

The Power of Food and the Importance of Family Recipes

By Kate Walling

As a child I remember waking up early to the smell of my grandmother's cooking. She would rise at 6 or 7 AM to begin preparing a meal for the family. As usual, this meal would be special. She would know each of our favorite dishes and find the time to make all of them while offering breakfast to the grandchildren, who spent the night frequently. For many people food and family are intimately connected. Modern families have a difficult task when it comes to preserving this connection. How is it possible to make a meal from scratch when you have to work, pick up the kids, clean the house, complete personal projects, do the grocery shopping and carry on relationships with friends and loved ones? We may not be able to do the exact same things in the kitchen that our grandmothers did 20 or 30 years ago, but there are new, innovative ways for both men and women to honor family traditions and preserve the culinary knowledge that has been handed down for generations.

Feeling Full: The Emotional Experience of Food

In her seventh book "The Way To Cook" Julia Child writes "Dining with one's friends and beloved family is certainly one of life's primal and most innocent delights, one that is both soul-satisfying and eternal." Family recipes are a way of keeping our ancestry alive, as well as a part of ourselves. Food appeals to all five of our senses and because of this it can evoke vivid memories of our childhood, of our relationships with family members who have passed away and of who we were during that time period. Food can remind us of experiences long forgotten and allow us to relive feelings of comfort, satisfaction or excitement. Preserving family recipes allows us to access these emotions any time we choose, whether it's a holiday or a simple special occasion.

Dedicated to Those Who Came Before Us: The Legacy of Food

Documenting family recipes keeps part of the legacy of our relatives and loved ones alive. Each cook in a family, whether it is a mother, brother, aunt, grandmother or cousin, contributes their own flavor and style. Food writer Laurie Colwin states, "No one who cooks, cooks alone. Even at her most solitary, a cook in the kitchen is surrounded by generations of cooks past, the advice and menus of cooks present, the wisdom of cookbook writers." As we record the words, thoughts, ideas and process of our traditional family meals we create an heirloom that will be handed down to our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. We build a bridge by which our loved ones can learn who we are, even after we are gone from this world. Part of knowing the path ahead is to understand where you come from. This legacy of food passed down from one generation to another is a tool, a family tree of foods, a line that can be traced for decades into the past and the future.

Bringing the Family Together: The Heritage of Food

Food is universal; eating is something all human beings do. Because of this, meals

have been a symbol throughout the ages of sharing, nurturing and loving one another. Remembering, collecting, recording and passing down the recipes your loved ones have passed to you is a wonderful way to honor and immortalize your family. These traditions from the past are part of who you are as an individual. Not only will these recipes allow you to create meals that are a meaningful experience, but they will also inspire you to create your own versions of dishes, to add your own flavor and style. You will take what your family has given to you and infuse it with your own meaning and power. Family ties are bonds that stand the test of time. Preserving family recipes is saving and honoring our heritage so future generations can continue to strengthen those ties. To learn more about recipe collecting and creative cooking projects please visit <http://www.TheSecretIngredients.com>.