



## Why Cook?

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By Eleanor Rodgerson, MD

"I looked forward to the time when my cooking days would disappear - and now they have arrived."

COOKING AND THE PREPARATION OF FOOD is an art form that captures men and women in every country. But it has never captured me. My mother considered me a nuisance in the kitchen and that was acceptable. We ate a variety of meals - vegetables, meat and potatoes, perhaps a dessert of fruit or a pudding made from leftovers, and the preparation and service was simple.

Nevertheless, I developed guilt feelings that persisted. I remember an argument one time with a fellow classmate who, in exasperation, exploded, "I bet you don't even know how to bake a pie!"

I was embarrassed and spent a following vacation baking pies.

Of course, cooking was necessary for living and raising children, and later I took it on. Still, I looked forward to the time when my cooking days would disappear - and now they have arrived.

The supermarket is full of frozen dinners, all marked with the percentage of ingredients we have been told are necessary for healthy hearts, like "Trans fats 0g." The neighborhood has several delicatessens from which food can be ordered and taken home

Today small restaurants are popping up all around us. It is obvious that there are many like me who do not cook, or do not cook much.

Is there such a category as "American" food? We have a mixture of cultures and, with the influx of immigrants, we have variety. Do you want Japanese? Thai? Greek? Spanish? Mexican? Italian? Chinese? French? They can all be found in our area. Portions served may be small, or large enough for leftovers to take home in a box willingly provided.

Suppose the relatives drop in for a weekend? No problem. Order in Chinese, pizza, or vegetables and meat prepared by one of the delicatessens. If the relatives don't see it coming, they won't know it didn't originate in your own kitchen.

I have difficulty using chopsticks and the Japanese restaurant, Hana Tsubaki, quickly provides a fork. La Bou offers Thai food along with "American" and, if you are allergic, you can specify "no peanuts." Thai iced tea is delicious with its sweet condensed milk.

Danielle's is a creperie along with American. The crepes are folded around a variety of vegetables, meats, and fruits. Its art gallery covers the walls and varies from paintings to grotesque and not so grotesque sculpture. Opa Opa specializes in the Greek and can be accompanied by raspberry iced tea.

It's fun to wake up on a clear day and plan - where shall we eat lunch today? All it takes is a little cash, a good appetite, a car, and an ability to move from it to a table in an

establishment which a smiling waitress, or cook, greets you and offers the menu of the day.

I note that Fins is a recently opened fish place and I'm going to order a hot, catfish sandwich. It should be healthful, provide sustenance for me and jobs for the waiters and cooks. The welfare of the neighborhood is bolstered and I needn't cook.

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