

Recipes of Life



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Introduction from Dr Angela Byrne,
Clinical Psychologist

"I am honoured to have been part of this wonderful project and to contribute to this book. Having been inspired by the work of Natale Rudland Wood, author of 'Recipes of Life', I have been privileged to share this approach with colleagues and witness its powerful therapeutic effects.

The recipes and stories in this book reflect the multicultural community of Hackney but they also express shared struggles and qualities of strength and caring. I learnt so much from participating, including how to cut a chilli without pain; the history of the Cornish pastie; the importance of friendship and about the hard-won courage, ingenuity and resilience that can come from having to grow up early, as celebrated in Gordon's 'stowaway curry'. I love the wisdom and humour of the recipe for 'health and happiness' and I hope that you will share this as you share these wonderful dishes."



at Shoreditch Trust

'Recipes of Life' is a therapeutic concept developed by the Australian therapist and catering chef Natalie Rudland Wood. It is based on narrative therapy.

'Recipes of Life' integrates talking therapy with healthy cooking and eating sessions, providing an easy and culturally relevant way of talking about health, wellbeing, resilience and recovery. Telling the stories associated with their favourite recipes helps put people in touch with their strengths and resources and those of their families.

For our Recipes of Life project, we met at Shoreditch Trust Healthy Living Centre every Wednesday for eight weeks and cooked our favourite recipes. Each person brought recipes that meant something special to them, and shared their memories with the group. Every week we had a fabulous lunch and a good chat.

As we ate and talked, certain themes began to emerge: growing up fast, cooking with love, bringing up children, trusting friends, feeding the stranger. We brought these themes together in a Recipe for Health and Happiness, which you can read in this book.

We represented many nations and cultures: Turkey, Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad, Malawi, Nigeria, Portugal, Ireland and Great Britain. We shared our stories, happy and sad, with each other. We celebrated our survival, resilience and hope for the future.

As you read this book, we hope you will be inspired to cook the recipes, and learn from our stories.

Montfort, Lois, Anita, Derick, Cassandra, Dele, Merle, Sadiye, Hulya, Valerie, Florence, Katie, Jane, Gordon & Paul

A Recipe for Health and Happiness

Ingredients

- Looking after yourself – a large quantity
- Being holistic
- Wellbeing of the mind - a whole lot
- Pampering yourself, relaxation
- Moderation
- Sex
- Love: for life, between parents and children, and self-love, which helps free us from perfectionism, never feeling good enough and self-criticism
- Trying and striving
- People to trust: picking and choosing who to trust - it's important not to listen to people who are negative and take kindness for weakness (this might be difficult to source, but put some in if you can find it)
- Caring and doing: empathy and listening is important, but sometimes it's also important to do things, such as pick up the phone and check how someone is doing
- Inspiration
- Laughter
- Believing you can do it – in gallons
- Talking – with friends; counselling
- Growing up when you need to, learning things young
- Trusting your instincts
- Appreciating the goodness of friends and not dwelling on imperfections
- Good food, sometimes with a sprinkling of wine or whisky
- A sprinkle of generosity; sharing food with others in your community
- Doing for others what you'd like done for yourself.

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Montfort's story

I grew up near Lake Malawi where there is a lot of Tilapia. We would buy it from fishermen and roast it on charcoal by the lake, with garlic inside. The fishermen showed me how to eat it and leave the skeleton intact at the end.



My Mum was a single parent, and she taught me how to cook. In those days it was survival of the fittest; with no father around, we had to be strong. My sister and I would go to the market on our own and buy food. We were four children and my Mum went out to work.

We had a plot of land and we built houses on it to rent out for the income. We built the houses ourselves, bringing stones down from the mountain and sand from the river. I used to knock out stones from the mountain with a 16lb hammer.

My father left us when I was eight and my sister was 11. I became an adult very fast. As the man of the family, I protected my Mum from neighbours who tried to take advantage. Some days we struggled to eat. We worked hard, but we played games together too.

My Mum forgave my father before she died. I've forgiven him too, and I'm still in touch with him. As a Christian I wanted to forgive him and not to carry that heavy burden anymore.

Life has taught me to be strong. I can cope with struggles now as a result. Sometimes you forget where you're coming from, but when you remember, it makes you strong. I have overcome a spirit of rejection. Eating this fish reminds me of family times all together. It makes me feel at home.

Tilapia with spinach, peppers and maize meal

Ingredients list (serves 6)

2 large Tilapia fish	2 cloves of garlic
4 cloves of garlic	4 tomatoes
Large handful of Parsley	1 large onion
Small handful of thyme	100g of spinach
2 Lemons	Large handful of parsley
Black pepper	Maize meal
½ Scotch bonnet chilli	Onions
Butter	Black pepper
1 red pepper, 1 green pepper	

Method

Preheat oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4

Clean the fish with lemon, removing scales. Cut shallow diagonal slices into the flesh. Finely chop the garlic, parsley, thyme and chilli and blend them together with the butter to make a paste. Rub the paste into the fish, filling the slices and the insides of the fish. Bake in the oven for 25-30mins, check to see if the flesh is cooked.

Vegetables:

Chop finely the onion, garlic, parsley, green and red peppers, tomatoes and spinach. Gently fry the onion and garlic for 5 minutes, then add the peppers and tomatoes cook for a further 5 minutes, add the spinach and cook for another 5 minutes.

Maize meal:

Boil water and mix with the maize meal, stir in and let it boil for 10-15minutes, stirring occasionally so it doesn't catch.

Lois's Story



This dish brings back memories of family Sunday lunch. I was one of four children, and during the week, my Mum would usually give us fruit or yoghurt for pudding. On Sundays though, it was “pudding as such” (our nick name for proper pudding). My Mum would make the crumble from blackberries we had collected from the local hedgerows in

Kent, and Kentish apples too of course! This would have to be eaten with ice cream in order for us to be happy.

Now when I eat this crumble I think of happy, noisy family dinners and full bellies, ready for getting all the Sunday afternoon homework done before a family tea in front of the TV. On this day only, we were allowed a TV dinner. All the food would be laid out on the coffee table: bread and butter, cheese, paté, scones, cake.

In those days there was proper family TV on Sundays: “The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe” or “The Box of Delights”. It was very important to us that my parents sat down and watched too, so all of us were together.



Apple and Blackberry Crumble

Ingredients (serves 8-10)

For the crumble topping:

80g wholemeal flour

75g dark brown sugar

85g butter (chopped into small cubes)

150g oats

1 handful chopped nuts such as walnuts or almonds (optional)

2 teaspoons cinnamon (optional)

Grated orange zest or lemon

For the filling:

600g apples (peeled and chopped)

600g black berries

1 teaspoon cinnamon or nutmeg (depending on taste)

1 tbs brown sugar

Method

Preheat the oven to 190°C/Gas Mark 5 and grease a baking tin. Wash all the fruit and prepare your baking tray.

Mix the flour, oats, cinnamon, sugar and orange zest in a large bowl.

Chop the butter into little cubes and rub into the flour mixture. Keep rubbing until the mixture looks like bread crumbs.

Soften the chopped fruit and sugar in a medium heat pan for 5 mins. Then spread across the bottom of the oven dish and sprinkle the crumble mixture on top.

Bake in the oven for 30 minutes until the crumble is browned and the fruit mixture bubbling.



Anita's Story

I grew up on an estate in Islington and all of us kids used to play out every evening after tea. We played skipping, hopscotch, run-outs. There was an estate caretaker called Mr Siddle, who used to come round at 7.30pm and tell all the children to go home to bed.

Sometimes we used to hide behind the sheds and he would come and find us. He was slightly scary – he never used to smile much! You respected him. I don't remember doing homework after school, we just played out, unless it was hair wash night and then we would go in early.

Hair wash night was not nice. We used to line up. If me or my brother laughed, we were bonked on the head with the water pan.

If we were naughty, we would get the cane. Mum used to send one of us to buy a cane from the shop, so you had to wait until your brother came home with it, knowing you were going to get a wallop. After the cane was used, Mum used to break it and throw it away. So a new one was bought each time one of us was naughty.

We used to have lamb stew with dumplings quite a lot. It was neck and scrag of lamb. I didn't really like the meat, but I had to eat it anyway. I hated the dumplings too, but loved the gravy, it was out of this world.



On Sundays we had to have a roast, and then we'd have the dripping on toast later. Sunday was all about family, we always ate together. Mum and Dad would get out the record player and have a dance. I loved watching, although I was too shy to dance.

My favourite meal was chips. Sometimes we'd get them and they would be wrapped in paper and we'd take them outside to eat them. I didn't like bread and butter pudding then, but all the things I used to not like, I love now.

From the age of eight I was sent to the shops to buy groceries. My Mum would send us to buy her favourite cream cake. My brother used to keep some of the change, until he got found out.

Eating my recipes reminds me of my family. We were all together a lot. I still talk about those memories with my brother now.

Lamb Stew with Dumplings

Ingredients list (serves 6)

For the stew:

2 sticks of celery
2 medium onions
2 carrots
3 sprigs of fresh rosemary
olive oil
500g diced stewing lamb
2 large potatoes
2 parsnips
1 heaped tablespoon plain flour
500ml lamb stock or vegetable stock
1 x 400g tin of chopped tomatoes
Freshly ground black pepper

For the dumplings:

250 g self raising flour
125 g shredded beef suet
Salt and pepper to season
Water to bind

Method

For the stew

Trim the ends off the celery and roughly chop the sticks. Peel and roughly chop the onions. Peel the carrots, slice lengthways and roughly chop. Roughly chop the rosemary leaves, discard the stalks.



Put a casserole pan on a medium heat, put all the vegetables and rosemary into the pan with 2 lugs of olive oil and fry for 10 minutes.

Add your meat and flour, stir until well combined.

Pour in the stock and tinned tomatoes, give it a good stir, then season with sea salt and a few grinds of pepper.

Bring to the boil, put the lid on and either simmer slowly on your hob or cook in an oven for 2½ hours. Remove the lid for the final half hour of simmering or cooking and add a splash of water if it looks a bit dry.

When done, your meat should be tender and delicious, remember to taste it before serving to see if it needs a bit more salt and pepper.

For the dumplings

Mix the flour and suet, add water to bind without making the mix too wet but enough to make into balls. Divide into 8 - 12 dumplings and roll into balls with floured hands. Add to the stew for the last twenty minutes leaving the lid off the pan so they can rise without being restricted.

Derick's Story

I've always eaten salt fish fritters. My first memory is waking up to the smell of them cooking. We would eat them for breakfast on Saturdays and school holidays; my Dad made them for me, my sister and my brother. He was a big guy and loved his food. He also used to do a fry-up at weekends, with dumplings.

Both my parents always worked, and I was proud of them. My Dad was very strict, and I hated him for that, but looking back I can see he was being protective. Caribbean parents back then didn't communicate; they used the stick, not words.

But my Mum was religious, and this was fortunate for me to be brought up in a religious way. She gave me those roots, and when I was older I found them again. I had some rough teenage years and never thought I'd reach the age of 22, but I did, and since then I have realised that knowledge is power. Through knowledge and education I have come to realise why my Dad behaved as he did. I see the rough and the smooth now; the whole picture.

The Kingdom Hall taught me to communicate. I had to speak out loud there, which was hard at first, but they encouraged me. I've come back to what my Mum taught me; the Bible says, "teach a child in a certain way, and when he is old he will not turn from it."

My sister has children, and she is an amazing Mum. She uses words, not hitting. There was one time I had behaved badly as a child, and my Mum spoke to me about it. That made more of an impression on me than any beating.

Making these fritters reminds me of times of unity in the house. When I look back, I see there was love there.

Salt fish fritters

Ingredients (serves 6)

1 pack of Salt Fish
1 Onion
5 Spring onions
1 Red pepper
1 Green pepper
1 scotch bonnet

Thyme
Black pepper ½ cup Plain flour
½ cup Self raising flour
1 Egg
Oil for frying

Method

Soak fish in a large bowl or the sauce pan you intend to cook it in, covered with cold water over night.

In the morning, pour away the water and rinse the fish with cold water. Cover the fish with water and cook on a moderate heat for around 15 minutes.

Remove from the heat, drain, cover with cold water. When cool, scrape off skin, pick out bones and break fish into desired pieces, not too small as you will get further breakage when frying.

Chop the onion, spring onion, peppers, chilli, and thyme very finely. Mix together with the fish and seasoning.

Add both flours and mix thoroughly. Add in a beaten egg and slowly add water until it looks like a thick batter.

Shallow fry in oil for 5-10 minutes until golden brown.



Cassandra's Story

When I was aged 10 or 11, Saturday was baking day. With my cousin and aunt, we used to make patties, pineapple tarts and chin chin (melted sugar on pastry). We'd take them out with us on Sundays on day trips to Clacton-on-Sea or Brighton. Clacton was my favourite because there was a funfair. We'd find a green space for a picnic and we bought chicken and chips to go with the patties.

I was born here, but I went to Trinidad when I was five and came back to London when I was 10. My stepmother and my step-aunt were Guyanese, so we made patties the Guyanese way – they're not traditional Jamaican patties. When I was in Trinidad we used to make salt fish fritters as well. My uncle made me a little table of my own to cook on and I used to cook with my grandmother. I was chief washer and cook.

I so enjoyed all of us being together back then: my brother, grandmother and uncle, sharing stories of our day. We would cook and eat together. When I think about it, being in Trinidad was the best time of my life. Just being a child and playing under the standpipe in my knickers and vest is such a happy memory.

I've taught my sons to cook these things too. I taught them everything, so that they could be independent. My sons learnt them in a nicer way than I did, though. For me it was forced. For them I decided to do it differently.



Beef patties

Ingredients list (makes 6-8)

Short crust pastry

500g plain flour
200g butter/lard
Cold water
Pinch of salt
1 egg and splash of milk
for brushing

Filling

500g beef mince
1 onion (diced small)
2 cloves garlic (diced small)
1 scotch bonnet (diced small)
1 cup garden peas
Olive oil

Method

Pastry:

Cube the butter and rub into the flour and salt.

Slowly add spoon by spoon the cold water until it comes together to form a dough (be careful not to add too much water).

Do not overwork the pastry just bring it together. Wrap in cling film and leave to rest for 30 minutes in the fridge.

For the filling:

Sauté the onions and garlic in a small amount of olive oil on a low heat for 5 minutes.

Add in the mince, scotch bonnet and peas. Cook on a low heat until quite dry. Let it cool.

Roll out the pastry, using cups to cut out discs from the pastry. Put in a muffin tray, fill with the mince mixture and then pop a pastry lid on.

Brush with beaten egg and milk.

Cook in the oven gas mark 5/6 for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown.

Cassandra's song

“This is an old ska song that my Mum used to sing to me. She died when I was just five, but I remember this song well and it reminds me of happy times.”

If I had the wings of a dove,
If I had the wings of a dove,
Well, I would fly, fly away, fly away
And be at rest.

If I had the wings of a dove,
If I had the wings of a dove,
Well, I would fly, fly away, fly away
And be at rest.

Oh, since I have no wings, since I have no wings, since I have no wings,
I'm gonna sing, sing, sing,
Since I have no wings, since I have no wings, since I have no wings,
I'm gonna sing, sing, sing,

If I had the wings of a dove,
If I had the wings of a dove,
I would fly, fly away, fly away
And be at rest.

Since I have no wings, since I have no wings, since I have no wings,
I'm gonna sing, sing, sing,
Since I have no wings, since I have no wings, since I have no wings,
I'm gonna sing, sing, sing, sing.

If I had the wings of a dove - imagine me,
If I had the wings of a dove,
Well, I would fly, fly away, fly away
And I would be at rest.



Dele's Story

I'm from Nigeria, and my Mum used to make this meal regularly when I was a child. At home, it's not that expensive to make; she would make a big pot, which would feed the seven of us plus Mum and Dad. I have six sisters, who are three sets of twins, and they all look identical to each other. In Nigeria there is a hierarchy; you call your older siblings "brother" and "sister", not by their names.

I was pampered by my Mum, and she taught me to cook. It was unusual for a man to be in the kitchen, but I was my Mum's companion. She taught me how to make this meal; and there's no African food I can't make!

My father was a lawyer, and he kept us separate from other children. My older sisters went to the USA but are now back in Lagos. I came to London on honeymoon with my wife and she refused to come home. I went back to Nigeria to continue with my job, and five years later returned to London. My wife deceived me. She went to another man and took the children with her. I was so depressed, I wanted to kill myself. But with help, I have got well. When I started my recovery, I was coming in to Shoreditch Trust every day, for cooking, exercise, therapy. The people here are wonderful. I can never forget them until I die.

I miss Lagos, especially my father's house. But I'm staying in London, because the healthcare is better, and there is more tolerance in society of health issues. My friends in Nigeria still call me though.

I love making Egusi soup, but it's expensive to make here. In Nigeria you would use stock fish, beef and parsley; we used to pick the parsley from our farm. I don't always put in parsley now because you have to buy it from the shop – I don't have a farm to pick it from!

Egusi Soup

Ingredients (serves 6)

200g ground egusi seeds

1 packet of stockfish

1 onions

2 cloves of garlic

Handful of thyme leaves

Large bunch of spinach

Cow leg or beef meat



Method

Soak the stock fish in water over night, then in fresh water boil for 1 ½ hours.

Chop up the onion and garlic, sauté in a small amount of oil for 5 minutes.

In a bowl blend together the spinach, egusi flour, thyme and black pepper. Add to the mix to the onions and garlic.

Add in the drained fish and cubed meat or cow leg.

Leave to simmer for 30mins and serve.



Merle's Story

I choose this dish not only because it's the National Dish of Jamaica where I was born, but because of the fun memories I had as a child, when my Grandmother would send my brother and me to pick the fruit from the tree. Then we would sit down with her outside in the lovely sunshine and help her prepare them to cook for our dinner.

This is my version, bearing in mind that all the produce we use back home were freshly picked from the garden or tree. Therefore, the flavours/taste would be much fresher, healthier and nicer than the pre-pack or tin version one gets from the supermarket. Anyway when one does not have what one needs at hand, one just has to make the best use of what one's got. LOL.

You can have this dish with variety of food, but the following is what we as Jamaican would normally have it with:

- Roast Breadfruit
- Rice & Peas
- Steam Rice
- Hard Dough West Indian Bread
- Boiled Yam, Green Banana, Breadfruit, Dumplings, Sweet potato and Cassava.
- Fried Plantain



It does not mean that one does or should have all this food in one sitting, although they say that a variety is the spice of life. A small piece of everything should suffice, but then the choice is yours.

Ackee and Salt Fish

Ingredients list (serves 6)

- 1 packet of jumbo salt fish cutlets
- 1 large tin of ackee
- 1 large onions
- 1 x Scotch bonnet
- 4 cloves of garlic
- Pinch of fresh thyme
- ¼ tsp of ground black pepper
- ½ tsp of cayenne pepper (optional)
- ½ tsp of garlic powder (optional)
- 10g of butter
- 2 tbs olive oil
- 2 spring onions
- 160g packets of pancetta (optional)



Method

Soak fish in a large bowl or the sauce pan you intend to cook it in, covered with cold water over night.

In the morning, pour away the water and rinse the fish with cold water. Cover the fish with water and cook on a moderate heat for around 15 minutes. Remove from the heat, drain, cover with cold water. When cool, scrape off skin, pick out bones and break fish into desired pieces, not too small as you will get further breakage when frying.

Place pancetta into a bowl and add boiling water. Leave to soak for about 5 minutes to remove some of the salt; the flavour will remain. Pat dry with kitchen towel and put aside.

Place a frying pan on the hob on moderate heat. When the pan is hot add the olive oil and butter, then add the pancetta and fry for 5 minutes or to your liking. Add the garlic and scotch bonnet pepper and cook for a further few minutes. Add the fish and cook for 5 minutes, then add onions and fry for until beginning to soften. Add the spices and cook for about 2 minutes.

Add the Ackee to the pan and gentle stir everything together. Be careful! The Ackee breaks up easily and you don't want it to be mushy. Now add your spring onion/scallion and four tablespoons of hot water. Reduce the heat, cover the pan and leave to steam for few minutes until all the ingredients fused together. ENJOY!



Merle's Poem

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may tread me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

Still I Rise by **Maya Angelou** (1928 - 2014)

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Sadiye and Hulya's Story



Sadiye:

I came here from Turkey in 1979, after being in Germany for six months. I came to visit London and decided to stay. I was married in 1984. After 10 years, I got my leave to remain.

I made this soup for my children when they were little, they loved it. My daughter starts University in September. I'm really going to miss her.

We make pastries for special occasions; this one is with Turkish cheese called Pogca; dill, yoghurt, egg, butter and flour. The friendship cake, I bake in a special tin so that it makes a hole in the middle. I bake it for the Friendship Group at Shoreditch Healthy Living Centre. I love sharing it with friends.

I feel British now, and so do my children. I visit Turkey every three years though, as I miss my family.

Hulya:

I have been living in London for 23 years now. I really love my sister. We see each other every week and we look after each other.

My favourite Turkish dish is karniyarik. It's a meal for special occasions. You fry aubergine, mince, onion, parsley, green pepper and garlic, then you put it inside pastry. I learned it from my Mum, and I cook it with my sister.

Vegetable soup

Ingredients list (serves 6)

1 small cauliflower	1.5ltrs of stock
1 small head of broccoli	500 ml of milk
4 carrots	1 tbs flour
1 onion	1 tbs of butter
1 tbs of olive oil	Black pepper to taste
2 potatoes	

Method

Dice the onion, in a large pan sauté in the oil for 5 minutes on a medium heat.

Chop all the vegetables into small chunks and add with the stock to the pan. Simmer for 20minutes.

In a small saucepan melt the butter, stir in the flour and cook for a minute keeping it moving. Slowly add the milk constantly stirring to avoid lumps. Once it has thickened, add it to the cooked vegetables.

Blend everything to together and season to taste.



Friendship Cake

Ingredients list (serves 12)

4 cups of self raising flour
1 cup of milk
1 cup of sunflower oil
1 cup of sugar
1 packet of vanilla powder
1 packet of baking soda
5 eggs
1 small orange
1 lemon



Method

Preheat the oven to 180C

Add the eggs, vanilla, sugar into the bowl and whisk together until dissolved.

Add the sunflower oil and milk to the mixture and whisk together.

Grate the lemon zest, squeeze the orange juice and then add to the mixture.

Finally add the sifted flour and baking soda mix well.

Put the mixture into the cake tray and bake for 40-45minutes.

Do not open the oven until ready!

Optional melt cooking chocolate and spread on the surface and even sprinkle on desiccated coconut.



Valerie's Story

I grew up in London, and learned to make rice and peas at the age of four. My Mum used to cook it on Thursdays and Sundays. She was a working Mum of four; I'm the eldest.

My parents both went out to work early in the morning, so from the age of seven I used to bathe all my siblings. They would line up around a paraffin heater and we used hot water from the kettle.

On Thursdays my job was to come home from school and put the peas on the fire. It was dangerous, but we were clever. Still, we had some experiences.

We used to eat the rice and peas with stewed chicken and tomato ketchup. When my Dad was in the mood, he made sweet potato pudding, coconut drops and ice cream. On Sundays we had ice cream and jelly or Carnation milk. After dinner on Sundays, it was my job to iron everyone's clothes for the week.



I have grown-up daughters now, and a grandson. When I became a mother I chose to talk to my daughters, and treat them differently to what I had had. And of course, I cook rice and peas for my daughters too.

Rice and Peas

Ingredients (serves 6-8)

200g gungo peas (dried)
1 tin or a block of coconut cream
1 Large onion, chopped
2 cloves of garlic, crushed
1 Tablespoon of fresh thyme
300g Basmati rice

Method

Prepare the peas by soaking them in a large pan in cold water overnight.

Drain the pan and fill with enough fresh water to cover the peas. Boil the water then return to a medium heat. Add the coconut cream, onions, garlic and thyme and cook until soft: it should take about one hour. Add extra water if needed: don't let the pan dry out.

Add the rice and cook on a low heat until it is fluffy and all the water is boiled away: this should take about 15 minutes. Stir once or twice to make sure no rice is sticking to the bottom.

Service with curried chicken, goat, or vegetables, whatever you like!



Florence's Story

I learnt to make aloo chaps in India. I met people from the Jewish Burmese community, Sephardic Jews, who went to India as refugees, and they taught me to make this. They are spiced potato cakes with meat. I've made them again today, but before that I hadn't made them for 20 years.

I've travelled to India seven times. I've lived in Israel too, and I speak Hebrew, Spanish, Portuguese and Urdu as well as English.

I grew up in Portugal, and I used to go and stay in my grandmother's house for three months over the summer. She lived in a village high up in the mountains. There would be 10-15 of us cousins there together and we'd sleep in a row in the barn. Meals were cooked in a separate kitchen building with a wood fire, and we'd all line up to get our food. They were such happy times.

We would cook milo (polenta) in a huge pan over the fire, and have it with grilled fish – scabra, traditionally cleaned with a leaf, or tuna, with onions and tomato.

Once when I was a little girl, I was at home with my mother and an old man with a big beard came to our door and asked for something to eat. My mother invited him in and gave him a meal.

When my father came home, I ran to him excited and said, "Daddy! An old man came to our house today and Mummy gave him food!"

My father told me to come and sit on his lap. He said to me, "Florence, when did you eat last?" I said I'd eaten today. He said, "That man may not have eaten for two or three days. When someone comes to our door hungry, we don't refuse them." This is still the culture in Portugal, but it's not as common as it used to be.

I have a friend called Jacob, and recently one morning, at 9am, he came to my door. I could see he was hungry, so I invited him in and cooked a meal for him.

I've always remembered that old man who came to our door, and what my father said to me.

Milo Cosido (Portuguese polenta)

Ingredients (serves 6)

200g white maize flour

500g yellow maize flour (polenta)

2 onions (diced finely)

¼ green cabbage shredded

400g broad beans (fresh, frozen or tinned)

½ cup butter

1 tbs olive oil

Small handful of thyme

1.5 litre of boiling water

Method

Heat the oil and butter in a large pan. Add the 2 chopped onions diced very small, sauté for 5 minutes.

Add the white and yellow maize flour, keep adding water and stir.

Add the shredded cabbage, broad beans and thyme.

Continuing to stir occasionally so that the mixture doesn't catch.

It should take about 30 minutes.





Katie's Story

This is one of my earliest memories of cooking a meal. I was about 8 years old and very hungry. My Mum liked to talk on the phone to her friends, a lot! Through the power of sign language I managed to get across to mum that I was really hungry and needed to eat.

Mid-gossip, she decided that I could make it myself, so on a note book wrote down the first instruction: "chop an onion".

So I took myself downstairs to the kitchen and proceeded to follow the instructions, running back up once each task was complete. Mum would then add a new line to the note book; "cut peppers into strips", "crush the garlic", "add the yoghurt... DONT LET IT BOIL" - and I would scamper back down.

The whole time my mum was on the phone: I think she may have stayed on just so I could finish it on my own. I remember being so proud once it was complete, my first meal. I haven't stopped cooking since.



Chicken Paprika

Ingredients (serves 6-8)

4 part-boned chicken breasts or 8 thighs
1 heaped tablespoon hot paprika, plus extra, to sprinkle
2 tablespoons oil
2 medium onions, chopped
1 dessertspoon plain flour
2 good pinches of cayenne pepper
450g ripe tomatoes, skinned and chopped or 400g tinned tomatoes
150ml chicken stock
1 medium green and 1 red pepper
150ml soured cream
Black pepper

Method

Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in the large saucepan pan and gently fry the chicken joints or thighs to a golden colour. Then transfer to a plate and season with pepper.

In the oil left (add a little more if you need to) fry the onions gently for about 10 minutes to soften. Meanwhile, if you are using fresh tomatoes, you can skin them. To do this, pour boiling water over them and leave them for exactly 1 minute or 15-30 seconds if the tomatoes are small, before draining and slipping off their skins (protect your hands with a cloth if they are too hot). Then chop them.

Now stir in the flour, cayenne pepper and paprika into the onions with a wooden spoon to soak up the juices before adding the chopped tomatoes. Stir them around a bit, then add the stock. Bring everything up to a simmering point, then return the chicken to the pan, put the lid on and simmer for 20 minutes. After that, stir in the chopped pepper, replace the lid and cook for a further 20 minutes.

Just before serving, spoon the soured cream all over, mixing it in just to give a marbled effect, then sprinkle on a little more paprika.

Jane's Story

I grew up in Cornwall and my grandmother used to make Cornish pasties, but I've never known how to make them until today. It's funny, the ability has skipped generations: my mother didn't make them either, but my daughter makes them beautifully. She learnt to make them from a recipe book.

Back when Cornish men used to work in the mines, they would take their lunch of leftover vegetables and meat wrapped up in pastry in their pocket. At lunchtime the pastry would be covered in soot, so they would open it up, eat what was inside and throw the pastry away.



My parents worked seven days a week, so I always went over to my grandparents' house for lunch on Sundays. My grandmother would make either a roast dinner or Cornish pasties. They were huge, so we never needed pudding afterwards. The pastry was light and there was a thick gravy.

My grandmother always cooked with a cigarette hanging out of her mouth, and I would watch her cook and wonder who would end up with the ash on their plate! My grandfather smoked a pipe, so it was pretty smoky in the house.

My grandparents were very down-to-earth, hard-working people. They ran a newsagents nearby. Going to their house was a break from home, a place I could feel safe.

Although I grew up in Cornwall, I was never taken to the beach as a

child. I was a real townie; we didn't have a garden, only a back yard which was basically a car park. When I became an adult and had my own children, that's when we discovered the lovely beaches.

My grandparents would always have the TV on, and on a Sunday afternoon there was a farming programme. I don't know who the presenter was, but he still does radio programmes today, and when I hear his voice on the radio it takes me right back to the taste of my grandmother's pasties.

Leek, Potato and Cheese Pasty

Ingredients (makes 4 large pasties)

For the pastry:

500g strong white flour, plus extra to dust
120g of butter
1 tsp salt
Cold water
1 egg, beaten with a little water

For the filling:

2 small potatoes, cut into 1 cm cubes
knob of butter
2 small leeks, finely sliced
3 thyme sprigs, leaves chopped
1 tbsp Dijon mustard
140g strong cheddar
flour, for dusting



Method

To make the pastry, put the flour into a mixing bowl and grate in the butter. Add the salt, and rub the fat in until the mix becomes crumb-like.

Mix in just enough cold water (probably about 175ml) to bring it together into a dough. It's ready when it comes cleanly away from the side of the bowl. Wrap and chill for 2 hours.

Cook the potatoes in boiling, salted water for 5-8 mins until tender, but still holding their shape. Meanwhile, melt the butter in a large saucepan. Add the leeks and thyme and soften for 10-12 mins. Drain potatoes and add to the leeks with the mustard and plenty of seasoning. Leave to cool a little.

Heat oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4. On a floured surface, roll out the pastry to the thickness of a £1 coin. Use a side plate or a bowl as a template to cut out 6 x 15cm circles.

Mix the cheese with the leek mixture and pile a mound of the mix onto the centre of each pastry circle. Brush around edges with a little egg, then bring edges together and crimp with your fingers to seal.

Place pasties on a baking tray lined with baking parchment, brush with the remaining egg and bake for 40-45 mins until golden brown. Serve warm or leave to cool.



Gordon's Story

I grew up in Guyana and my Mum wasn't good to me. She was a nurse and received awards for caring for other people, but she didn't care for me. She kept me separate from my siblings, and I never knew who my father was. When there was a family occasion, like a wedding, I was sent out of the house. I never learned any recipes as a child because I barely ever ate a proper meal.

When I was 18, I decided I had to get away, so I went down to the harbour and started asking around for a job on a boat. I got a job as a cook. I had no idea how to cook, but I wanted to get away from home and start living my life, so I took the job.

The ship used to deliver cargo all over the Caribbean. I was given ingredients to use and I cooked as best I could. I just relied on instinct and bluffed my way through, picking up skills from whoever I could. I used to make curry with chicken and chilli peppers. When I had a little bit of money and we were on land, I would go and buy roti for myself from a restaurant, as it was the cheapest food available. I didn't really eat the meals I cooked on the ship, and I couldn't touch raw meat or fish; I got the ship's boy to do that bit.

After that, a friend said to me, "there's a ship going to England. Let's see if we can get on it." So we went down and stowed away on the ship. After the ship started on the journey, we came out and offered to help with the cooking to pay for our tickets. So, this really is a stowaway curry.

I'm in my 70s now, and I had no idea I had depression until 15 years ago when my doctor diagnosed me. During family occasions I have always hidden myself away, because that was what I was taught to do as a child. But these days I try to join in with my children and grandchildren's events.

Talking about myself in groups at Shoreditch Trust has made me realise I'm not alone. One day soon, I want to sit down with my wife and children and tell them about my early life, which is something I've never done.



Stowaway Curry

Ingredients (serves 6)

Chicken Curry

1 tablespoon of vegetable oil
4 skinless chicken legs, split
2 potatoes, cubed
2 medium onions, sliced thin
4 cloves of garlic, minced
1 tablespoon minced ginger
½ medium Scotch Bonnet chili pepper, minced (or to taste)
4 tablespoons Jamaican curry powder
2 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme
3 cups chicken stock (750 ml)
2 cups coconut milk (500 ml)
Juice of half a lime

Curry Powder

1 tablespoon cumin seeds
1 tablespoon mustard seeds
1 tablespoon fenugreek seeds
1 tablespoon anise seed
1 tablespoon black peppercorns
1 tablespoon coriander seeds
½ tablespoon allspice
1 tablespoon turmeric powder

Method

Curry Powder:

Toast all the spices in a small dry skillet over high heat until the spices (except turmeric) have released their aromas. Remove from heat and cool. Grind in spice grinder and then combine with the turmeric.

Curry Chicken:

Heat the oil over high heat in a wide pot. Season the chicken and brown in batches if necessary. Remove from pot and reserve.

Add the onions, garlic, ginger and chili pepper and cook for 4 minutes. Add the curry powder and chopped thyme and cook an additional minute. Add the juice of half a lime.

Return the chicken to the pot, add the potato and cover with the stock and coconut milk. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to low.

Simmer the chicken with the pot partially covered until the meat starts to fall off the bone: it should take about an hour. Skim occasionally to remove extra fat. Serve.



Paul's Story

My grandmother used to make roast chicken on Sundays, and my job was to pluck the chicken.

She also made amazing scones, which we would eat with lemon curd.

Scones with Lemon Curd

Ingredients (makes 12)

For the Scones:

450g self raising flour
2 level teaspoons baking powder
100g butter (keep it in the fridge and grate in)
Milk (enough to bind together)

For the Lemon curd

Zest and juice of 4 unwaxed lemons
200g sugar
100g butter
3 eggs and 1 egg yolk



Method

Scones:

Sift together flour and baking powder, rub in the grated butter with your finger tips.

Add one teaspoon of milk to start with, mix it in with a knife, then add another and another until it comes together as a dough. Do not add too much milk or you will have cakes not scones!

Place the dough on a floured surface and roll out lightly until the dough is about 1½" thick, on floured baking sheet. Cut into 8 wedges, squares or use a scone cutter to make rounds.

Lay each scone on a baking tray and brush the top of the scone with milk. Bake the scones at Gas Mark 6 or 180°C for 30 minutes – or until they are golden.

Lemon curd:

Put the lemon zest and juice, the sugar and the butter, cut into cubes, into a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water, making sure that the bottom of the basin doesn't touch the water. Stir with a whisk from time to time until the butter has melted.

Mix the eggs and egg yolk lightly with a fork, then stir into the lemon mixture. Let the curd cook, stirring regularly, for about 10 minutes, until it is thick and custard-like. It should feel heavy on the whisk.

Remove from the heat and stir occasionally as it cools. Pour into spotlessly clean jars and seal. It will keep for a couple of weeks in the refrigerator.



The Recipes of Life Team

Recipes of Life at Shoreditch Trust was a partnership project delivered by Lois Gallagher from the Peace of Mind team and Katie Edmondson from the Healthy Eating team.

Shoreditch Trust worked in partnership with Dr Angela Byrne, clinical psychologist from the BME Access Service in the East London NHS Foundation Trust.



Peace of Mind's Pathways to Recovery Project supports people to develop a personalised action plan for recovery from mental health conditions.

Funded by London Borough of Hackney, the project works with those who are ready to take part in activities that promote mental wellbeing, recovery and build confidence to move toward future aspirations.



The Healthy Eating team delivers activities that help participants to re-engage with food through healthy eating, accessible recipes and a supportive, communal cooking experience.

Shoreditch Trust works to reduce social and economic disadvantage in Hackney (and similarly deprived neighbourhoods) by support people to gain knowledge, skills and opportunities.

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