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## THE MAJESTY OF IDAHO

### Why I'm Proud to Call the Gem State Home

One of the first joint excursions my wife, Meredith, and I took was to the McCall Winter Carnival. Even though over 60,000 people attend the event every year, it felt like we were all by ourselves. As we roamed the streets, looking at the massive snow sculptures, we were transported to another world. To use a phrase from a classic song, we were "walking in a winter wonderland."

A few years later, we were married and had two kids. Given how much we enjoyed the carnival, we figured they would as well. Avy and Jett were amazed by what they saw. Sculptures as big as a truck are impressive to adults, but to kids, they are borderline magical. Now that Max has joined the family, we're hoping to make another trip up to McCall this year. He may not be old enough to understand the effort and time that goes into the sculptures, but we're certain he'll have a great time all the same.

Being able to attend one-of-a-kind events like these is part of what makes Idaho so appealing. I may be a little biased — I was born and raised in the Gem State, after all — but I would say we live in one of the greatest places in the country. From pristine wilderness and outdoor adventures to quaint towns and



the more rugged terrain. In my experience, the most scenic places take a little work to trek through. As soon as Max can handle it, you can bet we'll be camping and hiking with him in tow.

There are a few places that are near and dear to my heart that I cannot wait to share with my family. Given that I grew up in Rexburg, eastern Idaho and Wyoming are home to many of these locales. As a kid, I used to ski at the Grand Targhee Resort, and I want to introduce that pastime to the next generation of Thomasons. I also have fond memories of Grand Teton National Park. In fact, it was on a fishing trip on the Teton River that I made the decision to pursue dentistry.

The pleasures of exploring our state and the surrounding areas are something I don't take for granted. I feel lucky that Meredith and I are able to raise our children in such a spectacular place. Now, it's just a matter of making sure they get to experience the best of it.

Before I go, I want to wish Meredith a happy Valentine's Day. She's my valentine every day of the year, but I would be remiss if I didn't include a little shoutout to her. She is the greatest person I've ever known, and I don't know where I'd be without her.

*-Dr. Chris Thomason*

## THE BEST VALENTINE'S GETAWAYS to Fantasize About



Valentine's Day is for fancy dinners, heart-shaped boxes packed with subpar chocolates, and fantasizing about the magical places you and your beau would have escaped to — if only you had the PTO. So, grab a glass of bottom-shelf cab sauv, cuddle up next to your special someone, and try to make them feel bad for taking you to Chili's instead of whisking you away to one of these picturesque fantasy lands.

#### Udaipur, India

These days, meandering through the cobblestone streets of Paris with your loved one is *très passé*. All the *real* high-rolling romantics are migrating southeast to the famous Oberoi Udaivilas hotel in western India. Set in a traditional Mewari palace, visitors will feel like royalty as they stroll around the labyrinthine gardens that surround the elaborate cream-colored structure. Travelers can relax beside one of the many glassy pools sprinkled throughout the estate, all of which are enthusiastically attended by an unparalleled service staff.

#### Positano, Italy

More than perhaps anywhere in the world, this place looks like it was lifted straight from a sappy romance novelist's imagination. You and your partner can kick back on a balcony overlooking the entirety of this seaside town, taking in the century-old multicolored Italian architecture perched precariously on the verdant mountainside. Too small to accommodate swarms of tourists, it's the perfect place to while away the hours ambling from shop to shop, sampling the delicious local cuisine, and maybe taking a dip along the 300-meter beach.

#### The Maldives

From a water villa smack dab in the midst of the glassy, ultra-blue Indian Ocean, you and your main squeeze can enjoy utter seclusion. Sip champagne in the shade of a palm overlooking an otherworldly sunset or get a little more adventurous, strap on a mask, and check out the abundant aquatic wildlife. Many hotels in the area even include access to an array of boats, perfect for your own private excursion along the mild waves. Of course, you could also always just stare, dumbfounded, into the horizon, wondering how such a place could actually exist on Earth.

**"I may be a little biased — I was born and raised in the Gem State, after all — but I would say we live in one of the greatest places in the country."**

burgeoning cities, Idaho truly has it all. The problem is that I just don't have the time to take part in all the activities that catch my eye, especially as work gets busier and my family grows larger.

I guess I should file that complaint under "good problems to have." Every corner of our state has secrets waiting to be discovered, and it will take us years to cross everything off our Idaho bucket list. As the kids get a little older, we'll be able to tackle some of



## EDUCATION IN THE KITCHEN

### WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN LEARN FROM BAKING

With Valentine's Day right around the corner, you're probably wracking your brain for the perfect recipe to bake for your loved one. There's nothing wrong with store-bought chocolate, but there's no topping the personal touch of some homemade baked goods. If you have kids, baking alongside them can be just as rewarding as enjoying the fruits of your labor. As an added bonus, baking is a hands-on opportunity where your child can learn all sorts of important concepts. Here is a short list of some of the educational lessons hiding in your kitchen.

#### Math

Baking is a numbers game. Just take a look at any recipe, and you'll recognize the importance of math in building a beautiful cake. Having children measure out ingredients helps them learn about fractions and ratios. You can also test your kids by doubling or halving a recipe for multiplication and division practice. With older kids, practice unit conversions by asking, for example, how many pints are in half a gallon.

#### Following Directions

Not unlike computer science, baking requires a strict order of operations. The wet and dry ingredients often need to be mixed separately and then folded together. It only takes one deviation

from the instructions for a pastry to go from delicious to disgusting. Spending time in the kitchen, then, is a great way for kids to learn the importance of reading directions carefully and comprehending what they've just read.

#### Cultural Understanding

Cuisine is a fundamental part of every culture. Introducing your child to dishes from around the world will expand their horizons. Want your child to be a less picky eater? Involving them in the cooking process is the surest way to get them excited about trying new flavors and ingredients.

#### Nutrition

Now, you might not think that baking cookies will encourage greater nutritional awareness, but hear us out. Sugar is often buried within packaged foods. When you bake something at home, a child gets to see, firsthand, just how much sugar goes into certain sweets. Meanwhile, cooking savory dishes also allows them to learn what constitutes a balanced, healthy diet.



## KARA'S CORNER NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH



It may not get quite the same attention as Valentine's Day, but February is also National Children's Dental Health Month. Every year, the American Dental Association (ADA) comes up with a slogan that encapsulates their goals for the month. The 2018 slogan is, "Brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste and clean between your teeth for a healthy smile."

People used to think that care for baby teeth wasn't critical. "They're just going to fall out anyway, so why worry too much about them?" This was the rationale behind the attitude. But nothing could be further from the truth. As the correlation between oral hygiene and overall

health has become apparent, so too has the need for great oral care as early as possible. Expectant mothers with gum disease can even transmit bacteria to their children.

Creating strong habits from a young age also sets up your child for great oral health throughout their life. Don't let your toddler fall asleep directly after drinking milk or juice, as it leaves acid in their mouths all night long, creating a fertile ground for bacteria. Fluoride toothpaste helps protect teeth from acid damage and strengthens enamel.

As children age, have a hygienist teach them proper brushing and flossing techniques. Once they have the tools to brush and floss effectively, encourage them to do so. One great way to do this is to set up a calendar monitoring progress. Place a sticker on the calendar for every day that a child completes their oral care regimen. If the child completes a certain number of days in a row, give them a little prize. As the months progress, you'll notice them brushing and flossing as a matter of course.

National Children's Dental Health Month is a reminder that providing a child with the skills and incentive to create great habits is a gift that keeps on giving. Baby teeth may fall out, but the oral care patterns you establish in childhood stick with you forever.

## STOP THE RECESSION! Why Your Gums Are Pulling Back



You're admiring your bright smile when you notice you can see more of that tooth than you used to. Wow, it really doesn't feel good when you touch that spot! It's painful, really, and very uncomfortable. What the heck? You've been brushing, flossing, and practicing the same oral hygiene you've known since childhood, and suddenly, your gums, which are usually there to protect your teeth, have moved!

If you've experienced this phenomenon, you might be suffering from gum recession, and the underlying causes can sneak in even after proper care. The hard part is, some of us don't have control over it. About 30 percent of people are predisposed to gum recession thanks to genetics. Ouch. The good news is, there are lifestyle changes you can make to protect the precious tissue that covers your teeth. With some work, you can reclaim control of your gum health.

When we talk about gum recession, we don't mean that gum tissue disappears. Instead, the tissue pulls away from your tooth. Your gum tissue is there to protect your teeth, and when something's not quite right in other parts of your mouth, the sensitive tissue draws back.

Your daytime habits are a factor in your gum's health. Smoking and other tobacco use can lead to a host of dental issues, including gum recession.

Misaligned teeth can also force your gums to pull away. If that's the issue, it may be time to talk to an orthodontist.

Sometimes, your nighttime habits are the cause. Clenching and grinding at night — or, in dental terminology, bruxism — puts extra pressure on your jaw and teeth that can lead to gum recession. If you've woken up with a headache or your partner has complained about how noisy you are at night, it's possible you're grinding or clenching your teeth.

If your problem is clenching or grinding, you might be suffering from sleep apnea. The clenching is in response to your body's struggle to get enough oxygen as you sleep. A simple sleep study might be able to diagnose sleep disruptions, and it may lead you to not only healthier gums, but a better night's sleep. Your dentist may even be able to fit you for a dental appliance as an alternative to a bulky sleep apnea mask.

Depending on the severity of recession, there are a range of treatment plans available to you, from an intensive cleaning of the area to more extensive surgical options that a gum specialist, or periodontist, may perform.

Whatever the cause of your gum recession, talk with your dentist to find the best option for you.

## BACON-WRAPPED TATER TOT BOMBS

Sure, your showoff pal can wrap a tater tot with a piece of bacon and call it "The Daniel," but you can take it a step further. Prepare a couple batches of these savory snacks for your Super Bowl party or the next family get-together. Snag a few for yourself before they disappear!

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups frozen tater tots, defrosted
- 4 slices bacon, quartered
- 1 ounce sharp cheddar, cut into 1/4-inch squares
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oven to 400 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside.
2. Press a cheese square into each tot, then wrap with a piece of bacon. Dredge each tot in brown sugar.
3. Place tots seam side down on baking sheet. Bake for 20–25 minutes, using metal tongs to turn halfway through.
4. Garnish with parsley, if desired, and serve immediately.

Recipe inspired by [ThisGrandmasFun.com](http://ThisGrandmasFun.com).

## LAUGHING GAS

