

“Making do” is not a phrase one hears often these days, but it was a common refrain in the past. What it referred to, of course, was coming up with an alternative solution to a problem. It might have been as simple as straightening an old nail to fix a barnyard gate instead of heading to the hardware store for new nails. It might have meant acidifying—with a little vinegar— a cup of milk to use in a recipe that called for buttermilk. It might have involved something like renovating a badly worn pair of shoes with some shoe polish and hard buffing.

“Making do” was often the result of lack of resources for always buying new things. But, it was also a way of life, one that seems to be increasingly rare in today’s consumption-driven society. Now, clothing, appliances, electronic devices, cars, spouses, and even food are discarded in favor of something “new.” But, the sad fact is that there really isn’t anything new under the sun.

And, if I am totally honest, I don’t really think of “making do” as a sacrifice. For one thing, it saves a lot of nuisance. I would get nothing done if I didn’t “make do.” Perhaps, it is an innate dislike of shopping, but I really don’t have any desire to buy clothes, furniture, accessories, or doodads of any kind. The only store that really lures me is a bookstore. So, I have to say that perhaps, I don’t always “make do.” But, I do purchase used books—sometimes.

Still, except for books, I am not interested in shopping. And even necessities for the farm or garden can often be recycled from other things, dispensed with, or made from scratch by hand. And, in the kitchen, this is a daily occurrence. If the ingredients aren’t available for some dish, there are either substitutions in seasonings or something entirely different to cook. This can lead to wholly new flavor combinations that may be “winners” that come to our table time after time. Or, it can result in “Well, I will never try that again.”

It is cold this morning, even in the house. I am sitting here in my red wool stocking cap and a pullover fleece running shirt that my niece gave me sometime during the 1990s. It is faded, worn out, ugly, comfortable, and my favorite. I will “make do” with it until something better happens along or the shirt deconstructs itself on its own. “Making do” has its rewards.