

Finding magic in a cooking pot

Grandma teaches a valuable lesson

By Navneet Deol
 Rodriguez High School

Throughout the course of our lifetimes, there are some things that we just never forget. Whether it be our first ice cream cone, our first loose tooth, or our first day of school, there are some memories imprinted on our minds, that we never forget.

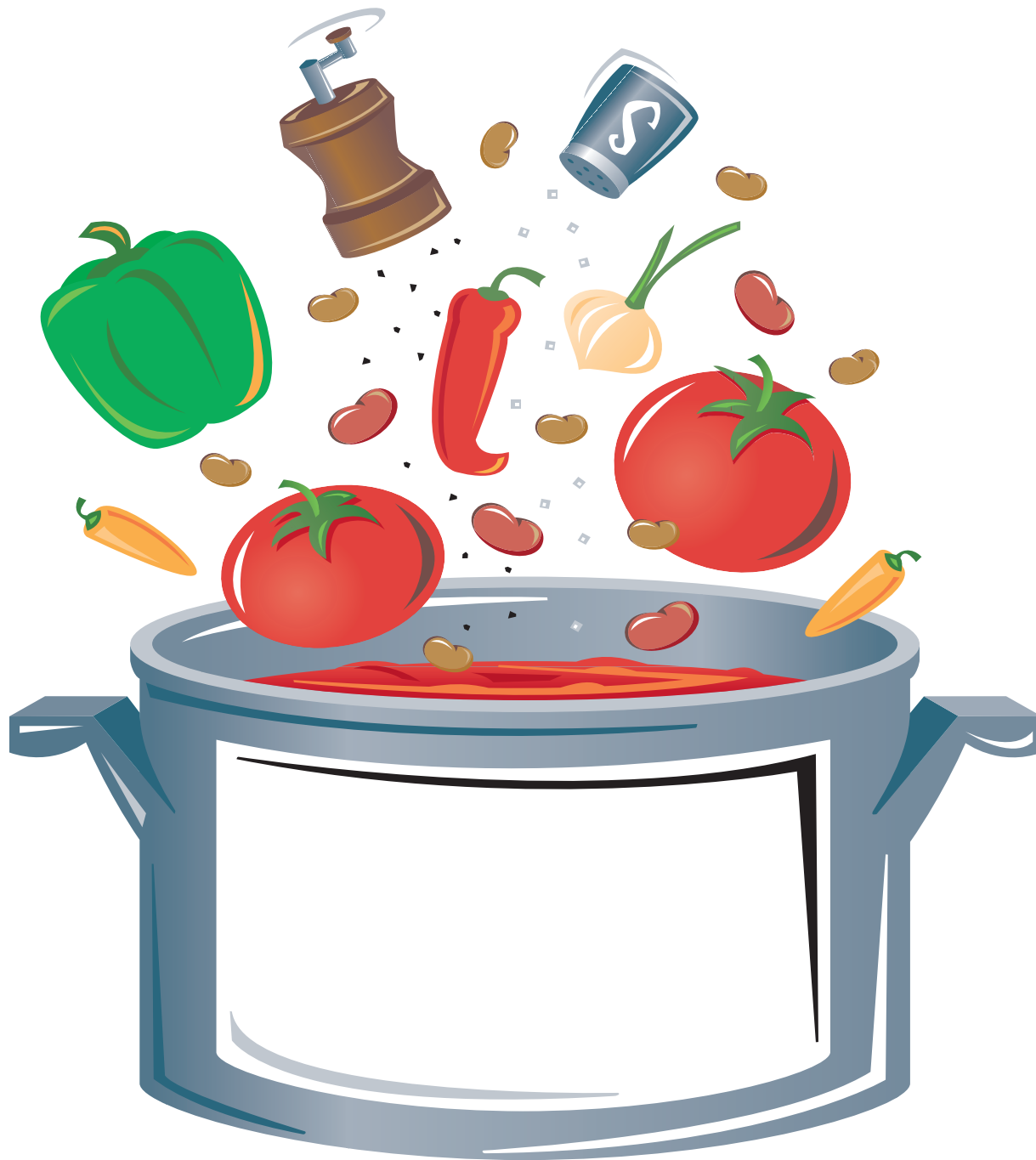
One of my fondest childhood memories is sitting on an oversized stool in my kitchen, watching my grandmother cook. Now, I know this may sound weird to some people, but it's true. I know that there was no other place that I'd rather be on rainy days, than sitting on my special stool in the kitchen, hands tucked under my chin, watching wide-eyed, as my grandma would start the *tardka*, for the night's *sabzee* (Indian vegetable dish).

The sweet aroma of that fresh minced garlic hitting the heated olive oil was like a perfume to me. At the time, the whole process of making the *sabzee* seemed magical. My grandma would take fresh vegetables, such as carrots, chop them up, toss them into a pot, with other ingredients, such as fresh ginger, firm red tomatoes, crisp green onions, leafy parsley, and then "magically," it would turn into a *sabzee*.

It used to amaze me, how an assortment of colorful veggies would all come together to make the soft, glazed *sabzee* that I loved so dearly. I would watch this process, day after day, and every day, my desire to know what was so "magical" about the *sabzee* pot would grow.

One rainy day, I decided that enough was enough. I just had to know what made that pot so "magical!" So, I waited until I was sure that my grandmother had finished all that needed to be done in the kitchen and had retired to her room to watch her Hindi soaps. I sneaked into the kitchen and located "The pot."

To my disappointment, I found that my grandmother had placed the pot on the top shelf of the cabinet. Although I was tall for my 6 years, the pot still seemed miles away. But, I was not one to be discouraged so easily, of course! So, I took my special stool, placed it near the counter that the cabinet was located above, and climbed up on it. When I found that I still wasn't tall enough, I



found the cookie tin and (after sneaking a few cookies out of it) placed that on top of the stool. Finally, I was tall enough to reach the pot. I could hardly contain myself.

After giving myself a pat on the back for a brilliant job well done, I carefully took hold of the pot, and placed it on the counter. From the counter, I then climbed down from my stool, carefully handling the pot along the way, and placed it on the ground. Once back on the ground, I silently regarded the pot. Then, after a dramatic pause, I lifted the lid, and found ... nothing! It was just an empty pot! Imagine my shock.

But then I thought, "Of course! How could the pot work without the ingredients?" So, I scurried about, trying to locate all the necessary ingredients needed, to make my *sabzee* pot work. In the end, all I came up with was half an unpeeled onion, a few carrots, some cauliflower, and a weird looking jalapeno. But, I figured that would

be enough to make the *sabzee* pot work its magic. So, I took my newly found supplies, threw them into the pot, shut the lid, and waited. And waited. And waited.

After about 3 whole minutes (which in toddler time, was like 3 years!) I took a deep breath, and opened the pot. This time, instead of seeing nothing, I saw a bunch of rotten veggies, but alas, no *sabzee*. There had been no magical transformation. Only then did I realize, there wasn't going to be any *sabzee*. Apparently, I didn't have the magical touch.

When this realization hit me, I totally lost it. I began to cry. And not in that quiet, silent way that most of us cry, when we don't want people to know that we're crying, oh no. I was bawling like a 6-year-old who'd gotten her heart broken.

Well, while I was crying my heart out, I guess my grandma had gotten the hint that something was wrong, because a few seconds later, she was in the kitchen beside me. After

taking in my tear-stained face, and the pot in front of me, my grandma did what grandmas do best, she gave me a big hug, and asked what was wrong. In her warm embrace, I spilled out everything that had happened. About how I had tried to get the pot to make me *sabzee*, and it hadn't, and how even after putting stuff into it and waiting for three whole minutes hadn't gotten it to work.

After listening to my story, my grandma was silent for a few seconds. Then, she asked, "So you really want to know the secret of the pot?" I could hardly believe my ears. She was going to tell me!

"Oh yes," I breathed. "Then we've got to get to work! Ready partner?" she asked as she took my hand. "Ready partner!" I replied with a cheery grin.

That day in the kitchen, is a day I'll never forget, for it was my first encounter with something that I would probably be doing for the rest of my life. That day, I learned how you can take a few objects that before wouldn't have seemed too significant, and transform them into a totally new, and amazing thing.

Today cooking to me is something that gives me comfort. In a teenager's life there are few times, when we feel as though we are fully in control of something. Normally, we're just trying to go with the flow, do what everyone else does, try not to seem like a weirdo, do the "cool" thing, and in doing so, we tend to lose control.

There are few times when we can be ourselves, and be in control of what we want to do. When I'm cooking, I'm sure of myself. I know what I'm doing, and that feeling, more than anything makes all the waiting and patience that goes into cooking worth it. And of course, there's the other other feeling of being able to make something that brings a smile to others faces.

Today, I am able to make anything from *sabzee* to angel hair with Alfredo sauce, but I never forget my trusty pot. Whenever I make anything on the stove, I try to use my grandma's *sabzee* pot; for some reason, my concoctions always taste better when I use the "magical" *sabzee* pot.

The author was a freshman when this story was submitted to the Solano County Reading Association in February 2007.



BY MARIYNN ANDERSON

Kids can be found hanging out together and that's a great time to ask if they wish to be interviewed for The Link. Their smiles are dazzling as they say, "YES!" Sometimes they ask for a topic and other times they have plenty of ideas of their own. This is one of those times when we tell it like it is and kids just talk about their lives and what's happening. Come to a Link: rdand@netscape.com

Remembering the important things

It's hot, so I like remembering when it was cold. A few months ago someone I know named Austin went outside to check on his puppy and guess what he saw! His swimming pool was frozen over. No, I never saw such a thing as a frozen swimming pool, but once I saw an icicle hanging from a house's roof up in the mountains. It snowed while we were there on a vacation. I pulled the icicle off and licked it once. Someone had made a snowman with a carrot nose. How do you make a snowman, anyway?

Chad Pippin, Grade 3, Orchard

Yes, I can tell you how to make chocolate chip cookies. Get some of your mom's cookie dough and add chocolate chips to it and there you have it. How do you make the dough? Well, you get two big fat pieces of butter and let it sit out until it is very mushy. Then you put the butter in a bowl with some sugar

and things and stir it up. When the dough is nice and good you add 20 to 25 chocolate chips to it and then stir and you are ready to bake the cookies.

Shelby Fargo, Grade 4, Cambridge

I know how to cook salmon because I watch my mom in the kitchen. No, we don't go fishing, we just buy salmon at the grocery store... probably Costco. You put the salmon in a pan and let it sizzle. Squirt some lemon juice on the salmon and flip it over and add some special breadcrumbs that come in a blue box.

Abbie Weida, Grade 4, Cambridge

If you miss going to school during the summer you might want to watch some films that have a school theme. Here are some titles: School of Rock, Dangerous Minds, Stand and Deliver, Mona Lisa Smile, and Ferris Bueller's Day Off. If you think you might like to see a movie at a theater and you want to

know more about the film before you go, you can just google the film's title on your computer and you'll see several sites that give reviews of the movie. Yes, I used to write film reviews for The Reporter when I was at Will C. Wood. Now I'm enjoying classes about filmmaking and journalism.

Dan Smith, Solano Community College

Looking into a person's face reveals who they are. You can generally tell about personality traits, confidence, and self-image right away because those things jump right out at you. The things you can't tell so well is what they're into in the way of sports or hobbies.

Stephen Hines, Buckingham High

My grandpa flew airplanes in the Air Force and he tells me stories about it. I want to be a soldier when I grow up. If we are still having a war with Iraq in ten years, I want to go there. Soldiers help

to protect people and their freedom. When you sign up to go in the Army you have to train 24 hours a day for about three months. They teach you to Army crawl, how to drive tanks and how to use weapons. Tanks can have four or five weapons on them. Being a soldier is hard and a lot of work. Troops have all kinds of equipment and different kinds of uniforms. They carry three guns, a pistol, and grenades. Some soldiers fly helicopters.

Matthew Allen, Grade 3, Foxboro

The things that I appreciate most in my life are my loving family, my strength of will to carry on, and God. God has blessed me with qualities that help me to carry on through hardships like death in the family and peer pressure. My family helps to make unpleasant events bearable. I don't know what I would do without them.

Alexia Hathcock, Buckingham High