

Celebrating Mother's day

My Mother's apron, Stories from the kitchen table.



*Read locally written short stories, poems, and letters, sharing
about family mealtime experiences
and the special moments created by Mums.*

Kāpiti Coast
Older Persons' Council
A Voice For Our Community


Kāpiti Coast
DISTRICT COUNCIL
Me Huri Whakamuri, Ka Titiro Whakamua

To celebrate Mothers day 2022, The Kāpiti Coast Older Persons Council asked people around the Kāpiti Coast to share written short stories, poems, and letters sharing about family mealtime experiences and the special moments created by Mums.

Enjoy reading these heartwarming stories.

A 'Mother's Day' letter to my late mother – Eila Stevenson-Wright.

Dear Muffins

How my late brother John and I came to give you this name of endearment – is now quite lost in the mists of time.

I recall so clearly your gentle insistence – that we could not 'leave the table' without having eaten the meal served.

I suspect that you were aware that John and I had a 'negotiated food swap' – that saw him eat the meat from my plate and me the potatoes from his.

I smile now writing this as a vegetarian of some fifty years plus.

Neither of us was at all keen on the cabbage served – that we surreptitiously hid around the potted maidenhair ferns.

My adult self apologises to those ferns that without protest hid the overcooked cabbage.

This letter is sent – with my love across time.



Eila Stevenson-Wright

Vegan Lasagne

By Daniel Fay (13yr) (Otaihanga)

My mother and I are both vegan, so when we cook in the kitchen we get to make up our own versions of recipes. The first time we tried to make our lasagne recipe vegan it well let's just say it didn't turn out the best. We made our own pasta with gluten free flour and no egg. Because the pasta had no egg in it there was nothing holding it together. The pasta was crumbly and so dry that it made your mouth feel like a dry desert that hadn't rained in years. Yet even though the pasta was so dry it didn't make up for how sludgy the whole thing was. It was more like soup than a lasagne. We put layered vegetables like spinach in it and a homemade tomato sauce so when we cooked it the juices from the sauce in the lasagne just about boiled the spinach. Nobody liked it, particularly not my sister or Dad who aren't vegan at all. It took us two hours to make but we couldn't stand eating it. We chucked the lasagne in the compost and ate instant noodles instead.

The second time we made lasagne it was so much better. We didn't have any vegan 'mince' last time which is why it was so soup like. This time we decided to make the 'mince' out of tofu by cooking some tofu with onion, then mashing it with a little bit of tomato sauce – shop bought this time. It helped with the structure of the lasagne and with the taste. We made a creamy vegan white sauce out of soy milk, coconut oil, and flour to help thicken it up. Adding nutritional yeast gave it a cheesy taste. We decided to make our own pasta again but this time with no gluten free flour. Even though we still didn't put egg in the regular flour helped with binding it together. This time we added more water, so the pasta wasn't so dry either.

We layered all this up in a dish, put it in the oven and hoped for the best. Success! We liked it so much, even the meat eaters ate it all. Then we kept on making it so many times until we got sick of it and never wanted to eat it again.



Daniel's Mother, Yossarian Fay

Mother's Day Poem

A Mum is someone who is always there to give you lots of love and care.

A Mum is someone who thinks not of herself, but the needs of her children.

A Mum is someone who you can laugh, have fun, and share hugs with.

A Mum is someone who shouldn't be taken for granted for the things they do.

A Mum is a daughter's best friend.

A Mother's love there is no other kind like it.

A Mum is special there is no other like YOU!

Love you so much Mum.



Awhina Andrew with her Mum Carol-ann Andrew, Raumati

On family occasions like birthdays and Christmas, my Mum loves to make us a Pavlova Roll. It is so yummy and filled with fresh cream, passionfruit sauce , and fresh fruit .

Derived from the recipe of Chelsea Sugar's Pavlova:

Ingredients

4 medium egg whites 225g
Chelsea Caster Sugar 1 tsp cornflour
1/2 tsp white wine vinegar
1/2 tsp vanilla essence

Method

* Preheat the oven to 150°C / 140°C fan / 300°F / GM 2. Line a large baking tray with baking paper, and draw round a dinner plate (20cm-ish circle) in the centre of the paper. Place the egg whites in a clean, grease-free bowl and whisk them until stiff and dry. Add the sugar, a spoon at a time, whisking until the mixture is smooth, glossy and holds stiff peaks. Gently fold in the cornflour, vinegar and vanilla with a large metal spoon. Spoon the mixture onto the baking paper. With the back of the metal spoon, spread it to just within the circle, making decorative swirls, leaving a shallow dip in the centre. Bake for 1hr until the meringue base and sides are crisp. Leave to cool on a cake rack – cracking is totally normal as it cools.

Awhina Andrew, Raumati

Sybil Robertson – in the kitchen



My mother, Sybil (Syb) Coombs was born in Widnes, Lancashire in 1924. During the second world war she served in the Air Force where she met and married a handsome young New Zealand flyer, Henry (Chips) Robertson. Like many war brides the couple were parted for some time until my mother could get passage on a war brides' ship in 1946. Once the couple were reconciled, they initially lived with my grandmother.

I suspect that, until that time, Syb and the kitchen were not well acquainted. Her lack of culinary knowledge was short lived, however, and with the help of her mother-in-law (and Mrs Parkes from across the road) she soon became adept. Mum made huge 3-course breakfasts to the delight of her son but not, unfortunately, his waistline. We would start breakfast with cereal (Weetbix in summer, porridge in winter), followed by mince, spaghetti or baked beans on toast and finally more toast with marmite or honey.

Mum was pretty good at most main course dishes. The only thing that she was never able to master was steak! Coming from Lancashire she would serve stews and hotpot as well as many offal dishes. Everything had to be well done, no tinge of red. She would have turned her nose up at Lamb, the way it is currently served in restaurants. Steak came out on the black side of well done. You could have replaced the soles on your shoes with it. Fortunately, steak was an expensive rarity in those days.

One dish that was a little controversial was Tripe and Onions (see recipe below). Tripe is a beast's stomach lining. Mum usually cooked it in a thick white sauce with the onions and often with leeks as well. I loved it but, to be honest, I don't think it had any flavour. The flavour was all in the sauce. My younger sister couldn't be coerced into trying it, no matter what. It wasn't my father's favourite either, but he tolerated it, except for one day when he was the only one served it.

Dad had been put into hospital for a gall bladder operation. While he was there my grandmother came down to be with mum. Mum decided to cook roast pork with all the trimmings, one of Nana's favourites. Unfortunately, Dad was released from hospital earlier than expected and wasn't permitted any fatty food, so Mum made him a big dollop of Tripe. We all tucked into our pork and poor old dad was forced to sit and watch us while he toyed with his Tripe. Nana didn't help. She delighted in discussing at descriptive length how delicious the pork was. I'm not sure he ever forgave her for that, and I don't recall Tripe ever being served after that in our home.

Evening meals were always two courses, mains, and pudding. Like most children we liked this second course the most. Mum produced wonderful trifles, pies and crumbles among many other treats. My all-time favourite was Golden Syrup pudding, a steamed pudding served with lashings of custard.

Like many mums in New Zealand in the fifties, Mum spent a large amount of time in the kitchen. She was always baking scones, biscuits and cakes to fill the tins. My sister still makes fruit cake to mother's recipe.

When I left home to go flatting, Mum gave me two recipes to take with me. They were both mince dishes which were easy and cheap to make. One of them was Chile con Carne, which I still make but not exactly to mother's recipe. I cheat and use tinned beans and we serve it with corn chips. In mum's day, corn chips were not available in our shops, so the chili was always served over rice.

Bill Robertson, Paraparaumu

MY MOTHERS APRON

Mothers Apron! I clearly remember my mother's apron. Not by its colour, not by its style or how often she wore it, but for what her apron did for me as a small child.

My Mum was a stay at home, wonderful caring, loving and gentlewoman. A woman who had been through WW2 and the bombings of London. She had married a kiwi soldier and came out to NZ in 1946, along with 599 other brides, on what they called a War Brides ship – The Rangitiki.

She was met at the Christchurch railway station by her new parents in law to be told she was being taken immediately to Ballantynes, a very smart shop in the centre of the city, to purchase a hat, gloves, and some nylon stockings, but no apron! Mother-in-law obviously did not understand the “rationing” that had been going on in London.

My Father grew a very large vegetable garden and mother's apron was used as the container to collect the vegetables that grew in plentiful amounts. Tied around her waist, she would gather both bottom corners of the apron and together we would gather, peas, potatoes, beans, green gooseberries, and black currants would be placed on the top of the pile so as not to crush them. I knew then that a pie would be on the menu in the evening. It was an idyllic time for both of us, I still treasure those moments.

Come Friday, baking day, our little kitchen table would be covered with the ingredients needed to make all manner of things to fill the tins, to make perhaps a currant pie, or an apple pie, scones, marsh-mellow shortcake, chocolate rough or a two layered soft light and fluffy sponge, which would later be filled with cream. What excitement that was, as I knew I would be able to lick with my tongue the cream that would be left on the old green handled beater. Aunt Daisy's voice could be heard coming from the wooden radio in the corner. Mother's apron would be covered in flour, black marks from the currants or cocoa powder, and it would have a screwed-up corner where I had reached and wiped my hands after “helping”. The kitchen would be filled with wonderful smells and later Mother would cut the slices, and it was my role to lay them carefully in the cake tins to be eaten and enjoyed over the next week.

However, the biggest, warmest and most memorable thought of my mother's apron was the safety. When the salesman came to the door and used his spiel in an attempt to sell the "Electrolux" vacuum cleaner, I could hide beside mother and under her apron. When I was sad or injured, I could run to mother and would be comforted not only by her arms but by the apron and my tears would be wiped away.

Many years later, I don't remember the colour of the apron. I don't remember where it hung, I don't remember where it went, but I do remember the comfort, warmth and loving that it gave.

I think of an apron, and I think of my childhood. My dear Mother, the kitchen, and the Apron. RIP.



Gail with her Mum

Gail Long, Paraparaumu

Mother's Apron

I am Mum's apron. I hang around.

Most of my time is spent hanging on a hook on the back of the kitchen door. I jump with joy when Mum reaches for me and loops me around her neck and ties my strings behind her because I know something good is going to happen.

Would it be making dinner or baking a cake? I love those delicious smells as she works to make her large family happy and well fed.

Mum makes roasts with vegetables and gravy, spongy steamed puddings with caramel sauce, chocolate cake iced with real chocolate and lots of scones.

Here's Mum's recipe for Coconut Biscuits: -

COCONUT BISCUITS

Cream 150 g of butter and a small cup of sugar

Add 1 egg then dry ingredients –

1 cup flour and 1 teaspoon baking powder, then 1 ½ cups of desiccated coconut.

Place teaspoonfuls on cold trays

Bake at 325 degrees for 20 minutes

Alternative – use teaspoon to indent each biscuit and add a small amount of jam.

Delicious and so easy to make.

But I get so dizzy when she decides I am a bit grubby, puts me in the washing machine with my friends, the tea towels. As for the hot iron, ouch! I was pressed so flat, folded, and put in a drawer till the next time I could hang on the door.

As time progressed, I lost some of my strength and colour, I was old and looked so tired, washed so Mum cut me into rags for cleaning cloths and I couldn't hang around on the kitchen door anymore.

Grace Terry, Paraparaumu

MY MUM'S APRON

My Mum had four different sorts of aprons.

One made out of a sugar bag with a cotton print sewn around its borders and a big pocket. This was a practical one for hard chores like getting a fire going to be able to sterilise the sheets and clothes in the big old copper out in the washhouse. Or for bringing in the wood and coal. Sometimes it would still be around her waist as she hung out the washing using a handful of wooden pegs out of the big pocket.

The second sort was an everyday domestic one, to keep her clothes clean and tidy while she cooked, baked, and cleaned the house. While rolling out hand-made pastry and while washing up the dishes. These ones were bib aprons made from sturdy cotton or towelling fabric so she could wipe her hands as she answered the party-line phone or the front door.

The third one was for when Mum did her pottery or mosaic work, made of canvas that covered the whole of her body. Wrapped right around her body and criss-crossed at the back sheltering her from any splatters or spills. A large front pocket held some of her tools and a big rag for wiping things on.

The fourth type was for parties, serving canapes at a cocktail party, over her very best dress. Made of stiff organdie with frills and embroidered with delicate flowers, it finished off the hostess look along with her hair in an up-do, with make-up on and in her best shoes.

I loved the everyday one best, when Mum would give you a cuddle when you came home from school on your bike, tired and hungry. So soft, warm, and comforting. The apron smelled of furniture polish or apple pie, depending on what Mum had been doing. So homely, safe, and sheltering.

Later, I would put on my own little apron and do some chores after my afternoon tea. Feeding the chooks and collecting the eggs or picking some flowers from the garden for the kitchen table. I felt just like my Mum.

Such happy memories.

Grace Terry, Paraparaumu



Grace's Mum Lila McDowell

My Mother's apron – stories from the kitchen table

From the 60's onwards, my mother was known amongst her friends for her pies. Beautifully presented large round chicken or steak pies. One pie would feed six people with a generous slice. She would host lunch or supper buffet parties and have four or five pies ready to serve. She was a dab hand at making pastry – no sheets of frozen pastry in her house. The pies were always succulent, full of meat, with rich golden pastry with crimped edges and decorated with pastry flowers and leaves. Presentation was important to my Mum.

She bought her meat from the local Newbury market. Charlie, the butcher would arrive in his van, open up the front panel and the local women would gather round as Charlie started his sales pitch. He would laugh and joke with his customers, telling them “you housewives wouldn't know a good cut of meat if you saw it” or “Do you need me to tell you how to cook it too” He would barter with them, a bit like an auctioneer, all the women determined to get the best deal and to not let Charlie know that maybe they didn't know quite what to do with a particular cut of meat that he was promoting at that moment.

My Mum was an expert at dealing with Charlie. The cuts of meat then were quite different to today. I remember her arriving home with great hunks of thick succulent beef that I wouldn't see today. It wasn't all primed, trimmed, treated, and packaged as it is today, just great slabs of thick red meat straight from the farm, no preservatives or water filler! It was economical too, it had to be as budgets had to be closely managed. I particularly remember the large quarters of green gammon she would come home with. We would cut a thick slice off and fry it in the pan. My mouth is watering, taste buds tingling and nose twitching at just the thought. An exquisite, joyous delight. So different from the processed water filled round “ham steaks” on offer today.

She also made wonderful Cornish pasties, a dozen or so at a time for us to munch on much to my Dad's delight. She made the occasional traditional pork pie. They were very time consuming, so she didn't make them very often. But they were a treat.

Fruit pies were also a favourite, particularly to use up fruit a bit passed its prime – apples that had gone a bit soft or wrinkly or apricots and plums that were a bit soft! They tasted delightful nestled in her crusty and sweet pastry, topped with sugar that browned in the oven.

Pies were also economical and time saving, particularly when entertaining a large group of friends. They could be made in advance and just needed heating. They could be served with potatoes and salads or vegetables or just eaten alone. Nothing better than a large slice of pie after a few social drinks and good conversation before heading home.

They were also delicious cold! Particularly when trying to satisfy the midnight munchies - a thin slice of pie, straight from the fridge, eaten standing up, in my finders (no need for a plate), humming happily as I chewed, often while the fridge door was still open. Satisfied, I would drift off to bed to sleep. Better still, enough pie left for me to take a nice big slice to work for my lunch. Who could ask for anything more?

There is something very comforting and friendly about pies.

My mother taught me well. I make pies. I have now resorted to using the frozen pastry, much to my shame. Oh well. My husband, after 50 plus years as part of our family is now also a pie maker. He is very good at it and often makes a pie for our daughter and grandchildren's tea!

The family tradition lives on even through my mum is now gone. She would be delighted.

Jasmine Thompson, Paraparaumu



Jasmine's Mum Margaret Richings



Margaret Richings with her family in the kitchen

LETTER TO MUM

No task for you
Was ever too large
And at the close of matters,
For you: 'No charge!'

Thanks for your toil,
Feet on the lean
As handmade garments
Flew from Singer machine!

Creations I can name
So proud on the day
To parade my Beatles' jacket
In purple corduroy: "Hip Hip Hooray!"

University years came
And were halcyon years
My tailor-made duffle coat
Jealous mates gave: "three cheers!"

Many visitors came
And were in their prime
As Ball and Bridal gowns
Were done: always on time!

As your time on Earth
Passed in March '04
Mourners displayed your wares
Three trestles galore!



Sylvie Boyce

My mother: Sylvie Boyce, who served her seamstress apprenticeship at Ballantynes [CHCH] and then worked as a dressmaker at Beaths [CHCH]. Prior to that my mother had been trained as an occupational therapist in the NZ army as a WAAC. Her many creations began in the army environment, where her forte was producing many and varied stuffed toys. As a grandmother extraordinaire, she always made fabric books, toys, and knitted garments for each of her 9 grandchildren; mourners were asked to bring one of Nanner's creations and display them in the Church Hall, after her service, we filled three trestle tables.

My lasting memory was of Friday night family dinners around the fireplace, tucking into one of Mum's fish pies. My mother always had a supper for my Dad to join us after he had completed 12 hours as the Shoe Buyer for Hays' store in CHCH. I recall my Dad, whom I sometimes worked for on a Friday evening, using a Ready Reckoner to produce his sales' figures for that week and compare them with the sales for the corresponding week from the year before. As my father walked passed the Managing Director, stationed at the main entrance door, he had to say "Up" or "Down", depending on how his weekly sales had gone by way of comparison with the same week in the previous year; the ride home was a breeze, if his figures were up, but I would hasten quickly to inform other family members, in the lounge, if his sales figures were down!

Kevin Boyce, Raumati Beach

JELLIED EELS - a memory of my Mum - Margaret Alice Pollard

Mum was a Eastender, born in Bermondsey, London in 1922 - so she would have turned 100 this year. How she would have loved that letter from the Queen. But you are not forgotten Mum, you have given me so many memories.

We lived in Kent and made frequent trips to London on the train to visit the few remaining siblings Mum had left in Bermondsey. It was usually just Mum and I. Dad came too if it was a special occasion like a wedding. Every visit to London meant a visit to Manzies in London Bridge Road, for a bowl of jellied eels or a hot meal of pie mash and liquor. This meal was literally slapped onto a plate, with a big dollop of mash, with green parsley sauce poured all over it. I can't say I liked it very much, but to my Mum and her siblings, this was their heritage.

They grew up in a house that had an outside privy, (toilet), and no bathroom. Best that could be offered was a tin bath placed near the fireplace in the living room, where it had to be filled with kettles or pans of hot water. This is where they washed, and it was not always private! Everyone had their regular bath day, and they would set off to the local Public Baths with their toilet bag and a change of clean clothes. Oh, the luxury to have their own bathrooms in later life could only be imagined! After having a good wash and brush up, nothing beat a good feed of jellied eels followed by a plate of pie, mash, and liquor! Then they probably went home or to the pub to enjoy a few ales or a Guinness.

Manzies was the most favoured shop in the district. It was so popular, there was always a queue to get in, and people expected to wait. Then these great big plates of food would be consumed with gusto. No-one lingered after their meal as they knew people were waiting to come in. As soon as someone vacated their seat, the next person in the queue took their turn to go in for a feed. I can remember the noise in the shop, the friendly London banter, and the white tiles on all the walls. As kids, we were often fed the jelly of the eels. Only when we were older, we could eat the chunk of eel without the bone getting stuck in our throat. There was a good dash of chilli vinegar on the eels too – this was most important! There was always a good hunk of bread to go with it. No sliced bread then I recall.

When we went to the seaside or the local market, Mum had to have her bowl of jellied eels. I usually ate them too, but Dad went for a plate of cockles or whelks. These looked far less appealing to the bowls of eels. My Yorkshire friend said they reminded her of a bowl of snot! Not an appealing sight, I must say - best not to dwell on that. The cockles and whelks looked worse to me, they looked like baby chicks fresh out of their eggs. One day I went on a school visit to Maidstone Museum, where I saw a live eel in an aquarium. The sight of this long black slimy eel with its face looking back at me in its tank put me off eating eels for a long time – but not forever. They became part of my diet when I became pregnant and had a craving for jellied eels. Evidently Mum's London heritage, and her taste for eels was in my genes too.

When we emigrated to New Zealand, jellied eels, an unheard-of delicacy, were impossible to come by. Mum couldn't stop reminiscing about them. One time a couple of eels were brought round to our house as treat for mum. But it was a different story when you must process them yourself and make your own meal as opposed to buying readymade jellied eels. The eels had to be chopped and then they had to be stewed. As if by some miracle, if it's done right, the water sets into jelly when placed in the refrigerator.

As I worked during the day, this procedure took place while I was out of the house. I remember that Mum was in her element for weeks because she had a right ole feast of eels all to herself! No one else in our household appreciated them as much as she did!

Mum eventually went into a Care Facility Home near to us and was happy there. Right up to the end she still talked about her jellied eels. It bothered me. How could I get Mum her treat once again? How hard could it be? Well, I was to find out. We asked everyone we could possibly think of. Local Chefs who were supposed to be sh*t hot at foraging didn't come through. The local butcher who professed to be able to source anything didn't come through. Locals who used to go eeling regularly didn't come through. I was informed which creeks had them if I wanted to go catch them myself. No thank you! Even if I did catch one, I knew I'd have to deal with it myself. I was told, "Once you catch an eel, you must leave it in a bath of clean water for the eel to cleanse itself of all the mud it has ingested". The more I learnt, the more I wished I hadn't had this idea, but I didn't give up. Mum was getting to the stage of hardly eating anything. She was fading away before our eyes. It was a sad time, as it was fast becoming Mum's time to leave us.

I resorted to making a plea on Facebook. I got a resounding silence until out of the blue someone told me of an Eel factory in Levin that farms eels - who would have known? I found the phone number and called them. Well, wouldn't you know it. They were closed for the season. I explained why I wanted an eel and a lovely dear man, named Erik arranged to meet me at the factory to get vacuum-packed eels from the freezer. How wonderful was that! I saved Erik the Eels phone number in mobile. I bought 2 vacuum packed eels plus some smoked eel as he had gone to so much trouble. All the way home my thoughts were of Mum and how she would enjoy this treat. But who was going to prepare this dish? Oh, how I wished someone would walk in the door and say, "I will do it for you love". No fairy godmother appeared that day.

I had to tackle the eels myself. I put one in the freezer and cut the other one into chunks after I covered its little face with the tea towel. I followed a recipe to the letter, but what I ended up with was a bowl of eel stew - nothing like jellied eels. That wouldn't do. I googled 'jellied eels' and up popped a 10-minute video of Gordon Ramsay on the river Thames in London with an eel fisherman. They caught their eels and prepared them in a simple way and 'Bobs your uncle' - jellied eels! Gordon advised viewers, "If the eels don't jelly up by themselves, just add gelatine". How simple was that? Following Gordon's recipe, mine jellied up, so all was good. Next, I made the chilli vinegar.

When I took the jellied eels around to the Care Home, Mum's face lit up a treat. Although she was barely eating or drinking by this stage, she walloped them down. I couldn't get the spoon to her lips fast enough, and she kept saying, "Lovely, lovely, thank you". The joy in her eyes was all the thanks I needed. Mum passed away soon after, aged 94.

Following Mum's death, I took a trip back to England and visited London. It had changed so much since I'd last been there. Mum wouldn't have recognised any of her old haunts, and Manzes had closed their London shop. I visited relatives in Leigh on Sea in Essex. We went down to the cockle sheds where you can still get your cockles, whelks, and jellied eels. Oysters and scallops were also available, but they were never on our menu. On this trip I had a bowl of jellied eels for old times' sake. I raised my bowl up and said, "This is for you Mum"! They were delicious with a dash of chilli vinegar, and a chunk of bread to go with it of course!

The 2nd eel remained in my freezer for years, looking at me. And then he disappeared!



My Mum – Margaret Pollard

Linda Brewer, Otaki

“MOTHER’S MILK” – *a scene which occasionally unfolded at our family home after the 8 of us had sat around the dinner table together, enjoying our evening meal.*

A miniature, round, glass jar, capped with a pretty violet coloured screw on lid, and inside, the pearly, swirly white balm of beauty, silky scent of serenity and promise of a pretty party dress, matching bracelet and clip on earrings, and tricky stiletto heels. The finishing touch - her gorgeous gold lamé evening bag dangling from her wrist on its delicate gold chain.

Stored securely in the back corner of the shelf of Mum’s very basic make up collection, in the bathroom medicine cabinet, I knew that when the “Milk of Roses” jar of moisturiser came forth, magic was about to happen!

Mum saved it for very special occasions, as it was an expensive luxury item, and six children on Dad’s “not flash” single income meant that such glamour and glory was only indulged in if, and when, the opportunity arose – A ROSE! I’m positive that’s why it was named “Milk of Roses”: Its sweet, velvety, rosey fragrance on Mum’s minutely textured, tired skin, spoke of romance, revival and rejuvenation, even if only for a few hours.

Oh, how I loved those rare twilights, when Mum would whip off her soiled apron, don her faded bath robe, then open “her end” of the bathroom cabinet, for her make up routine, before a night out with Dad. I would perch, buttocks flattened, on the side of the enamel bathtub, watching Mum’s face in the mirror on the cabinet door, her back to me, as step by step, she applied her “Milk”, then her face powder, with a circular powder puff, and next, ruby rouge, to lift her pale cheeks to a subtle sunset pink.

Then she would set about transforming her eyebrows and deep brown eyes into chocolate puddles, set off by sparkly, dark highlights around the edges of her eyelids, and a newly invented beauty product for eyes, mascara, which magically masked her weariness and womanly woes.

Mum would have her lush, dark, wavy hair pinned back with hairclips, or in a hairnet, to keep her face and forehead clear, while she performed this transformation. Once she had meticulously blended her make up along her hairline, off came the hairclips or hairnet, and a brisk brush of her luscious locks, followed by her “tail comb”, to tease her hair into a fiesta, prepared her crowning glory for the spitting spray of hair laquer, as it was called in those days, and a sticky fragrance would fill the room.

I was the eldest of the tribe of kids, and I was fascinated with all fancy, feminine fads and frolics. This was my induction into the ways of women, watching Mum blossom from a harassed housewife and mother, to a breathtaking bloom, in a mere half hour ritual. Caterpillar to butterfly!

Not only did I love the sight and smell of this chrysalis hatching, but the sound of container lids being unscrewed then replaced, the zip zap of Mum’s mascara wand flashing in and out of its tube, and then the most crucial colour finale – the lipstick: Popped out of its case, applied to open, stretched lips, and then lips rolled together, followed by a kiss pressed onto a scrap of loo paper, to ensure that no scarlet smudges sneaked beyond her lips of lustre. Then the lipstick was slid and clicked back into its tube, ready to be popped into the gold evening bag with the curly closing metal clip in the centre. Also tucked into the bag were her powder compact, and a pretty white lacey handkerchief – the epitomy of womanhood - saved specially for glorious, grand occasions such as this.

Truly vivid memories of over half a century ago, when my Mother's Milk (her "Milk of Roses" moisturiser) announced the arrival of half an hour of pure pleasure for me, because it was the only time, about twice a year, that I saw my dear mother give herself time and attention, when for all those years, after giving birth six times, she had given her mother's milk, day and night, breastfeeding her six babies, for many nurturing months.

"Mother's milk", for me, is a term which encapsulates the enduring love and care our mother gave us in hard times, financially and materially, sewing most of our clothes, knitting "woollies", mending and darning, and adding false hems when we grew taller, "turning" sheets and Dad's business shirt cuffs, to get a bit more life out of them, also cooking and baking endlessly, to feed the eight of us, and "to make ends meet" (they never did!), as the bills kept coming in, and the car kept breaking down.

So, our mother, her Milk (of Roses), and her own milk for her six babies symbolise the essence of motherhood, its rewards and its triumphs, its soothing sweetness and nourishment. My memories of Mum are not skin deep – they seep into sacred spaces in my mind and "fill up my senses", as the song says, like a halo that is always present, and heavenly, indeed.

The saying goes "*There's no use crying over spilt milk*", but my tears are for milk that dried up well over 50 years ago, and also for the memories of the Milk which preceded "some enchanted evening", when Mum would become a beautiful belle, just as she was in her photo below. Not a drop was spilt. All of it was sucked into my spirit and tucked into my heart for- ever. "*Thank you, Mum, for memories you never knew you made for me*".



Our “Mother Mary”, as a debutante after she left school, before she met our Dad, Terry. Photo was taken in 1948. Mum lived until 2015, and died two weeks before her 85th birthday. Dad had died 24 years earlier. Mum’s life changed forever when the big Christchurch earthquake took her home and her health in drastic ways, and she never was Mum again.

Susan Greeham, Raumati Beach

Eileen Mary Ashdown (Biddy) 30 December 1918 - 3 July 2009- My Mum

Dear Mum

I miss you and your constant phone calls to come and see you up there in Levin.

At the age of 7 you were stricken with Polio, you never attended any school as all your school work was done in Hospital or at the Hot Pools in Rotorua. I remember you telling me that your family was living in Mangamahu at the time and your Parents only came to see you once a year.

Even though you could hardly walk and one arm was completely useless with the other arm very weak you did an amazing job bringing up your 10 children. Not sure that we all turned out how you would have liked. Times were tough but you never gave up I guess being a devout Catholic was the foundation of your being.

Every day after school you made me bike up to the butcher to get meat for tea, coming home to prepare the meals due to you having no strength in your arms. We did have a wonderful vegetable garden which was great and groceries were delivered every Friday night along with Fish n Chips.

Saturday's were always cleaning and tidying our own bedrooms as you had a housekeeper for the weekdays. Mum you never rode a bike, drove a car, never danced, went for a walk, did housework, never had to hang the clothes on the line. You could not smack us I, remember the strap hanging on the Dining Room door, not sure that it was ever used. As a small child I did have lots of fun as we misbehaved at our house because you could not chase us, and went next door to Mrs Enright to swear as she was deaf - was great fun.

Thank you for sending me to Nana and Grandad Connolly on the Farm at Te Horo once you moved to Levin from Te Horo. Every holiday and even during my college days I was on the Farm. You also sent me to Boarding School in Otaki when I was about 7 years old for a couple of years. Guess you could not cope with me even when I was a child :)

Once I was married and had children we came to visit you heaps, Christmas Time was so Special for us all, lots of presents, about 40 of us sitting around the Big Dining Table sharing lots of memories.

Everything to you was Black & White there never was any Grey in between. I am here today because of the Love and Care that came from you, even though I left home at 15 and went to experience the Big Smoke you were always there for me. Your Faith kept me alive.

During your later years you suffered terribly from Post Polio Syndrome, which, unfortunately we had to put you into Hospital Care for the last 14 months of your life due to not being able to walk nor see very much at all. Loved coming to visit every weekend and doing my knitting while we chatted. I remember one Sunday I had a slice of cream sponge, so thought I would eat it while visiting you. Silly me sat in the Sun across the room from you and you said "Kathryn is that sponge you are eating" Well !! I said I thought you could not see. It was great I just did not want to share my piece of sponge cake with you. :)

You were a very Humble and Dignified Lady. There is so much more I could say but will end by saying Thank You for your Enduring Love and Faith in me. Your Strength Shines On.

Miss you heaps mum your Stubborn, Determined, Cheeky daughter Kathryn.



Images of my mother

A shy sweet smile topped by luxuriant auburn curls

Arms full of bluebells

Standing in a wood

In a 1930's formal suit

Innocence

Later in a wedding dress, simple, soft, and flowing

A lush bouquet of lilies filling her arms

And the same shy sweet smile

Anticipation

Now a mother in a deckchair on the beach

An anxious watchful look hiding her smile

"Be carefull" "Be careful" "Be careful"

Formal dress and suited husband shoes upon their feet

Motherhood

The children grown - a special birthday

Nose buried in fresias and lily of the valley

My birthday gift to her

The shy sweet smile sneaking over the painful heart

Soon to be at rest

The body gone but images remaining for ever

Peace

Sue Heald, Raumati Beach



My Mother, Edna Violet Heald

My MUM.....Dorothy Irene Garrett

Mum grew up in Chesterfield in North Derbyshire.

Mum's birth mum, her real mum, died when my mum was only 3 years old.

Her Dad, my Grandpa remarried so mum was brought up by her step-mother who I knew as Grandma.

Grandma was very much of the Victorian Era and believed that children should be seen and not heard. When Grandma did the dishes my mum as a child had to be there with a tea towel in her hand or she would get a slap.

Mum had it drummed into her from a very early age that the world was a very dangerous place, and all activities should be approached with absolute caution. This stifled Mum's confidence somewhat. The other thing dinned into her was the old cliché of "What would the neighbours say?" "Can't do that.....What would the neighbours say"

If mum was ever asked to do anything outside of her comfort zone her first reaction was to say, "NO.....I couldn't"

Mum grew up with a very strong personality, but strongly negative.

The best thing that happened to my Mum was meeting my Dad.

Dad had strong religious beliefs. He had spent 7 years in WW2 driving a tank around Europe and North Africa. He had survived. He had done it.

If he could do that, he could do anything.

God had gotten him through.

Dad's whole demeanor was positive. "All things are possible through Christ who strengthens me" was one of his favourite quotes.

Dad's positive outlook on life did not suddenly make my Mum a positive person but Dad worked on the things she could do well and encouraged her to succeed.

Mum loved baking and was very good at that.

Her signature cake was a Parkin Cake. This was a traditional ginger cake from Northern England full of Golden Syrup and warm ginger spices. The sweet, spicy aroma whilst cooking was beautiful. A homely smell which met you at the door confirming that Mum was at home in the kitchen, all was well. There was always a bit of Parkin in the cake tin and even on the odd occasion when it sunk a bit in the middle it was still delicious.

At Christmas time Mum made beautiful mince pies and lemon curd tarts with short floury pastry. She would make the fruity, nutty Christmas cake a few days previous and then Christmas Eve would turn into a huge bake-a-thon with Mum baking the tarts whilst Dad finished the Christmas cake with a marzipan almond layer under a thick white frosty coat of snowy white icing.

I broke my mum's heart the day I left England to go to Australia & New Zealand. I could hear her crying in her bed every night for weeks before I left.

Mum and Dad did come out for visits over the years, but I always felt guilty for deserting them to follow my own dreams.

When Dad died in 1992 Mum shifted over here to spend the last 15 years of her life in New Zealand.

We had some lovely times together and I was able to make amends for some of the pain I had caused her by leaving England all those years ago.

She loved it here and I told her that I thought a very negative person had done a very positive thing by Emigrating to New Zealand at the age of 70.

Mum laughed.

“No” she said. “You don’t understand”

“I couldn’t live over there without your Dad....**I just couldn’t**”



Dorothy Irene Garrett – Celebrating her 80th Birthday in NZ

MUM'S RECIPE FOR PARKIN GINGER CAKE

Ingredients

200g of butter (plus extra for greasing)

1 large egg

4 tablespoons milk

200g golden syrup

85g treacle

85g brown sugar

100g medium oatmeal

250g self-raising flour

1 tablespoon ground ginger

1 teaspoon ground mixed spices

Method

Heat oven to 160 degC (or 140 degC fan bake)

Butter a deep 22cm square cake tin and line with baking paper

Beat egg and milk together with fork

Melt syrup, treacle, butter, and brown sugar together in large saucepan until sugar melts into liquid.

Mix oatmeal, flour, ginger, and mixed spices together and stir into syrup mixture along with egg and milk.

Turn cake mixture into baking tin and bake for approx. 50 minutes to 1 hour until cake feels firm and crusty on the top.

Cover with more baking paper and let it cool in the baking tin.

When cool, transfer to cake sealed cake tin and try not to eat it for up to 5 days.

It will keep for at least two weeks and become softer and stickier the longer you leave it. If it dries out, you can butter it like ginger loaf.

Chris Garrett, Paraparaumu Beach

Pumpkin Soup

By Yossarian Fay (Otaihanga)

Through my bedroom door, at the front of the house, I hear bangs and thumps. I glance at the time, 11.11. It's pumpkin soup again for lunch obviously. Homegrown on her daily increasing, compost mound, at the end of the garden. Pumpkins have been our mainstay since Mum's redundancy. This one, freshly hand-picked after the animals have been tended to, is now being chopped, or at least attempted to be chopped, with one of Mum's notoriously blunt knives. I come to inspect; nothing like a little procrastination from homework. The kitchen windows and those of the adjoining room are opaque with condensation; no extraction fans here just an open window and hope that something will escape. Steam rises from the pot with its lidding bobbing up and down.

This wasn't her speciality dish but one that I associate with her the most. Anytime I see a pumpkin now the memory comes flooding back of that autumn day. Mum in the kitchen, busy and happy. She was particular that no other vegetables were added to her pumpkin soup, bar garlic and onion. 'Some people add potatoes to pumpkin soup. I don't though. It isn't pumpkin soup if you add potatoes' she would exclaim upon the making of each batch. This time though, aside from the customary lunch, there was a whiff of something else, a warmth radiating from the oven in addition to the red glow of the element and bubbling soup. Scones! We must be having guests!

'I love having visitors' I state out loud without much thought, 'it means you actually bake nice things.' Mum laughs 'Really?!' she replies, and I quickly realize my internal thoughts are external. I look up; she's smiling. Safe today. I know her recipe by heart; it's an easy one and made so often as to be unforgettable. First onions and garlic, cut so fine as to be indistinguishable in the soup once it is mashed to a creamy consistency, fried off in butter. Then the pumpkin chopped roughly, after all how could it be any other way with that knife, added and stirred around to gather the flavours. Then water is added to allow flavours to blend as it all boils together; which is the stage I find her in. It is a quick and easy dish with pumpkin being so willing to soften. It isn't long to wait between chopping, cooking, mashing it into a soup blend and enjoying it. The scones have been prepared earlier; the perfect accompaniment on a cold day. Finally, a dollop of cream is added to the soup; another of Mum's mainstays.

When the soup is dished up into three bowls, Mum retrieves the little red lidded container from the shelving in the corner, to delicately sprinkle dried onion on top. An inspiration from time spent browsing the Asian Supermarket on Middleton Rd when she worked close by. 'Set the table for three please' she says without looking up. I'm quick to action; ready to eat. A plate of butter for lashing on the scones, a small jug of cream for cooling the soup at the table, three side plates, three bread and butter knives, three soup spoons and three spaces for the bowls to fill. The dogs bark, I hear the rattle of the gate. 'Who is coming' I ask. 'Wait and see' she replies. It doesn't actually matter to me though as the fact that Mum is happy and has made warm scones for lunch tops it all.



Janet Aiken – Yossarian's mum

MY MOTHER'S KITCHEN

My Mother's Kitchen was a Temple!

Her kitchen in Strathmore Park, Wellington, was a sacred place in which culinary miracles were performed. It was a place in which NO MAN was allowed to venture into.

In adulthood my family and I would embark on pilgrimages across Wellington harbour from our home in Eastbourne to feast upon her magical creations.

Being of Greek background, there were very well-defined domestic rules about what a man could and could not do in her home.

Rule number One was 'You shall not enter the vicinity of the kitchen'.

Rule number Two was 'You shall not wash or dry dishes'.

My mother's signature dish was **Keftedes** or Greek meatballs.

These were no ordinary meatballs. They were an amalgam of mince and secret spices that resulted in an explosion of taste and aromatic sensations. Her Keftedes transcended time and space as they united her tiny Greek island in the Ionian Sea to the suburb of Strathmore Park.

My mother had two kitchens in her house. The first was for general baking and grilling.

The second was for the real heavy lifting! The second kitchen is where my mother would fry her Keftedes, away from the gaze of curious men who dared to ask what the ingredients were in the recipe and where cooking odours would not penetrate into the main house.

Lunch at her house was like watching an ancient Greek play unfold. My mother would disappear into the second kitchen as we eagerly awaited the first of many servings of Keftedes while seated transfixed at the dining table in anticipation. She would eventually glide into the dining room with the first batch of flattened and crunchy meatballs that we proceeded to devour. We would - as one - praise her for her infinite cooking skills and implore her to join us at the dining table. However, she would not listen and instead would utter in an ancient Greek dialect that we could barely understand - *'Eat my children, your needs are greater than mine'* - while disappearing to the second kitchen to begin cooking the next batch of heavenly Keftedes.

It wasn't until years after her death that I finally had access to her recipe for Keftedes.

My older sister had written it down and magically retrieved it when I pathetically tried to prepare my own version of the dish.

Keftedes – according to Mum

Ingredients:

- 450g beef mince
- 3 x slices of white bread, crumbed.
- Half an onion
- 1 clove garlic, chopped finely
- 1 tbsp oregano
- 1 x egg
- Salt and pepper

Method:

Add all the ingredients into a large bowl and mix well (for about 5-10 minutes), squeezing with your hands, to allow the flavours to blend. Cover the bowl and let it rest in the fridge for 1 hour.

Turn the mixture for the keftedes out of the fridge and roll into meatballs the size of a walnut (or bigger if you prefer). Roll the meatballs lightly in flour making sure to shake off any excess. Flatten the meatballs slightly and deep fry in oil until nicely browned on all sides.

Kiriakos Zorzi, Raumati



My Mum - Andigoni Kallis

My mother's apron

I grew up holidaying at my Nans home. We loved baking together, starting with moulding chocolates at age 3 for the farm workers to enjoy on their break. Through cupcakes and ginger kisses to croissant and custard squares in my teenage years.

At home with mum as a young girl we would bake microwave chocolate cake, baked in a trusty Tupperware plastic cake mould, this was a trusted regular, topped with chocolate icing and hundreds and thousands sprinkles.

As I was growing up, I despised and protested loudly about the noise mums Kenwood mixer made, overtaking the volume of the TV I was watching. At the same time, I associate the Kenwood mixer noise with indulging in perfect kiwi Pavlova the next evening. This Pavlova recipe, handwritten on faded brown paper, was passed down from my mum's grandmother, Maggie, it is kept in mums recipe folder a collection of recipes she had collated from magazines, TV or other people. The Pavlova recipe has never failed to produce perfect Pavlova every time and has a cult following within the extended family and friends.

As a adult I had a custom, black and white skull print accents, apron made for myself. A candy thermometer is a must have item at home that is used regularly to create perfect velvet chocolate fudge from sugar that melts between your lips. There's that saying, "a moment on your lips, a lifetime on your hips.". As this is quick easy and economical recipe, I must stop myself and share with others for sake of a growing waste line. Needs to say I'm a good neighbour to live by.

Danelle Stella, Paraparaumu Beach



Dear Mum,

I often take a minute and remember the times growing up as a child you've said to me "you will understand when your older" as an explanation or rarely when you've said no. Or I remember, as I am repeating the same thing myself, thinking how similar I am to you, my mum.

As I've gotten older and become a mum myself, I've gained, through experience, knowledge of how, as a mother, you can find the exhaust to just get things done that need doing when they need doing.

Your Super Woman powers to keep going and going, through busy schedules as well as those unexpected things that come along too. As you use your ability to keep it all together as a happening thing throughout this.

The many very extravagant, budget celebrations that you have organised throughout the years for birthdays, Easter, Christmas, or a special occasion and as we've become adults' engagements, wedding's, baby showers, and house warming's' or Organising catch-ups or holidays.

Selfless choices you've made over the years putting us children's needs and wants first. Also, your value and notoriety in the local community through volunteering and being kind. Always putting yourself last so you can help others wherever you see you can. Offering advice and help or just a friendly catch-up and a smile

As a grand mother you've become Super Gran, easily and lovingly babysitting the grandchildren regularly, even all 5 at a time. All the while, taking on full time day to day care of one of them, postponing your retirement to grow, teach and look after him.

Professionally working, doing the accounts, investment management, serving family at home, cooking three times a day, dishes, washing, cleaning, taxi run rides, phone calls counselling and daily calls from children that aren't at home, and everything else. Oh my how, and when do you get down time to relax and unwind.

I look at you and always see your natural beauty that shines through you and your personality. Others see and experience you and want to try emulate this for themselves in their lives. I got the best, I got the real original to watch, see and experience, so these things are naturally engrained into my personality and me as a person all grown up.

God has given me the best, most amazing lady as my mum that I could have ever even imagined, wanted or asked for.

I cannot ever properly thank you for being you. I want to tell you how much I appreciate you and everything you ever do for us, and I love you so much.

From your adult daughter

Danelle Stella, Paraparaumu Beach

My Mother - Ruby Janet Tucker

Ruby Janet Casey was born in 1909. We are not sure of the date.

She was found wandering in Hobson Street, Auckland when she was about 4 years old. She told me she remembered being in a room with a "nice lady " who gave her a hot drink and something nice to eat. She remembered sitting on a table, singing, and clapping her hands.

She was placed in an orphanage, and she was given the name Ruby Janet. Her mother was not found at that time but a man, John Casey who had been with her mother was found. He had a daughter with my mother's mother, and his family cared for her but would not take care of Ruby Janet. My Mother became a Ward of the State and was officially named Ruby Janet Casey.

Later orphanages were closed down and children were placed in Foster Care. These were terrible times for some children including my mother. She was placed in a home where all the children were badly treated and as she was the eldest and the girl her treatment was worse than the boys. She told me that when they were allowed to play outside, they were so frightened of making a noise they sat on the grass and made daisy chains!!

Eventually a big black car arrived and took all the children away to new homes.

My mother was 12 when she was placed with the Watkin family where she had an older sister and two younger brothers and a good life.

The years of deprivation had an effect on my mother for the rest of her life.

This Generation lived through the Depression of the 30s and then the 1st World War. Food was never wasted and people "Made Do". They fed others who knocked on their door looking for work and help. My mother told me of a time during the Depression when my father was working on a farm. They opened their door to a "Swagger" He was invited in to have a meal. My mother said, "What will we give him to eat him"? My father replied, "we have got some cat meat there. Cook it slowly to make a stew". My mother was embarrassed because it was very "rubbishy" meat.

I do not remember clearly any specific meals during my early years except the wonderful creamy rice puddings my mother made.

1939 changed our lives dramatically. We did not have our own home, so my family went to live with my paternal Grandmother. My father went to War and was required, my mother was manpowered into work because my grandmother could care for my sister and me. Two to three years later another family came 'home' to live as the father had been 'called up'. Tension eventually developed so my mother rented a room a short distance away.

Sadly, my father lost his life towards the end of the war. I was 16 when I went to live with my mother who had been allocated a State House. Because my mother worked full time, I cooked most of the meals. I had been well taught by my grandmother.

My mother was the Master Cook of the Christmas Pudding. She used the same recipe, and it has become a classic in our family. Every year when my mother turned the pudding out, she would say "oh I don't think it is as good as last year's". It became a standing joke, and her great grandchildren would chorus those words as soon as the pudding was presented.

She made that pudding until she had a stroke when she was 87.

Another favourite she often made were Bran Muffins which she continued to make for me because I liked them.

Ruby Janet was a very brave, strong woman and my very best friend.

Ruby Tucker's Christmas Pudding Recipe

2 breakfast cups of flour
1 breakfast cup sugar
1 breakfast cup currants
1 breakfast cup sultanas
2 ozs Lemon Peel
1 Teaspoon Mixed Spice
1 Tablespoon Butter dissolved in 1 Cup hot water.
2 Teaspoons soda dissolved in 1 breakfast cup water.
Half teaspoon of salt

Method:

Mix the two cups of liquid together. Pour over the dry ingredients and prepared fruit. Stir well. Leave overnight.

In the morning mix well and steam in a well-greased basin for 3 hours or more.

Shirley Clarke, Waikanae



My Mother – Ruby Janet Tucker

Mary Frances's Apron

My mum, Mary Frances, always wore an apron. She preferred the half apron, with a pocket for her hanky, that wrapped around and tied behind her back. A talented dressmaker, she made them herself using pretty floral cotton fabric, and had quite a selection of them to choose from.

Her apron of the week lived in the kitchen, tied to the towel rail that was attached to the back door. Every morning, when she came downstairs and into the kitchen, she donned her apron before she put the kettle on to make a cup of tea. Her apron stayed on all day, while she made the breakfast, lunch, and tea, baked, prepared the supper, did the dishes, washed, and ironed our clothes and did the general housework. All these chores seemed to be done like clockwork, while mum chatted to us, sang to herself, or listened to the 'Archers' or 'Women's Hour' on the radio.

The apron usually came off around 7pm when she left the kitchen and sat in her favourite chair to watch the TV, read the paper, and do a bit of knitting. Of course, Mary Frances never wore her apron when she left the house – her apron was relegated to the home.

Mum came from a big Irish family – she had nine siblings! As she was the oldest girl in the family, she grew up doing her share of the chores, which included preparing and cooking the meals for the family. With so many mouths to feed, the weekly menu focused on simple meals consisting of stews, 'Colcannon' (an Irish dish), a standard meal of potatoes and green and root vegetables served with inexpensive cuts of meat or fish, and 'Toad-in-the-Hole'. When she got married, the practice continued in our family home using the fresh vegetables that mum and dad grew in our garden.

Us three kids were raised on three square meals a day, one of which was a school dinner served at lunchtime during term time. We also ate supper just before going to bed – this was usually cheese and Jacobs Cream Crackers, or bread and dripping. In the 50's, 60's and 70's we always had a pudding after our evening meal, known as 'tea'. Our meals were always served to the family at the kitchen table, except on Sundays, when we ate 'Sunday dinner' (at lunchtime) at the 'dining room table' in the living room.

Puddings were served at 'teatime' - except on Sundays. Hot puddings in our house were usually boiled in a muslin bag in a bowl on the stove. These puddings all shared the same basic recipe, but with a slight variation, for example, Jam Upside Down Pudding, Golden Syrup Pudding, and our favourite - 'Spotted Dick'! Oh, how we loved 'Spotted Dick' – it was the ultimate in puddings and was always served with lashings of hot custard. Here is the recipe.

Spotted Dick (British Pudding)

4 oz Self Raising Flour

2 oz margarine

2 oz sugar

2 oz currants

1 egg beaten with

1 tablespoon milk

Method

Rub margarine into the flour, add the sugar and fruit

Mix thoroughly with the beaten egg and milk

Grease a 1-pint pudding basin, then add the mixture

Steam for 1-½ hours

Serve with hot custard

Yum!



My Mum – Mary Frances

Angela Robertson, Paraparaumu

Mother's Day Story



Gwen

This is my mum's graduation photo. It made her giggle because she had she said a terrible perm and because having being stood down from nursing school for breaking curfew and being told she was letting the profession down a few weeks later she topped her exams and was told by the same people that she was an excellent role model.

She nursed through the war which she said was heart-breaking. One of the few times she was angry with me was for staring at shell-shocked soldiers waiting at bus stops...there were many of them even ten years post war!

Mum went on to have a large family of her own yet still managed to maintain her career. She was a hard worker very organized and very funny. For many years she cooked dinner 6 nights a week... Friday's fish and chips same as across the nation!

In the fifties dinner was very formal compared to today. Always a tablecloth. Linen napkins... we had our own napkins and holders...and butter knives, jam spoons, and fresh flowers. Fish dishes had their own special knives and forks with decorated blades and bone handles that had to be washed by hand.

Mum was a fabulous cook and sadly we took it for granted that there would always be baking for afternoon tea and fruit and milk puddings every evening served on the kitchen table...the centre of our lives.

Dinners were basic...garden veggies plus meat. Corned beef, lamb roast, Irish stew with dumplings, sausages, chops, fish pie, shepherd's pie. We helped make the gravies and sauces, mint sauce, white parsley sauce, onion sauce, and curry sauce.

Puddings were mostly milk, rice, junket, custard, and fruit, though Sundays were more elaborate Spanish cream, trifle, and Pavlova. My favourites were her Chelsea buns and her golden syrup tart which was made with melt in your mouth short pastry of which I never got the recipe. My very favourite desert was her sponge cake light as a feather filled with pieces of chopped tart rhubarb served with big blobs of whipped cream. I have tried to emulate the last two without success.

As well as keeping house and working part time, sewing all our frocks she ran a huge garden which fed us for years. Again, we took our bounty for granted. Peas, carrots, beans, silver beet, beetroot, curly kale, lettuces the dreaded Brussel sprouts, potatoes, rhubarb, and plums. Our cabbages were liberally dressed with DDT - considered at that time as the home gardeners essential help mate!

At the time we lived in a large old farmhouse on the edge of town. We had big gardens front and back with an expansive wash house adjoining the house. It was not unusual to find wire baskets of preserved eggs from our chooks and the odd dead rabbit or black swan left to bleed out. I was not a fan of game meat but we did squabble over the fluffy rabbit tails which were supposed to bring good luck if you put them under your pillow at night.

Mum was essentially a country girl and loved to bake with the duck eggs her family gave us. The giant pale blue green eggs made huge omelettes and her favourite... coffee cake. Her 'go to no bake' was chopped dried fruit coconut, cocoa and condensed milk rolled into balls and rolled in coconut. Today chefs recommend butter milk. Mums' version was milk soured with lemon juice put in the safe with a muslin cover or little beaded covers made by the blind and left to sour overnight.

And then technology arrived. Fridge with an ice compartment for ice cream and homemade ice blocks.

My ultimate favourite was the Sunday lunches in the garden under the dark pink blossom tree. Father would set up the extending table and we would have a lingering lunch, parents with wine, we with lime juice. One of my happiest memories ever is sitting in our Sunday best being snowed with pink petals eating off the good China set on a lace tablecloth.

Rhonda Edwards, Paraparaumu

Mums Shabu Shabu

My Mum, Takayo Ukai, is a small Japanese woman with a big beautiful soul. Growing up, dinner would often be Japanese food, sushi, fried rice, dumplings, miso soup, curry rice and my favourite shabu shabu.

Shabu shabu was often made on special occasions. Vegetables, carrots, chinese cabbage, onion, spring onion, shitake mushroom, daikon radish, cut finely to cook together in a hot pot of boiling water, and thinly sliced meat on the side. When you are ready to cook your meat, simply hold in the water swaying side to side for about 10 seconds and then dip it in the sauce and eat it with short grain rice.

Shabu shabu meals growing up was a rare treat and it was often when we would have visitors. Mum would have to order the meat especially from the butcher to get it cut into nice thin strips. I loved hearing her chopping away and the smell of the shitake mushrooms cooking. Mum would lay out on the table a brown foam like table cloth and then on top a white tablecloth with flowers on the edges or sometimes one with lace, then chopsticks with their cute little pillows and at the centre the masterpiece, the electric pot ready to cook our meal.

Eating it was a social affair and there was always a lot of talking, laughing and lost piece of meat somewhere and we always took our time (I think part of that was it was our visitors' first time using chopsticks).

The night before my wedding day my Mum made a big feast of shabu shabu. My bridesmaids and I ate it together, sharing stories, hopes and dreams and laughing a lot.

Now, many years later my son spends Wednesday nights with his nanachan (my mum) and he gets to enjoy the same foods that she made for me growing up. Now, on a not so rare occasion Mum will put the pot of shabu shabu on and we eat together again, a food that brings us together, slows us down and creates fun memories and is made with her special ingredient of love.

Norie Parata, Waikanae



Mum with my son Koa

My Mum - Christina May

Dear Ma,

Just a few words to let you know how honoured I am that you are my Mum. Not that I could ever call you Mum to your face. You thought it was babyish me calling you Mummy when I was 10, so I called you Mum, and you snapped, "Don't call me Mum. It makes me sound like I'm at the tub all day with soapsuds up to my elbows". You called your mother Ma, but you didn't like me calling you that either. Consequently, Mother you became, which I was never comfortable with.

Now I'm nearly 80 I get a shock when I look in the mirror. I see you, 'Christina May', the 'May' named after Brian Lahore's mother, your mother's friend, you used to proudly say. I too was given the name 'May' and with that I was taunted at school, "Valerie May or Valerie May Not". When I look in the mirror I see your personality, your perseverance, your resourcefulness, your hard work. These are qualities you instilled in me as a rebellious teenager.

Someone once said that it is important for teenage girls to rebel to help them break away from their mother's apron strings. But how cruel it is for the mothers. You got no thanks from me, just lots of arrogance and resentment. I wish you were here to see that the results of your constant nagging have not only been passed on to me, but to my girls. Sonja sent a text in the long lockdown saying, "Hi Mum. Just saying thank you for teaching me resilience".

Talking about apron strings reminds me of you in the mornings. You used to tear around dressed for work up to your petticoat, covered with one of your tatty aprons, which you would never throw out. You'd rush round doing the housework and prepare the tea, then fling on your dress and coat, tear out the door and off to work on your bike. Oh, the embarrassment one crowded lunchtime, when you were striding down the main street dressed to the nines. Suddenly your apron tie gave way and your ragged apron landed at your feet. You just picked it up and put in the basket hanging on your arm.

Things were not 'touchy-feely' in those days. Once babyhood was over, hugs from you were few and far between. Nevertheless, you always tucked me into bed when you thought I was asleep. The bedclothes were tucked so tight that the sides of the mattress curved up, and I felt like I was in a cradle. I never felt too old for that.

I knew you loved me from lots of little things you did, such as shoving cough mixture in my mouth when my coughing woke you in the night. You smothered me in Vicks before I went to bed - on my chest, on my back, on the soles of my feet, shoved down my throat, even though the jar said, "Not to Be Taken"!

You were poor, but I never felt hungry. When we had unexpected visitors for tea our table was covered with fancy plates of food, all made by you. I remember the vinegary tomato relish smell that permeated the house every autumn. The jams, the fruit wrapped in cheesecloth suspended on the upside-down stool on the table dripping overnight into a bowl on the floor. That was to make your lovely fruit jellies. My mouth waters when I think of them spread on your homemade bread. I think of the toastie pies made in a long-handled contraption sitting on the coals of the sitting room fire. So lovely on a winter's night. When I was older, I'd ask you, "Would you like one". You'd reply, "No, I'm all right". "Are you really, really sure?" "Yes, I'm really, really sure". And then, just when I was going to take the first bite, you would say, "That smells nice. I *will* have one after all".

I remember making you a cup of tea, and you'd say, "What's this? Maiden's piss?" You had a saying for everything. Things like, "If you pull that face when the wind changes, you'll stay like it". "Don't count your chickens before they hatch". "Don't cross that bridge until you come to it". "Shut the door, you weren't born in a tent". "You look like you've been dragged through a gorse bush backwards". "Tidy your room. It looks like a tornado's hit it". "And who do you think you are. The Queen of Sheba?" "Why? Because I said so". "Why? Because Y's a crooked letter and Z's no better".

You were fantastic at embroidery and knitting - known throughout the city for your two-ply baby knitting, especially shawls which could be threaded through a wedding ring. You knitted them without looking. I always said you were the only person in the world who could knit, read, listen to the radio, and tell me off at the same time.

Thank you, Ma, for the household skills you learned as a lighthouse keeper's daughter, which I was to use in my years as a lighthouse keeper's wife. Oh, there are many more memories of you flowing through my mind.

I finally managed to bring you back from Sydney and I'm so thankful for the last five months we had together. For the first time you accepted me as an adult. We were equals and we had so much fun. I was sad, that you stubbornly refused to return years ago, choosing to struggle on your own in your comfort zone. How different our lives would have been, to have had those extra years together.

Then suddenly you died and left my life forever. Four years later, I have come to terms with your loss, because you haven't really gone. You are in my heart and as I said, in my mirror.

A very big thank you for being my Mum.

Lots of love, Val XXX

P.S. This photo is the only one I could find with you smiling. You hated looking old, and in all the others you pulled a face when the shutter went 😊.



'Christina May'

Valerie Gilgrist, Waikanae

Pancakes in My Mother's Kitchen

Mum's Sunday morning specialty was making pancakes and this was always an occasion of much laughter. It traditionally marked the start of our family day – the one day of the week when dad wasn't working. No porridge and prunes on a Sunday – hooray!

Our kitchen was very small. There was no room to swing a cat, as mum often told us. Um? Why would anyone want to swing a cat? In our kitchen? Never mind – there was room for us girls to squash behind the table as mum set out all the ingredients. All? There didn't seem to be very many. The old mixing bowl came out, along with a wooden spoon; the frying pan. The lemons we had picked from the tree were neatly cut into quarters, ready to squeeze for juice. Sometimes there was runny honey, sometimes just sugar in its bowl. The sugar bowl had a white lacey cover with glass beads sewn around the edges. They sparkled in the sunlight shining through the small window. And out beyond the window was the sparkling Hauraki Gulf. How fortunate we were.

So this set the scene for our special Sunday breakfast.

As her mother had done in years past, mum measured the ingredients into the bowl, added milk (fresh from the horse-and-cart-milkman that morning) and began to beat it with the wooden spoon. Vigorously did she do so. The frying pan was heating up on the flames of the gas stove, the butter was sizzling – and in went the first lot of mix. Now the fun began.

Mum wasn't the most adept at flipping the pancakes. Somehow she lacked absolute dexterity. Nevertheless she flipped and tossed with great enthusiasm and pancakes flew, never completely controlled when airborne. How we laughed as she ducked and dived, somehow mostly managing to catch the pancakes back in the frypan. Perhaps she did this just to make us laugh. And how we laughed – mum with pancakes flying, sister and I dodging mother, frypan and batter, and dad leaning in the window watching the fun. (And waiting for his share, too.)

The actual eating of the pancakes was sheer delight, of course. Lemon juice, sugar or honey were favourites but there were variations.

So that was the custom through two generations. I carried it on for my children, grandchildren and friends. And so it has continued with my daughter (another generation). It is always a treat for me, now that I am 80, as Jo serves up pancakes on special days of the year. Christmas morning, New Year's day, Easter Sunday, birthdays. She does it so well.

This is such a simple recipe and process, but oh the memories of laughter and fun.

Thanks, Mum, for the pancake performance.

One of your many sayings was “Keep on Smiling!” and, thinking of you catching pancakes I smile

Helen McKernan, Paraparaumu.



Eileen Anderson, late of Paraparaumu.

