

HOME & GARDEN

SUNDAY
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ACTS

By Elaine Matsushita

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Today, the glass is half full — and half empty. And almost perfectly so.

It's the autumnal equinox — the yin to the yang of the springtime vernal equinox. The day when day and night are just about equal as the sun crosses the equator. When every point on Earth experiences close to 12 hours of sunlight and 12 hours of night.

Wouldn't you say this unique day is cause for some sort of recognition, some celebration? Perhaps in your rush from dry cleaners to grocery store to school drop-off lines to work, the occasion eluded your radar. Never fear. Here are some simple ideas for celebrating the equinox from folks who know a thing or two about embracing (and creating) beauty in our world:

"I envision getting on the phone to everyone I know who might otherwise sleep through the magic moment, calling and waking them just before this year's 4:51 a.m. autumnal equinox, and suggesting we, in unison, hoist a morning cup of coffee into the air with gusto at precisely 4:51 a.m. all the while expressing a hope that Fall 2007 is the best ever," WGN-Ch. 9's meteorologist **Tom Skilling** tells us. *"Once done, everyone hangs up and dives back into their beds for a few remaining moments of sleep!"*



Brice Cooper, design guru and former host of HGTV's "Design on a Dime": *"The equinox is a special time in this Designer/Ware Wolf's life. It is the only night a year that I can be most productive as a Ware Wolf and a Designer due to the night and day being almost equal. In years past, I have celebrated with close friends by throwing a pile of Beach Boys records in a burning pile of fall leaves to celebrate the end of summer and beginning of a new fall. I suggest you do the same."*



"The way I celebrate is through my food," says **Priscila Satkoff**, chef/co-owner of Salpicon, one of Chicago's most noted Mexican restaurants. *"I'm really very simple. I get in the mood for more squashes and game.... I start thinking about what I'm going to cook for the holidays."*



In his dream celebration, photographer **Victor Skrebneski** says, *"I would go to Paris."*



"I would go out and cut some asters, solidago, Indian grass, maybe some sunflowers, and make a big arrangement, maybe a 4-foot tall arrangement. If I have some dried baptisia pods, I'd put that in there too," says **William Moss**, Chicago-based author of the "Moss in the City" newsletter and Web site (garden.org/urbangardening) and contributing editor to the National Gardening Association newsletter.

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Balancing acts

It's official. At 4:51 a.m. Sunday [Sept. 23], autumn officially arrives as the sun crosses the equator and the day splits into equal parts light and dark. Before the daylight in our autumn days gets as sparse as the leaves on the trees, celebrate the coming of the season. Want ideas? Read on.

Artist **Tom Bachtell**: "When the sun peeks through the matching 25-ton upright stones and lintel in my back yard, I know it is the autumnal equinox (how the stones got in my back yard, I have no idea.) . . . Not sure how we'll celebrate this year. Last year, we hauled out our copper fire pit onto the patio and my housemate Amy burned her old tax returns. She thought it might be kind of cozy but, frankly, smelled awful. [We] may sing 'September Song'; it's always fun to put on a long face and really milk it: 'And the days dwindle down, To a precious few. . . Sep-TEM-ber, No-VEEM-ber. . .'"



"In a way, the equinox is the beginning of the issues raised with fall, the death of the season, which culminates in Thanksgiving, which is a uniting of the whole structure of family through feasting. All of these rituals and ceremonies are ways of confronting mortality — human and plant — and marked beautifully by the astrological [sign of Libra, the constellation of balance or scales] and the shortening of daylight," says **Marilyn Houlberg**, professor of art

history at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and ritual expert.



Celeste Rue, pianist/accompanist at The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago: "My dream celebration of the autumnal equinox would be sipping a glass of fine wine at Nepenthe in Big Sur, [Calif.], surrounded by the forest, overlooking the ocean, feeling the cool air as the seasons change, the color of Earth returning to a rich golden hue as the sun sets."



"I feel very thankful to live near the Museum of Contemporary Art. At the start of each fall and spring season, I carve out time to visit this special and beautiful Chicago place," says **Bruce Fox**, design director for Heather G. Wells Ltd. Architectural Interiors.



Jane Browne, gallery director at John Toomey Gallery in Oak Park, says: "I plan to head over to the Oak Park Farmers Market to pick out a harvest of fall vegetables and throw them in the crock pot for an overnight surprise autumn stew. I'll serve it from a hollowed out pumpkin shell."



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