

"What's a normal day like for you?" one of the little 3rd grade boys pipes up when I ask whether there are any final questions on my visit to his sprawling school. The question stops me in my tracks for a moment, and I realise that for me no two days are alike. So that's what I tell him, adding that when your life is that eventful, you start to miss a routine – something which many people feel actually undermines well-being. But as answers go, that's not enough for this plucky little kid. "But still, what's a really happy day like for you?" he parries. So I take five minutes out of my next engagement to describe it to him.

I wake up at home in my own bed in Ärna knowing that I have the whole day to myself – I don't have anywhere I need to be. I don't need to put my make-up on or worry about what to wear. Such days are few and far between: maybe half of the Saturdays in the year, or fewer than that even, do I get to spend at home, just me and the family.

My daughter's crawled into bed with us in the early hours, so when we wake up she's the first one into the dining room to let Edward and Schubert out. Before they fly out the door they plant a thousand kisses on her face. Eedu, an English setter with long white eyelashes, is great at giving hugs, too. Schuby's more of a kiss-chaser. They bounce around so much, so excitedly, that it can't help but put a smile on your face as soon as you see them. And who better to teach us the beauty of living in the moment than our pets? They're not worried about whether they'll get their homework for next week done without making any mistakes. And it's not like worrying will help or solve any problems in any case. That's something we humans tend to forget, and that's why our dogs are so smart. And why we should be so grateful to them for teaching us that lesson.

I set about making breakfast. In winter I usually whip up an omelette or porridge; in summer I plump for fresh berries with cheese curd cream. Luukas is our very own barista par excellence – the rise-and-shine coffee he makes is an inseparable part of any happy morning. But if he's away somewhere, the president knows how to make a mean cup of his own. The puppies get their breakfast, and once we've all eaten our daughter takes some fresh milk and fish out to the barn for Musi and Mõmmi – our cats, one jet-black and the other a big, furry tabby. One room normally isn't big enough for the two of them and Eedu and Schuby.

At some point after breakfast we head out for a hike through the forest. In winter we tend to take a four-or-so kilometre route which leads us to Abja-Paluoja. The first couple of kilometres are more or less cleared forest paths; the last couple are more of a challenge: normally the snow comes up to just below the president's knees, which means it comes all the way up to mine and

well over our daughter Kadri's. More often than not the dogs disappear in it completely, but they seem to like it. Trudging along as we do isn't easy, but Kadri has fun rolling down the snowy hillocks, and her father likes to think of the exercise as endurance training. It certainly brings a healthy glow to all of our cheeks.

In Abja we pop into the book store before heading over to Mulgi Tavern to warm ourselves by the fire. The dogs know which table we normally sit at and make a beeline for their corner, stretching themselves out on the floor. Since they've spent most of the hike here hoovering up snow, the bowl of water the waitress brings over for them almost always goes untouched. Soon enough their eyelids begin to droop, and after that not even the smells coming from the kitchen are enough to tempt them to stay awake.

Mulgi Tavern offers some wonderful home-style food, in particular the dishes that are traditional to the region. It's worth giving all of them a try – especially if you've just been hiking through the forest for an hour! The cranberry cordial they make is the stuff of little girls' dreams.

Part of any happy day, of course, is a hot sauna accompanied by birch twigs that have just been taken from the deep freeze. And if you then throw yourself in the snow outside the sauna or plunge into the pond after you've whipped yourself up into a birch frenzy, you'll be more than invigorated for a snowball fight on the steamy benches. It's hard to imagine a more entertaining winter pastime!

After that, feeling completely cleansed, almost as if you've got a new lease on life, it's wonderful to sit down and have dinner together – grilling some local salted fish or throwing together a spicy casserole. And no happy day is complete without cake. Cheesecake gets top marks in our house. I must have come up with 50 different versions by now. Perhaps I should put them all in a cookbook. Of course, happy days are about exciting, new ideas, too. Or at least they can be; they don't have to be. Sometimes it's nice to just stick to your routine and go with the flow. That's when you realise how extraordinary the everyday can be.

Happy days rolls together to make a happy year when every day is filled with lots of happy moments. We should all do our best to notice those moments, and what's more, to live in them.

A happy new year to you all!