By the mid-1600s, the term was generalized to describe any cyclopean creature. Traces of this linguistic shift can be seen today in science with the Polyphemus moth, which got its name from the eye-like spots on its wing.

Lamia

Lamia refers to “a mythological creature depicted as a woman who preys on humans, especially children, by sucking their blood,” according to the OED. In Greek mythology, Lamia was once a beautiful queen Zeus loved, but in an act of vengeance, she transformed into a monster that roamed the night, preying on children. Over time, her name became synonymous with witches and female demons.

Snallygaster

Unlike ancient legends, the Snallygaster emerged in American folklore, fueled by newspaper reports in the early 1900s. This winged beast, described as “a fabulous reptilian bird of vast size,” inspired public hysteria before the legend faded into obscurity. The creature itself has been largely forgotten, but its name left a linguistic mark, morphing into the term “snollygoster,” a term for a shrewd and unprincipled person, which is said to have originated from the Snallygaster legend.

Although these creatures have faded from everyday language, their stories reflect the fears, humor, and beliefs of the past. They also remind us that monsters and the words used to describe them are constantly evolving.



Driving Barefoot? You Might Want to Rethink That

Everyday Driving Habits That Could Cost You

You might think you’re a model driver, but a few everyday habits behind the wheel could land you an unexpected ticket. From driving barefoot to rolling through stop signs, many drivers unknowingly engage in behaviors that are considered distracted driving, which is illegal in every state. Even behavior that seems harmless — like sipping your coffee or driving with your four-legged friend in your lap — could lead to fines in certain situations. Before you get caught off guard, let’s explore some of the most common driving habits you never knew could get you a ticket.

Surprising Distractions Behind the Wheel

Quite a few smaller driving habits aren’t explicitly illegal but can fall under the umbrella of distracted driving, a violation that could cost you. If you drive barefoot or in sandals, you could get your flip-flop stuck under the pedal, leading to an accident. If you drive and wear earbuds, let your dog sit in your lap, or eat, you might drive more dangerously. You risk not hearing an emergency vehicle behind you, or your focus may be on your lunch, which puts you or others at risk.

Noisy Cars and Loud Tunes

While most people know the cops can come calling if your house party gets too loud, did you know you can also be ticketed for noise ordinance violations behind the wheel? In over 40 states, it’s illegal to have mufflers that make excessive or unusual noise. If you are blasting the tunes out of your car stereo, you could also get nabbed for the municipality’s noise ordinance laws, especially if it caused you to drive distracted.

Tint Trouble on the Road

Though tinted windows may be allowed in one state, laws vary everywhere, and this modification could cost you if you cross state lines. If your windows are too dark in certain states, that is enough to get you pulled over. If you have tinted windows, you should look up the laws in the state you are visiting any time you travel.

Sometimes, accidents can happen no matter how safe and prepared you are. If you have been injured in a car accident, contact Packard Law Firm today for a free consultation.

—Michael Packard



From Cap and Gown to Safe and Sound

HOW TO KEEP YOUR TEEN’S GRADUATION NIGHT CRASH-FREE

Graduation is one of the most exciting milestones a young person will reach, but the celebrations can quickly turn dangerous if you don’t prioritize safety. Sadly, many teens drive while under the influence of drugs or alcohol during this significant event or can easily fall victim to distracted driving habits, like changing the music or focusing on friends in the back seat instead of the road. Teens and their parents need to discuss safe driving practices and take steps to enjoy this incredible achievement without any risks.

Share tips with your teen.

If your teen participates in graduation celebrations with their friends, make sure they understand how vital it is to focus if they are behind the wheel. Distracted driving habits like texting and having too many rowdy passengers can easily lead to accidents. Speeding is another common cause of fatal crashes among young people, so remind them to adhere to posted speed limits. One

of the most prevalent concerns on graduation night is alcohol. Make sure your grad knows that even one sip of alcohol is not just illegal; it could have dire consequences. If they are impaired, they need a sober driver to take the keys or call their parents or an Uber.



Create safe driving guidelines.

Parents can also do other things to support a safe night of fun for their teens. You could hire a ride for them and their friends, like a limousine, which will not only elevate their evening but also prevent them from driving. Create and share rules for the night so your teen knows the expectations and potential consequences for breaking them. You might even have them sign a parent-teen driving agreement. Encourage your child to spend the night with a friend or suggest hosting a graduation party at your home so you know they won’t be on the road late at night.

As your teen prepares to walk across the stage for their diploma, ensure they know safety is the best way to make lasting memories. Open communication, clear boundaries, and setting a positive example can go a long way to ensure their big day doesn’t end in a tragic accident.

TAKE A BREAK

I Q F D Q F H L R H S B U N R
Y N V G V P M Z O Y N T I U R
P F I O Y B C K S Q O C C C P
D K K M F J L L E E I I J I P
J O L P E M V O S H T N M J O
K Z F L S G O V O M A C E I D
D L A R E M E T Z M U O T H E
M E M O R I A L H B D E D C W
K H D A P H B B K E A F S O V
R L N U O Y E Y X C R T Y I E
D U X R D Z L F H Q G V B Q C
F B R E G I Z E J D O H G O O
D K R Z L E R S N A R E T E V
F B C N G N K O K J A D O P L
Y I V E O Q V M W G X T D Y A

Bloom
Cinco
Derby
Emerald

Gemini
Graduation
Lily
Memorial

Mother
Roses
Teacher
Veterans

SILKY CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

This light, airy chocolate mousse is flavorful and requires only two ingredients. It's the perfect easy-to-make treat for a weeknight or special occasion.

Ingredients

Inspired by TheKitchn.com

- 1 1/2 cup heavy cream, divided
- 1 cup milk chocolate or dark chocolate chips (6 oz)
- Optional garnish: grated chocolate, crushed nuts, toffee, or brittle

Directions

1. In a microwave-safe bowl, put 1/2 cup of cream in the microwave for 1 minute.
2. Stir in chocolate and let sit for 5 minutes, then whisk until smooth.
3. In a separate bowl, beat the remaining 1 cup of cream with a hand mixer or whisk until soft peaks form.
4. Set aside 1/2 cup of whipped cream for topping, and continue whipping the remaining cream until stiff peaks form.
5. Gently fold whipped cream into the cooled chocolate mixture in batches, mixing until combined but still light and fluffy.
6. Spoon into four ramekins or glasses, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour before serving.
7. Top with reserved whipped cream and garnish if desired.