

Menu

The Other Side of the Atlantic (2002-2012)

Toad in the Hole

Shepards Pie

Fairy Cakes

The Land of Opportunity (2012-2015)

Mums Falafel

Bacon Cheeseburger with Sweet Potato Fries

Honey Spice Cake

World Outlook Shifting (2015-2020)

Haynes Family Curry

Pulled Pork Sandwiches

Chocolate Olive Oil Cake

An Education in Ethics (2020-2022)

Pesto Pasta with Shredded Chicken

Potato Chickpea Curry

Greenery Chocolate Chip Cookies

The Hope Makes It Taste Better (2022-Present)

Ground Pork Chili

Pot Roast (Kristopher's favorite)

Chocolate Bundt Cake

The Other Side of the Atlantic (2002-2012)

The air outside a butcher shop in the early morning had a musty smell that stung my nostrils with cold as I stood outside in line. My coat was almost due to be handed down to my sister, just about fitting around my shoulders and zipped up to my chest, and my father would hold the fuzzy lined hood to assure I didn't wander off. At 7am the door would open, the bell would ring, and each person would file into the shop to pick up their order, eager to beat the rush with Christmas was less than 24 hours away. Now seven years old, it was tradition for me to spend Christmas Eve morning watching cars fly by on Prices Lane with my father as we waited for our turn. Once back home the turkey would disappear into the kitchen, where I most likely wouldn't see it until my mother pulled it out of the oven the next day, golden and ready to be carved. Christmas was no small deal in my family, split into three groups as we juggled both sides of my mothers family as well as my fathers parents, all of whom wanted the most Christmas time with their children and grandchildren. Our family meal did not always fall on Christmas day, sometimes there simply wasn't time after driving back and forth for so long, but every year my mother pulled off culinary magic that left us stuffed and sleepy.

My mother is without a doubt the biggest influence over my food journey, I watched her cook and ate her food for eighteen years, I developed my sense of taste based on foods that she made for me. When I list the foods meaningful to my life I can credit her with many of my favorite dishes, the cookbooks on my shelves reflect the chefs and cooking T.V I watched with her as a child. I can see the cover of Nigella Lawsons' *How to Be a Domestic Goddess* in my mind when I think of home, my favorite on my moms collection to page through, sitting on the floor of the kitchen while she cooked, fantasizing about each and every treat I saw pictured. I think it is a shared experience among women to think that we will not grow up to be our mothers,

but every day I find myself more and more like her. My recipes are not identical, they are copies grown from the same inspiration, molded by circumstance not unlike the core of the family itself.

I am fortunate that most of the English recipes I grew up with can be easily recreated with ingredients in American grocery stores. Classics like leeks and cheese sauce, Yorkshire puddings, and my favorite, Shepards pie, were regularly dishes in our house when I was growing up, and I delight in making my own takes on them now. Shepards pie is an incredibly simple dish that can be made with pretty basic ingredients and little to no skill, as long as you have some ground meat, some potatoes, and cheese, you can make the most basic of Shepards pie (some may argue about what *exactly* you have to have included for it to be a Shepards pie, I am not one of those people). It was the first dish I knew how to cook on my own past eggs and bacon, I can remember the pride of taking it out of the oven, there's a picture somewhere of me holding it up on my friends front porch, smiling at my own accomplishment. I often wonder how different it tastes to my American friends, if the nostalgia adds notes and flavors undetected by newcomers, when I take a bite I can taste the wooden kitchen table and chairs, I can hear our windows rattling as English rain beats down on the back doors. It is this question that drove me to this vein of exploration, how can I make them taste my story?

The Land of Opportunity (2012-2015)

Two weeks before my tenth birthday my family moved from Reigate, Surrey in the south of England, to Walnut Creek, California. The move had many motivations, my fathers career, my mothers desire to experience places far from home, but for my sister and I it was the adventure of a lifetime into a world of options only seen on T.V. Our grandfather told us before we had left that if we could imagine it, they had it in the United States of America. Something important

about my grandfather was his infectious sweet tooth, passing his love to both his children and grandchildren. Each week we would spend a night and each week we would be sent home with a £2 coin and a bag of sweets, and on our last week with them he reminded each of us to have the American children teach us how to blow bubble gum in squares. As children we believed that our grandfather was eating cake and sweets after every meal as he did with us, only later in life did we realize what a celebration those days were for him, that he would save his treats for the weekend.

Sugar marks many of the best celebrations in my family, the most remarkable of which being the cakes my mother makes for our birthdays. Every year she has home baked and decorated elaborate birthday cakes for my sister, father and I, always designing the cake to whatever interest the birthday person has held recently. Standouts include a detailed wooden log and axe cake for my fathers 50th birthday, a panda themed cake for my sisters 11th birthday cake, and a chocolate otter cake floating in ocean green jell-o for my 11th birthday. These cakes are secretive, made by her and only her in the few hours she finds alone in the house, kept carefully hidden from the rest of us until the singing begins. My mother also delighted with other less secretive cakes she would sometimes let us assist with, often a carrot cake donated to the school fair in England, or most often in America, her honey spice cake. This sweet and comforting dessert is especially perfect for the colder months; combining ginger, cumin, and cinnamon with brown sugar create the ultimate rich and sticky dessert you want to eat fresh out of the oven. Our small California kitchen would leak a delicious trail of scents as the cake baked, filling the house with the warm enveloping aroma and the delightful knowledge that there would soon be cake. My mother still makes this cake to this day, it doesn't matter who is at home and who is away, it is a fan favorite that has traveled with us. I find myself naturally drawn to cooking, it feels very intuitive, I find I can see the next step or the obvious choice with ease, and that I can fix my

mistakes without too much hassle as long as I have the necessary supplies. Baking on the other hand is a whole other battlefield, nothing about it feels as easily explainable or explorable as cooking and I often find myself with a dense brick that vaguely resembles my initial goal. Despite my love for this cake I am weary of baking it for fear of disrespecting my mothers recipe, an issue that sounds silly even to myself.