

# Zine Verschenken

#25 | august 2024 | magic



# Editorial

Welcome back readers. As summer is drawing to a close, aren't we all feeling retrospective once again?

I cannot speak for everyone, but I have noticed a few more clouds on the horizon during this summer than the previous one. For many, this year has been a difficult one and even during the brightest sunny days, the community found themselves discussing some rather tough topics. This left us feeling rather pessimistic and at times, helpless in the broader scheme of what lies ahead.

Often, I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders. I've slept with my jaw clenched with worry, or not sleeping at all, with the burdens that 2024 have put upon us. But fear not, dear readers, the descent is only for us to come back up stronger. This is how I have connected to month's theme, magic.

I recently took myself on a vision quest. A midnight walk in the woods, searching for Perseids meteor shower. Although the clouds hid the planned magic of the night, I discovered many small beauties walking a route I do most mornings in the daylight. The lighting of the pathway, a spider's web under a streetlight, the flickering of the candles in the cemetery. This is when I felt it. The magic that we find in our daily life. And the magic that we can bring to any moment we choose.

My second reckoning this month was at a piano concert. It was an hour long and had me lost deep in the thoughts that were this year. Despite the troubles, I found myself grateful. And realising that, I cried, for everything I had, everything I couldn't change and for all those who are suffering. I came out of that concert feeling stronger and with renewed energy to take on the rest of the year.

Survival during difficult times requires strength. But sometimes that brief moment of connecting with yourself, the earth, or a friend can unlock the magic of your own personal strength.

With this message, readers, I encourage you to think about how you can add more magic to your day to day life and to those around you.

## Mama's cookbook spells

Mama was a queen among pastry chefs. She had a knack for transforming humble ingredients into works of art. Her salads looked like Chinese gardens with their water-lily radishes and carrot anemones. Her petticoat pavlovas were light and airy, her forest fruit flans glazed to perfection, and her jellies and blancmanges towered on their stands like miniature Neuschwanstein castles. As for her crisp and spicy biscuits, She would cut them by hand into fairytale characters: a toy soldier, a nutcracker, a gingerbread witch on a broom, a swan with coronet, Cinderella's slipper, a pumpkin coach, Red Riding Hood's basket, an army of cossack mice, the seven dwarves and the good fairies... they held hands around the tea table as though they'd just tumbled out of a storybook. Even sandwiches, open and closed, were cut into shapes; triangles, diamonds, stars, flowers and hearts: tiny sweet and savoury bites that delighted a child's eye and palate.

Whichever one of us was about to celebrate their birthday was allowed to look at the pictures of cakes in her cookbook and choose a recipe. Nothing was too much trouble. Over the years, she made Tiger Lily's coconut wigwam, the Sugarplum Fairy in a frosted ballet dress, a shoe house for 'The old woman who had so many children she didn't know what to do', the Beanstalk Giant's castle, Humpty Dumpty, a hedgehog bristling with chocolate flakes, a rugby ball with gelatine laces, a candy-coated gingerbread hut in a forest of Angelica, the Snow Queen's palace, a grinning Cheshire Cat, a grandfather clock with sugar mice, a train carrying wagons heaped with Smarties and Liquorice Allsorts.

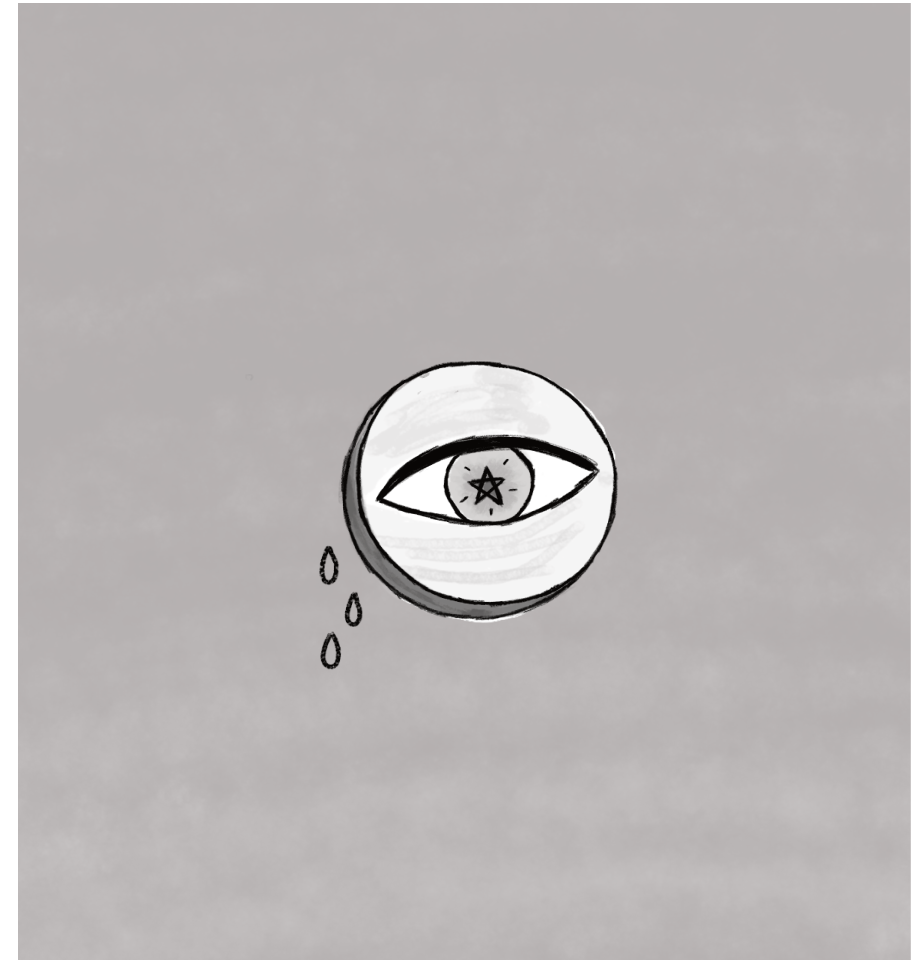
On the night before a special occasion, out would come her box of cake decorations, her piping bags and syringes, then she'd line up her silver nozzles like tin soldiers, ready for action. She drew and practised her own icing patterns on parchment paper and always baked more cakes than she needed in case one didn't turn out right, or she needed to carve extra pieces. By morning, the cake would be revealed, the centrepiece of the party table, bedecked with silver balls, hundreds and thousands, pretty ribbons, handmade sugar roses, shimmering with glittery fondant icing, candles and our names emblazoned in the middle. They were almost too good to eat.

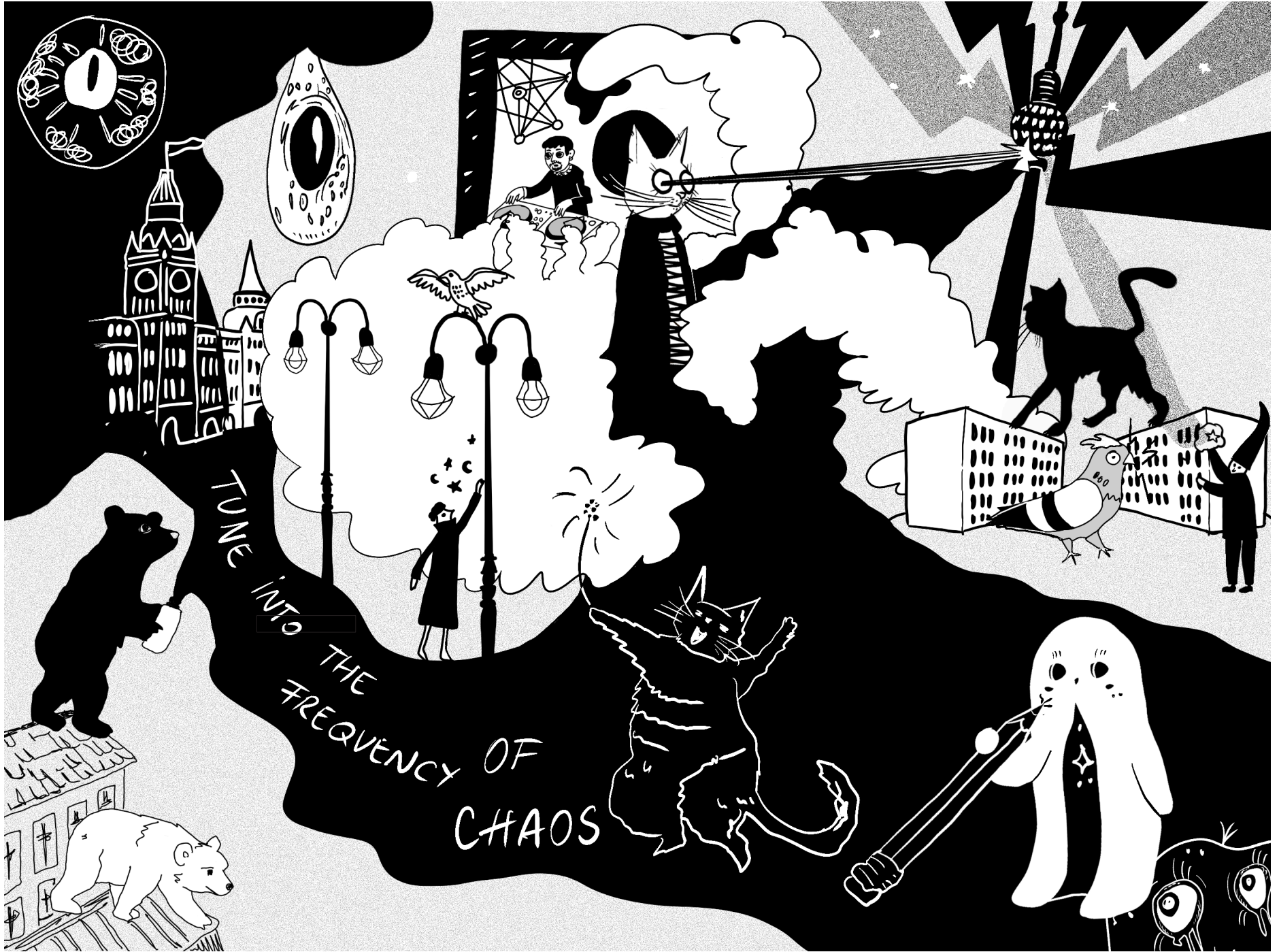
Oma and Opa always brought the necessary ingredients when they came to visit. Once, they even brought a collection of miniature dolls to make cake characters. For my eighth birthday I chose a Cinderella doll that Mama popped into a pudding basin of cake mixture, then sculpted a ballgown out of the sponge around her. Her dress was iced to perfection, as though the fairy godmother herself had woven a magic spell over it.

Mama's master cookbook was a reflection of herself and her imagination. Inside, she recorded of her favourite recipes, assembled magazine clippings, examples of the latest culinary crazes and stuck in our birthday wish lists. Its margins were crammed

with handwritten notes on successes and failures, variations and embellishments, vital ingredients. Of course many recipes were a sign of the times: finger food for fashionable cheese and wine parties, elaborate puddings using the latest Tupperware moulds, luncheon meats sculpted in aspic jelly, a Frenchified craze; but also all the yeasted breads, and classic cakes in the German tradition: Mondkuchen, Sand und Semmelkuchen, Apfel und Zuckerkuchen, as well as an array of Danish pastries stuffed with apricots, almonds and pineapple for coffee mornings and high teas.

Over the years Mama had built up a professional collection of patty pans, cake tins, muffin trays and biscuit cutters, which she kept oiled and greased in the bread oven by the Rayburn. She liked nothing more than to pass the time among them, as the kitchen filled up with the sounds and smell of her baking.







## Bewitching flavours of the forest

The jewel of the jam-making season is bramble and crab-apple jelly. Strange to think that a clump of prickles should produce such a magical blackberry, although its crimson juice makes me think of the spindle that drew blood from the tender fingers of Sleeping Beauty before she fell into a hundred-year-sleep, and the thorn bush that grew around her arbour.

Strained through a muslin cloth tied to the four legs of an upside-down stool in the kitchen of my childhood, the fruit wasn't to be prodded or squeezed until the very last drop fell unbidden into the bowl, lest it become cloudy. The only blemishes allowed were the wrinkles that rippled the surface of the boiling mixture as it cooled on the saucer, indicating the setting point.

Holding a jar up to the sunlight, Mama always said that a good jelly should be as clear as a summer's day and as rosy as an autumn sunset, laced with just a trace of sourness afforded by a spoonful of stewed crab apples.

Crab apples also had a magic of their own: custard yellow with brown speckles, in my childish eyes they were like forbidden fairy fruit: tart on the tongue but like nectar when only slightly sweetened. I would pick them gingerly from their spiky branches, as though they were poisoned cherries, all the while resisting the temptation to pop them into my mouth and risk falling to the ground like Snow White.

As far as I was concerned, the wild berry jams that lined our pantry shelves and let in a rainbow of sunlight had been stirred in the cauldrons of fairy folk, were set by their spells, and contained all the bewitching flavours of the forest.

### Wild apples

Crab apples are an old-fashioned, almost 'forgotten' fruit. Despite their reputation, they aren't toxic, although their seeds do contain a natural cyanide (but you'd have to consume your weight in them for it to have any detrimental effect - apart from a touch of tummy-ache, perhaps). Tart and tangy, they are naturally acidic as well as high in pectin and so can be used to help set jams and jellies, and to flavour pickles and chutneys, without the need for flamboyant spells or incantations!

They ripen in late September to October and are usually green with a pink blush or a freckled golden yellow. Hardy little fruits, they hang onto their twiggy branches well into winter, and are at their purest-tasting when it's chilly outside.

Any kind of crab apple will do for the cooking pot: red-skinned Dolgos, yellow-skinned Butterballs, ornamental Chinese varieties, Golden Hornets, Centennials, Chestnuts - even the uncultivated *Malus Sylvestris* that grows wild in woods and hedgerows, is fine. But a word of warning: just because they are edible, does not mean you will like them all!

The magical properties of crab apples are such that their sour, appley flavour will revive an otherwise sickly-sweet jam and bring a lip-puckering smack to the most jaded of fruity concoctions - without any danger of being accused of unwarranted acidity.

### TREE OF LOVE

CRAB APPLES HAVE LONG BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH LOVE AND MARRIAGE. IF YOU THROW THE PIPS INTO THE FIRE WHILE SAYING THE NAME OF YOUR LOVE, THE LOVE IS TRUE IF THE PIPS EXPLODE!

### BITTER CURE

THERE ARE FEW SOURS AND BITTERS CONSUMED IN OUR MODERN DIET OF OVERLY-SWEETENED FOOD, WHICH IS WHERE THE MINIATURE CRAB APPLE PACKS A HEFTY PUNCH.



### RECIPE FOR CRAB-APPLE JELLY

This taste bud-tingling amber-pink jelly can be spread on buttered toast, crumpets, muffins - or on crackers topped with goats cheese. It is also perfect for glazing or pairing with meats. You can pep up the recipe by adding a few chillies, a cinnamon stick, coriander seeds or star anise to the pan.

#### Ingredients:

as many crab apples as you want to use  
water to cover them  
fresh, strained lemon juice (optional)  
white granulated sugar

#### Method:

Wash and pick through the apples, taking out any bruised ones.  
Tip them into a large pan - skin, core, seeds and all - and cover with water.  
Simmer until the flesh has turned mushy.  
upturn a stool or a chair and attach a square of muslin with string to the legs. Pour the fruit into the muslin and let it drip through overnight (do not be tempted to squeeze or press it through, otherwise the jelly will be cloudy).

Next morning, throw the pulp on the compost and measure the juice so that it is 10 parts juice to 7 parts sugar. Add lemon juice to taste, if desired.

Bring to a steady boil, skimming off any foam with a large spoon. To test if the jelly is ready - put a spoonful on a chilled saucer, and if it forms a skin that wrinkles when touched, it is ready to go. -

Pour into hot, dry sterilised jars, seal with a circle of waxed paper and screw the lid on while still hot.

**Tips:**

Freeze the pulp in an ice tray to use as fruity cubes for sweetened ice tea.

Use left over juice to de-sweeten commercial fruit juices.



**RECIPE FOR BRAMBLE JELLY**

Great with cheese and biscuits!

**Ingredients:**

3kg blackberries (incl. some unripe red ones for extra tartness)

2 large cooking apples, peeled, cored and diced

400ml water

strained juice of 1 lemon

1 cup strained crab apple juice

splash of crème de cassis (optional)

white granulated sugar

**Method:**

Wash the blackberries to get rid of any dust and insects.

Add the cooking apples and tip into a pan with the water. Soften the fruit, simmering for about 20-30 minutes while mashing the fruit against the side with a wooden spoon.

Pour into a colander/sieve lined with a double layer of muslin. Let it drip over night.

(NB don't attempt to squeeze for a clear juice!)

Discard the pulp and stir in the lemon and crab apple juice.

For every 600ml of juice add 450g of granulated sugar. Turn up the heat and boil on high for 10-15 minutes, skimming off any scum as it forms, until the setting point is reached.

Fill hot, dry, sterilised jars to just below the brim and seal while still hot.

Keep in a dark, cool place.

**BERRY BENEFITS**

THIS LITTLE FRUIT IS A SUPERFOOD!

HIGH IN FIBRE AND GOOD BACTERIA, IT AIDS DIGESTION.

IT IS AN EXCELLENT SOURCE OF VITAMIN K AND HAS BOTH ANTI-INFLAMMATORY AND ANTI-MICROBIAL PROPERTIES.

IT IMPROVES BONE HEALTH.

A POWERFUL ANTIOXIDANT, IT HELPS RELEASE TOXINS FROM THE KIDNEYS AND BOWEL.

IT HAS AN ANTI-AGING EFFECT ON THE SKIN AND IS A NATURAL BRAIN FOOD.

IT PRODUCES SLEEP-ENHANCING MELATONIN.

AN ANTI-CARCINOGENIC, IT ALSO LOWERS BAD CHOLESTEROL AND REDUCES SUGAR IN THE BLOOD.



# Zine Verschenken

#24 | july 2024 | language

**Artists** Bianca Cheung  
Erin Johnson  
Karen Foster  
NINANIÑA

Do you want to contribute to the zine?

Have any questions?

Send us an email:

**[zine.verschenken@gmail.com](mailto:zine.verschenken@gmail.com)** or  
scan the QR code to access our website:



**[zineverschenken.de](http://zineverschenken.de)**

