

# FATHERLY FEASTS

Sunday 15 June, Father's Day, is a time to celebrate dads everywhere, though not necessarily for their prowess in the family kitchen...

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**R**etaining a strong and meaningful relationship with your father into adulthood is not always an easy task. But, like most things in life, it's made that little bit easier by food – that magical glue with which so many relationships have been made and maintained. While looking back to childhood memories of my mother's cooking brings to mind a multitude of delicious handcrafted meals – a table laden with roasted vegetables and succulent meats or a checkered picnic blanket anchored down with crust-free egg sandwiches and potato salad – generally thoughts of fathers and cooking are, let's be honest, a little more limited. However, that's not to say that fathers are any less enthusiastic or wield any less skill in the kitchen. It's simply a matter of approach. While mums tend to whip up meals at any hour of the day, it's the dads who channel their energy into mastering one dish or food group. And, regardless of the stereotype, the culinary expertise of most isn't limited to barbecues.

Well, at least, that's true of my own father. My dad, all 6ft 2 of him, is the self-proclaimed king of porridge. Now, I'd forgive a person for thinking that porridge is a simple dish that anyone could stir up, but that person has obviously never had the joy of seeing my dad at work. On visits home I still watch in awe as he measures out the specific ratio of oats

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to milk to water, adjusts the hob to the ideal heat, stares intensely at the pan to ensure a perfect simmer, then dishes it all up with a sprinkling of blueberries and a spoonful of honey. It's a sight to behold and, boy, it tastes good. The three bears have nothing on him.

Asking around for other people's foodie memories of their fathers, I'm relieved to find that this niche culinary enthusiasm is a relatively common characteristic of the paterfamilias. Chris Scott, who grew up in the south of England, associates his father with curries. "Every Saturday night Dad would cook several of them. He is absolutely obsessed with making curry from scratch, so our kitchen is full of spices."

Meanwhile, the father of Nathanielle Kumar, born in Dubai and now working in India, decided to perfect a dinnertime staple. "Pasta is the one food that reminds me of my dad. He considers himself an authentic pasta

chef, but he's the only person I know who puts green chillies in it."

Even away from the kitchen, it would seem people often link one particular dish or food group with their father. Erin Walters, a New Yorker living in London, says, "My mum and brother aren't keen on seafood, but from a young age I loved it and my dad was excited to indulge me – usually lobster on holiday or sushi at a local place. Even now, I still know that the way to reach out to my dad is by suggesting we share some seafood."

It may still be the case that dads generally aren't responsible for cooking everyday meals, but the memories of their culinary escapades and the connections we make between them are no less significant. Ultimately, these memories can help keep the bond with our fathers strong – or at least give us a good laugh – wherever in the world we happen to be.

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