

A CULINARY LEGACY *My Family's Cooking Adventures*

Eating is a necessary human function that is vital to our overall health. Without proper nutrition and a healthy diet, we can put on extreme weight, waste away to nothing, or cause significant issues to our physical and mental health. We all need to eat multiple times a day to feel our best, but many cannot cook a decent meal. They see cooking as a chore and find no enjoyment in it, especially if their dish does not come out according to the recipe. On the first Thursday in November, men across the country get an opportunity to put their cooking skills to the test as we recognize National Men Make Dinner Day.

My mother grew up on a farm and lived on one while married to her first husband. Because of this, she developed a love of cooking as she had to make meals for the family and the farmhands. She would wake up bright and early to make breakfast for 30-50 people every morning. I imagine it probably felt like she was cooking in the barracks for the military! The experience allowed her to gain the ability to whip up just about anything at the spur of the moment. She was an ace in the kitchen but explicitly told me all the best chefs were men. I don't know if her words impacted me, but I wouldn't be surprised if those early memories helped cultivate my love for cooking.

My dad was away from home fairly often when I was growing up, and my mom worked outside of the house, so there were many evenings I was responsible for my own meals. Now, I wasn't making anything extravagant or fancy. Most of the time, I was just frying up a bologna sandwich, but doing so helped me grow comfortable in the kitchen. And that comfort carried into adulthood, where I became the main chef for my immediate family.

My former wife didn't have much cooking experience, so I helmed most meals. One time, shortly after we married, I decided to pick up a beautiful 10-pound beef tenderloin. I wasn't making much money then, so this was a big deal to us. I was saving it for a special occasion, but she decided to surprise me by cooking it. Unfortunately, she decided to put it in the crockpot, which turned out to be a disaster! It ended up being like the turkey from "Christmas Vacation!"



As a parent, I wanted to ensure my sons know how to cook. I was essentially a single parent for about nine years with my boys, so we had plenty of time together in the kitchen. This was when I started to develop my love of cooking and took great pleasure in it. I was in the habit of getting home from work and immediately throwing something together for dinner. We usually had a rotation of meals that included macaroni and cheese with kielbasa, hamburgers, and various chicken dishes. Cooking gave me a break from my other responsibilities while providing me with a creative outlet. I relished those moments, and I think my sons enjoyed them too. To this day, they're the chefs cooking most of the meals for their respective families.

Cooking is a fantastic activity that will help you reduce anxiety, stay entertained, and maintain a healthy diet. Plus, you get the bonus of eating all of the delicious meals you make! I hope all the men reading this newsletter get a chance to cook something new and exciting this month in recognition of National Men Make Dinner Day!

-Jim Monast

MASTER THE CHALLENGE OF COOKING FOR 2

There's one part of empty nesting almost no one talks about: After feeding a family for years, how do you rethink your kitchen to cook for two? Classic recipes like pot roast and roast chicken are challenging to cook in two-person portions and will create a metric ton of leftovers. But that doesn't mean you have to eat from your freezer for weeks or survive on cereal and pizza rolls! Here are three tips to help you cook for two without compromising healthy eating.

1. **Meal plan like you're a young parent again.** This will be a familiar tactic for big families. Back in the day, you probably had "Taco Tuesdays" and "Pizza Fridays" to keep your grocery shopping on track and your kids happy. Now, it's time to develop a new meal plan! Work with your partner or spouse to choose your favorite recurring meals and find new two-person recipes that fit your preferences.

If you're not sure where to start, consider using a digital meal-planning tool. The editors at CNN recently compared the top meal-planning apps and recommend downloading the premium version of Eat This Much (EatThisMuch.com). It costs \$9 per month, and you can use it from your phone or computer. Once you choose your recipes, it will automatically create a grocery list and even give you the option to order grocery delivery!

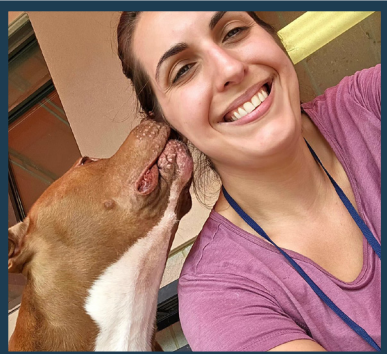
2. **Invest in a meal kit service.** If you're exhausted by cooking and don't want to build a new repertoire, you might want to use meal kits through your golden years. Dozens of companies will deliver ready-made meals or pre-portioned ingredients directly to your door, including Blue Apron, HelloFresh, Sunbasket, Home Chef, Dinnerly, EveryPlate, and Purple Carrot. Read up on each service (they're all recommended for two!), and choose the best fit for your diet and budget. A meal kit can be a permanent fix or a temporary tactic to find two-person recipes you love.
3. **Turn to the experts.** For more inspiration and advice, pick up books like "The Complete Cooking for Two Cookbook" by America's Test Kitchen or "One Pan, Two Plates" by Carla Snyder.

If all else fails, buy backyard chickens — they're fantastic at gobbling up leftovers!



Get to Know Samantha Baughman!

Hello everyone! I was born and raised in Mount Vernon, Ohio, where I met and married my high school sweetheart, Corey. My husband is a United States Air Force veteran, and our first post was at Cannon AFB in Clovis, New Mexico. As soon as I heard "New Mexico," I got rid of all my hoodies and warm clothes. I was shocked when we arrived during one of the worst blizzards in New Mexico's history! After this, I actually got to enjoy the heat of Tucson, AZ, our next post. Now, back in Columbus, I enjoy volunteering at the local dog shelter and, on weekends, hiking in the many beautiful parks around Ohio. We also like community activities and the Ohio Renaissance Festival. I serve as a statewide representative for the Paralegal Association of Central Ohio.



A HIDDEN GEM IN PLAIN SIGHT

SHE FOUND WHAT AT THE THRIFT STORE?

Have you ever watched the show "American Pickers"? It follows a couple of guys traveling across the country looking for rare artifacts in antique malls, individuals' homes, and other locations. Many Americans have tried to find treasures of their own by visiting local garage sales, thrift shops, and places that may contain rare items. Those hunting hope they'll stumble across something valuable, like a vintage Mickey Mantle baseball card or a copy of Action Comics #1. Unfortunately, these valuable finds seldom occur, but once in a blue moon, someone finds the deal of a lifetime.

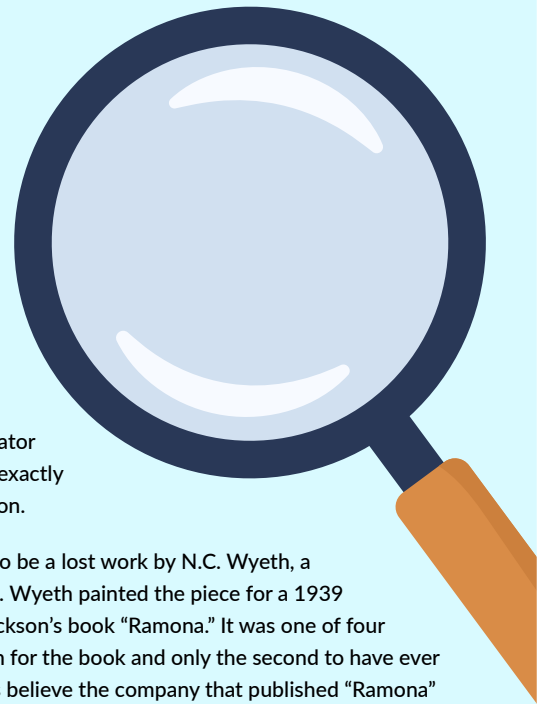
A few years ago, a woman was walking through Savers thrift shop in Manchester, NH, searching for frames she could reuse when a painting caught her eye. She brought it to the front of the shop and paid a whopping \$4 for the frame and painting. She took her new artwork home and tried to find more information online to no avail. She liked the painting enough to hang it on her bedroom wall but took it down a few years later and stored it in her attic.

The painting sat in the attic for another few years until the owner stumbled upon it during spring cleaning. This time, she was determined to find answers. She snapped a few pictures of the painting and posted them on a Facebook

group dedicated to helping people discover information about found items. Her efforts proved fruitful, and a curator contacted her to tell her exactly what was in her possession.

The painting turned out to be a lost work by N.C. Wyeth, a prolific artist from Maine. Wyeth painted the piece for a 1939 edition of Helen Hunt Jackson's book "Ramona." It was one of four paintings made by Wyeth for the book and only the second to have ever been discovered. Experts believe the company that published "Ramona" gave the artwork to an editor or the author's estate.

At the time of writing this article, the painting is going to auction, with the auction house estimating that it will bring in \$150,000-\$250,000. Not a bad outcome for a \$4 purchase.



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ANSWER



INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs ground beef
- 6 cups water
- 1 28-oz can tomato sauce
- 1 28-oz can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 2 cups chopped green peppers
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp beef bouillon granules
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 2 cups cooked long-grain rice
- Chopped fresh parsley (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. In a Dutch oven over medium heat, cook beef until no longer pink, breaking it into crumbles; drain. Add beef back to the pot and stir in all ingredients except the cooked rice. Bring to a boil.
2. Reduce heat. Simmer uncovered until peppers are tender, about 30 minutes.
3. Add cooked rice and simmer, uncovered, for about 10 minutes. If desired, sprinkle with chopped fresh parsley.

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HANG ON — THE FBI ROBBED A BANK?

THE STORY BEHIND A MIND-BLOWING CALIFORNIA RAID

"This was the largest armed robbery in United States history, and it was committed by the FBI."

That jaw-dropping statement came from Robert Frommer, an attorney representing several hundred people whose safe deposit boxes were emptied during an FBI raid in 2021.

The story is wild from start to finish. On that fateful day in March, armed FBI agents stormed a California strip mall and burst into a U.S. Private Vaults bank branch. They searched 1,400 safe deposit boxes and confiscated the contents of many of them — making off with roughly \$86 million, plus valuable collectibles like coins, gold, and jewelry.

Why would the agency do this? Well, after a two-year investigation, the FBI suspected U.S. Private Vaults was catering to drug dealers and other criminals hiding cash in Los Angeles. So, the agency obtained a warrant and raided the bank to look for proof.

And apparently, they found it. After the raid, U.S. Private Vaults pleaded guilty to conspiracy to launder drug money and closed its doors for good. However, that wasn't the end of the saga.

Remember attorney Robert Frommer? Roughly 400 people who kept their money at U.S. Private Vaults hired him to get the contents of their safe deposit boxes back from the FBI. They said they weren't criminals and wanted their money back.

One of those people was Joseph Ruiz, who lost \$57,000 in savings during the FBI raid. He filed a lawsuit, claiming the raid was unconstitutional. When the FBI accused Ruiz of making his money through illegal drug sales, Ruiz showed proof of his income, and in August 2021, the FBI agreed to return his funds.

However, not every U.S. Private Vaults customer has been so lucky. In September 2022, a judge ruled that the FBI raid was legal under civil forfeiture laws and dismissed the depositors' class-action lawsuit. An FBI spokesperson also said the agency was putting a process in place to return items to innocent owners, but as of March 2023, at least one person still claimed she hadn't gotten her money back — even though she wasn't criminally charged.

If this story ever becomes a Hollywood movie, we'll be first in line at the box office.

