

# Swooning with summerness

## Soaking up the heat before fall arrives

BY **MONICA SCALF**

Last week I cleaned out the garage, sold all of my excess items on eBay for big money, transferred my home movies to DVD, updated my wardrobe, worked out everyday and read three novels.

It's a minor detail to mention, but I accomplished it all within 15 minutes while hanging out on my back porch having a beer and watching re-runs of *Cake Boss*. Now that I think of it, I was enjoying a piece of cake, too (so much for that New Year's resolution).

In my own little fictional world, I am amazing.

It's a world where I use my Le Creuset pot to concoct gourmet meals channeling the spirit of the *Barefoot Contessa*. It's a world where my home looks as perfect as a Pottery Barn catalog. It's a world where my garage isn't an embarrassing and malodorous way to enter my house. In other words, it's a fantasyland. But a healthy imagination never hurt anyone (can't say the same about my cooking).

As I sit and daydream, the To-Do list is the only thing increasing these days (unlike all of our bank accounts and home values). But, I'm unusually and eerily calm about the unfinished business around the house. Light bulbs are out, weeds are in full bloom, and, to top it all, I've even stopped sucking in my stomach as I pass by the mirror.

There can only be one reason for such behavior: I'm swooning with summerness.

That's my word for the warm and fuzzy feeling that through a combination of sun, vacation and lack of routine has me wrapped up like a big mellow burrito. And being a burrito isn't bad – until of course, you get eaten by fall.

Back-to-school ads, empty sunscreen bottles, and 70 percent off swimwear sales all hint at the impending change. Around here, our autumnal entry is going to be about as easy as getting our puppy to “stay” without a stash of Pupperoni.

The new school year almost always produces a few blisters and, literally, a few tears (admittedly, some of my own) before being adequately broken in. Early mornings, hectic sports schedules, and seventh-grade math are going to require a willingness and determination that I can't fathom at the moment. I'm still thinking about backyard barbecues, fresh guacamole and frozen margaritas. But time marches on, even if I'm still wearing flip-flops instead of marching boots.

I have no choice but to cajole my mind and body into appreciating turning leaves, football games, and shorter days. As Charles Dickens said, “This is a world of action, not for moping and droning in.” And if you haven't noticed, a bad attitude is as contagious as a yawn. So, it's time I start gearing up for last-minute projects, missing assignments, and the drama of middle school. It's time to put on a happy face and convince the kids that Christmas break really isn't that far away. It's time to don orange and black and convince myself that the Bengals are going to go all the way.

Hopefully, the crisp air of Fall will help to clear my head and allow me to see the season for all it has to offer. Anyone who goes down the school supply aisle recognizes how the scent of fresh crayons and the sight of empty notebooks have a unique power to induce a strange mix of excitement and panic. If you're lucky, you can capture that feeling and fake your own new beginning.

As for me, I'll be back to multi-tasking in no time. The house will be buzzing with the sound of the dishwasher, washer, and dryer all running at the same time – a domestic trifecta. The light bulbs will be changed, the weeds will be pulled, and the kids will be back to getting in bed before I do. I'll be at my desk working instead of Facebooking (OK, most of the time). As the leaves and the temperatures drop, I'll remember just how nice it is to live in an area of the country where we get to experience the splendor of all four seasons.

But until then, I'll be on my back porch squeezing every last drop from summer, soaking up enough warm weather, high humidity and beautiful sunsets to get me through a glorious Cincinnati winter.

Oh, and I'll be accomplishing amazing feats, if only in my own mind.



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