

Transmitting Your Delicacies

Eating is an everyday act in the life of everyone; therefore we cannot take it for granted just because it is something so common. Food is the representation of the way of being of every culture, country, family and people. Food from a particular place depends on what is harvested, type of land, environment, traditions of the artisans and culinary talents of the people who cook the ingredients, among other things.

France, which has been called the birthplace of gastronomy, coined a term that fascinates me: “terroir,” which is known in Spanish as “terruño,” although it loses something in the translation. In France, “terroir” refers to a place, a determined area with special characteristics and geographic, historical and cultural conditions that cannot be repeated in another place. A product of terroir is a product from a specific region, territory or land.

Also, thanks to writings from French anthropologists in the 19th Century, we are conscious that we are what we eat, that we become what we eat.

In this month’s issue, where we are honoring the seniors, our older members of society, our grandparents, I would like to talk about the importance of transmitting food knowledge from generation to generation.

Grandmothers and grandfathers are the ones who carry the wealth of family knowledge. They are the very thin thread that links us to those who came before us, the great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents who we never knew and perhaps who lived in other countries. They can tell us stories of our parents that our parents themselves don’t even remember.

Grandparents, even though they have fewer years left than our parents and us, have a calm about life to listen and tell stories that make time stand still.

In most cases, the grandmothers are the carriers of the culinary knowledge and customs in families. They are the ones who are the best cooks in the family, the ones who bring the family together and teach the children and grandchildren the real warmth of the home. Grandmothers have the recipes of the dishes that we ate while growing up, the ones that make us remember the most and that bring us such pleasure.



The most important of all these experiences that mold our life and spirit is that we can remember them and have on paper, so that one day when they are not with us, we can pass these flavors onto our children and grandchildren.

My advice is, if you have a grandmother who cooks your favorite foods, ask her to give you the recipes or film her preparing them. Make a recipe book, and keep them alive for everyone. There are many recipes that have been lost because they were not transmitted.

If you are a grandmother who has cooked her favorite recipes for her family year after year, be sure to show them to your children and family members so that they can be repeated.

The way we cook is different in every culture, and in some places, cook books are a luxury that many people cannot afford. The type of recipe book that I am talking about is not the hard-cover variety that costs \$40, but rather the kind where a grandmother simply transmits her ingredients, the quantities and the method of preparing every dish and along with some anecdotal story that goes with it.

In every family, there are characteristic dishes that stay marked in the memory of each one of its members, and at the least expected moment, we come across that smell or familiar taste that takes us back to grandmother’s house.

I have a great liking and admiration for the wise faces that the older people possess, and I love to take pictures of their faces and contemplative expressions.

With this reflection, I finish this article asking you to cook with your grandmothers and to enjoy their tender faces. Hug them, and ask them to tell you all the stories that they remember.

The photographs in this article are of my beautiful mom (Linda) and of my dear and adored grandmother (Seena), my hero, my example of a woman, the wisest woman that exists in this world. Both are artists, and I adore their way of expressing themselves. ♦