

Lost Generations and Faded Flavours

Figure 1: This image shows a mealtime with family sitting together eating cultural food prepared from scratch with love by grandparents. Their kids and grandkids do some of the jobs like washing and chopping ingredients, setting the table, and getting ready to do something that might seem simple, but is a really big deal... eating together! When we eat together, we can talk about our day, sad things, happy things, dreams and goals, and it is a time when we learn about our family's stories, culture, and even the food we are eating and why we eat it. We might not all have time or families to eat with, but at school, we are a family of teachers and students from all over the world, and if we explore our cultural food by eating it or talking about it or even studying it, we can travel the world to discover lost generations & faded flavours from our very own classroom.



Photo Credit: Darlene De Souza-Mendonca

Have any of your grandparents cooked you a delicious meal from your cultural background?

Our names are Oliver (grade 5) and Liel (grade 7), we are students in Mississauga, Ontario and we both care about food, school... and our grandparents! We both observed that cooking has been fading from generation to generation. We are close to our grandparents and we both love our grandparents' cooking. When you eat your cultural dish have you ever thought about the things you could learn just because of your food? You can learn a lot of about different subjects through food, like the science of how you cook it; or the mathematics of how much/many ingredients go into preparing it; and the finance on how much it costs; and history on how or why it was first made; the social studies around the culture and climate of those traditional dishes; and the language origins of how/why dishes were named, and the family life for the traditions passed throughout the family generations. Even religion can be taught throughout eating and discussing cultural foods. Health also has a connection to our cultural food because our ancestors used it for medicine.

In most families, the grandparents are the keepers of family recipes, they have unique and traditional techniques to making these special recipes. They understand the nutritional value and health benefits of various foods. Through their knowledge and experience over the years, they have fed their families, making tasty yet healthy food for them to eat. In today's world, people's eating has changed, and we use the more convenient choices instead of the nutritious choices found in traditional homemade meals. Processed and fast foods have gained popularity, contributing to a decline in the consumption of healthy ingredients and the nutritional benefits of our Grandparent's cooking. The traditional dishes, often made with fresh produce, whole grains, and lean proteins, are gradually being replaced by calorie-dense, low nutrient alternatives. For example, our grandmothers cooked with mainly coconut-based dishes, with healthy spices like turmeric, cumin, etc. and also whole brown rice as a staple.

It would be amazing if cultural food practices can be taught at schools, where different traditional cuisines can be learned through fun projects and practical cooking assignments. While we lead our busy lives, it is still important to find a balance between convenience and nutrition. Adapting our grandparents' recipes to fit our current lifestyles can help us tap into our ancestral tools and gifts. Exploring innovative cooking techniques, meal planning strategies, and time-saving tips can help us grow as students and members of society as we continue to enjoy the nourishing benefits of our grandparents' cooking. We need to work together as a community with school programs leading the way for us to cherish the nutritional wisdom of our grandparents and continue to nourish our bodies and souls with the timeless flavors they imparted.



SDG 2 – Zero Hunger

SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being

SDG 4 – Quality Education



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