

TIME TO EAT

Newsflash for Ripley's Believe It Or Not:

You may not consider this front page news, but to me, it's a rare and remarkable occurrence. I, a mother who made a simple New Year's Resolution to have more family dinners at the kitchen table, actually corralled all four family members on the same day at the same time in the same house at the same table for a somewhat civilized dining experience on Monday, April 14, 2008 at approximately 6:21 p.m.

At first, I didn't think I could pull it off. We gathered in January and flipped through the calendar pages searching for an evening, any evening, when my hyper-scheduled husband and two teenagers and I would potentially be home at the same time. Four months into the calendar, we thought we might have found one day when there would perhaps be a few minutes when it was possible that the stars would be aligned just right and our paths could cross. Maybe.

We circled the date in red. As it drew nearer, I took the necessary steps to ensure the success of our Dine Together Day:

- On DT-Day Minus 5, I polled the kids to see what they would like for our special dinner. That didn't work well because they couldn't name a meal that did not come in a McBox or McBag. I vaguely recalled a recipe from when I used to cook and headed to the grocery store, where I was heralded with balloons and a marching band after spending the equivalent of one child's college savings fund to appropriately stock our shelves.
- On DT Day Minus 4, I sent reminder memos to my children.
- On DT-Day Minus 3, I realized my children would not understand an actual paper memo so I had to learn how to send text messages to their cell phones. LOL.
- On DT-Day Minus 2, I started worrying that someone would call a last-minute practice or a mandatory meeting so I rented a skywriting plane and flew over the town, leaving an unmistakable message in the clouds that went something like, "The Weisenburgers WILL eat together Monday at 6:15. No excuses."
- On DT-Day Minus 1, I petitioned Congress to make April 14th a national holiday, allowing me sufficient time off to clear the table of credit card offers, expired coupons and Christmas cards from 2006.
- On DT-Day, I locked the doors, drew the shades and dispatched a SWAT Team to keep any intruders from thwarting our plan.

Miraculously, it happened. For 19 ½ minutes, the four of us were face to face around the table. We ate, we laughed, we remembered each others' names. And then, like firefighters responding to a four alarm fire, two jumped up to head to the gym, one sprinted for music lessons, and I was left alone at my seat, wishing I had taken photos to capture the historic moment.

After all, some stories are just too far-fetched for even Ripley's to believe.

Mary Beth Weisenburger lives in Putnam County with her husband and two teens and tries at least once a year to have a family dinner.