Nourish

food & whole person wellness

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Summary:

In this Nourish course we will cover how healthy eating can support brain health. We’ll discuss the role of food in family legacy, reflect on memories of food traditions special to us, and discuss actions we can take to continue to develop a legacy of food.

“Food brings people together on many different levels. It’s nourishment for the soul and body: it’s truly love.” – Giada De Laurentiis, Italian American Chef

# NOTES:

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# Reflective Writing – Food as a Family Legacy

Reflect on foods that have special meaning to you or have become a legacy to your family/circle of loved ones. Write your thoughts and memories in any style you wish (short paragraphs, a list, a short story, etc.). The questions below are optional and serve as thought or writing prompts.

**Prompts for creative writing:**

* A wonderful memory of food I have as a young child …
* The funniest story about food in my family/friend group is …
* A dinner table staple growing up was …
* Whenever I eat \_\_\_\_, I think of …
* A food my family/friends always prepare that I just don’t care for is …
* My circle of friends/family know me for (food) …
* At (holiday) I always look forward to eating/drinking …

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Stories from Eat, Darling, Eat
https://www.eatdarlingeat.net

## Proof of Pleasure – By Jane Bernstein (2017)

Print: <https://www.eatdarlingeat.net/post/Proof-of-Pleasure>

Recording: <https://www.eatdarlingeat.net/2021>

I think my mother loved to cook, but she never said so, and if I’d asked when she was alive, she would have brushed me off. Though spirited and outspoken, she never would have admitted feeling joy or loving anything. I suppose this was rooted in Old World superstitions–the family was from Moldova–because her five siblings were much the same: praise squelched; grievances aired with abandon. And yet, never did my mother complain about her decades in the kitchen, preparing meals for her immediate family or hosting holiday dinners for myriad relatives.

We always ate a salad before our entrée, and the fruit bin in the refrigerator was full of whatever was in season. Except for frozen peas, our vegetables were fresh, and the sweetest memories from my mother’s kitchen begin with produce from local farm stands, like beet borscht with warm potatoes, cucumbers, and sour cream. Dessert was a key part of our meals–often sherbet or ice cream, sometimes with a special Friday night plum cake or apple brown Betty. But she loathed junk food. We didn’t drink soda, nosh between meals, or commit the ultimate sin of filling up on what she called ***chazerei*.**

I assumed everyone ate as we did until I saw that my classmates were grossed out by the sandwiches I brought for lunch, neatly wrapped in waxed paper: cheese and green pepper on rye, or cream cheese, olive, and tomato on pumpernickel. (A perfect sandwich when tomatoes are in season and the pumpernickel is dense and freshly baked). No Wonder Bread, no baloney. No Ring Dings or chocolate milk. And I had no cravings for "their" food, no desire to rebel, which I did in every other facet of my life.

My mother was dismayed when I announced that I no longer ate meat and never stopped asking why. Whenever I was coming for dinner she’d say, “I don’t know what to feed you.” But she did know, and she continued making delicious dinners for me, and later for my family, until she was nearly 90, serving us vegetarian chili, pasta, enchiladas, Middle Eastern food, and a Romanian vegetable stew called *gvetch*. Even so, she never stopped fretting or querying me about why I’d given up meat, until one day, I said with exasperation, “But Mom, you were the one who taught me about good food!”

This wasn’t exactly true. My mother taught me how to sew, iron a shirt, and make a bed with hospital corners. She introduced me to books and drilled me on my responsibilities as a citizen–but nothing about cooking. True, she couldn’t stand anyone in the kitchen during meal prep and was so fussy that she’d rearrange any item someone else put in the dishwasher. But lately I’ve begun to think that cooking was not something she could easily share.

Why else would she be so dismissive when I first asked for recipes? (“There’s no recipe.”) It took effort to coax instructions from her, along the lines of, “Sauté some onions and mushrooms, and put in a pinch of salt.” Later, around the time she insisted that I take her serving pieces and silver, she began sharing actual recipes, written in her neat hand on lined 3 x 5-inch cards–for baba ganoush, for puttanesca sauce, for tuna walnut pâté.

When the holidays come around, I take those handwritten cards out of the recipe box, haul out her serving pieces and cut-glass bowls, unwrap the silver, and think of her enthusiasm, which she denied, and her talents as a cook and host, which are so much greater than mine. I tie her apron around my waist and wait for the guests to arrive and remind myself that words are only one way pleasure is expressed, that the proof was on her table every night.

## Never Too Late – By Margie Goldsmith (2021)

Print: <https://www.eatdarlingeat.net/post/never-too-late>

Recording: <https://www.eatdarlingeat.net/2017>

My mother was a photographer who studied with Walker Evans, an American photojournalist best known for his work documenting the Great Depression. Although she wasn’t a professional, I learned after her death that three of her photographs are at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. (Unfortunately, I’ve never seen them because they are somewhere in storage.) She was also as strong as an ox despite having survived cancer three times. Perhaps her practice of daily meditation helped. I am a writer, triathlete, marathoner, and take pretty good photographs, but I don’t have the patience to meditate. The thing we shared the most was that neither of us cooked. She relied on TV dinners. I eat out or take out.

But recently I decided that it’s never too late to learn, so when I heard about a company that offered truffle cooking classes via Zoom, I signed up, choosing the easiest class I could think of truffle lobster roll. My mother died before people had personal computers, but I doubt she would have ever signed up for a Zoom cooking class because there was not one strand of technical DNA in her entire body. When I once bought her a cassette recorder so she could listen to meditation tapes, she never could figure out which button to push.

But she would have loved how easy and relaxing this class was. The FedEx box arrived two days before the class started. The ingredients included a huge portion of cut-up lobster packed in ice, shaved truffles, pre-measured butter, chives, shallots, oil, brioche buns, even egg yolks and two bags of truffled kettle corn. I tore open the popcorn, and it was so good, I instantly scarfed down an entire bag. I had to staple the second bag closed, a more appealing form of lockdown, so I wouldn’t be tempted to eat it prior to the class. I could almost hear my mother’s voice, “Now, Margie, you’ll ruin it if you eat everything beforehand,” or her favorite warning, which was always, “You’ll be sorry.” But I never was.

I downloaded the mise en place list: cutting board, nonstick pan, knife, spoon, two medium mixing bowls, whisk, paper towels, and a microplane. A what? I had to Google "microplane" to learn it’s a grater that looks like a traditional woodworker's rasp, and the end result tends to be a lot fluffier than with a zester. Being the perfectionist I am (thanks, Mom, that’s your fault), I emailed the company in a state of panic, but was reassured that a grater would be fine. I know we never had a grater when I was growing up, or even a whisk, and surely not a nonstick pan—we had a cast-iron skillet in which my father scrambled eggs every Sunday.

An hour before the class, I moved my laptop to the kitchen (this computer has traveled around the world but has never been in a kitchen). I thought the shock of the new location might cause it to crash, but it behaved, and I signed in. To my shock, I saw myself in a little box wearing my Hello Kitty T-shirt (my go-to pandemic outfit). My classmates were four couples and one mother with a teen-aged daughter—I was the only one solo. For a brief moment, I missed my mother (something I rarely do), even though there were only a few times that we were in the kitchen together, making my sister’s birthday cake. I would pour the cake mix slowly in the bowl as she stirred it with a big spoon.

After the chef directed us to chop a shallot into one bowl and chives into another, we began making the aioli, a flavored mayonnaise, which involved whisking the egg yolks with the oil, a drop or two at a time. I whisked and whisked and whisked. My arm was killing me. I wanted to dump in all the oil at once and be done with it. I am sure my mother would have been able to drizzle in the oil while I whisked. She had the patience I’ve never had or will have, ever.

We browned the brioche buns in butter to a golden-brown deliciousness, which the chef called GBD. Finally, we spooned the lobster into the rolls, added shaved truffles, and garnished with chives and kettle corn.

I took a big bite. It was better than any lobster roll I’d ever tasted in my life, and I’ve eaten them everywhere from Maine to New Brunswick. I looked at the second lobster roll. Did my mother like lobster? I don’t remember. But as I scarfed down the second roll, I thought about her again. The class was so easy that even she would have been able to call herself a chef.

Since this class, I realize that cooking doesn’t have to be a chore, and it’s fun to be really proud of something you’ve made yourself. So, with the extra time in this pandemic, I’m going to take another class, and then I’ll be able to call myself Chef, even if no one else will. Instead of dreaming of winning a marathon, I will dream of effortlessly wielding a micro plane.

Other story options below, or choose from over 100 short stories at [www.eatdarlingeat.net](http://www.eatdarlingeat.net)

<https://www.eatdarlingeat.net/post/Importance-of-Pie>

<https://www.eatdarlingeat.net/post/life-of-a-muffin>

<https://www.eatdarlingeat.net/post/The-Forager>

<https://www.eatdarlingeat.net/post/The-Gardener>

# **Additional resources for this session:**

Eat Darling Eat
<https://www.eatdarlingeat.net> Enjoy this storytelling website filled with brief readings and recordings families share about culture and food. Consider submitting your own story.

Mochi as a Food Legacy

View this brief documentary about Mochi as a food legacy (4min 45 sec): *Mochitsuki* (Link:<https://vimeo.com/368149499>; Password: Mochi)
Topic: How one community celebrates the Japanese New Year, bringing together tradition, family, and love… all through mochi.

Recipe Organizer Apps

* Recipe Keeper
* Paprika
* ChefTap

# KAIZEN STEP

**1) Goal I want to accomplish**: (*Ex: I want to leave a family food legacy.)*

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**2) One step I could take toward that goal:** (*Ex: I can share a recipe with my grandchildren.)*

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**3) Ways I can break this step (#2)** **into smaller actions:** *List as many actions you can think of:*

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