



‘Tis the Season

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Standing outside the red barn shack that held the world’s greatest pies, I patiently waited as the line snaked around the building. During hot summer days, pie always signaled the end of a day trip to the quasi-western town that is Julian. As the lord high commissioner on everything desserts, I ordered a slice of cherry pie for myself and a whole apple pie for my family. I always ordered the same combination, cherry pie with a dollop of vanilla ice cream. In the heat, the ice cream would melt and mix in with the cough-syrup-viscosity of the cherry filling. In China, there is a saying about a heavenly match, *tian xian pei*; for me, cherry pie and vanilla ice cream was the combination.

I fell in love with cherries as a child, introduced by parents encouraging me to eat more fruits and vegetables. I began my tango with cherries dangling my feet over the wooden deck. I would be interrupted by constant reminders to avoid dripping cherry juice to prevent creating tie dyed shirts. In a chipmunk-like fashion, I bunched pits in my cheeks, then launched them into the yard. Fishing for a Guinness World Record title in the farthest distance traveled.

Fresh cherries were crisp and light, while the opposites were . . . the opposite. Cherries varied in size, shape, and color. There are the classic Bing cherries, but a personal favorite is the amber colored Rainier cherries from Washington.

As a global fruit, cherries have made their way around the world and have even ingrained themselves into American culture. Cherries were a testament to our first president’s honesty, while also being the killer of our twelfth president, Zachary Taylor.

For me, it was the definition of the summer fruit. Rising and waning all within the three summer months and never to be seen until the next year. Like the god Adonis, cherries are taken from us by the deathly cold winds every year, without fail. A season so short that, as a child, I tried my hand at horticulture, only to end up watching dirt for months.

This year, the brevity of a season was never so apparent. Cherries began to symbolize the summer that was left behind. A summer that ended before it even began. The first batch of cherries arrived at the Vons right off the 56. It was a few weeks into May, and the cherries were minuscule and sour. As if by magic, June rolled around, and the cherries were plump and sweet. By this time, COVID was at its height, ravaging large metropolitan cities. For a summer that was destined for the monotony of college applications, I looked forward to spending time alone in blissful ignorance. I read the news, I ignored the news. In contrast to the previous years, but in concurrence with the

current national mood, I spent most of my time re-watching TV shows. Clinging to laugh tracks, alone in the living room, I created my very own island of the lotus-eaters. The cherries, on sale for \$4.99, were the only part of the summer that stayed the same while the world swirled around me.

Come the end of Independence Day, the cherry season ended. COVID, however, did not end with it. Like the weird off-season cherries hunkered down in refrigerators, we too continued to be tucked away at home. In a global pandemic, the signs of fear, the signs of aggression, the signs of sadness come from all directions. It surrounds you. It eats at you. Pundits exclaiming the end of the world, while others merely call it seasonal. Although we glean conflicting information from all sides, I know for sure that the cherry season is over. The summer is over. The days of relaxation are over. The new academic year has started. I cannot seem to shake the feeling that I lost something. A summer lost and replaced with something artificial. A summer, meant to look up to the future, was spent looking down at screens. A summer for exploring the world turned into a time to hide from the world.

We all wonder how next year will be different. How will the pandemic change the world? For me, it is far too early to guess. However, like the cherry trees, we will flower again. In a cyclical world, to everything there is a season. Although it is impossible to say when, I know that having patience will bear fruit. As for me, I know that next year, I can bask in the sun, all the while enjoying a slice of cherry pie.

