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## Bon Appétit

Kristine Hayes Nibler

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# Bon Appétit : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Friday January 26, 2024

## Bon Appétit

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By Kristine Hayes Nibler

I come from a long line of culinary–challenged women.

So when I heard about meal kits I was intrigued.

The meal kit company promised I could make a gourmet dinner in the comfort of my own home.

No cooking skills required.

I ordered a kale and sweet potato pizza kit.

The photos made it look amazing.

And big.

I forked out \$29 and waited for the kit to be delivered.

When it arrived, I was disappointed.

Because the packaging weighed more than the ingredients.

My 'delightfully delicate pizza crust' contained approximately two tablespoons of flour.

My 'robust Italian pizza sauce' was the size of a McDonald's catsup packet.

The instructions assured me everything I needed was included in the box.

Everything except a dictionary.

The first step instructed me to chiffonade the 0.0002 ounce piece of basil included in the kit.

Chiffonade?

I want to cook a meal, not play *Jeopardy*.

"I'll take obscure French cooking terms for \$1000."

The meal kits my mom used when I was a kid were a lot simpler.

Most of them had two ingredients.

Macaroni and cheese.

Hamburger and helper.

Two ingredient kits did not require chiffonading.

Many times they didn't even require cooking.

The ingredients *did* have exotic names.

Like processed orange non-dairy cheese product powder.

For the first 18 years of my life, the only cheese I knew came in two forms.

Powdered and squeeze.

The only potatoes I knew came out of a box.

Unlike the cereal of my childhood, there were never any toys inside boxes of instant mashed potatoes.

Which is too bad because they were a staple in our house.

The first time I saw a real potato was when I went to a friend's house for Thanksgiving.

When I was 26 years old.

My mom tried to follow the food pyramid guidelines.

The one that said children should eat a variety of foods as part of a well-balanced diet.

Mom knew dinner should consist of a protein, a vegetable and a dairy product.

So we had hot dogs topped with instant mashed potatoes and Cheez Whiz.

I wonder how much taller I would have been if I hadn't been malnourished since infancy.

My grandma struggled with cooking as well.

My grandma only made one kind of pie.

Burnt.

She didn't even make them.

She bought them.

Mrs. Smith's frozen pumpkin pie was a Thanksgiving meal tradition.

But not the kind of tradition anyone looks forward to.

Grandma's oven, circa 1918, had just two temperatures: "Surface of the Sun" and "Off."

Our dessert choice wasn't "with or without ice cream."

It was "frozen or burnt."

My grandma may not have been a pie grandma.

But she was a borscht grandma.

When you're a kid, you'd rather have a pie grandma instead of a beet soup grandma.

Because it's hard to entice your friends to come to your house and eat beets.

Whether they're in soup or not.

As for my chef skills?

Let's just say my meal kit pizza didn't look quite like the photo that accompanied it.

Still, improvements are being made each generation.

Fewer beets.

Less burning.

Bon appétit.

—Kristine Hayes Nibler

Kristine Hayes retired in 2022. She lives with her husband and their four dogs just outside of Phoenix, Arizona. She spends her days writing and training the dogs in disobedience.