

Home-cooked meals bring us together

Mark Pavilons



"Instead of going out to dinner, buy good food. Cooking at home shows such affection. In a bad economy, it's more important to make yourself feel good."

Ina Garten

It's been said that families become closer when they share dinner together and chat about the day's events.

It's encouraged, for very good reasons. While I admit that it's not always easy, it does bring a family closer together.

For some reason, we've strayed from the dinner table and real, home-cooked meals. I understand the whole hectic lifestyle business, but there just has to be time to make and share a meal together, at least a few times a week.

Growing up, there was no such thing as "eating out" on a regular basis. Restaurant meals were reserved for special occasions and holidays. They were a luxury. And that always struck me as odd, because unless you're very lucky, restaurant food seldom stacks up against mom's superhuman powers in the kitchen.

My mother was German so cooking was in her blood. And sharing a meal with others was just par for the course.

I recall a time when I did late-night newspaper layout and we car pooled. I invited my colleagues over for dinner, before we headed out for the long night ahead. They were constantly amazed, and had nothing but praise for the good, home-cooked meals they received. An often-heard comment was "do you always eat like this?"

Even mom's leftovers were like a banquet, a feast for those who subsisted on fast food and take-out.

Eating was one of life's simple pleasures. Eating well gave you strength. Eating together gave you a sense of belonging.

"When I eat with my friends, it is a moment of real pleasure, when I really enjoy my life."

Monica Bellucci

Let's talk about some of those dishes that graced our tables of yore.

I was nurtured on ample servings of mashed potatoes, rouladen, pork chops, breaded veal, sauerkraut, sausages, veggies, salads, along with cucumbers and onions straight from the garden. That same home-grown bounty resulted in the biggest pickles I've ever seen. Yes, my friends, meat, potatoes and fresh veggies were my source of energy, my source of inner strength.

In many ways, it was an expression of love.

In fact, most of my memories of mom center around family occasions, big meals and after-dinner refreshments, home-made wine, and poker games. Nowadays you can play [PKV poker](#) online. In fact, you can play basically any game online, it is pretty amazing to see how advanced we've gone with technology. Anyone like you or me could just install [kiss918 apk](#) on our smartphones and play poker and other games on the go.

We only sat in front of the TV at the end of a very long and productive day. We often just carried on our dinner conversations until

the wee hours, covering everything from current events and life's tribulations, to the bright and cheery future. Maybe it was the times ?life, work and relationships seemed simpler, more straightforward. You left a job, and you got another one. You broke up with your girlfriend and moved on. Your car broke down and you picked one from the neighbour for \$500 (my 1973 Dodge Dart with a slant-6 a case in point).

Food always seemed to play a part in our lives. It was something we looked forward to and enjoyed, not just once in a while, but every single night, seven days a week.

Let's talk about meatloaf, that often ridiculed staple.

In my younger years, I often saw my mom's hands buried in a bowl of fresh ground beef, squeezing the stuffings out of it for some concoction. From hamburgers and meatballs to meat loaf and stuffing, it was all homemade. When was the last time you had home-made meatloaf?

We enjoy it frequently at our house and my wife has become quite the master, tossing in red peppers, broccoli and a dash of HP sauce. My kids are like piranhas when the dish hits the table!

Before she died, my mom lived with us for a little over a year. She treated us well when we gathered for dinner. For some strange reason, in her declining years, she put mustard in just about everything. My mashed potatoes went from white to yellow! Don't get me wrong, it tasted just fine. It's something that brings a smile to my face to this day.

What were some of your mom's special creations or twists?

Back in the day, our dinner table seemed to be the demilitarized zone, a place where all battles and arguments were banned. That's why I remember our meals with fondness, smiles and laughter all around.

I miss them. And I miss all the people around that special table ? my dad, mom, sister and uncle. They're just shadows now.

I would encourage everyone to think of some of your favorite dishes from the past and let your family enjoy some real food. If you must, call assemble the troops ? moms and grandmas ? to help make magic in the kitchen.

Your family will appreciate it.