

FOOD: *for the* BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT

A Collection of Poems and Stories by
Immigrant Seniors and Mount Royal University Students

2019


Immigrant
Services Calgary
Over 40 Years of Community Impact

FOREWORD

by Professors Natalie Meisner &
Aida Patient

One of the immigrant seniors here featured, thoughtfully noted during the course of this project that: “Food is a God-given gift. We must save it to eliminate hunger from our wonderful world!”

For this second year of collaboration between Immigrant Services Calgary and Mount Royal University, the large and complex theme of “Food” was chosen, as it literally and metaphorically intersects with lives. The seniors were wonderfully generous with their stories. They provided everyone connected with the project, including the professors and MRU students enrolled in the capstone course 4802 (Experiential Studies in Creative Writing) the opportunity to reflect, learn, and grow in ways that exceeded expectations and enriched our lives. The project, since its inception has been about far more than teaching and learning outcomes. Students find career paths, seniors gain new skills, and friendships are formed while we all forge new forms of community. As we worked on the project from September to December 2019, we were all nourished by stories, shared living moments and memories. It is truly an honour to offer you this anthology, please enjoy.

About This Anthology

This anthology is the result of a collaboration between Immigrant Services Calgary (ISC) and Mount Royal University (MRU). Facilitated through the Community Initiatives for Immigrant Seniors Program (CISP), funded by Family & Community Support Services (FCSS), it was over the course of twelve weeks that immigrant seniors worked with a group of university professors and creative writing students to write and craft stories about the topic of food.



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The Community Initiatives for Immigrant Seniors Program (CISP)

The Community Initiatives for Immigrant Seniors Program (CISP) is a locally funded social inclusion initiative designed to enhance the integration and inclusion of vulnerable immigrant seniors from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, creating welcoming and supportive environments to help them feel respected and valued.

This program adopts a proactive, holistic, outcome-driven approach to address the physical, emotional, psychological, social and intellectual (PEPSI) needs of immigrant seniors and facilitate their integration in Canadian society. CISP focuses on empowerment and building the capacity of our seniors to be active and contributing members in the community, and it provides them with opportunities to take part in spearheading, implementing and sustaining meaningful community-based projects.

If you are interested in learning more about CISP, or want to join this program, please visit us online:

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Gyan Chand Kapoor came from India in 2013, with his wife of 52 years — Kamlesh. A Design Engineer by trade, he is an artist by heart, and loves painting and nature.

Kamlesh Kapoor is originally from India. She is a positive-thinking woman who loves her friends and family. Among her passions she counts cooking, knitting, and reading.

Dr. Kewal Krishan Singal was born in a remote corner of the Indian Punjab region, but went on to earn BSc and BEd degrees from D. M. College, Moga, and then MSc (Gold Medalist) and PhD (Organic Chemistry) degrees from Punjabi University, Patiala. He speaks Russian, German and French, and was a university professor before immigrating to Canada in 2015.

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Sima Kharrazi immigrated from Iran 15 years ago and enjoys every moment of her life in Calgary. She is thankful for the opportunity to be in the program and learn different things while improving her English.

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FLAVOURS OF HOME

A Free Life Scholarship

By Pedro Leal

It was May 1992, and I had been happy working in the oil and gas industry on the East Coast of Lake Maracaibo in Venezuela. In those days, the company I worked for won a bid in Cienega de los Olivitos, a big field work project that involved design, construction, and legal processes. At that time, I was worried to accept the change from oil and gas industry when I received the transfer notice to the new project. I felt frustrated but I accepted to work at the new job, designing a 1,650-plus hectares solar salt plant.

After a few months, the work was so interesting. The environment, the birds, the sunshine, the Caribbean sea, the wind, the boat rides, and the local food prepared by the local fishermen. Those first years I was still hurt at having to make the change, but at the same time I was very young; a CEO kept telling me “you will love this project in time.” I met many people working on the salt plant, sailors, hunters, engineers, fishermen, and other coworkers.

On my first trip on a boat on the lagoon, or the Cienega, we navigated in at high tide so we had enough deep water to sail through; at times, we used a large stick to help the boat along when it ran aground. For those activities, we only had the Caribbean sea environment, the wind, sand, and sunlight. There were big, pink birds all around, flamingoes, that were



protected by the government and my company. But they were very smart; they placed their nests in the Cienega, in places where the swamps were deep and so no one could approach and disturb the nests. It was spectacular to see the flamingoes fly off every time we came close to their nesting places. We were on alert that some fishermen would go and try to take the eggs to sell them because flamingo eggs were believed to have aphrodisiac properties; this taking of the eggs could result in decreasing population of the birds.

To my surprise, one day when we were in the boat on Cienega, we anchored on one of the islets that surface out of the water at low tide. There were two fishermen's boats that were also stopped there to prepare food before they went back to work. It was like camping in the middle of the lagoon. This was a magic moment. The group of fishermen had several cooking pots all blackened by fire smoke from the curari wood they used to make the camp fire. I forgot, in that moment, my job and my frustration, and started to connect with wonderful people.

I began by taking a pewter cup and dipping it into the coffee pot, which was so different because of how they made the coffee. They used two kilograms of coffee, cinnamon sticks, cloves, and *papelón* that made a strong and sweet beverage. In another big pot they were boiling three gallons of water. The fishermen were preparing food expecting guests to join them. The fishermen were all cooks as well. I watched how

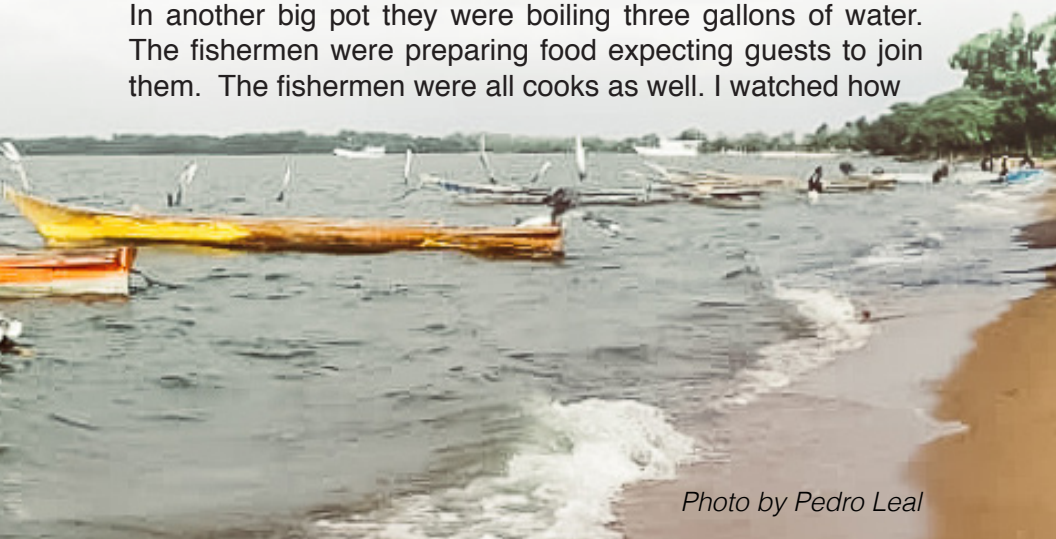


Photo by Pedro Leal

they cut and cleaned the fish they had caught, and crabs and shrimp. They used the heads and the tails to make the soup, adding only onion, salt, and cilantro—all simple ingredients. The soup was an appetizer. In another pot, the fishermen added oil to fry tomatoes, garlic, and onions, and then they added caracolos, a type of pasta that looks like little shells. After the pasta cooked, the last step was to add the fish, crab, and shrimp, with salt and pepper and jalapenos and wait for the sauce to boil and thicken a little and for the pasta to absorb the flavours. In the fire they also put some sweet plantains.

Everything came together very fast. We all enjoyed the nature of the place we were in and the smells around us that were a combination of smoke, sea wind, and food. In that moment, I forgot about my own lunch that I had with me, as we shared sodas and cold water we had packed in the company boat. That was my first lunch in the Cienega.

I worked for this company and in this place for 27 years. In time, I understood the words of the CEO who had told me “you are going to love this project.” In January 2017 I retired from the project and came to Canada. And every day I miss the Cienega de los Olivitos, the friends I made, and the food gatherings on the temporary islets in the lagoon.



Photo by Pedro Leal

My Food, My Home

By Carmen Victoria Rojas

When I think of my country, Venezuela, it evokes in my heart and thoughts the smells and flavours of the fruit trees: mango, guava, pineapple, and passion fruit. Especially in the morning, I remember the delicious arepa. For me, and many other Venezuelans, this is the family breakfast we share at sunrise, listening to the sound of the birds welcoming the sun's rays.

One day in Venezuela I made, as I did every day, arepa for breakfast. I played Simon Diaz on my CD player as I kneaded the cornmeal dough into the round shape that characterizes it, then put it on the budare (a circular clay or cast-iron plate) to cook. It wasn't long before I could smell the roasted corn that we enjoyed so much. This mixed with the smell of the freshly brewed coffee that sat next to the juice that was, as always, on the table.

Old Horse played in the background as my little daughter Sandra asked, "Mommy, why is the arepa round?"

Surprised by the question, I replied, "Because it is the same as our planet earth and the moon, though it is much smaller."

"Mommy," Sandra asked another question. "Why do children eat arepa and cheese for breakfast?"

"Because it is nutritious, and it makes you strong and healthy." Sandra was happy with that and enjoyed her food.

The arepa is more than that though. It is a traditional Venezuelan food of pre-Colombian origin, before the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492. It is a Venezuelan gastronomic symbol. Not only is arepa a breakfast food, it can also be a companion for lunch and dinner, packed with goodness; white or yellow cheese, ricotta, *carne esmechada*, pork, chicken, quail eggs, shrimp, ham, and even more! It brings the whole family together for special moments.



Photo by Carmen Victoria Rojas



Remembering family moments always reminds me of Christmas. In Venezuela, Christmas food represents family union. This is because the whole family gathers to prepare the delicious foods on Christmas Eve. This meal is known as *Hallaca*. On the day before Nativity early in the morning, everyone gets together: mother, father, children, and sometimes, family friends. They prepare the dressings and ingredients for the appetizing meal. The stew of the *Hallaca* is a recipe that has been in my family for many years. This begins a festival of smells and flavours: garlic, onion, paprika, olives, aromatic herbs, capers, wine, pork, meat, and chicken. When the meat stew is preparing, the intoxicating aroma invades the home, connecting us with our traditions. This is a magical moment for the Venezuelan family. For dessert, we have the sweet papaya or milky candy—a traditional sweet made for Christmas—prepared in syrup with cinnamon and cloves. During all this, the special Christmas music plays, the Gaita. It is all a whirlwind of smells, flavours, and enjoyment at home with my family. Unlike the arepa that we have every day, we only have *Hallaca* once a year—this is what makes it so special.

When I emigrated to Canada eight months ago, I missed the family breakfast with the arepa and the magic it made in the kitchen with its smells, flavours, and feelings of family. When I was visiting a Latin Store one day, all this magic returned. There before me was the majestic cornmeal flour used to make arepa! It had arrived in Canada before I had, already waiting for me to find it! So many feelings and memories returned.

Since that day, the smells, flavours, and emotions produced by the arepa were present again in our home. And now, my Canadian-born grandchildren Andres and Daniel, my daughter and son-in-law that I love, can enjoy the smell and taste of our traditional Venezuelan breakfast in Calgary. The arepa and all that it means are again present in our home.

Sadar Bazaar

By Gyan Kapoor

I grew up in a town called Ropar, in Punjab state, India. It is surrounded by villages. The central market of this area is called Mandi of Ropar. Mandi is 50 square kilometers of shops and traders which sells all kinds of products like wheat, barley, rice, mustard, fresh and powdered jaggery, raw sugar (*khand*), cotton seeds, raw cotton, potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, and many other agricultural products. Each morning the offerings lay in colourful heaps, spread in front of shops ready for bidding.

There were two rows of shops along a far stretch of motorable road, each side housed 200 shops. This stretch of market we called Sadar Bazaar, and people came here to buy all their daily necessities. There was a sweet shop, a chemist, doctor's offices, hardware shops, and a jeweler. The bazaar was typically teeming with people, street dogs, and untethered cattle that we had to maneuver around to fetch water from wells in the *mohalla*, which were clusters of houses spread around Sadar Bazaar. I spent a lot of time in this marketplace, because my father owned a shop there where he sold herbs and spices and other household spices. I was a young boy of ten at that time. His shop was open 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, with a break of one hour. Since our house was close by, I would assist my father when I was not in school. He would sit behind the sales counter, which was at the front on the right, and watch customers shop in the space behind him.





There were two rows of sacks with a narrow aisle in between them, on the walls above which hung wooden racks. We had more than 50 items in many sizes and varieties. Pulses, or lentils, in black, green, yellow, brown, or pink, which came whole, split, smashed, or polished. There was rice, teas, soap, mustard oil, rock and sea salt, raw sugar, and jaggery. The warm scent of Indian spices filled the shop as we also sold dried ginger, black pepper, cardamom, and cumin.

On Sundays, my father would have to travel to wholesale dealers in a nearby city to stock his shop and he normally asked me to accompany him. I enjoyed these trips: the process of trading, the greetings and special welcome I would receive as my father's apprentice, and the treat of delicious meals that were prepared by unfamiliar hands. My father taught me to explore varieties, quality, and prices at the different dealers, to compare and determine what to buy (and how much) from where. Once we had made our choice, traders known as *sethji* or *lallaji*, would put all of our purchases into small packs. These would be placed into a larger, jute sack which was hand-stitched closed with jute thread. Our bill would be hand written and manually calculated after some bargaining, we would pay in cash. A labourer called a *numberdar* would carry the sack back to the railway station or bus stop and pack it onto the roof around an iron safety guard.

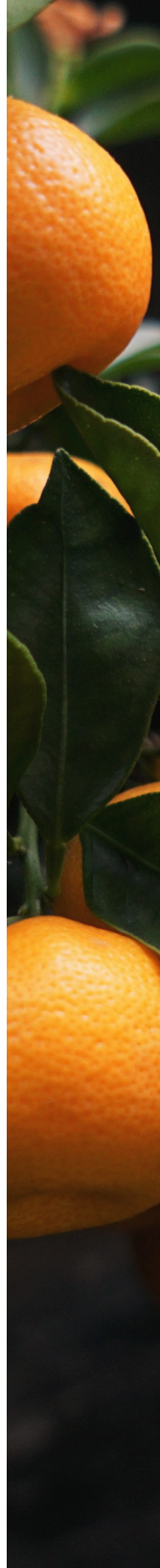
When we arrived back in Ropar, we would ride a rickshaw to the post where we would have to pay the municipality an import tax having procured the goods from another city.

Remembrance of Oranges

By Muhammad Sharif Khan

When I was about 14 years old, along with my cousin M. Akhtar Khan, and my uncle, Irshad A. Khan, I went to my grandfather's farm in Noor Shah, Punjab, in Pakistan. On the way, we came across a garden of oranges. One of the trees was full of ripe oranges, and the smell attracted us. The smell of the ripe was intoxicating, and the tree's leaves were a wonderful green colour. We called over the gardener to buy fruits from the orange tree. This was back in the old days, the 1960s, so prices were very low. It was easy to buy the lot; we picked all of them and ate some right then and there, then brought the rest home for our family. I haven't forgotten this event even after sixty years: the smells, the colours, the taste of the fruit, the farm landscape all around it.

Years later, I went to the city of Lahore for school, as there were no colleges or universities in my own village. After I graduated from school, I shifted to the big city, far away from our village, so I could not experience this again, but I still remembered it on and on. Maybe now, after retirement, I will spend some time back in that village and try to take the trip again to my home village, where I still have one small piece of land inherited and passed down through my family. Although I never cook, I hope to relive this wonderful memory. And 2020 will hopefully be the year that I will begin to do some cooking.





Mother Herb

By Gyan Kapoor

Ayurveda amla,
healer herb, immune
elevating antioxidant,
small orb.

Translucent in diluted yellow,
taint of bottle green mix.
Hard to bite, juice and fibre,
tangy sour leaves sweet tongue
once you swallow.

RECIPE FOR AMLA CURRY

INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp amla
1 tbsp ginger
1 tsp garlic
1 tsp turmeric powder

DIRECTIONS

Make a paste of the amla, ginger and garlic. Stir into any cooking oil over medium heat, add chosen vegetables, turmeric powder, salt and pepper to taste. Cook, stirring every few minutes, until vegetables are cooked to desired degree. Enjoy with rice or chapati.

Sweet Memories of Our Village Tohra

By Pushpa Singal

When I was a young girl, my sister, Darshana, and I used to visit my grandparents in Tohra. Tohra is a village about thirty kilometers away from Patiala, the city that we lived in. The first time that we visited, I was delighted to see cows and buffalo tied and scattered here and there on the narrow lanes of the road. In the streets we also saw children playing Gullie Danda and Peecho, fun and familiar games. When we arrived at my grandparents' house, the neighboring children stopped their games and crowded around us. They looked at my sister and me in silence until my grandmother, whom we called Amma, spoke.

"These are my granddaughters, you will all be friends soon," she said.

The children immediately lit up, they were excited to meet us and we were all filled with great joy.

Later, Amma gave us cold lassi (butter-milk) laced with butter to drink in the open courtyard. It tasted sweet, I could tell that it was made with love. When we finished our drinks, a great aroma from the kitchen filled the house. My Amma had prepared *sarson ka saag* and *Makki ki Roti* with bowls full of butter and kheer, this is fine rice boiled in lots of milk for two hours to make it thick. The sweet corn flour chapatis and the kheer were very delicious. Because my grandparents raised buffalo, we had lots of milk available. Amma had also made *khoa* with the buffalo milk.

After taking some rest, Darshana and I went to the fields with our grandpa, whom we called Baba ji. The trees were laden with so many ripe fruits. We picked red berries and indigo coloured *shahtoot*. It was like a paradise.

From the fields, we pulled out radishes, carrots, onions, turmeric, and long stalks of sugarcane. We washed the vegetables in the flowing water of our Tube-Well to free them from soil. When we were finished, we started carrying the fruits and vegetables back home. We met many of my grandparents' neighbors along the way, and they were all quite happy to see us.

In the evening, we heard the calls of a street-hawker on a bicycle. He was selling ice-cream, cookies, and namkeen. My Amma stopped him, and exchanged a small basket of wheat and black chick-peas for some of his ice-cream and delicious homemade sweets like namkeen.

"Why didn't you pay him with cash?" I asked my Amma.

"In the village, we exchange our home-product for other products. We don't use cash because everyone has something to trade instead," she explained to me.

I was delighted by this, it was very practical.

We ate our dinner before sunset and sucked some sugarcane.

We used the vegetables that we had pulled for the next day's cooking.

After dinner, my Baba ji brought my sister and I to the roof of the house. It was flat, unlike the slanted ones in Canada that I am not used to, and the perfect place to relax. We set up cots that were covered with cozy embroidered sheets. The neighbouring children joined us, and as if on cue, my Baba ji started narrating fairy tales.

While listening to the stories, we lay in our cots and looked up at the bright moon and the shining stars in the sky. A cold wind started flowing and we became drowsy. We fell asleep in the open under the starry roof; we slept without a care in the world.

During the middle of the night, we were woken up by thundering clouds that lit up the sky and a light drizzle of rain.

“Take the bedding and cots inside, to the Chaubara,” my Baba ji instructed us.

The neighboring kids had returned to their homes. With sleep in our eyes, we gathered our things and followed him. It was very hot inside, and after about two hours, the rain finally stopped. The sky was clear, so we took our cots and bedding and went outside to go back to sleep. The outside air was humid and fresh. We were awakened by the shining sun, and happy that our grandparents allowed us to sleep outside for most of the night.

What a wonderful and memorable experience!

...

My grandparents stayed with my family in Patiala city when I was a young child. My Baba ji was not feeling well, so my parents insisted that we take them in to take care of them. Whenever my Amma had to go out of the house, I had to hold her hand. She was not able to cross the road alone because she was not used to the great rush of traffic.

It is not like here in Canada, where the vehicles stop when a pedestrian is crossing.

My Amma and I used to take evening walks to the Hanuman temple and towards the Thandi Khuee well and near the National Institute of Sports in Patiala. There is always a great hustle and bustle at these places.

During these times, my Amma used to sit on a Pihri, a small stool, near our entrance, and wait for my sister and I to return from school. She was quite busy with her spinning wheel during the day, she used to spin cotton and make yarn. With this, she prepared durries and kheses for our beds.

That was a really great time as our homes were self-sufficient in all respects. Every need was fulfilled from our homemade materials.



A landscape photograph showing terraced hills. The upper part of the image features a steep hillside with a diagonal pattern of green and brown, suggesting different crops or soil types. Four small, dark green trees are planted in a row along the edge of the brown section. The lower part of the image shows a green field with similar diagonal patterns. A semi-transparent white box with a decorative border is overlaid on the right side, containing the text.

PIECES OF WISDOM



Photo by Kewal Krishan Singal



Celestial Sustenance

By Kewal Krishan Singal

Twenty years ago, our friend Sohan Maan from Calgary, visited India. He stayed in his home at Hoshiarpur, Punjab. It was June, a scorching summer month of that year. My friend, Jagpal, and I battled the gruelling heat for about five hours to reach Hoshiarpur by a Roadways bus. We went to see him as he was unable to travel due to the hot weather. We stayed with him for five days. Every day, he took us to the best restaurants for food. The restaurant food was usually spicy and heavy with oil. Though tasty, it is usually heavy to digest. It becomes heavier still in the hot summer days. In the mornings, he used to take us along with him for yoga in Guruji's Ashram. Guruji had a very attractive personality. He had retired as a principal about twenty years ago at the age of 58, and was serving the community since then. He had converted his large bungalow into a yoga Ashram. All were welcome to learn and practice daily for free and many people came to him daily for yogic solutions to their physical and mental problems.

We relished our early morning two-hour yoga training sessions in the open grassy lawn as cool breezes washed over us in the wee hours of the morning. In the open, it used to be cool and refreshing.

During the day, however, the heat became unbearable and we had to remain indoors. In those five days, the oily and spicy

restaurant food were all we ate and because of how heavy it was for us, we yearned for home cooked food. Our last day there was a Sunday. Guruji served community dinners in the evening around 7. The food served was sattavic in the true sense of the word. It was simple whole wheat chapatis with no butter garnishing and the yellow, unpeeled (Dhoti Mung Dal) mung lentil without many fried spices and chillies. It seemed like a God-sent opportunity for us compared to the restaurant food we had lately. It was the best meal we had for ages. The food was delicious, and I will remember it forever. The following day we went home after taking our yoga tips.

Wisdom from The Bhagavad-Gita By A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Parbhupada (Ch. 17.8 to 17.10)

Note: The Bhagavad-Gita is a holy scripture in Hinduism, not too dissimilar to Christianity's bible. It is a universal life lesson for everybody emphasizing doing one's duty without being too attached to the results.

The purpose of food is to increase the duration of life, purify the mind and aid bodily strength. Such foods are juicy, with added ghee (purified butter), wholesome and pleasing to the heart. These include grains, beans, peas, milk, curd, butter, butter-milk, sugar, fruits and vegetables. All these foods are pure by nature. In the Bhagavad-Gita, the supreme Lord says that He accepts preparations of vegetables, flour and milk when offered with love and devotion. Therefore, to make food more acceptable to the body and mind, it should be first offered to the Supreme lord before consumption.

From Keoputhy : *As we were discussing the Bhagavad-Gita, Kewal told me something that I don't think I will ever forget. "Home-cooked food is cooked with care, appreciation and love and therefore it will always taste better. It is personal and love has been imprinted into the food. A mother's cooking will taste unlike anything you taste at a restaurant because the food was prepared lovingly. Restaurant food is professional, the chef does not love you the way a mother does.*

Lessons from a Rabbit

By Pedro Leal

One day in 1998, I tried to convince my son that rabbit meat was very good and could be used to prepare different dishes. He was 8 years old at that time and, even though he enjoyed eating gourmet food, it was shocking to him to see the skinless rabbit in the supermarket. We bought the rabbit and looked up a recipe in a Spanish cookbook, the easiest recipe to make.

We bought red wine, oregano leaves, and garlic. My son Pedro was not convinced but we began to cook and follow the recipe together. The dish would eventually be placed in a cacerola, a traditional casserole dish. We cut the rabbit into small pieces, chopped the garlic, onions, and potatoes. In a bowl, we marinated the rabbit pieces with olive oil, and pepper and garlic. The oven was set for 350 degrees. The meat was browned in a pan with olive oil, and we added the onions, pepper, and enough salt to seal the meat juices.

Everything went into the cacerola at this time and was mixed well together before going in the oven for 20 minutes.

At this time we added one cup of wine, put the top back on, and let it all cook for an hour, checking every once in a while to make sure it did not dry out. During this time, the entire kitchen smelled of all the wonderful flavours coming from the oven, and increased our appetite.

My son tried a piece of the meat with potatoes and sauce, and he was fascinated by the taste. We ate the meal with a Sicilian bread, and he ended up enjoying the entire dish, saying that eating rabbit tasted like chicken breast, very soft and delicious. Thus he learned that before refusing or criticizing a new kind of food, he must try it first. And next time we tried a new dish, we bought iguana meat that a local friend was selling, and we prepared together another dish, with green peppers, onions, garlic, tomatoes, and salt. We used this as a filling for empanadas, which we ate with fresh white cheese. And my son, having learned to try things first before refusing to eat them, enjoyed this new culinary experience as well.



Photo by Pedro Leal

One Lesson Two Ways

By Gyan Kapoor

Two saintly figures, of golden times, Muslim poet Rahim and learned writer Tulsidas.

Tulsidas asks, “Rahim, o my dear friend, when you give alms to the poor with both hands, you gaze downward. Where have you learned to do this?”

“Dear Tulsi,” Rahim replies, “you know very well that the giver is someone else, sending all the day and night, but still the world gives me credit. So, I lower my eyes in embarrassment.” Rahim’s lesson: he who has to beg is no longer a man, but those who refuse to give alms were never men to begin with.

A friend once asked me for some money, and with no condition of return I met his need. With the passage of time, I simply reminded him of the money and he showed no interest of repaying me. I told him, “nothing to bother, I will not ask any more, only that our friendship should not be affected.” Since then, we are still the same friends.

My own saying goes: when money is lost, nothing is lost; when character is lost, everything is lost. I stand with this to this day.





ODES TO LOVED ONES

Friendship Cake

By Kamlesh Kapoor

I want to tell you about the meal my best friend Nalini made for me when I visited her in New Jersey two years back. Nalini and I have been friends since school, we studied in same college and even after getting married we lived in the same city Faridabad. She is very tall and has short hair, she is a sweet, loving, caring and jolly person who loves cooking food. She is a fun-loving person who lives in New Jersey with her daughter. When I visited her, she cooked a very simple yet delicious Thai style food-vegetables cooked in white sauce and for dessert she made dates cake which I loved. The vegetables looked amazing in the white sauce, I still can't forget the sight of orange carrots, green broccoli, and red pepper in white glazed sauce with black pepper. The sight and taste made it heavenly.

I couldn't stop appreciating this delicacy until I tasted the date cake. Nice brown chocolaty colour with walnuts and nuts inside, it was truly delightful. I asked her for the recipe which she happily handed me, since then I make that cake on every special occasion. We loved chatting over food, remembering our golden memories together since school. After enjoying the meal, we went out for shopping and sight-seeing, re-kindling our lives together and looking back at 60 years of glowing friendship that progressed with time.



Photo by Kamlesh Kapoor

WALNUT AND DATE CAKE

INGREDIENTS

All purpose flour	3 cups
Sugar	1 ¾ cups
Oil	¾ cup
Milk	2 cups
Baking powder	2 teaspoons
Baking soda	1 1/2 teaspoons
Dates	300 grams
Walnuts	300 grams
Salt	A pinch
Vanilla essence	3-4 drops

DIRECTIONS

Boil oil, milk and sugar together, then add dates and walnuts. Turn off the gas and let it cool a bit. Mix flour, baking powder, baking soda separately than add to the lukewarm milk solution. Add vanilla essence, mix the batter well and pour in greased moulds. Pre-heat the oven at 350 F and put the baking dish in the oven for about 45-50 minutes. Check and take out immediately from the oven. Let it cool and serve.



More Beautiful than a Rose

By Shahla

More beautiful than a rose petal	my mom...
Every finger of your hand, had art	my mom...
Without requesting fee	my mom...
You shared your spirit and your experiences (You taught us what you learned)	my mom...
Not only you were the mother	my mom...
Also, you were a teacher, coach	my mom...
Whenever I was with you	my mom...
I learned one thing	my mom...
The aroma of each food that you taught me	my mom...
It wraps around my home like rose perfume	my mom...
Wherever I am in the world	my mom...
I never forget you	my mom...

How I Learned to Cook Kotlet

By Shahla

One day when I was 18 years old and I came back from high school, my mother said to me, “Come and help me make your favorite food.” The name of that delicious food is Kotlet.

I love it, but at that time, I never cooked it. My mother said, “You know when you experience something for the first time you have to listen, watch and learn it carefully.”

I thought to myself: Okay every girl at least must learn to cook. And so, I said to her “My dear mom, I will do anything that you want. What should I do, please let me know?” She looked at me very kindly and laughed. “Bring a few potatoes, put them in a pot with water and then turn on the stove and let it boil.”

While I was washing potatoes, I started to sing, and dance and my mom told me that the first time doing something it is hard but after that it will be easy. After fifteen minutes I peeled the potatoes and grated them with one onion. Then I mixed in mincemeat (ground beef), one egg, a little saffron, salt and turmeric.



Photo by Shahla

While doing this, a thought came to me suddenly. Oh my God, my mom has so many duties. Suddenly I kissed her, and she told me “Continue, please.” Then she gave me a cup of chickpea flour and she said, “You know this flour helps the ingredients be stiff.” I laughed and she said, “Imagine when you are walking down a slippery road and trying not to fall down. If you put this mixture in hot oil, it will not shape, and you will fall.”

I told her I would never forget it. After mixing the ingredients

she showed me how to take the mixture in the palms of my hand and shape it. I put it carefully in the hot oil and after fifteen minutes the Kotlet was ready.

The smell of food surrounded our entire home. When it was finished, I put all the kotlets inside the dish, arranging them beautifully with decorations of potato chips, vegetables, and tomato. My mom taught me that when you decorate the food it shows pride in your work. You must do this in all things.

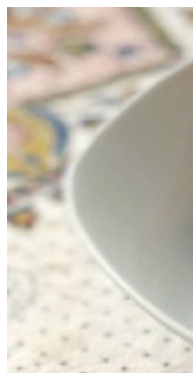
Around the table, my father, sister and brothers were sitting and my mom said to them, "This is the first time cooking for Shahla, please tell her your opinion, because this is very important to her for next time and she needs to know how to be careful in her work."

Everybody told me their opinion. One said the salt is a bit low, and my mom said, "This is for those who are going to have it in the future and don't know if they are eating low salt or high salt." I laughed.

My father said, "My beautiful daughter, thank you." I laughed and I said, "My dear father this dish is not the same as my mom's." He said, "Of course, you must practice."

I began to sing the same song I had while I was cooking; everyone laughed and said if you can bring this joy to all you meet in the future, you will succeed.

My dear mom, I will never forget you.



RECIPE FOR KOTLET

This recipe is for 6 people

INGREDIENTS

500 grams ground beef or
ground turkey

5 medium potatoes with skin

1 large onion

1 large egg

1 tsp salt

1 tsp meat spice

1 tsp turmeric

1/8 tsp saffron (optional)

6 tbsp liquid oil

1 cup chickpea flour or toasted
flour

but with chickpea flour will be
delicious



Photos by Shahla







CELEBRATION

Food Contains Blessings

By Xiaoqi (Linda) Cao

There is a food in China that is called dumplings.

All the families from south to north make this food.

One day, my mother smiled and said to me, “My daughter is smart to do things, come do the dumpling with mum.” I was joyful and jumped up, I was interested to learn how to make dumplings. I was then 10 years old.

Later, when I made dumplings at home, my mother always sat there and kept smiling while talking with praise: “You see, my daughter can really do it,” and directed me and my sister how to make it together. And even though we sprinkled the flour everywhere, my mother never complained, and said, “Wrapped in the dumplings is only happiness and good things, so making dumplings should keep a good mood.”

Each family has their own different recipes. Generally, the stuffing of dumplings uses beef, pork, lamb, chicken, fish, shrimp and eggs, etc, and with some vegetables, like onion, ginger, sesame oil, and soy sauce, stirring everything well together. When the stuffing has been combined, it will have an attractive aroma, tangy. I can't resist it, usually my mouth will water.

In general, whoever made dumplings would share them with their neighbours.

During a Chinese festival or to say farewell when relatives go to a distant place for work, housewives must make dumplings for them.

I remember, more than 50 years ago, before my brother went to college, in the home there were not any vegetables, so our neighbour sent my mother some leeks and some eggs.



Photo by Xiaoqi (Linda) Cao

My mother got up in the middle of the night to make dumplings and let my brother eat hot dumplings before he left that morning. I saw my brother with tears in his eyes while eating, and my mother encouraged him: "Study hard and do not be homesick."

Even though the dumplings taste and look different, their meanings are the same. Wrapped together, safety, happiness, and love are found within the dumpling.

My Memorable Recipe

By Kamlesh Kapoor

Born and brought up in the city of Punjab, where people love rich and healthy food, I learned cooking and baking from my mother. She is no more, but her recipes live with me and fill my heart with the fluttering love she had for me. I remember one of her special dessert recipes which we used to cook together with so much love and devotion. Its memory is still fresh in my mind I want to share that incident with you.

It was a normal day during the first year of my post-graduation until I came home from college and heard that one of our relatives in Jalandher (Punjab) had sent a marriage proposal for me for her nephew. The boy was a good-looking design engineer, well-settled in his job and had a well-to-do family. My parents were so excited as I am their first child and invited his family for lunch next Sunday. I was surprised and mad at them because I wanted to complete my studies before getting married.

The preparations began in the excitement and began the discussion over what to cook. My mom cooked shahi paneer, chickpeas curry, cauliflower, salad, Dahi Bhalla and recipe that got attention was dessert called Phirni. It was prepared in different colours—pink, yellow, green and white in separate bowls and garnished by almond, pistachio, raisin and cardamom. The colourful appearance, fragrance, sweet flavour and texture of Phirni was so tempting that everyone loved and praised it. The proposal of my marriage was finalized that day after lunch and the date was set to be 28 May 1967.

We share a loving bond of over 52 years together. Two years back, on the same date, our children and grandchildren arranged for all the wedding ceremonies to be performed and remarried us on our 50th wedding anniversary in Calgary. They made all the arrangement, invited all the family friends and surprised us as our son and daughter-in-law also flew



Photo by Kamlesh Kapoor

from India to be a part of the grand celebration. They made us do the ring ceremony, the mangalsutra (necklace) and Jai mala (garland) ceremony, followed by cake-cutting and Champagne opening. I don't drink, but that day they forced me to take few sips from the glass, to make this event more memorable.

We feel so blessed and are so proud of our children for celebrating this great event of our life. We can't thank God enough and our lovely sweet and caring children for all their efforts. May God bless us all!

PHIMI RECIPE

INGREDIENTS

Rice	¼ cup
Milk	2 litres
Whipped cream	200 grams
Sugar	200 grams
Green cardamom	5-6
Ghee	1 teaspoon
Almond, raisins, pistachios for garnishing	
Food colours (yellow, red, green, pink)	

DIRECTIONS

Grind rice with 1 cup milk to make a smooth paste. In a pan heat ghee and add 2-3 grinded cardamom. Then add the rice mixture and stir continuously. Add another cup of milk when it thickens and keep stirring. Repeat this 3-4 times and once it is done add whole milk, whipped cream and sugar. Keep stirring till it becomes thick, then separate in 4 portions, add different food colours. Garnish with dry fruits and sprinkle a pinch of grinded cardamom powder. Enjoy the sweet and colourful dessert.

Postscript from Gyan Kapoor

The Golden Anniversary of my marriage was held on 28th May 2017 in Calgary, attended by my own family members and family friends. My son came from India, accompanied by his sweet family, his wife and two sons. My sister and other relations sent their congratulations via videos. We received gifts of jewellery for the ring ceremony, a gold Jan chain, a woolen suit for me, a beautiful sari for my wife. There were flower arrangements and other decorative gifts.

My family helped decorate the house and set up video recording. There were anniversary banners and lights everywhere. There was a lot of food: mutton, bbq, chicken, fish, and vegetarian dishes, alongside naan and laccha parathas. There was also champagne, whisky, vodka, red wine, and beer.

We went once again through the marriage rituals: the Mililani, the ring ceremony, the Vedic mantras of marriage. It was a real occasion of a memorable celebration.

My wife and I have lived a life of love and togetherness and brought up children who are set in good careers and are happily married with children as well.

It was a celebration of marriage, love, and remembering that a happy and long-lasting marriage depends on trust and respect, and does not have place for negativity and selfish ego, resulting in a life that is strong as a rock, woven through with the laws of attraction, love, helping, and contentment.

Sharing Besan Barfi and Happy Thoughts with Friends

By Pushpa Singal

India is a land of festivals. Diwali is one of my favourites, and it is celebrated with great pomp and show throughout the whole of India. This year it falls on October 27 (Sunday). Diwali signifies the victory of good over evil. During these celebrations, people visit their near-and-dear relatives, exchange gifts, and distribute sweets. In the evening, the households, roads, streets and every nook and corner is well-lit with earthen lamps followed by venerations and fireworks.

Even living in Canada now, I love to celebrate this festival. On November 20th, my daughter called myself and my husband. She lives in India, and we enjoy sharing our preparations for this function.

“I have decorated my house with lights and I have prepared lots of sweets like cake, kheer and Dokhla. What have you done?” My daughter asked.

“Oh, that reminds me, I should prepare something too. I want to make something that I used to prepare in India,” I said.

“You should make something that makes you happy!” My daughter replied. The first dish that came to my mind was Besan Barfi, a delicious sweet make with chickpea flour (Besan) and other tasty ingredients as follows:

- 1 kg besan (chickpea flour)
- 800 g clarified butter
- 800 g finely ground sugar (bura)
- 100 g dry fruits (almonds, cashew nuts crushed)
- 100 g muskmelon seeds peeled (giri)
- 1 tbsp black pepper powder

I asked Dr. Singal (my husband) to help me in its preparation. Thankfully, he agreed to lend me a hand.

I put butter in the pan to melt on the gas-stove and added Besan to it. Dr. Singal stirred this mixture with a spatula.

“Keep the heat low, otherwise it will burn and stick to the pan,” I warned him.

Within half an hour, the Besan Barfi was ready. Thankfully, it was not burnt. Two days later, my husband and I went to attend our creative writing class. Our teachers are Dr. Meisner and Dr. Patient and our peers are students from Mount Royal University. I decided to bring the Besan Barfi to class. I wanted to share my feelings of happiness for this festival with them, especially because my class-fellows always bring sumptuous treats.

“It’s delicious!” My teachers commented.

I could tell that they were very happy.

Many of my peers asked for the recipe, which I was glad to share. We enjoyed the Besan Barfi with other snacks like biscuits and hot tea.

I am glad that I still celebrate Diwali, and that I have new friends to enjoy these traditions with.







HEALTH & HAPPINESS

The Golden Drink

By Kewal Krishan Singal

In 1988, while working at the Punjabi University in Patiala India, my wife and I used to get to work by motorized scooter from our house which was about five kilometers away. One morning while on our way to the University, we were knocked down by a rashly driven moped coming from a side road. My wife was saved from injury, but I fell on the handle, hitting my chest. Dr. Makhan Singh, one of my colleagues happened to be following us, kindly put us in a tuk-tuk to take us to the University Medical Centre.

They found a hairline fracture in one of my ribs in addition to some minor bruises. I was transported to another colleague's house for some rest. Then they gave me a glass of milk with added turmeric and desi ghee (clarified butter) giving it a fine golden shine. He told me that it was the best medicine for such internal injuries. I was to be on bed rest for three weeks, during which time I was to take this drink twice daily but I was better within a week.

Turmeric is a spice extensively used in the Indian households. Not only is it a folk medicine, it also has anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and antiviral properties. It is an anti-inflammatory food and is very useful in the fight against circulatory and respiratory problems. It is effective against colds and influenzas as well as arthritis and joint pains. Here is the recipe for The Golden Drink:



Photo by Dr. Kewal Krishan Singal

MILK WITH TURMERIC

INGREDIENTS

Milk - one cup

Turmeric - one half of teaspoon (8-10 g)

Sugar or Honey - one teaspoon

DIRECTIONS:

Place the milk in a boiling pot. Add about half a teaspoonful of turmeric powder to it and stir. Boil the mixture gently for ten minutes and add sugar. If you want to add honey, let the milk cool down first. Take this drink daily before going to bed for at least three months.

1. If green turmeric is available, then use about 2 cm piece of the root. Peel, wash and cut it into small pieces and boiled in milk. It can also be consumed along with warm milk. Or, it can be filtered out and discarded.
2. If the milk makes you feel bloated at night, then it can either be taken in the evening, or a pinch of roasted cumin seed powder can be added.
3. Two teaspoons of ghee may be added if there is an internal injury to make it more effective.

Friends for Life

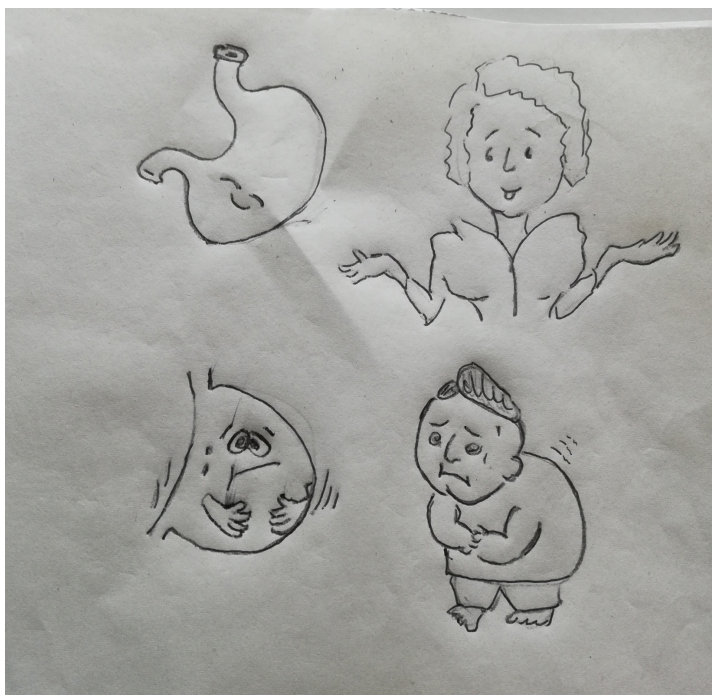
By Xiaoqi (Linda) Cao

My name is “stomach”
Everyone wants to be friends with me,
But when people see or taste good food they immediately
forget me,
Please stuff food into my small space
So I thought you not enough my friend.

Did you know
I am very delicate.
I’m afraid of too cold, hard, tough and high protein,
I’m afraid of too sour, spicy, sweet and barbecue or
smoked,
I’m nervous when you are angry,
Lose the power to digest the food you give me.

And did you know
I’m afraid my host will not eat on time
so I’m sometimes hungry or sometimes full
Let stomach acid digest myself, corrode myself, defend
my membrane,
I’m afraid my host will learn, work and exercise immediately
after eating,
The blood should be given to me, but to give scattered to
other parts
so I thought you not are enough my friend.

Our contradictions are sometimes little and often,
sometimes a deep fight and big,
To cause destruction to both sides,
Even the surgeon raised the scalpel, considering to
separate us.
To stop us from hurting each other.
Yes, we are not friends.



Illustrated by Xiaoqi (Linda) Cao

Why can't we live in peace?

In fact, I am also very gentle,

As long as the food you give me is

-- Warm, soft,

-- Three meals a day give me food regularly

-- Keep a good mood when eating

-- Chew slowly

-- And Eat in moderation.

We can be good friends for life.

If you realize, cherishing me is cherished yourself,

Take care of our feelings all the time

We will nurture each other

Keep your body healthy

We can be good friends for life.



A Recipe for Revelation

By Muhammad Sharif Khan

My mom cooked delicious Kofta one day, in 1966, on one of my visits when I came home from college after two years in school. I was 18 years old. When I arrived home, the house was fragrant with the scent of spices and curry. I ate the food and loved it very much. After eating, I asked my mother, "What is this made of?" She looked at me with surprise and told me it was meat. I could not believe it as I had not recognized the texture or taste of meat in it. Until that moment, I had refused to eat meat since I believed that I disliked its texture and smell. And so we just stood there and laughed.

O Food!

By Nazleen Rajani

O' food O' food O' food
You are so important!
In the womb you were a red colour,
after I was born you were a white colour.
Later, I went from liquid to solid.

O' food O' food O' food
Solid food; I rejected and refused you.
Cry - Cry - Cry
My mother Try - Try- Try
again and again,
until my mother wins.

O' food O' food O' food
Why are you so delicious?
You make me so weak.
I eat you like an animal.
Sweet, Sour, Salty, Bitter and Spicy.
I can enjoy you cold or hot.

O' food O' food O' food
Important for survival, and yet
you are just so yummy, so delightful.
O' food O' food O' food





Photo by Nazleen Rajani

Poutine for Paputi

By Nazleen Rajani

I came from Pakistan to Canada in December, it was snowfall season. One week after I settled in the cold weather my granddaughter Paputi requested for food. “Nani, I feel hungry could you please make poutine for me?”

Pudding?

“Sure! Why don’t you give me half an hour while you play with your favourite doll?”


She was 5 years old, with a loveable personality and curly light brown hair.

“Sophia! Sophia!” she called to her doll.

“Where are you, oh you are sleeping? Please wake up! Nani is going to make poutine for us.” She lifted her doll and began brushing its hair with her small hands, her brown curls bouncing.

“Oh your hair not look nice, I make your pony.”

I hear this as I begin to prepare her pudding. Mixed egg. Milk.



Sugar. Put on steam. I worked as she was busy with her doll, making her “pony.” After 20 minutes she smelled the pudding. “I’m hungry Nani!”

“The pudding is ready Paputi!”

She came toward me with her doll, searching. “Where? Where?” Looking here and there. “Where is it Nani?”

“Here my sweetie!”

“Oh, why is it brown coloured? Maybe it’s burnt?”

“No, it is brown sugar caramel”

She seemed surprised. “What?”

I put a bite in her mouth. “How come it’s sweet? And where is the fries?” I told her “You’re mistaken, there is no fries in pudding and it is always sweet.” Then she said “No Nani, poutine has potato fries and... and... and cheese.... and.... ” her words tumbled out of her and we fell into a small argument about pudding and poutine.

My daughter interrupted us “What happened?”

I told her how I made pudding for Paputi, how she insisted it have fries, and cheese, and gravy.

She started laughing: “Oh my dear mom, you made a pudding for her when she wanted Poutine!”

“Poutine?”

“Yes Poutine! It’s a Canadian food made up of potato fries, sprinkled with cheese curds and topped with gravy.” I felt so silly until my daughter and I made a real Poutine for Paputi.

That was the day I learned the difference between poutine and pudding. It was a misunderstanding and an experience I will never forget and now, whenever I make Poutine, I laugh with this story in mind.





LIVING IN CANADA

A Punjabi Delicacy

By Kewal Krishan Singal

My friend, Dr. Ram Singh who lives in Skyview, had a good kitchen garden. I asked if some of the vegetables were growing well there. In the villages of Punjab, where I grew up, we grow vegetables and fruits throughout the year. Through the summer, vegetables are ram tories, gourds, onions, cucumbers, taran, pumpkin, karela, lauki, melons (musk and water), mangoes, bananas. These are different from the winter vegetables such as leafy greens, mustard, spinach, fenugreek, peas, bitter gourd, cauliflower, garlic, ginger, cabbage, turnips, carrots, radish, apples, pears, lemons, and tomatoes. The summer vegetables and fruits are soft and digestible, whereas the winter food is richer and gives you a feeling of fullness for a longer time.

In Canada, however, vegetables grow only in the summer months. My friend's garden had leafy greens and I was astonished to find that mustard grows here very quickly and can be harvested five or six times in one season. When some of the plants ripen, they spill seeds that will grow next spring as the snow fades. In Canada, the ground has enough moisture to last for all seasons, whereas in Punjab, we have irrigation systems such canals or tube wells and even earlier than that we had cattle-drawn water wells called Hurts.

Ram Singh asked me if we would like to have some of the green leafy vegetables. We said we would be delighted. The next day, he brought a bagful of saag (a mustard green), spinach, fenugreek leaves and bathua to the Saddletowne station where we planned to meet.

We were delighted to have it because it would be our first time cooking it here. My wife, Dr. Pushpa Singal, washed the mustard greens, spinach and bathua thoroughly to free them from any sand particles and dirt. She then chopped them to about half a centimetre size and cooked them together on low

heat for about two hours along with green chillies and table salt. As the steamy aroma of mustard filled the kitchen, I ran out to buy a bag of creamy, yellow corn flour and some jaggery (sweet brown sugary lumps) from a Punjabi store nearby.

After adding some corn flour, my wife churned the saag into a cohesive paste and cooked it again for half an hour. She chopped two onions, some garlic and ginger and added a couple of tomatoes. They were fried well in butter, until the onions were golden-brown giving a sweet aroma to the air. They were finally added to the cooked saag and mixed thoroughly.



Photo by Kewal Krishan Singal

The corn flour was kneaded with water to give a cohesive creamy dough and she made chapatis of corn flour to be eaten with the saag. Butter was also added. The sight of this brings a shine to the eyes of any Punjabi. Finally, it was time to eat. We relished this delicious, fragrant food to our hearts' content. For a sweet dessert, we had some jaggery and anise seeds to help digest this nice, rich, sumptuous food.




A Buffet of Conversation

By Sima Kharrazi

For my husband Hassan's birthday on the twenty-third of October, we invited three married couples for lunch to the Grey Eagle Casino. Unfortunately, I got a cold so we had to postpone it for the fifth of November. We, eight seniors, had fun and enjoyed the variety of appetizers, the main course, the dessert, and the coffee and tea. The food was served buffet style, with chicken, lamb, fish and different types of seafood. There were two kinds of soup, seafood with grated carrot and a cream soup, as well as all kinds of vegetables and salads that were perfectly cooked and prepared. The food was served in big silver dishes all around the salon. The dishes were organized into different courses, appetisers in one place, the main course in another, and the desert served up last.

Our friends brought Hassan a white cake with chocolate frosting, decorated with whipped cream and strawberries. We all sang happy birthday and clapped for him. They also brought him some birthday presents of chocolate, thick socks for winter (one grey and one green and red), white wine, and many wonderful things. We really care about our friends, they are very kind and gentle and generous. They are lovely and respectful, and come from the United



States, Germany, and India. They make life very happy in Canada.

At least twice a month, we make plans to go out or each other's homes for brunch, lunch or dinner. On these occasions, Hassan and I don't feel so lonely. We like to make Iranian food for our friends when they come over. Hannah and Paul, our German friends, cook us German food when we go over to their houses. When we go to Cokie and Mahindra's house, our Indian friends, they make us Indian food. Indian food is very spicy and they use a lot of cayenne pepper and sometimes jalapeño. It's very good, but it can be hot.

When we see our American friends, Rudy and Mary Jean, it's a nice opportunity to improve my English. I will ask them to help me and I find myself talking a lot. Not only do we have fun spending time with our friends, but we also get to experience different countries food and culture while also improving our English. We laugh a lot, have great conversation and like to joke with each other. Seeing our friends is what I call spiritual food, sustenance for the soul.

A Beautiful Day with Sholeh Zard

By Shahla

It was a sunny and beautiful day in May when my family and I decided to go to a Persian restaurant. The weather was beautiful, and the blossom were just starting to come out in Calgary. This was one month after I arrived in Canada and I was happy to go to an Iranian restaurant here for the first time.

I thought, I wish my family from back home were here. I must try to live without them.

A beautiful and cheerful lady came over to our table and bid us welcome. “Do you have a reservation?” she asked. My husband said that we did.

I said to the lady, “Wow it is incredible, this place is the same as our home country, with a quiet atmosphere and nice decor, I love it.” When I saw the menu, I was delighted and said, “My God I love all of them, especially my favorite dessert, Sholeh Zard.” We made ourselves comfortable and ordered Sultani Kebab, rice, Kashke Bademjan, Fesenjan & Sholeh Zard. We savored the unique flavor of every dish.

After we finished our meal, an older lady who owned the market approached us smiling, “is Sholeh Zard is your favorite sweet? It’s my favorite too.” She asked if we wanted another one and I said “Yes, I would take another for the next morning. “If I buy the ingredients of Sholeh Zard from your supermarket, then I can make it myself in the future.” We laughed together.

“Do you know how to cook it?” she asked, and I replied that since it was my favorite, I had learned how to cook it from my Mom.

After dinner we looked around their supermarket, happy to see familiar ingredients and I bought some items. While we were shopping, a man came inside the restaurant. My husband





Photo by Shahla

recognized him as a friend and beckoned for him to come over to us. After speaking for a while, I had a question for the gentleman.

“Can you please explain for me the seasons in Calgary?”

He replied: “There are two seasons in Calgary: the first one is winter and the second is construction.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

He laughed and said this is a special joke I have for Calgary as it is always snowy, and they are always building something. This was a fun time with sweet memories, made sweeter by the taste of Sholeh Zard. I will never forget it.

Sholeh Zard – An Introduction

How enjoyable it is to make a famous dessert for your family that they love also for your friends who have never tasted.

The name of this delicious Saffron Rice Pudding is Sholeh Zard. It comes from my home country of Iran and it is served on special occasions like New Year, but nowadays my people and I serve it as a dessert. I serve it for celebrations or for my new friends who they are not familiar with it.

Oh my God, the color of that is mixed with yellow and red. This nice color is from powdered saffron.

When rice blooms like a flower bud and you pour the powdered saffron, the color of rice suddenly changes from white to red and yellow, I love it, especially the smell of that. And we also need rose water for the recipe. During cooking, when rose water and cardamom are placed in the boiling rice, the scent of rose perfume wraps around the house. In Iran, we even have a Kashan rose water festival.

I love the taste of Sholeh Zard when you decorate with the cinnamon and pistachios.



Photo by Shahla

RECIPE FOR SHOLEH ZARD

This recipe is for 12 people and it needs 1 h 30 min

INGREDIENTS

2 cups rice
12 cups water
4 cups white sugar
1 tbsp liquid oil
2 tbsp unsalted butter
3 tsp powdered saffron put
into 1 cup warm water
1 tsp cardamom
4 tbsp blanched slivered
almonds put it into
1 cup rose water
3 tbsp ground pistachios
2 tbsp ground cinnamon
*pistachio & cinnamon for
garnish and designing

DIRECTIONS

At the first time we must wash and drain the rice several times. Then add the rice to a heavy-bottomed pot. After that add 12 cups of water to the pot and cover half open with a lid. For boiling the rice we need medium heat, stir with a wooden spoon and take out the foam. When the rice is boiling and opens like a flower bud, remove the lid, add sugar and mix gently to dissolve, then add saffron dissolved in warm water. After changing the color of rice mix gently to dissolve. Then put slivered almonds with rose water. It had to be constantly mixed for 30 minutes with low heat so that it would not stick to the bottom during this time.

Grid the cardamom seeds, put it into 1 cup warm water then smooth the water and pour into the solution then increase butter, rose water and stir well thoroughly to combine for 15 minutes. It will be like a cream.

Turn off the heat then pour the Sholeh Zard into a plate and let it cool. After 10 minutes you can design with the cinnamon and pistachios. It is optional.

*Some people like to serve it right after cooking done, some people like it after cooling it in the refrigerator

Cover it then place the plate into the refrigerator until it is the same as jelly. (Enjoy)

Chatpate Khatte Aloo

By Nazleen Rajani

In the evening after returning from work, I was exhausted and hungry. I thought about the meal I would make for tomorrow while quickly grabbing something to eat and head towards bed. My daughter appeared with a downcast face and asked “Mom, my classmates and I came here to study as a group, we’re hungry and tired. Could you please make something? Please Mom?” It was impossible to order something from somewhere else, we were struggling financially, and my daughter understood this. Studying in university she was busy and knew the burden we had, there was helplessness in her eyes and sadness in the lines of her face. I took a deep breath.

“Okay dear, I will do something.”

Khatte Aloo.

All the ingredients were here, and it only took minutes to make. I prepared it fast and skillfully. I knew the recipe by heart. When I was young my family struggled as well, my mother worked hard to provide, feed and raise me. Nights she would cook for us were nights she didn’t eat so we could have more. I gave my daughter and her peers a dish each and glimpsed them enjoy the steaming flavorful potatoes garnished with coriander. My eyes stopped at my daughter. My daughter watched as her classmates devoured their plates, remarking on its rich flavor and gentle texture. I could see the pride in her eyes, radiating from her smile and when I took a closer look her face opened with joy and it removed all my fatigue. This is how my mother must have felt. It is something only a mother can feel when they have children, a tender fire like the taste of chatpate.

This is my favourite recipe. I would like to share it with you. Yummy and tasty:

CHATPATE KHATTE ALOO

DIRECTIONS

Peel potatoes, cut in medium size cubes. Half-boil the cubes with salt and lemongrass. Drain and then keep aside.

Heat oil in a large pan over low medium heat. Add besan and roast until it is deep in colour. Keep the heat low otherwise it will be at risk of burning. Remove the gram flour when it is fragrant and coloured, remove from the pan and set aside. Add cumin seeds and ginger paste to the pan, mix well. The scent of cumin seeds will complement the tamarind and potatoes.

Add chili powder, paprika powder and salt, mix it before adding tamarind paste and the roasted gram flour for 1-2 minutes. Then add the potatoes and water allowing it to cook for about 2-3 minutes on a low flame so the spices absorb into the potato and the potato is now fully cooked. Ensure the potatoes are evenly coated with the masala. Garnish with coriander and serve.

Tips: Use besan so the spices stick to the potato. Do not substitute other flour. If Khatte Aloo is not garnished with coriander, then don't bother to make it.



Photo by Nazleen Rajani

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lb cubed potatoes
- 2 tbsp besan (gram flour)
- 3 tbsp oil
- 1 tbsp red chili powder
- 1 tbsp paprika powder
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 tsp ginger paste
- 1 tbsp lemon grass or lemon juice
- 1 cup water
- ½ bunch chopped fresh coriander
- ½ cup tamarind paste

The Benzene Ring Group

By Pushpa Singal

It was the month of November, 1995. I was attending a meeting with my staff members in the Department of Human Biology when the attendant interrupted.

“Somebody wants to see you, Madame,” he said.

I went to the corridor and saw my friend Harinder standing outside. She also resided in my hometown, Patiala, and we often met with each other.

“See who has come with me!” She said, motioning behind her. I saw my other friend Jaswinder, who was living in Canada at the time. She stood behind a pillar. It was all a surprise-- Jaswinder never told me that she was coming. It had been twenty-two years since she had visited India.

My joy knew no bounds, we hugged each other with tears and laughter.

“How are you? I’ve missed you so much, how are the children? How is Mann Bhaji? Have you come alone?” I asked.

“Yes, I’m here alone. He will look after the children, although they are grown-up.” Jaswinder replied.

I brought Jaswinder and Harinder to my office. We started talking and we drank tea with samosas and hot gulab jamuns. Eventually, the three of us drove to my house.

I started preparing lunch with my friends’ help. We cooked biryani, rice with lots of vegetables. We talked and planned for visiting our other friends who resided in other cities. We reminisced about our undergraduate days, when we were working towards our B.Sc degree.

“Do you remember our friend group?” Harinder asked.

“Yes, we were six in number, what did our class-fellows call us?” Jaswinder replied.

We all made eye-contact, and at the same time, blurted out: “The benzene ring!”

Memories of our six-personed group flooded in. Just like the six carbon atoms at the corners of the ring, we were inseparable. The six of us used to sit together, go to the canteen, watch movies, and take trips as a unit.

“Our other class-fellows always commented ‘oh, here comes the Benzene Ring!’ because we were always together,” I added.

The food was ready within an hour. It was placed on the dining table, and my husband joined us. The aroma of the food was mouth-watering, we were all feeling quite hungry. While eating, we talked a lot about the whereabouts of all our class-fellows, and laughed a lot by remembering little tidbits of that time. We also talked about our teachers, especially Professor R.K. Sharma, who taught us Botany.

“He always made us laugh, especially during laboratory practice when we had to cut very thin slices with sharp blades of plant products to see the tissues under the microscope.” I remember saying.

“Yes, he used to comment, ‘are you cutting vegetables or cross-sections?’” Jaswinder replied.

We all laughed out loud.

The next week we planned to visit the rest of the group: Rajinder, living in Delhi and Parminder, living in Ropar. To them, we also gave the surprise of Jaswinder. We could not meet the sixth member of the group, Kamlesh, because she was living too far from Patiala in Jaipur.

For about fifteen days we were together. We visited other places like Anand Pur Sahib, and Naina Devi. Jassi was continuously clicking her camera to take photographs. We frequently visited the market for the day's meals and went shopping. Jaswinder did a lot of shopping; she bought suits, saris, and Punjabi juttis. She also talked a lot about "life in Canada."

"It is very busy but at the same time, there are so many facilities available and one gets used to the different working conditions and looking after the children."

My children were amazed to see me so happy with my old class-fellows. It was all fun. Though the Benzene Ring could not all meet, I was glad to reconnect with those who could.

And now we are here in Calgary, Canada. When we came here in January 2015, Jaswinder met us at the airport and made all the arrangements for our stay with all the necessities in our new house. We often still meet each other, share meals together, and recall old memories of The Benzene Ring Group.

The Food of Life

By Sima Kharrazi

I'm in love.

I'm in love with life.

I'm in love with God our Creator.

I'm in love with all humans regardless of the colour of their skin, religion and language.

I'm in love with my family: husband, children and grandchildren.

I'm in love with the people who feed my soul.

I'm in love with both Iran and Canada, both precious to me.

The second part of my life started in Canada.

I'm in love with every corner of Calgary.

I'm in love with the places that feed my mind.

I was born,

Grew up,

Educated,

Married,

And have three children.

I'm in love with these things that feed my life.

I was born in Iran, I will die in Canada.

I'm in love, I'm in love.



Photo by Sima Kharrazi





BITTER-SWEET

Blood in the North Pasture

By Kyra Koustrup

I got a job at a local chicken restaurant when I was twenty years old to pay for my schooling. Coming from a small town I didn't have much work experience and felt lucky to get a job in the service industry. When the phone rang, I clutched it hard and smashed my thumb into the little phone symbol to stop the insistent ringing. I took a deep breath, inhaling through my nose and began.

"Hello, how can I help you?"

The beeping of tablets, ovens and tills drowned out the voice on the line. I crouched behind the thick cement counter with my pointer finger stuck in my other ear.

"I'm sorry I couldn't hear that, can you repeat?" A deep voice responded: "Is your meat *Halal*?" What was he talking about? "What?" This time it was louder. "Is your meat *Halal*?"

In the restaurant industry you must think and act fast, but I honestly had no answer for the voice on the phone. I had no idea what it meant for meat to be *Halal*.

"Hello!?"

I turned towards the other waitress next to me and muffled the phone into my shirt. "Is our meat *Halal*?" She flipped her bleach blonde pony-tail and thought for a minute, her small brown eyes blinked.

"No, I don't think it is." I pulled the phone up to my ear again.

"No sir, it's not." He responded quickly, "Okay. Thank you."

The dial-tone started again and carried his voice back to his phone through satellites and wired lines away. I stood the

phone onto its stand and wandered out to the front of the restaurant and left the question with the phone propped neatly behind me.

...

When I was young, maybe 11 or 12; I would lure the ewes over to the trough with grain and when they were lined up and unafraid of me. I would grab the two largest ewes standing side by side and wrap my hands over their shoulders like a harness on two draft horses. I would clutch their wool with my little hands and dig my dirty fingernails into their soft wool. My feet would drag by the toes when they bolted forward over the trough and I would cling on for all my life and limb. My feet would drag on the dirt and hay, dust blew up behind us in a flurry to leave long marks across the grounds of the corrals. My sister and I would race each other in the hot sun, our reddened backs would sting against the hay and dirty wool. We would let the sheep out into the yard and watch closely as they mowed the lawn for us, steering them away from the plots of flowers with crawling vines, towering sunflowers, thick vibrant salvias. Carefully, we ran around the garden of vegetables steering sheep away from tall stalks of corn, dirty potatoes, curling green peas, enormous beets, long cucumbers and forest green zucchinis. We would sit atop our horses and lope after sheep, we would hold water guns in one hand and the reins in another and chase each other until we were soaking and dripping, and the horses were sufficiently cooled under the hot sun, their bare backs stained with dark water and the imprints of our body.

The farm we lived on in Alberta was twelve hundred acres of rolling green alfalfa, golden wheat and bright yellow canola. The pastures with wild flowers and grasses had trampled tracks making trails to trickling water, to food and to shade. In the summer we sold our lambs to private butchers, auctioneers and shepherds looking to bolster their numbers. In the winter, we checked the pregnant ewes every couple hour, shivering in our pajamas and work boots we would walk to the pens and barns checking on each sheep. Sometimes new lambs would be sucking on their mother while she licked slime off their

backs. Their weak shivering legs made their body teeter back and forth. Other times ewes would need help, a gentle hand or pull and I would hold their tiny bodies in each arm, they were small and delicate with wrinkled skin and tiny tufts of spiralled wet wool. I would feel the slime off their thin wool, the pulsing heart, floppy ears and the tentative breathing of a baby whose lungs were filled with fluid just thirty minutes ago. I could feel the gaze of the new mother watching me as I poured stinging iodine on the lamb's belly, her eyes challenging me for rights to her newborn. This is how I remembered all our sheep and lambs until the day they died, I loved them long after.

I'd never left this life until I moved to Calgary in 2017.

From the farm, the city was like looking through a window into the lives of people far away, that didn't understand the constraints of my life or the strain of ranching and farming. I remember my parents' arguments outside my bedroom, their feet creaking on the worn hardwood floors and the trickle of wind rustling through pine trees behind our house, just out my window. The floor creaked and the sound of slippers dragging on cold stained wood accompanied my father's deep voice; you could hear his conviction from the living room.

"Why do we have to sell to them? Why is there even a market for this!? They should be eating like anyone else!"

"They pay double, Egan. I said we could let them pray and butcher in the North pasture."

"You said they could do that? What the fuck is wrong with you?"

"You have to be more open-minded, Egan."

I shifted in my bed and pulled the covers closer and tighter. Their argument sounded like social class; words like "open-

mindful” reminded me of “individualism” and “collectivism” and it all connected to that one term we were just learning about called “globalisation.”

“The snow melted too early, you know the crops aren’t doing that well.” The snow this year had thawed so fast, the soil hadn’t been ready for seeding, the crops were growing like patches across the fields and they weren’t thick like they were most years. We weren’t going to make much this year. “I’m not going down to help them. You can do it.” Dad didn’t even know how to work with the sheep if he had wanted to. I flipped my pillow to the colder side. Dad was so stubborn. They were already separated for the past year, why didn’t they just divorce? “Then I will, Egan. This will be good for all of us.” A week later, a foreign white ford blew down our driveway and drove up dust clouds on its way, sinking as it hit potholes and flying as it hit mounds. It turned into the lane of our house and the dogs surrounded it, dripping oil could be heard from the engine. The dogs’ chorus and giant curious heads were enough to keep the driver and his passenger in their seats. I watched this from the window of the house, through the watermarks and dead bugs on the windows. My mom came bursting from her darkened room with messy hair and tired eyes, it was midday. She quickly got dressed into jeans and a dark T-shirt, from her room she yelled.

“Kyra, put the dogs in the barn!”

I was wary and didn’t say anything. I marched to the entry way that smelled of dirt and leather and forced my right foot into a muddied cowboy boot and then stumbled into the left foot. I opened the screen door with a squeak and a cringe. Cats crawled out of the shade and meowed to be fed, but I ignored them, there were plenty of mice around here that would taste better. I approached the vehicle and watched the men inside; they both had dark beard and brown eyes. I raised my voice and yelled for the dogs to come with me and the three of them

lined up behind me panting heavily, tails wagging; I locked them in a stable in the barn with water. The barn smelled of methane, hay, worn wood and grain. I went back to the house, gravel crunching with my footsteps, a calling cow could be heard in the back. The sheep were pacing with little hooves, and the lambs were jumping on the old ford leer we had placed out for shelter from the sun. It's pink paint peeling and falling with each patter of hooves. The men had gotten out of the truck and were speaking with my mother, a naturally tall woman of 6 ft who seemed so small now.

I saw my dad walk past the window of our living room in the corner of my eye, mosquitoes clustered in the air on my right, I avoided them.

"Kyra! These guys are here to look at the lambs, wanna help me?"

"No thanks, ma, I want to get something to eat." I whined.

The air was still for a second and my mother looked at me with hesitation in her eyes.

"Okay, go inside." I ran past her and the men. I couldn't wait.

"Come with me, the lambs are over here." She gestured with her hand down low toward the corrals and I went inside to my fuming father and naïve little sister. Mother came back an hour later crying. My father didn't say a word, so my little sister did. "What happened mom?" I knew my mother always cried when she brought the lambs or calves to slaughter, she cried just like their mothers. "I just sold some lambs, Miki, don't go outside they're slaughtering them" She locked herself in her room, it smelled like cigarette smoke and clothes worn from work. I stood in confusion; my parents had never let a butcher come to prepare on the farm.

I was puzzled about the men from Calgary, the city far south, the city “full of foreigners” my dad would say, with gross streets and polluted water. I ran outside. Determined to see why, this was so special, why it was “good for us”, I plopped my boots back on and ran to the edge of the lambs’ pen, counting those missing, knowing each by name or mother. Shade’s lamb Mary was safe, Raisin’s twins Poppy and Marco were safe, Big Head’s triplets were too small for anyone to want, until I’d listed them all in my head. Four lambs unaccounted for. Two Leicester-Suffolk crosses, and two Dorsets whose names I can’t recall because their life began to seem unimportant to me when I saw them die.

I ran down the dirt road, they were the best lambs of the bunch, the oldest and largest, with strong legs and thick loin. I pulled up to the horses’ pen and slipped between the green metal, cold sliding across my belly. I whipped dust up behind me and the horses misunderstood my urgency. They trotted with heads swinging and tails high, disturbed by my small sprinting body. They raced past me and kicked at each other, and I jumped the wooden fence, splinters catching on my fingers like bee stingers. I landed on my feet, proud for a moment of my farm prowess until I reached the edge of the tall flowering bushes. I heard the cries of the lambs for their mothers, I heard the panicked noise they make, where they bleated with their tongue fully erected from their mouth. I could feel my heart erupt, the feeling in your chest you get when something you love is lost or distant.

Sonorous whispering erupted from the other side of the bushes, deep voiced and beautiful like a forlorn chant. The bleating drowned out. I peered through the bushes. I watched through a veil of sticks, round green leaves and trumpet shaped yellow flowers. To me they were vague shapes, vague prayers and vague people.

Bismillahi rehman-i-rahim



The lambs quieted. The birds stopped singing. The horses stopped running. The cows stopped calling.

Bismillahi rehman-i-rahim

My heart stopped beating.

The man laid on his legs with the lamb in his lap, his large hands pulling floppy ears over their eyes, the lamb laid on its side with legs gently spread. He stroked the lamb's neck and whispered gently to it. It never struggled, it never moved. Just like it laid in my hands when it was born, it laid on the ground for this man and I watched like a mother challenging his right to it. I hoped he respected the lamb like I had. The other man knelt next to him and reached behind himself for a curved blade, unbloodied. He wiped it anyway. The man brought his hand under the body of the lamb and sliced upwards, flesh ripped elegantly, and water trickled in the pasture. I forgave myself eventually for watching, for witnessing, for acknowledging the things my parents could and would not accept. They packed the carcasses into coolers in the truck. They drove back to Calgary, the southern city, full of people and problems. They would have passed ewes and lambs I had known since birth, horses older than me, cattle that recognized me and fences that stood greyed and proud for decades on their way to the gravel road.

I opened the barn and watched the dogs flood out as blurs of white, sprinting to the scent of fresh blood. They ran to the puddle by the bushes, the strands of meat and my shattered understanding of the small world I had known all my life.

I came home. My sister in the living room, my dad in the garage, my mother in her bedroom. We didn't eat supper that night. My mother called them "fend for yourself nights." We always got excited for these nights because it meant my sister and I could eat cereal for supper like the proper animals we were. I prayed over my food that night despite not believing in God.

When I work, I get flustered by the phone on a busy day, on the other end of the line a voice rings: “Is your meat halal?” and I’m reminded of the slaughter I had seen when I hear that word. “No, sir; only our livers are.” I can’t say in confidence I know anything about what it means for something to be Halal but I have seen the slaughter of my labour surrounded with a certain stillness and clarity, an understanding between animals. “Thank you,” the voice responds, and I can only reply with “You’re welcome.”

I prop the phone on its stand after hanging up. I can remember the prayers, the words and the lambs.

Bismillahi rehman-i-rahim

Hiding behind the bushes, veiled with twigs and leaves and yellow flowers, I could see culture not unlike my own. When I was kneeling in grass with sweaty boots, I could hear it along with my beating heart. The voices of generations, the warring ideologies and the warring of religions like on the TV screen that played non-stop in our living room. The misunderstanding of parents and children watching news anchors scream absurdities about violent people in far off places, the beauty of places people dare not go because they fear what is far across an ocean. There is a difference between my rural farm and the city. The men that came to slaughter our lambs and haul their carcass left me with an understanding of death and life, next to the puddles of blood in the North pasture.

A Recipe for Divorce

By Rowan Cooney

I walked up the long paved driveway to the entrance of the house. The sun shone as the day drew to a close, making everything look taller on the ground. Despite the time of day, I felt warm as my skin absorbed the late afternoon rays. Entering the house, I squeaked the door open as the heels of my boots echoed on the long blanks of bamboo flooring. Our giant of a dog, Boo, greeted me with enthusiasm, his tail creating a hurricane in the entryway.

“Hello?” I called out as my fingers stroked his blonde fur. No response. I chattered away about my day as I opened the bedroom door. It felt wrong. Something felt like it was out of place. I kicked my boots off in the empty closet. Empty closet. I looked around, my gaze sharp and stern. I opened the drawers of the dresser and they were empty. The walls were bare and even the television was gone. Stones settled in my stomach. I thought my heart was going to remove itself from my chest. I could not breathe. Everything was gone, and he was gone with everything.

I screamed. The sound bounced around like a bullet in a titanium room. Boo’s tail drooped and his ears fell. Hot tears streamed down my face as I scanned the room. My knees met the ground with a thud. Get up, Rowan, you can do this, I thought as I pulled myself to my feet. I heard mum stirring upstairs. Go tell her, she’ll know how to help. I fought my way up the stairs. Mum looked at me, her eyes questioning as I struggled to meet them.

“He’s gone,” I said plainly. My heart stuttered.

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“His stuff is gone, he’s gone,” I replied. This wasn’t easy to spit out. Her eyes grew dark. She looked at me, walked over to the

fridge, poured two large glasses of white wine. She handed one to me without saying a word. My brain ran in circles around the kitchen, desperately trying to catch up. I took a large sip. My tongue swam in the cool liquid before I took it down and set my glass on the counter. Numbness began in my toes and crept up, slowly reaching the rest of my body like venom taking over. My knees buckled. I let my body fall like a card house. My mum looked down at me and handed me my wine.

“You don’t have to get up until you are ready,” she said. I looked up. Little did we know, it would be months before I did.

I spent the next several months in the kitchen. Food became a mirror for my emotions. I cooked, over and over - attempting to fill the void. Spices and seasoning got thrown around the kitchen violently, usually ending up in the meal. My family stood by and watched me whirl around. Some days it was quiet. I would make delicate foods. Other days it was heavy. I would make foods that felt mad. I couldn’t help it. Emotions hung around the house like drying pasta, we would all push it out of the way, but never actually pull the pasta down. Everything felt delicate, like an almost cooked soufflé, balancing between inflated and deflated. Some days were good and I could breathe freely. Other days I was locked in a meat grinder with no escape.

There is something peaceful about being in a truly bad place, though. I had to turn to something to get me out, and it turned out to be food. The feeling of being full made the gaping hole in my chest seem smaller, if even for a short time. I was learning what it was like to live again; in doing so I was learning what it was like to taste and savour again. I began to see the world differently. Flavours and colours danced around, hugged me, comforted me, made me feel free.

Lest this all seem too easy: learning to heal by learning to cook, learning to taste again slowly in my own kitchen... I have to back up for a moment. It wasn’t easy at all. I knew that my marriage wasn’t going to last. Looking back, I can see that

this had been about a year coming. They say opposites attract, but my husband and I tested the edges of this adage. In fact, we rarely found common ground on anything. From how the house should be kept to what kind of food to eat, we found more difference than communion. When you add diagnosed mental health issues and medication into the mix, you end up with a mess. It's not easy. It's not nice.

So he left. And I tried to put my life back together. I started with bread. Cheese and onion bread to be precise.



INGREDIENTS

2¼ tsp active dry yeast
1⅓ cup warm water
1 tsp sugar
¼ cup milk
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp salt
5 cups flour
2 onions, finely sliced
3 cups cheddar cheese,
grated
2 tsp fresh thyme or
rosemary (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat a glug of olive oil in a medium frying pan and add sliced onions. (Cry, “because of the onions”). Cook on medium heat for 10-15 minutes until softened (watch the clock... don’t burn the onions) and then reduce the heat to low or med-low, depending on how hot your stove element is, and cook for an additional 45 minutes, until sweet and golden. Yep. 45 minutes. (45 minutes to think). We're not taking short-cuts with this one, we're actually 'caramelizing' these onions. (Mindless time, time to relive every moment).

2. In a large bowl, add yeast, sugar and warm water. Leave 3-4 minutes until foamy. (Watch the bowl. Do not lose focus). Add milk, olive oil, salt, caramelized onions and 4 cups of flour and mix together until a dough forms. If the dough is a little sticky, continue to dust with the remaining cup of flour. Knead until the dough is smooth and elastic.



(Feel the squish. Appreciate the way it feels between your fingers. Let the anger out as the dough moves). I love using my stand mixer for this with the dough hook attached, but kneading by hand is just as effective, and a great arm workout.

3. Place dough in a lightly oiled bowl and let rise until doubled in size. Depending on the warmth of the room, this could take anywhere from 1 to 2 hours. If you have time for a slow rise, place the dough in the fridge overnight. (Put it in the fridge, there's no sleep anyways, it doesn't matter how long the bread takes to rise).

4. Punch down the risen dough, cut into two equal portions and roll each portion out into a large rectangle. Sprinkle with cheddar cheese and thyme/rosemary, if using. Roll the rectangle up from the short edge creating a tight 'jelly roll'. Repeat with the second portion of dough.

5. Using a very sharp knife, cut each jelly roll of dough in half lengthwise. Pinch the ends of each halved roll together and braid them, one over the other, finishing the other end by pinching that dough together. Lightly grease two loaf pans, or line them with parchment paper. Gently place one dough braid in each loaf pan. Cover with a tea towel and let the dough rise a second time for approximately an hour.

6. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake for 50 minutes, rotating the pans halfway through the baking time so they cook evenly. If the bread is browning too fast, move it to a lower rack in the oven and cover the top with a piece of aluminium foil. Let the loaves cool in the pan for 5 minutes before removing them from the pan.

A RECIPE FOR DIVORCE

INGREDIENTS

1 cup bad communication
1 cup opposite ideals
½ cup mental health problems
½ cup lack of support
2 cups fighting
1 tablespoon self-loathing
1 tablespoon confusion
A pinch of fear, anger and resentment

Bread-making was therapeutic. But it left me with too much time to think. Too much waiting. Too many moments where my brain could walk away and go into the dark corner. That's when I turned to more immediate foods. Things that took less time, like pasta, risotto, pancakes and fried rice.

I made my own world with food and it was what I needed at the time. As I sit here, writing this, five months after he left, however, I am still not healed. I am not back to being myself but I have written, over time, a different kind of recipe.

DIRECTIONS

1. Throw all the ingredients into a bowl haphazardly.
2. Mix furiously until well combined and unable to identify individual components.
3. Let the mixture sit far longer than seems reasonable.
4. Be surprised when everything is gone and you are gone with everything.

Bitter-Sweet Berries

By James Welsh

Despite what most people think, England isn't always overcast and rainy. Summer can be quite warm and cloud free, especially in Derbyshire, the heart of the country. On one of these summer days in 2003, when I was nine, my Grandmother wanted some fresh berries for making jam, something she did every year. Lots of berries grew in the deep woods behind her house in Shipley, but today we didn't have time for foraging, much to my dismay. My Grandmother, or Gran as I was fond of calling her, loaded me into the car and we were off on another one of our adventures—this time to a large berry farm. Gran always had an adventurous streak, something we shared. She had immigrated from England to Canada with my grandfather, mother, and uncle, then back to England years later. When she wasn't on a hike or an escapade, she was in her garden. It was a sight to behold with flowers of all kinds dotting the flowerbeds, snap pea vines latticing the wall-fountain, fat tomatoes in the greenhouses, and lazy bees everywhere. My Gran was a nurturer in every way.

We drove the narrow winding roads through the English countryside, through rolling emerald hills and thick verdant woods. We eventually pulled into the farm somewhere deep in the Amber Valley district. Gran parked the car in a field, and we walked through the gates. I could see the rows of the berry plants before me: strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, and blueberries—too many to count. I asked her what kind of berries she wanted.

Blackberries, but make sure they're ripe! she replied in her Derbyshire accent with a smile.

I have always been determined, even as a child. I took a basket from the booth that the farmers set up and strode into the vines. I was determined to pick as many berries as I could and make Gran proud.



I reached the first of the vines dotted with blackberries which were my favourite. On our walks in the Shipley Woods behind her house, Gran would pick them from wild bushes and we would eat them as we went. The woods were ancient with tall, twisted trees that were hundreds of years old. Bluebells, Snowdrops, or Crocuses covered the ground in thick carpets and, of course, there were the blackberry bushes the size of a car. I always found the woods magical; now I realize a lot of that magic came from Gran as she would tell me tales of English folklore on our adventures.

I picked a blackberry and dropped it into my basket. I licked my lips in anticipation, looking around to see if anyone was watching me. Satisfied that nobody would see, I picked another berry and ate it. My face puckered at the sourness of the berry: it wasn't ripe like the ones Gran picked. I moved to the next vine, sampling another. I wanted to pick good ones. The sweet juices of these blackberries told me that they were ripe. I got to work

promptly—two for the basket, one for me. I was careful to avoid the sharp brambles, but in my haste, I pricked one or two fingers; it wasn't enough to deter me from my mission.

It wasn't long before my basket was nearly full, as was with my stomach. I was starting to get tired and bored. The hot sun was nearing the horizon and becoming orange, casting long shadows of the vines.

J.T.! Have you been eating all the berries? Gran scolded from behind me, wagging a finger. She used her own personal nickname for me, J.T. —James Thomas—so I knew I wasn't really in trouble. Still, I decided to divert attention, showing Gran my pricked finger.

She kissed it better, knowing well my ploy, and we went towards the exit of the farm, me with my basket, and Gran carrying about half a dozen.

I didn't know how berry farms worked but I soon found out. At the gate, the farmers took their toll which was half of what we picked. I didn't understand then, but we were effectively labourers being paid out in berries. I thought they were just taking my hard-earned fruit away. This was my first run-in with taxes. I cried and grandma handed over more of her berries so that I could keep all of mine. I had tried to be careful with the quality of mine, but thinking back, Gran would have been way more careful. Yet she still gave up hers for mine.

I had no idea how jam was made when I was nine, but as soon as we got back to Gran's house, the process began. After the fruit was mashed I watched as Gran poured heaps of sugar into the mix. My eyes widened in amazement as Gran stirred the sugar in.

Don't you need more sugar? I asked wishfully.

Any more sugar and your teeth will fall out! Gran laughed, *I've seen you sneaking spoonful's!* Nothing got past her.

The sugary mash was jarred and left to cool for thirty minutes or so. It felt like hours, but it was finally time to sample the finished product—a jam sandwich. Gran buttered her homemade bread and slathered it with the sweet jam. My eyes went as big as the plate it was served on. I had two sandwiches before falling asleep.

This was the first time I helped Gran make jam. I didn't know it then, but it would be the last. I remember watching from a distance as she told my mother, her daughter, that she had cancer. I had no idea what words were passed between the two, I just remember the looks on their faces. Despite my age, I knew what it was before I was told. Gran's optimism faded as the cancer spread and yet she kept her playfulness with me. At the beginning, we would garden together still, and go berry picking in the Shipley woods. It wasn't long before the sunlight through the trees turned into bright hospital hallways and the smell of grass and soil turned to disinfectant and chemicals. With this shift, the feeling of happiness and freedom turned to loss. Gran wasn't going to take me berry picking any more. No more video games with her, no more adventures, no more James Bond marathons—nothing. Six months later, she died.

A year later, I sat at my mother's dining room table with blackberry jam on toast for breakfast. Nothing was extraordinary about this; however, something felt special. This was the last batch of jam Gran made, and we had made it together. I ate it, savouring the flavour, wanting to remember it, wanting to relive the moment that she and I picked the berries. At that moment, I wanted to feel her squeezing hugs, and hear her soothing voice. I couldn't—but the jam helped. And then it was gone.

...

I moved to Calgary with my family when I was twelve in 2006. The sweet foods couldn't be more different. I miss my Gran in these moments, longing for her jams and baking. My mother baked when she could, but it was difficult as she had two jobs. Then, in my early 20s, she had the time to start making jam with Gran's recipe.

The fruit is not the same over here, Mum said. It was true, fruit from the grocery stores in Canada always lacked a certain English-ness. So, I took her to a farmer's market, hoping that would be as close to English fruit as we could get.

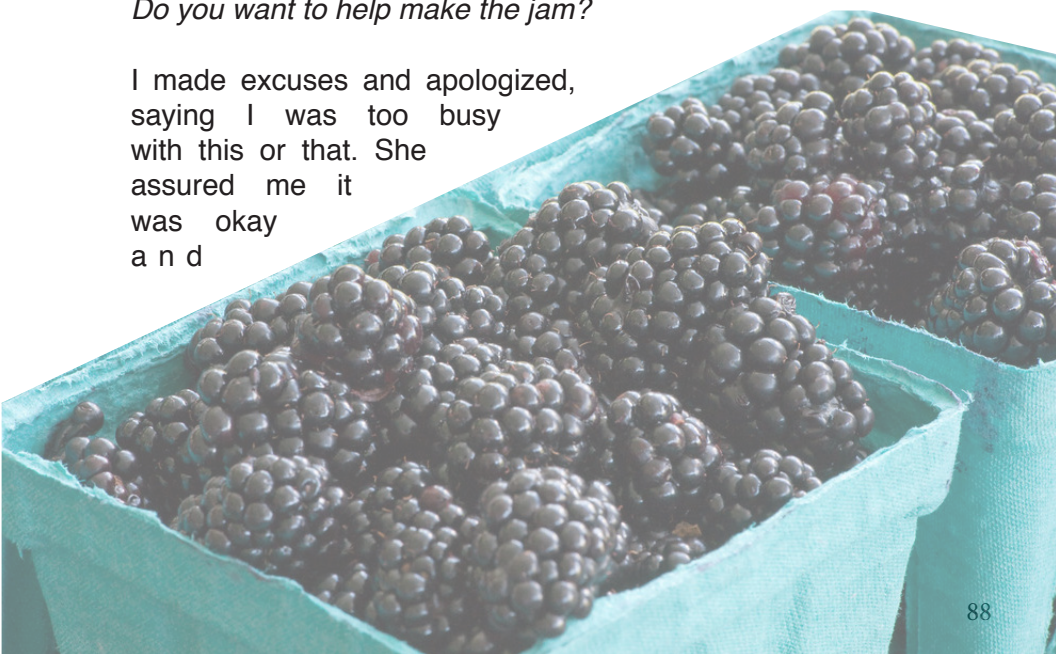
Mum's newly found free time was both a blessing and a curse; she'd had a serious head injury five years prior. I loaded her walker in the car, and we drove to the farmer's market. It was exciting with loud noises, lots of goods, and delicious smells. You can't walk ten paces without getting a sample. The variety stunned me. There was foods and goods from all over: India, South America, the Middle East, Asia.

Mum got out her list for fruits and we began perusing the stalls. It didn't take me long to notice that Mum was similar to Gran. She picked up the fruit and inspected it in the same way. Ones that didn't make the grade were put back, much like Gran putting the reject berries in the basket for the farmers, I remembered fondly. It was quickly evident that she too, like Gran, had the highest of standards.

When the checklist was complete, I took Mum home.

After I brought the fruit in to the kitchen, she asked,
Do you want to help make the jam?

I made excuses and apologized,
saying I was too busy
with this or that. She
assured me it
was okay
a n d



told me to run along now. I wish I had stayed and helped; I wish I spent more time with her.

Because of Mum's injury, we didn't notice the signs leading up to a cancer diagnosis three or so years later; they caught it just in time for it to be operated on, yet it wouldn't be simple. The month before the operation it was prime berry season. She and I went to the farmer's market on a warm day, with a partly cloudy sky that had a very English feel about it. We walked around the stalls, joking and smiling, forgetting our worries. By the time we had finished, her walker's basket and seat were loaded to the brim.

We got to work right away, washing and cutting the fruit. Mum sterilized the mason jars while I mashed the berries to a pulp. The mash was boiled and Mum poured a heap of sugar into the stewed fruit.

Wow, that's a lot, I told her, *surely it can't be healthy.*

That's only half, she laughed as she poured in the rest.

As Mum added the thickening pectin and emptied the molten jam from the pot into the little glass mason jars, I had a thought: could this be the last of her jam? A year from now, will I be eating toast, wishing she was still with me?

The Bitter Taste of First Beer

By Gabe Zia

(For the purpose of anonymity, the names of the people and locations in this story have been altered.)

I was about six years old when I saw it for the first time. I was just a little kid with no concept of alcohol or parties or any of the things that came with those, but nevertheless something about it struck a particular chord in my still developing brain.

“Beer,” or as I called it, *the Golden Drink that my parents were allowed to partake in*.

My family was living in Philadelphia at the time, so we were at a Fourth of July family barbecue. I and the other families’ kids were going nuts in the backyard, roughhousing and throwing Nerf guns at each other while the parents were on the deck, eating and talking amongst themselves. And that’s when I heard it. The *crack*. The sound of compressed air squeezing out of a battle and the carbonated drink sizzling. I turned around to look at the parents’ deck, and saw my dad guzzling down a mysterious drink inside of a brown bottle. It was like the drinks I had seen in movies, only this time it was real! I knew in that moment that I had to try some.

Absconding from my friends’ Nerf battle, I walked over to my dad.

“Hey dad, can I have some of that?” I asked him, pointing at his drink? He looked at his friend, and they both softly chuckled about my question.

Where most stories of a first beer may end here, with a father offering their kid a meager sip of beer only to watch them spit it out in disgust and laugh, it didn’t for me. My parents, and especially my father, were very strict about what children should be allowed to do, and not just beer. No violent movies,

no movies with any kind of sex or swearing, no video games, no comic books, so certainly not beer, not even a sip.

Of course, most of those rules had little impact on my childhood. Any number of my friends had access to violent or graphic movies, and with the advent of online flash games the “no video game rules” effectively bit the dust. However, beer was the exception to this rule. No youth liquor pass, and no chance in hell of getting a fake ID while I was too short to even reach the doorknob of a store by myself, and even ignoring that I still would have no idea what a fake ID was, or even a regular ID. However, much like a child grabbing the edge of a stove with the determination of curiosity after their parents insist they don’t touch it, I didn’t understand why I couldn’t drink beer. And so it would be that because of this small action, beer would become my forbidden fruit, a vague concept hiding in the bushes, taunting me with my inability to comprehend it. But about ten years later, all that would change.

It was a cold autumn day in Calgary; I was in my second year of high school, and class had just ended. As the bells rang signalling the schoolwide burst of freedom, I picked up my bag and headed into the hallway, towards my locker. I saw that my locker neighbor, Dan, was already putting away his textbook.

I and Dan had what some may call an “arms length friendship.” We only hung out a couple times throughout high school, but we never went to the same places or hung out with the same crowds. Dan was a black-wearing, ears-pierced, eye-linered goth kid who listened to thrash metal and spent his weekends at a skate park or at parties, and I was a closed-knit dork who spent his weekends playing video games or watching anime, only ever hanging out with a small group of close friends who did the same. Dan and I weren’t exactly star-crossed lovers, but we were pretty close to whatever the platonic equivalent of that would be.

“Fun plans tonight?” Dan drilled out in his raspy voice. I shrugged.

“Not much. Got the new Grand Theft Auto,” I told him. He nodded.

“Cool, cool. You going to Samantha’s party on Saturday?” He asked me.

“Samantha? Samantha B.?” I asked. He shook his head.

“Samantha H,” he corrected. This was a very important distinction to me, as Samantha B was, much like Dan, a thrash metal kid only a lot meaner and Samantha H was a member of the girls’ Basketball team, with a popular Instagram page and all. Pretty much everyone I knew was scared of Samantha B just from her menacing gaze, but Samantha H got along with just about everyone, even someone like Dan, who’d normally hate someone with so much positive energy.

“Oh, I didn’t know you hung out with Sam,” I pointed out.

“I don’t, but we’re partners on a chem project and she invited me,” he told me.

“Oh, okay. Yeah, I’ll think about it.”

“Cool,” Dan said.

After class ended, I immediately headed to me and my friends’ personal favorite spot, a Vietnamese restaurant near the school that served this amazing noodle soup that I would later learn is called Pho (pronounced “Fuh”). As I walked into the restaurant, I was glad to see I was the last one there, and the other three - Tom, Erica, and Ollie - had already arrived shortly before me.


It wasn’t long before the topic of Samantha Holland’s party came up. As only recent sophomores, it was the first real party the four of us had ever been invited to. Of course, none of us had ever drank before, each for our different reasons. As we debated whether or not we could bring beer to the party, the

first question was whether or not we even should. After all, Samantha H was on the basketball team, and both Erica and Tom pointed out their strict no alcohol policy. It struck me as redundant to ban students from drinking by law, but I didn't question it.

Of course, even if we wanted to bring beer, it was much easier said than done. After all, we were all two years underage. Without fakes - which was unreasonable as none of us stood a chance at convincingly faking adulthood just yet - we didn't have any obvious way to score any liquor. The only method any of us could think of was to boot.

Booting, short for bootlegging, was something just about everyone our age had done or would eventually do at some point. It was almost considered a rite of passage, a natural part of the high school experience that would raise us up closer to being adults. It's the simple act of calling upon a friend who's above the legal drinking age, giving them some money and having them buy alcohol for you. However, the four of us had a slight hiccup with this plan, that being we couldn't think of any adults we all knew who would be willing to break the law for a couple of teenagers.

Then, Erica suggested we ask her older brother, Rick. The three of us shuddered at the thought. Rick was what some kids



BEER!

my age would refer to as “a bad kid.” He dropped out of high school after Junior Year, and spent most of his time working at a motorbike repair shop. But in his spare time, he sold weed to some of the other students at our school. Every one of us except for Erica was borderline terrified of him. If we saw him smoking cigarettes outside of a Seven Eleven, we would duck our tails and run for the hills terrified he’d mug us. The kind of kid you heard rumors about in middle school, although they were closer to ghost stories than rumors. Fights, suspensions, vandalism, getting caught with a knife in his locker, stories far exceeding the reasonable for someone his age. In retrospect, this should have been my first clue to his true nature. As far as I was concerned, he was the most dangerous, most frightening person I’d heard of. But we swallowed our fear and decided to ask him to boot for us anyhow. It was the only way we could think to get hold of any kind of beer for the party.

To our surprise, Rick was nothing like what we’d heard. No biker tattoos, no scars; he was only a couple years older than me, and skinny with surprisingly long hair. It hadn’t occurred to me up until this point that perhaps the stories about Rick were inventions made by the school staff and elitist parents to demonize a kid who dropped out, but the moment I saw Rick that truth became immediately clear to me. The stuff about him working in a bike shop and selling weed were partially true, only I found out that he actually worked in a bicycle repair store and “sold” weed to close friends from Junior year who still went to school. Now seeing this misunderstood man for what he really was, I and my friends didn’t have any trouble asking for him to boot for us, and he had no problem saying yes.

My heart was racing at this point. Ten years of waiting it had felt like, and I was finally going to try it! I was beyond excited, I was revelling in the catharsis. I never tried to steal it, I never got a fake, I never broke into the liquor cabinet at home. I was finally going to get a taste of the mysterious and exotic drink, the golden elixir. The beautiful liquid that seems to elicit happiness or sleepiness depending on what movie it’s in. As

the four of us sat in Rick's surprisingly nice apartment watching the latest JoJo's Bizarre Adventure episode, I couldn't help but be distracted by the thought of how close I was to tasting that forbidden fruit.

After an hour, Rick got back, with several six packs and a case of beer. The five of us each grabbed a can, and cracked it open. As I caught my first whiff of it, a sense of vindication came over me: I was finally about to do something I had waited for what felt like all my life, and as I looked to my friends, I saw the three of them had the same glimmer in their eyes as well. We took a deep breath, and each took a sip.

And immediately spat it out. It was disgusting! It was foul! I had never in my life tasted what I imagined urine tasted like, but in that moment I was certain that this was the very taste! The sense of catharsis washed over me and left only the existential dread of reality, the cold hard truth that nothing, not even the taste of a drink that had been forbidden to me, could fill the void in my soul. I was so confused! How could anyone ever drink this, I thought. It tastes like motor oil! I was dumbfounded to explain or even comprehend the sensation of flavours that poisoned my tongue.

But then something happened. I looked around the room, and saw that all of my friends had felt the same. They had all spat out their drink, and were laughing at how awful it tasted. Rick was laughing too, calling us "babies" for our intolerance to the flavour. And it hit me. This drink, this amazing, beautiful drink had nothing to do with the flavour. All four of us, friends from different cliques, with different lives, had all come together, and here the four of us were enjoying this disgusting beverage. It brought the four of us together in a way no delicious drink ever could, no amount of video games ever could. I didn't say any of this of course; I was too busy laughing at how bad it was. But after I stopped laughing, I looked at the can, and remembered my dad drinking it. And I remember feeling right. The feeling you get when you're not allowed to touch the stove, that something sacred is being kept from you, in that moment I felt right in thinking that. I had been kept from, or rather saved,

for something special. If any of the four of us had had beer before then, the moment would've never happened. Awful or not, this disgusting drink had done something beautiful. So, I smiled quietly, and took another sip.

And spat it out again. Still gross.





THE TASTE OF MEMORIES

The Taste of Memories

By Shannon Barry

Here is a collection of poems about growing up away from my family back in South Africa. Old flavours bring up feelings of deep loss, both of people and places that I can never get back, but I am happy I once knew.

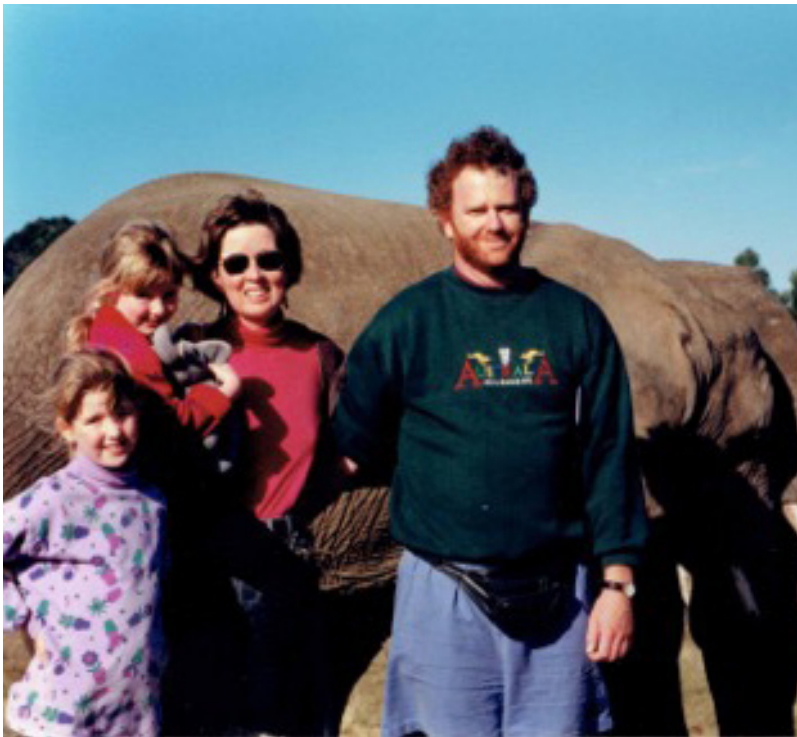


Photo by Shannon Barry

Oranges for Elephants

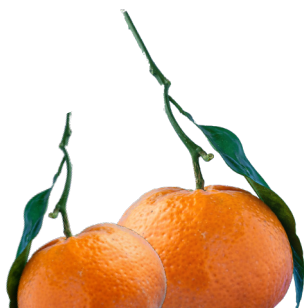
Elephant noses
Are slimier than they look.
Rogue trunks
Bopping slippery nostrils on faces.

Dad holds me up
I'm star struck
Afraid and excited
To give them small round gifts
Forever a reminder of my heroes.

Hold your palm out flat,
A sweet offering to colossus.

Careful not to get any slime
On my Ellie from granny,
My very first gift.
He is soft and squishy.
Big ellies are hard and bristly,
Like hugging a hairbrush.

They speak like moving mountains.
Rumble and quake.
They smell like Earth cows
Less sweet, like baked mud.
Feeding oranges to elephants
In Knysna Forest.
I am the mouse
Beloved are the elephants.



Oregano

Bringing a sprig of oregano
To my father
While he braai's fish
In the big brick stove.
A Flake in a vanilla cone
Walking on Fishoek beach.
The taste of salt on my tongue
Ears stinging in the wind.

Quiet lunch of chicken pie
At granny's house
All laid out on the table
Which I now use for painting.
Across the bay at Grandma's,
Potluck dishes in a spread.
Dad and Uncle Peter
And people I don't remember
Shouting at each other
Over the same opinion.
South African politics.
Lamb stew for my eighth birthday,
Mom brought tables onto the bricks outside.
Christmas in the summer,
Her bacon-wrapped turkey
On the one day a year
We see our only cousin,
Dimitre, who ate all the whipped cream.
Jeanne and I cried,
Sisters up in arms,
But I was still happy he was there.



Feta and Rosé

First night in Athens.
Hot, sticky air
Plane sticky skin,
And so much garlic it burns my tongue.
I'm fourteen, I can't drink wine.
"Ah, fourteen, I'll bring you a rosé."
Mom smiles and nods.

Jet-lag, no sleep.
Mom, Jeanne and I
Get a visit from Thanatos,
The God of death.
It was, really, too much garlic.
I wish we had met his brother, Hypnos,
To put us to sleep.
The hotel room becomes the Underworld.

First taste of Greek yogurt
Light, so smooth, creamy
Instant breath of life
Fresh fruit and berries.

Meet dad on our way to Santorini
Rushing through the market
To catch our ferry.
Luckily we didn't,
It got stuck on a rock
Three people didn't make it.
Sank past Poseidon
And into the arms of Hades.



Small restaurant on the island
Should have noticed it was empty.
TV's on every wall.
Not chicken parmesan
Boiled with the bone in
Lumpy, slimy skin
No flavour, overcooked pasta
Cold tomato sauce from a can.

Just us girls
And another glass of rosé

Too sweet, but I didn't know then.
Santorini sunset over the ocean
Orange, pink, a smeared rainbow.

Back together again
Heat stroke in the Acropolis
A plain salad on a sidewalk café
Huge chunk of feta
Big pieces of fresh tomato
Neatly chopped cucumber
Olive oil drizzle, salt and pepper
The best thing I have ever tasted.

Every Grain

By Keoputhy Bunny

It was 8:30 A.M. and I gnawed on my coffee cup, considering getting another one. The school library café was quieter than usual, save for the baristas talking quietly to their customers. The smell of roast coffee lingered and flooded my nose with a safe, intoxicating aroma. I eyed the pay counter. I should get another coffee. My eye shifted down to the papers on the table in front of me and they were also about coffee. The Senior that I worked with in the life writing project had written a piece about trying coffee for the first time and how he had not wanted to finish the strange bitter drink. The papers stared back at me, mocking me for not editing them the night before. The paper did not talk. It is paper and it does not talk. I get it, Sir, I didn't like coffee at first either. All my other friends seem to have either peppermint tea or americano as their blood type too. My mind wanders further than it should. Bits and pieces assemble and reassemble as I let them drift: a blissful cup of coffee you drank a lifetime ago. When you think of that coffee, you don't think about how much cream or sugar you added. You don't make note of what the headlines were on the news of that day. No, you think about the smoothness of the blend. You think about the glowing feelings of safety contentment it evoked. You remember how glad you were to be tucked in your blanket, reading a good book with all the cares of the world hidden underneath your bed until you're ready to take on the world again. That is how you experience a cup of coffee. That is how you experience a memory. Without the cream and sugar. This is how I remember that memory.

I was walking around Marlborough mall with my father when I was around eleven years old. We pass the food court and I squeeze my father's hand tighter. He is not going to buy me any food.

"We have food at home", he will say when I ask. I ask anyway.

Pa, pa, can we get A&W today? It's only 8 dollars!" He said no, he always said no. I tore my hand away and walked ahead. I am livid, a mix of fire and frustration in my belly threatened to come out as a choked cry. My eyes were watering. I never get anything I want. I wanted to run away. To run away and never come back. Why didn't they know good food? Didn't they watch TV? I would drool for some succulent triple A beef with fresh tomatoes, lettuce and a crunchy sesame bun. Pickles, relish, ketchup, mustard. I can see my teeth hungrily tearing through the patty, lips stained with ketchup, with mustard. Down it all with some root beer. Perfect.

A vibration in my pocket shook me from the recesses of my memory. I pulled out my phone, a reminder for the class I had in 15 minutes. I gave a final look to the coffee shop and packed up my stuff to go.

Nine hours later, I was home after an hour and a half transit ride. The blanket of snow enveloped the city so quick, it felt like a flash ice age. Getting home felt like rowing through an ice river. There is something to be said about the beauty of snow though. Of cold amplifying the warmth of homes and the deliciousness of food. This was the first time I was home in days. My mom was cooking quietly in the kitchen, humming a Cambodian tune I couldn't place my finger on. I wanted to help but my mom simply waved me off and told me there was nothing for me to do.

Go grab the plates, she said in Khmer, *the food is done.* My house had always been like that, a chimera of culture. Both Khmer and English echoed through the house and when my aunt had visited for a few months, French too. Before I could grab the plates and bowls, my sister had already arranged everything. What did I have left to do?

"Do you want any drinks? I can make you some." I asked.


My mom nodded to her full water glass and my sister politely declined.

I sit down quietly in my spot, sinking into a stew of guilt. The food in front of me presented itself as a small symphony of colour, a quiet magic in a loud world. Aside from the staple of normal white rice, we also had a large bowl of golden fried rice mixed with pieces of pork-ear and eggs, a beef stir fry mixed with lovely green, yellow and red bell peppers and fried eggs with bacon mixed in. There was also a small, dark-green soup in a small bowl near my plate. Koko, she had called the soup.

“Chicken, papaya, pumpkin, spinach, and all kinds of vegetables,” my sister had said when I asked what was in it.

I was disappointed I hadn’t helped; I was constantly pushed out of the kitchen as a kid and even though I was 20, today was not an exception. My disappointment, however, was overshadowed by my growling stomach and excitement. I spent so many late nights working and going to school, I often stayed with my girlfriend who lived closer to downtown to get around easier. I could tell the food was not necessarily something my mom liked. She ate it dispassionately, discussing groceries, the car, family and other things with my sister. I was on the other side of the spectrum. This food may be lackluster for my mom but for me, it was everything I wanted.

“You know your *cham*? You should cook that with something else.” My mom said between bites.



“The spam?” I raised my eyebrow. What is *cham*?

“Ah, yeah, yeah. Spam. You should cook that with eggs or something next time. No good alone.”

The conversation moved to other subjects. How work was, how I was doing in school, what I liked about my program. Things were okay, I had said, I was handling them. I finish my meal off with a hot chocolate and quietly browsed my phone. She started up her tablet to watch her Khmer-dubbed Thai dramas again and I knew dinner was officially over. I didn’t know why she liked the Thai dramas so much; they were just translated Thai TV series but I figure she didn’t understand my love for video games either. We did not speak for a while.

She asked, *Are you staying at your friend’s tomorrow night?*

“Yes. And the night after. I have work in the morning, it’ll be easier that way.” I replied. “But could I pack some food? I’ll bring the containers back. I just miss the food at home a lot.”

My mom looked me in the eyes and smiled. She paused her Thai drama. She asked me if I wanted her to cook something new for me tomorrow. I declined. She worked every day and then came home to make dinner, the least I could do is appreciate the leftovers. She

nodded and headed to the living room. I headed off to my own room.

A day and a half later, I sat in a fast food restaurant and watched my friends' backs as they walked back to the bus station. We had just finished our project and whereas they took their food to go, I had mine to eat in. A mistake. I should have remembered to pack food. I had 3 layers on but somehow still felt a bit cold and I wished they had stayed. I was not averse to eating alone but it wouldn't have hurt to have someone beside you, if not for anything but their presence. The smell of processed meat and fries passed my nose occasionally. I didn't like it, it made me slightly queasy if I thought about it too much. I stared at the half-eaten burger in front of me. It was... Okay. It was no homecooked meal, but it'd keep me going for a few more hours. It's not Cambodian food, that's for sure. It just seemed so... Lackluster. I finish the burger almost reluctantly. A memory called out to me but no pictures came, only voices. Voices and the clinking of spoons and forks on plates.

Finish all the rice on the plate, my dad had said in Khmer.

Even all the grains of rice? I asked.

Everything, he said.

Not finishing everything on a plate is wasteful and we shouldn't be wasteful. And here I was, all those years later, still trying to finish everything on my plate whether I really loved it or not. I looked at the other people sitting at the fast food place. They looked nothing like the ads I used to see when I was a kid. This was everything I would have wanted when I was kid. To be by myself, enjoying the food of my dreams. It was ironic. That kid would kill to be here. That kid was stupid.

Poems

By Ashley-Rae Carter-Wells

Macro

Penhold.
Becomes a town in 1980, thrusts itself triumphant
from yarrow/thistle/canola quilted prairie but remains
microscopic. In my memory,
muted/film-grain/dust, time slows and quickens. Moments
fracture/coalesce/fissure/coagulate...
Both sunny and storming, we drive from Calgary Northward.
Highway 11 is frost-seized overturned semis,
Queen/Billy Joel/Metallica on the radio.
The only country we hear blurs in rearview mirror,
my mother's hair engulfs the car; A Hyundai/Chrysler/Chevy
with wax crayon melted over the backseat.

Micro

Flossie's.

Opens in 1985, her apple trees/awning/alcoholics greet us.

Waver in chinook wind, waft

garlic/geranium/draught: this my second/first/only constant
home along a fraying thread of broken ones.

Drunken elatedness sounds like anger. My infected ears, wadded
with cotton, can't differentiate. I escape into piano/wrap myself
around barstools/ask strangers for their pickles/cry
for my father.

The mints are stale/hoarded/abandoned.

I pity them, line my pockets.

Easter-pastel coating melts in the dryer.

In my mouth? Become swallowed teeth.

Bill

The man at my grandfather's bar
nurses his beer with a four-fingered
hand. He twinkles the knob
of the fifth at me over
the rim of his pessimistic pint;
half-empty glass.

2FacedFlossies **a broken sestina**

My grandmother, for whom the restaurant is named, calls
me “lovie”;
her deep Scotian accent lengthens, shortens, holds
words inside of it like peppermints come with the bill. But
in her absence, red and white cloth flows from my other
grandmother’s sweet
arms, tidal across windows. Tables are set without knives
— a precaution. We don’t talk about, only tiptoe around,
eggshells.

The walls of the dining room float sailboats in gilt frames,
eggshell
paint and gaudy sconces celestial above a strange,
gingham sea. Teenaged lovers
entwine fingers beneath greasy pizza pedestals. They keep
knives
inside their elbows, this Verona on verge of war, and steal
sweet
kisses when patriarchs turn their heads. My mother comes
to hold
me in her belly, soon her arms. Facing the storm, she
waitresses on. But

beyond the safety of that dining room wall, nautical turns
nocturnal. Bud
Lite signs flicker neon, pseudo lighthouses fluorescent
through cigarette haze. Shells
wash up to the bar, “one more pint, Gary”. I nap on green
velvet tabletops, sweet
dreams to repetitive jukebox lullabies. My uncles, in the
forbidden kitchen, love
to send me bowls of shredded mozzarella, cheeseburger
pickles, and croutons. My fists hold
mother’s hand and skirt as father’s family abandons ship,
become knaves.

Patrons empty kegs, not pockets. Their ships fly, RCAF.
Knife
fights don’t disturb families sharing potato skins but,
from my crow’s nest perch on pool tables, violence holds

my breath. Uncles crash from kitchen with cleavers, crack
teeth like eggshells.

An upright piano drowns their cursing as the Drunk sings
“Love
Hurts”. Empty bottles and hearts, flotsam and jetsam: long
for sweet.

I have my birthday parties in the bar on Sunday mornings.
Sweets

imprisoned in inflated balloons. My friends bounce to free
theirs, I prefer knives.

We play mermaids and roll pool balls, eat hot dogs. My
father loves

to anchor his promises. As in, they weigh him down. He’s
not there to light my candles, but

the best part of the cake is frosting flowers because I find
eggshell

in the batter. The garden my grandfather tends immaculate
out-front holds

April apple blossoms, their fragrance competes with the
deep fryer. Time holds

like a sieve. Only particles. A shipwreck. This piece sweet,
that? Sharp. I am nine when Flossie’s closes her doors,
crushing accumulated eggshells.

Its namesake prefers Halifax harbour to Florence. Mother
habitually knives

pieces off of herself. Feeds them to insatiable VLTs. Uncles
hide cleavers in their smiles, but

peppermints still come with the bill. We pretend to be
gingham drenched; we forge lovely.

I learn to stretch across impaling eggshells,
sculpt myself into a bridge. Silence over honesty, I pass
over knives.

I tarnish my own memories, hold
lighters to edges, they burn sweet.

My mouth fills metallic, but
the cracked foundation of this place names itself love.



By Ashley-Rae Carter-Wells

Christmas Dinner

By Julia Kintop

I. Moose Crock Pot

When I was nine-years-old, Kaya, my cousin and life-long best friend, and I received matching Dream Life consoles for Christmas. We hugged my grandmother extra tight. Dream Life was a plug-and-play lifestyle game that lets you live through the eyes of a teenage girl in highschool. She gave them to us right away because she wanted us to have plenty of time to try out the game.

Kaya and I fled to the basement before dinner, weaving through tall aunties and bored uncles, and sneaking cookies on our way. Downstairs was full of generations of knick-knacks. My grandmother had inherited her father's belongings once he passed, and displayed his clocks and books like trophies. While playing the game, I remember being so excited to be older. Our character, I think we decided on Courtney for a name, drove her own car to school, worked part-time at the mall, knew how to cook her own food, and had a great sense of fashion. We wanted to be just like her.

When called up for dinner, we paused our game, and immersed ourselves back into the adult landscape. The kitchen, though magical in some ways, was not our preferred space. We were careful with what we welcomed to our plates; white bread buns, mashed potatoes, a small scoop of vegetables that we certainly wouldn't finish, and a little gravy. Sprite to drink because clear beverages are so underrated. When I dished myself some turkey, I saw a yellow crockpot with a mysterious dark brown meat. My grandpa stood behind me, and lifted up the lid.

"Try some roasted moose leg. I've still got tons in the freezer from my hunting trip in November," he said. A skunk-like scent escaped from the pot, squeezing its way into the kitchen. The

gamey meat was drowning in an almost black gravy.

“Maybe I’ll take some for seconds, but my plate’s full right now,” I said. Kaya was standing next to me, and when my grandpa left, we both made dramatic gagging sounds. We pulled up our shirts to use as masks, and sped back to the basement.

“Seriously, I thought I was going to throw up, it looked like my little sister’s diapers!” Kaya said. “It definitely isn’t something Courtney would eat, yuck.” I added. Now, I wish that I had tried the slow-cooked moose, I’m sure it had that “umami” taste that the podcast described, and it would’ve been cool to eat something that my grandpa had hunted. The aroma wasn’t as bad as Kaya and I made it out to be.

After dinner, the family congregated in the upstairs living room, and we unwrapped presents while eating dessert. I didn’t bother with the pumpkin pie - the orange globs around my brother’s mouth were enough to prevent me from trying it, and I was put off by the thought of eating something you’re supposed to carve and put on your doorstep. Instead, we filled our bowls with whipped cream and stirred it until it was liquid. I didn’t try pumpkin pie until I was fifteen, and realized that the combination of cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and ginger balanced out any sliminess that I had expected.

The adults sat on the couch and at the dining room chairs that they had brought to the side of the living room, and the kids took the floor. My grandparents had their own chairs, my grandmother’s was soft and had knitted blankets draped over it, and my grandpa’s was a stiff leather recliner.

“Do you like the game?” my grandmother asked.

“I love it! I’m going to play it all winter break, it’s seriously the best present ever” I replied, slurping cream with my spoon. “That’s good, I wanted to get you girls some of those, uh, tama-hoochi toys, but they were sold out at Wal-mart.”



“I’m saving up for a tamagachi, it’s okay!” I replied.

“Do you have lots of friends at school?”

“Uhm, yup! There’s Michelle and Kennedy and Diana and Sierra — but we’re kind of fighting right now because she stole my Bratz dolls and won’t give them back. But she also takes a limo to school, even though I’ve never seen it.” I welcomed my grandma’s questions, but mostly answered them with enthusiasm because she had given me Dream Life, and because she didn’t comment on my bowl full of cream.

II. Panettone

When I was nineteen, I drove to Edmonton a few days after Christmas to visit my mom’s side of the family. My aunt had already hosted Christmas dinner in Calgary, but her house was louder with her husband’s country-fried family also in attendance and Kaya couldn’t come. I decided I’d make the trek alone, stay with my cousin, and preserve the tradition of a Christmas dinner at my grandparent’s. The door was locked when we got to my grandparents’ house, so we waited outside until my grandpa heard our knock and opened it.

“Welcome, welcome,” he said, “I’d hug you but my hands are covered in flour!” My grandmother was seated in her chair in the living room, knitting.

“My lovely granddaughters, I’m so happy you came,” she paused. “Can one of you help me up so that I can hug you?” Kaya offered her arm, and my grandma stood up and hugged us both at the same time. She still wore the same perfume, but it wasn’t as fragrant. Without the rest of the family, the living room looked much smaller.

“Where’s the Christmas tree?” I asked.

“We didn’t see a point in setting it up, with Christmas dinner being in Calgary.” She replied. “Now, I think what we need

is wine, and maybe a little treat... Cesare!" She called to my grandpa, who had already vanished into the kitchen.

"I can get it, grandma," I said.

"Are you sure? There's a bottle of merlot at the bottom of the pantry, and a box of Baci chocolates on the bistro table, Cesare can help you if you need."

"Perfect!" On my way to the kitchen, I passed the entrance to the basement. Part of me wanted to go down the stairs, play Dream Life, and tune out the buzz of the adult floor. But there wouldn't be much to tune out, and it was a silly thought.

In the kitchen, my grandpa was spreading tomato sauce on two oval pizza doughs. He smiled at me, but didn't say anything. After finding the wine, I faced him.

"So... What are you going to put on them?"

"This one is chicken and artichokes, and the other one will be venison sausage and jalapenos," he said. "Do you want to try the sausage?" I was hesitant, but my stomach begged to be filled.

"Sure... Oh, wow that's amazing. What is venison, is it pork or something?"

"Well, it has pork shoulder in it for that fatty flavour, but venison is deer." I smiled, and asked for another piece. This must be umami. After dressing the pizzas and putting them in the oven, my grandpa showed me pictures from his last hunt on his silver digital camera. I was delighted by his willingness to share his memories — and game — with me.

"So, what's the new gossip with you ladies?" my grandmother asked.

"I'm still serving at Vonn's, the tips are pretty good. Other than that, just getting the hang of living on my own," Kaya said.

"I'm so proud of you, Kaya. You know when I was your age, I was the manager of the room sales at Hotel Saskatchewan. That's where Cesare and I met, he was the executive chef," she said, cutting up a slice of pizza, "and are you still taking psychology in school, Julia?"

"No, actually, I switched to English. I'm minoring in psychology though." I replied. I brought my knees to my chest and sat awkwardly.

"Oh right, your mom mentioned that on the phone! So, who's your favourite? Shakespeare? Chaucer?"

"Well, I switched into English mainly because I took an intro class on postcolonial literature, so I guess that's where my passion is."

"I see, I see. I read *The Canterbury Tales* when I was in highschool, it's so funny."

I felt my jaw stiffen with frustration.

"I'm not just in it to learn about dead guys who won the genetic lottery and romanticized rape. I mean, yeah, they laid the foundation for what was considered literature, but the boundaries they established were so rigid and rooted in eurocentrism. I want to hear about the other side, and for that side to not be other, you know?"

"I'm sorry if I've upset you, Julia. I hear what you're saying though. At my church, I teach English classes to people who are new to the country, and the stories they tell... well some of them just warm my heart, and others break it. But they're important stories. And your passion, or your interests, or whatever you want to call them, I just think they're incredible. I see your intelligence and it truly inspires me."

"Thank you, grandma."

For dessert, we poured orange liqueur over slices of panettone, and my grandfather opened up about his time working at the hotel.

“Because our restaurant was well known for its ice sculptures, I used to commission them for other chefs too, and this one guy... oh he was a piece of work. So he calls up the hotel at six in the morning, and he says, ‘Cesare, I need you to make a bear that can hold a tray, it’s gotta be about four feet tall, because it’s gonna hold Russian caviar for a cocktail party.’ And I say, ‘Okay, what day do you need it by?’ Because you know, I’ve got to plan it out and make sure I have enough ice, and the guy goes, ‘well, about six hours.’ Six hours? So I doubled my fee, made one-hundred dollars, and made him a damn good sculpture!”

The table erupted in laughter, I think it was the most I’d ever heard my grandpa speak. I knew that he was into ice sculpting, but not that it was part of his job. I realized that my grandma’s “irritating” questions weren’t just for her benefit, but also for my own. She wanted me to see myself the way that she saw me, and she really was interested in my life. I realized that she wasn’t made of gifts, or of judgement; the blood we shared meant unconditional love to her, and the more I shared about myself, the more this love could thrive.

Thank you for reading

FOOD
for the
BODY, SOUL
AND MIND

A Collection of Poems and Stories by
Immigrant Seniors and Mount Royal Students

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