

Now that I'm a grandma, I feel a little guilty about certain culinary gifts that I absolutely do not possess, nor do I really feel led to learn. To cut myself some slack, I realize we are living in the Jetson's age, where we press a button and the food pops out of the wall. We never saw Jane Jetson putting the food in the microwave, but we saw it from the point of her pressing a button and taking the dinner out.

I am guilty for using store bought ready-made pie crusts instead of making my crust from scratch as my mother and grandmother used to do. I think I made them from scratch the first few years we were married, but it didn't take me long to realize I could lay the already rolled flat and perfectly round crust in the pie plate and make my same little thumb and finger crimped edges. No one knew the difference, or they simply didn't care.

I used to make my mother's stuffing at Thanksgiving, but now I am an avid fan of Stove Top. I still might make cake frosting from scratch, but boxed cake mixes and canned frosting are just as good in a pinch! At Christmastime I've even forgone making the sugar cookies from dough that I made myself, and buy the dough in a roll. If I feel very ambitious, I'll pull out my cookie cutters (they were my mother's!), and will make the powdered sugar frosting to go on top. I confess lately I've been buying those round, soft sugar cookies that are already frosted. I'm so ashamed.

I have inherited my mother's recipe box, and have looked at the recipes from time to time. I've even attempted a few of the very easy ones. Our life has been busy, and my husband and I have simple palates. If we want something really different there are restaurants everywhere. We are basically meat, veggies and potato people. Throw in a spaghetti or taco dinner now and then and we are good to go. We try to eat the recommended amount of fruit and vegetable servings per day, along with our dairy and protein. Many might say we are boring. Our teenage son has told us this already.

But there is something about those special creations from the kitchen that bring back really good memories. There are a few specific items that my grandmother made that I miss terribly, and it isn't because I miss the foods, so much. I just miss my grandma. Picture a plump, jolly faced woman with perfectly coifed, silver hair. She always wore an apron when in the kitchen, and kept her apple shaped cookie jar with the wooden lid stocked with homemade chocolate chip cookies. At least when she knew her grandkids were coming. This is my permanent picture of who I believed to be the perfect Grandma.

She has been gone for quite some time now, but every year during the holidays, Grandma made homemade fruit cake and sent a cake to everyone in the family. I have yet to meet anyone who likes fruitcake. But I liked her fruitcake. I'm not sure if it was the fruitcake itself, or just because Grandma made it. I only know that when I see them in the grocery stores, a smile comes to my face and I think to myself, "It's not Grandma's".

The one thing grandma made every year without fail were her blackberry preserves. She always used small mason jars that had a diamond pattern all around, and every jar had a label that had a fruit trim around the border. On the label in her familiar writing was, "Blackberry", the date it was made and her name, "Gertie Gooch". Perfect name for a grandma, isn't it? Grandma's preserves were the absolute very best. Whether eaten on fresh buttermilk biscuits in the morning or on a perfect peanut butter and jelly sandwich, they were delectable.

Grandma might be disappointed that I didn't take the family recipes and 'carry on', but I don't think so. She was a pretty cool lady, and I think she would have loved ready-made pie crusts and Stove Top stuffing. If it meant being able to spend more time with her family, that would have been enough for her. I still enjoy homemade blackberry jam or preserves whenever I come across some, but the outcome is always the same. "It's not Grandma's."