

# When all else fails, call your mum



Mothers are no stranger to calls at ungodly hours and being bombarded with questions on basic cooking skills. This week, LS offers a variety of recipes that can be made easily, and in no time. A separate article deals with an essential grocery list that every person living alone in a foreign country should keep in the pantry. Taking the easy way out is the best way when it comes to cooking up a storm in a short time.

Simmering pots of water, confusing forms of cinnamon and quantifying salt to perfection — beginner's luck only fares so well against these culinary challenges in the kitchen.

Reluctantly watching television was only so fun because mums in their petite but well-organised kitchens were experts in the game. Whether it was the Bengali soul food on rainy days, which is 'bhuna khichuri' or delectable 'beef tehari' on special occasions — mums were nothing short of culinary wizards when handed basic kitchen staples.

However, flipping the script and taking over the kitchen with mum's enlightening guidance over the phone bring their very own tales of sweet and sour.

While mothers are meticulous with recipes, the amateurs that walk among us are wonderfully imprecise and only see the recipes as rough guidelines. Beginner's luck runs out quickly when a routine cook time of 25 minutes for white rice takes a turn for the worst. When our belief in cooking websites and microwave ovens abandon us, we look to a power greater than ourselves — the commanding but soothing voices of our mums.

Chaos cues in when numerous calls are made in the time-span of half an hour, all in the name of a pot of rice. Breaking down the recipe and answering monosyllabically and repeatedly, anxious mums idly sit by during their 5-minute intervals waiting on their smartphones and computers to buzz again.

Students moving districts may resolve the problem of different time zones but this does not necessarily correlate to cooking skills. Attempts for midnight cravings of a decadent mug of chocolate fudge cake go south when recipes followed to a T backfire. Emending such sunken mug-cakes means

trying your luck with mum's famous stir-fry noodles which only takes 20 minutes. Making outgoing calls in the dead of the night might evoke an agitated and half-asleep mum still ready to help; or, if calls are unanswered, that bag of chips you picked up from your last visit to the grocery store will have to do.

Graduate to the next big phase — when you have a spouse to take care of and marriage vows to uphold. However, you cannot let these keep you away from the kitchen.

Endeavouring the task of preparing a whole meal to appease the dining-room at your in-laws' may seem unfathomable. Taking on the reduced task of only preparing rice pudding still seem hefty enough. However, with your mum at your beck and



call and cooking off the same dessert alongside you in a Skype video-call, instructing you every step of the way makes it all doable.

While your mum's recipe is for two, you may intend to serve the whole family of six. Measurements will mismatch and will have to be proportioned carefully but you are probably already deep into the recipe surpassing the point of return.

Embarking on independence and mov-



ing into your very own apartment means more than celebration. Regardless of being on your own or being the better half of a matrimonial union, chores have to be done and food has to be served. Craving mum's special 'dal paratha' or paratha stuffed with yellow lentils will not magically make their way onto your breakfast platter.

If you have planned ahead and aimed to impress with breakfast-in-bed, you probably have the whole recipe jotted down in a notepad somewhere in the drawer. However, if fate does not always favour you, the dough you so attentively knead turned out sticky. Innumerable calls to mum to ask her to rescue revealed the supposed use of lukewarm water at the beginning but you went with cold. And the effect? Not too edible or impressive!

Fast-forward to when practice made perfect and you are now a proud amateur-tuned-professional in the kitchen, hosting celebrations and get-togethers and taking the cooking into your capable hands.

However, that special recipe by mum still has you nostalgic and longing for her unique blends and exclusive whisks. Calling your mum yet again for her one-of-a-kind recipe of Kashmiri chicken pulao or the irresistible 'doi bora,' you seek to have your guests entranced.

Passing down the torch and serving it to the excitement simmering in the dining table, this is a way to hold her traditions and your memories with a clenched fist and of course, to keep them alive.

No matter how you put it, the reality of taking cooking instructions over the phone offers their very own twists and turns and different blends of sour and sweet.

Despite the phase you are conquering in life, you will probably never forego those singular phone calls forever seeking your mum's culinary counsel. And why should you? After all, it taught you the correct use of salt in the very first place.

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