

One-derful!

On Saturday, amidst great fanfare, Leo graduated from having his life measured in months to having his life measured in years. In other words, he turned 1... and we celebrated.



Have you ever wondered why first birthday parties are such a big deal? Why is so much effort put into an occasion the guest of honor is unlikely to remember? And the details!

The party was held on the sod farm. The sunshine illuminated everything, while the wind tormented the orange, yellow, turquoise, and spring green tablecloths and balloons. The lion piñata swayed back and forth as we weighted down the plates and napkins which starred an adorable yellow lion with an orange mane. He was holding on to a blue balloon. "1" it read.

Both grandfathers prepared their famous chili (vegetarian and venison). Patrick whipped up his first batch of real macaroni and cheese. Our friends at Chick-fil-a delighted kids of all ages with their crowd-pleasing chicken nuggets. A very dear friend prepared 6 dozen cupcakes: chocolate, vanilla, and pumpkin spice. She even made a little lion smash cake. And with all that food, it was a real fight to keep the bees away.

My sister-in-law hid some cannonball pumpkins (about the size of a grapefruit) in an open grass field. A short hayride led us there, and the children squealed as they "picked" their pumpkins from our "patch."

The candle wouldn't stay lit, so poor Leo didn't really get to make his wish. (I made one for him.) I'm not sure why, but he was hesitant to tear into his little lion cake. (His brothers didn't mind.) Of course, he was spoiled with toys, books, and new clothes (always nice when you're the third son!)

The party was delightful, but it wasn't because of the details I just mentioned. Soon, they will fade from everyone's memory. Even mine. But the thing that will stick around is the warmth and love we felt that day.



Like a wedding, a first birthday party isn't just about the people who are being celebrated; it's about the contributions made by loved ones in bringing them to this point. Leo's first birthday party wasn't just about him reaching a major milestone; it was a way of honoring his brothers, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends. These were the people who fed him, changed him, bathed him, clothed

him, played with him, and read to him during his infancy. These were the people who nurtured him and helped him grow into the toddler he is becoming. And I'm grateful for each one of them.

I haven't written much about Leo. I wanted the first year to be just for us. But I will tell you that he is quite sweet, patient, forgiving (especially to Frank, who has a tendency to bite, hit, and be rough with him), curious, and almost always smiling. He loves his kitty cats (and animals in general), every kind of food (even Brussels sprouts!), patty-cakes, Sesame Street, and stealing travel-sized toiletries from underneath the bathroom sink. He's happy, healthy, strong, and lovely - all the things we prayed for when he was still living in my tummy. As he grows, you'll get to know him better. I'm looking forward to it, too.

