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## The Special Times of Cooking with Grandmama

By Susie Iventosch



Photos Susie Iventosch

Some of my fondest memories go back to time spent in the kitchen with my mom and my grandmother. Usually, "cooking time" with my grandmom (Do Bee, an Orinda realtor with Massie and Underwood for 20+ years) centered round the holidays. She loved to entertain and since we lived in Michigan and my mom was her only child, she delighted in showing my siblings and me off to her Bay Area friends whenever she could. And, I just loved it, too. I was so proud to be her granddaughter and so excited to go to her office and visit her friends.

Every time we went visiting, we sampled lots of goodies. According to my memories, and my grandmother's recipe file, which I now possess, all of her friends were excellent cooks, too!

But, I never really realized just what it meant to my grandmother to spend time and share her love of cooking with us, until my friend Elaine McDonald, a grandmother herself, emailed me to say how much fun she has cooking and watching the Food Network with her granddaughter, Margaux McDonald, 6. Elaine says Margaux is very much into cooking and food.

"Margaux loves to watch the cooking shows," Elaine pointed out. "She will make comments like 'maybe they are using too much salt' and 'is there too much

oil?' or 'do you think the dish is too messy to serve to guests?' She is very much into it."

Margaux says, "I like the cooking show where the girl puts lots of salt and pepper on her dish. She shakes the salt and the pepper she is grinding."

Elaine said Margaux was a great help on Thanksgiving Day. "She served the shrimp cocktails to each guest - with the required fish fork, and she did it with great aplomb. She also made the most adorable place cards for each guest."

I am so thankful for the time I had with my grandmother. As I work in the kitchen, I reflect upon the hours she and I watched Julia Child, the original network foodie, on T.V. She always got such a kick out of Julia skinning a chicken, or tossing a baguette over her shoulder! What I'd give to listen to her chuckle over those shows.

When I spoke with Margaux, even at her young age, it is easy to see she has a sense of appreciation for her time with Momma Mac.

"I like to make Momma Mac's macaroni and cheese from scratch," Margaux noted. "We use sharp cheddar cheese, tomato soup, ketchup and milk. I like the parts that are crunchy and browned the best!"

For their Thanksgiving feast, Momma Mac and the "petite foodie" prepared a roasted green bean and cherry tomato dish they learned about on the Food Network. It is easy, delicious and apparently, exciting!

"I like the taste [of the bean dish] and especially the way the tomatoes popped in my mouth," Margaux remembered. "The tomatoes felt like they exploded!"

She added that the family liked the color and stripes on the beans. "They said it was seasoned just right."

This is a festive dish for the holidays and an easy way to get the veggies on the plate. The colors couldn't be more perfect for Christmas dinner -- the green beans look like holiday greens while the roasted tomatoes resemble tree ornaments!

Margaux and her sister, Maren, 3, both enjoy cooking at home with their mom, Catja, too.

"At home I like to make Caesar salad with mommy and sometimes we use cucumbers instead of croutons," Margaux informed. (That sounds pretty darn healthy!)

Catja says the girls, when in the mood, love helping out in the kitchen. They like to clean and salt the chicken or fish and like to make salad dressing. Margaux has learned to taste as she goes, to get the combination just right.

"We make pizza dough and arrange the toppings together," Catja said. "Sometimes it can get a little messy and crazy, but I have to take a deep breath and remind myself that maybe they will make pizza for me one day! It really is good time together."

As for Momma Mac, the holiday season is the best season to bake cookies, and she and Margaux enjoy making shortbread cookies ... in shapes.

"We make stars, hearts and moons," Margaux said.

And, I say, "Santa is one lucky guy!"



Margaux and Elaine's roasted green beans and cherry tomatoes

The dish is delicious and easy, especially when you purchase a package of pre-washed microwaveable green beans. Toss the beans and tomatoes in 2 tablespoons of olive oil, season to taste with sea salt and freshly cracked pepper and roast in a 400-degree oven for 18-20 minutes, or just until the tomatoes look like they're about to pop.

#### RECIPE

- 1 12-ounce bag of package pre-washed, microwaveable greenbeans
- 1 12-ounce basket of cherry tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly cracked pepper

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Toss all ingredients in a bowl and spread out in an 11x13 inch casserole dish. Roast for 18-20 minutes, or until beans are beginning to brown slightly and tomatoes are plump and just about ready to pop. Serve immediately.

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