

# Recipe of Love



Jeannie Woo

## PREFACE

The simple recipes that I have compiled in this book have won the hearts of my grandchildren. The book will not make it to the top culinary award nomination because I do not intend for it to head that way. Instead I wish to share it with you, with the hope it will kindle your desire to get into the kitchen, to try your hand at making a difference in preparing a family meal.

Cooking does not involve much - just skilful hands and a creative mind. The trick is in cultivating the love and desire to cook for the enjoyment of the family. I know of someone who had never boiled a pot of rice, but out of necessity, had to experiment and perfect the skill of getting rice cooked to the desired texture. In the process, he found that regardless of the size of the pot, the level of water should just be one centimetre above the rice to obtain the best results. If you have been in a similar situation trying over and over again to perfect a dish and wondering how to add variety to your meals, you are in good company to read on.

Lucy, a friend who has tried some of the recipes I shared with her, has given me positive feedback. Through her encouragement, I have compiled these recipes to share with cooking enthusiasts who aspire to cook with love and for loved ones. I hope mums and dads; grandmas and grandpas too, will find the recipes worthy of their efforts when cooking for the family. Eating together will spawn family bonding and hopefully grandparents' and parents' home cooking will be what the younger generations will yearn to come home for.

**HAPPY COOKING!**

# LOVE

Love has no other desire

but to fulfill itself.

To melt and be like a

running brook

That sings its melody to the night.

To wake at dawn

with a winged heart

And give thanks for another

day of LOVING.

- Kahlil Gibran

## FAMILY BONDING

Family bonding is important for nurturing the young. Three generations can do many things together; eating a meal, going on holidays, going to church and even sitting down to discussing sports results are all occasions of sharing.

My three grandchildren relate with me very well. We enjoy many hours of togetherness trying our hands at making cookies, checking out our talents in art work, solving mathematical problems, discussing the Sunday church readings and thanking God for His abundance before our meals. At least once a year, my son Gavin would plan a holiday for the whole family. We would gladly take the opportunity to relax and build ties.

Bonding is more rewarding when through siblings it also transcends their families as I experience with my sisters and Anthony's siblings. We are often in contact which is easy in Singapore, showing concern and giving each other support and help when faced with difficulties.



*Being together in Tokyo June 2010*



*Bonding with my sisters & their families*



## MORE FAMILY PHOTOS



7th Aug 2005 - Gavin & family visit us at Huiyang in GuangDong Province, outside the village Roman Catholic Church, after Mass.



10th June 2010 - With Anthony, Dean, Troy and Leah in Sheraton Hotel mini golf course, Tokyo.



Gavin & Chai Hean hosting 2010 X'mas dinner for her siblings and relatives at home.

## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

My mum and dad had always been great cooks. Mum's ayam buah keluak, itek tim, raw fish salad, sambal prawn rice, babi ponteh and fish maw soup were some of our favourite dishes. We looked forward to every Chinese New Year's reunion dinner for the very special treat. The food spread was not only wide but delicious and prepared with tender loving care.

Dad baked well. His pineapple tarts and kueh bangkit were well received by us as well as by friends and relatives. He would pick seaweed from the sea and then sun it to make agar-agar delights which were his specialty. It was tedious and time consuming but Dad would laboriously take the trouble to prepare them to perfection and present them as gifts to friends and relatives.



10th Nov 1963 - With Mum, Dad and Sisters on my 21st birthday

## CHAPTER 2 - TROY'S HEALTH

Two of my four sisters, Jess and Jasmin and I took Domestic Science as one of our 'O' Level subjects. We did well; especially Jess, who scored a distinction. She became a Home Economics teacher. My youngest sister, Janice, is also a great cook.

My late father-in-law did us proud with his roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. His roast pork with its crackling skin and apple sauce was really a treat. All his skills at cooking and baking were self taught. I remember my husband relating to me his father's determination to provide for his family during the Japanese occupation in Singapore. He baked cup cakes and peddled them through the kampongs to earn a meager living for his family of five; not that many people had enough banana notes to exchange for cup cakes. These were treats that few could afford.

Overall I can say the love for cooking and baking runs in our family.



*Dad, Mum & Sisters, circa 1960*

In September 2007, Troy, my grandson, came down with fever for a few days. Then the worst news hit us. He was diagnosed with leukemia. Our world collapsed! We agonised over what wrong we had done to deserve this ill fortune. Nothing could be worse than this to befall on our beloved Troy. Whilst his parents made it a point to give Troy the best medical care, the family prayed to God for His protection. Dean, being elder brother, earnestly prayed for Troy's speedy recovery at every prayer time.

The months following saw us placing our hope and drawing strength from God. We would do everything and more for Troy's well-being. We also placed our trust in the professionalism of the doctors and nurses.

Troy was in and out of hospital keeping doctor's appointments, doing blood tests and undergoing chemotherapy. For him it was a very painful regime, having to put up with side effects like nausea and vomiting.

So as not to compromise his low immunity, we decided to confine him to home-cooked meals as far as possible. At times, Troy would look longingly at his favourite hawker food which he knew was tabooed. We were very sorry for him. His siblings rallied and denied themselves sumptuous local fare many a time so as not to make him feel deprived. Even when we ate at carefully selected restaurants, we would be equipped with our own sterilised crockery and cutlery for Troy.

Obviously, the better option for Troy would be to cook and eat at home as much as possible. Thus began our journey to prepare recipes of love for Troy. Chai Hean, Troy's devoted mum, ploughed through cook books and searched the internet for interesting yet nourishing dishes to maintain Troy's good appetite. He would ask for chicken satay, char siew paus, siew mai, fish and chips and many other dishes. We tried our hands at satay, carefully selecting the appropriate seasoning each time before finally perfecting the recipe after a few trials.



I worked up my imagination and came up with creative dishes to whet his appetite. Troy was of course participative in selecting recipes he fancied. Whenever convenient, I would get the three grandchildren involved in the preparation of the dishes. With much excitement, they would creatively present whatever they made and reserve special portions for their grandpa and favourite aunt.

Amongst the three grandchildren, Dean, the eldest, does not show any interest in selecting dishes for a meal. Even on occasions when the family dines out, Dean is not one who will be putting forth his choice of food. He would, however, delight us with his expression of appreciation, and he has not missed a single occasion to thank his mummy or me for the delicious food that is served. For Dean every meal is the best he has ever tasted.

It was more than a year later that Troy's condition was stable enough for him to start formal education at the commencement of the school year in primary one. To help his peers understand his condition and needs, the Cancer Society sent social workers to give talks to his class; explaining the problem children with leukemia face and how they have to avoid exposure to the risk of all infections. He had a wonderful class teacher who was very understanding and caring. She was very protective of Troy's well-being whilst in school. Through her kind attitude and role model, Troy's classmates rallied to show their concern and support for Troy. They cooperated very well to keep their distance whenever they were under the weather.

Every day for his recess, Chai Hean would bring home-cooked food for Troy, instead of buying snacks from the canteen. We were not taking any chances and followed his doctor's advice to the letter. Every recess found Troy with a few of his friends eating at a table. They never ceased to wonder at the variety of specially cooked food Troy was enjoying every school day.



*Dean, Troy and Leah at work*

## CHAPTER 3 - RECIPES OF LOVE

There are a few dishes Dean, Troy and Leah enjoy the most. Chai Hean and I have painstakingly perfected these recipes to tantalise the children's taste buds. Out of habit, one of them would always pose the question, "What is cooking?" When told of what was coming up, there would always be an exclamation of delight. Such encouragement, both Chai Hean and I never failed to enjoy.

We cooked, tested and refined the recipes to our satisfaction before we compiled them into this book. For health purposes, I have always insisted on using the best and freshest ingredients and the best cooking method such as baking instead of deep frying. Baked food tastes as good as deep fried food, if not better. The proof is in the eating. It gives me more pleasure to see my family enjoy a healthy home-cooked meal than eating the finest cuisine at a restaurant.

My simple approach is not to be very precise in defining the amount of salt, sauce, sugar and any other seasoning in my recipes. It gets to be too tiresome to state these in definite measures. You develop a knack for doing it right according to the taste of your family members and their feedback.



## SALMON SURPRISE

### Ingredients

- 10 thin slices of deboned salmon
- 200 g minced pork
- 2 water chestnut-chopped fine
- Grated cheese
- Pepper
- Soya sauce

### Method

1. Mix the minced pork and the chopped water chestnut.
2. Add a little soya sauce and pepper. Make into 10 balls.
3. Wrap the salmon slices round the minced pork balls. Secure the salmon ends with a toothpick.
4. Spread grated cheese over the salmon wraps.
5. Switch on the oven and heat to about 375°F.
6. Put the salmon wraps in baking cups and bake for 15 minutes.



Leah's Favourite Dish

## FRIED RICE-O-FISH

### Ingredients

- 200 g salmon, or Cod fish deboned and sliced
- Chopped spring onions
- Cooked Rice (about 2 rice bowls )
- Onions
- 2 eggs
- Garlic - chopped
- 2 tablespoons of chopped chye poh (preserved vegetable)\*
- Pepper

\*Chye poh is salty. Rinse and squeeze dry to remove salt.

### Method

1. Steam salmon or cod fish for 10 minutes.
2. Fry chopped garlic till slightly brown.
3. Add chopped onions and chye poh to fried garlic.
4. Add in salmon or cod fish.
5. Add in the cooked rice.
6. Beat the eggs and then add to the rice.
7. Add salt and pepper to taste, be mindful that the chye poh is salty.
8. Add in the spring onions.



*Delicious treat*

Troy craves to eat this dish since he acquired the taste. I have also given this recipe to a few of my close friends to cook this dish for their grandchildren. The feedback I received makes my day!



## HAIRY GOURD GOODNESS

### Ingredients

- 1 green hairy gourd
- 200 g minced chicken
- 2 water chestnuts
- 1 onion
- A few prawns
- Pepper
- Salt
- Oyster sauce

### Method

1. Cut hairy gourd into 6 pieces. Cut the edges in a zig zag pattern.
2. Steam for a few minutes and leave to cool.
3. Chop water chestnut and onion.
4. Mix the minced chicken with the chopped chestnut and onion.
5. Add pepper, salt and oyster sauce to taste.
6. Scoop a little pulp off each piece to form a cup.
7. Fill this cup with the minced chicken.
8. Top the filling with a prawn.
9. Steam till the chicken is cooked.



*What a Dish!*

Instead of hairy gourd, old cucumber could be substituted. Minced pork or minced beef could also be used instead of minced chicken.

## SAUCY CHICKEN THIGHS

### Ingredients

- 6 to 8 chicken drumsticks
- A tin of button mushrooms
- A tin of Campbell chicken soup or mushroom soup
- 2 carrots
- Green peas
- Salt
- Pepper

### Method

1. Steam the chicken thighs or drumsticks for 10 minutes.
2. Cut carrot into cubes and steam.
3. Cut button mushrooms into slices.
4. Pour Campbell chicken or mushroom soup into a pot and put in the steamed chicken.
5. Cook for a few minutes and then add the button mushrooms, carrots and green peas.
6. Add salt and pepper to taste.



*Saucy, you bet!*

Some people prefer chicken breast meat which is healthier instead of chicken drumsticks or thighs.

## CABBAGE ROLLS JOYS

### Ingredients

- 10 pieces of cabbage leaves
- 200 g minced pork
- 5 medium-sized prawns
- 2 water chestnuts
- A carrot
- A big onion
- Oyster sauce
- Soya sauce
- Salt

### Method

1. Blanch the cabbage leaves in a pot of boiling water for a while to soften them.
2. Shell and chop the prawns.
3. Mix minced pork, prawns, chopped onion and water chest nut, soya sauce, pepper and oyster sauce.
4. Take a piece of cabbage leaf and fill it up with the minced pork and form a roll.
5. Steam till cooked.



*Yummy! Yummy!*

Minced chicken or beef instead of pork can be the alternative.

A sauce of crab meat, egg white and cornstarch could be poured over the cabbage rolls.

## CHEEZY BAKED POTATO PIES

### Ingredients

- 4 medium sized potatoes
- 200 g minced beef
- A tin of button mushrooms
- 2 hard boiled eggs
- A big onion chopped
- Grated Cheese
- Butter
- Oyster sauce

### Method

1. Boil potatoes till soft.
2. Mash it. Add a teaspoon of butter and stir.
3. Cut boiled eggs into slices.
4. Slice button mushrooms.
5. Fry the minced beef, add in chopped onions and button mushrooms.
6. Add oyster sauce to the minced beef mixture.
7. Put the beef mixture at the bottom of a casserole.
8. Spread the mashed potato over the beef mixture.
9. Top up with grated cheese.
10. Bake for 15 minutes.



*Potato Pies Pick*

The cheesy taste makes this dish unique and popular with the children. It is also a wholesome meal for lunch.



## CRISPY CEREAL PRAWNS

### Ingredients

- 600g big prawns
- One packet cereal prawn mix
- One tablespoonful butter
- Curry leaves
- One big red chilly

### Method

1. Fry prawns till cooked
2. Put a tablespoonful butter into the wok
3. Fry the cereal prawn mix and curry leaves
4. Add in the cooked prawns and stir for 2 minutes.

This is perhaps not too unfamiliar with people dining in a Chinese restaurant in Singapore or Malaysia. I have tried preparing it when I lived in China, with ingredients brought over from Singapore on my regular home trips. The recipe turned out to be a great hit with most people and of course, with fellow Singaporeans who were our neighbours, or who were visiting.

The skilful part is to retain the freshness of the prawns and avoid destroying the crispy feel of the cereal. It all has to do with the right cooking temperature, light handed stirring and not over cooking the prawns.



*Packed cereal is sold in packs at wet market stalls*



*Curry leaf flavoured prawns*

# PORKY PORK

## Ingredients

- 500 g pork
- 2 potatoes
- 2 large onions
- Green peas
- Oyster sauce

## Method

1. Slice pork into thin slices.
2. Season with pepper, oyster sauce and soya sauce.
3. Slice potatoes and onions into thin slices.
4. Fry pork in a little oil and set aside.
5. Fry potatoes, browning each side.
6. Fry onions. Add in green peas, potatoes and sliced pork.



*Looks good*

# TAUHU TOP

## Ingredients

- 10 pieces of fishcake- tauhu ( small, oval shape)
- 200 g minced pork
- 3 water chestnuts
- 1 big onion
- Oyster sauce
- Pepper
- Egg white
- Tapioca flour
- Corn flour

## Method

1. Cut each piece of fishcake-tauhu into halves.
2. Chop the onion and water chestnuts into small pieces.
3. Mix the minced pork with pepper, chopped onion, water chestnut and oyster sauce.
4. Rub each piece of tauhu with corn flour. Top it with a small ball of minced pork.
5. Dip in beaten egg white and toss in a plate of tapioca flour.
6. Heat oil and deep fry the tauhu till brown.

Tapioca Starch



Fish cake tauhu



Everybody' favourite



# MEE GORENG ISTIMEWA

## Ingredients

- 500 g yellow noodles
- 2 potatoes
- 2 tomatoes
- 2 pieces fishcake, sliced
- 1 big piece of tauguh
- 2 eggs
- 1 big onion
- 2 cloves of garlic
- Tomato sauce
- Oyster sauce
- Green chili
- Curry leaves

## Method

1. Boil potatoes and cut into small cubes.
2. Cut tauguh into small cubes and fry.
3. Cut tomatoes into small cubes.
4. Fry chopped garlic till slightly brown.
5. Add in yellow tauguh, tomatoes, onion slices, curry leaves, green chili, noodles and fishcake slices.
6. Add in tomato sauce and oyster sauce.
7. Add in the beaten eggs.

In Malay Istimewa means special. The specials in this dish are the green chili and curry leaves. These give the mee goreng the very local flavour.



*Skilful hands to keep noodle strands from breaking to pieces*



*Mee Goreng Istimewa – Proof is in the eating*



## A POT OF GOLD

### Ingredients

- Half a sharkfins melon
- Crab meat
- Enoki Mushrooms
- 6 big prawns
- 6 scallops
- One piece chicken drumstick
- Salt
- Pepper

### Method

1. Cut the edge of the melon in a serrated manner.
2. Steam the melon for 10 minutes.
3. Fill it up with crab meat, fresh scallops, chicken pieces, prawns and enoki mushrooms.
4. Steam till melon is soft.
5. Chicken stock can be added if you want some soup.



*A Pot of Gold – Imperial goodness*

For the festive season like Chinese New Year, baby abalone, sea cucumber, fish maw and dried black mushrooms could be added.

## THAI SALAD SENSATION

### Ingredients

- One packet jellyfish
- One big cuttlefish
- One yellow capsicum
- One small cucumber
- One carrot
- 5 limes (limau kasturi)
- 5 pickled garlic
- One red chilli
- Fish sauce
- One teaspoon sugar
- Mint leaves

### Method

1. Steam cuttlefish and cut into thin rings
2. Cut carrot, pickled garlic, capsicum and cucumber into thin strips
3. Mix jellyfish, cuttlefish, carrot, pickled garlic, cucumber, capsicum together
4. Squeeze the lime into the mixture
5. Add sugar and fish sauce
6. To add flavour, add some mint leaves.

Limau kasturi and mint leaves give this dish a mystic Thai flavour.



*Thai Salad - Simply sensational*

Tanghoon ( rice vermicelli) could be boiled and added to this dish.  
Chilly padi (bird's eye chilly) give this dish a kick to the palate.

## BRINJAL BAGUS

### Ingredients

- 1 brinjal
- 1 large onion
- Sambal

### Method

1. Cut brinjal into rings of about 1cm thick.
2. Cut onion into thin rings.
3. Fry onion with the sambal. Set it aside.
4. Fry the brinjal slices. Browning on both sides.
5. Top the fried brinjal with the sambal onion.



*Brinjal Bagus - Dean's favourite Dish*

Credit is due to Siti, our domestic help who not only turn out a wonderful meal to the delight of the children, but also skillfully arranged the display giving the dish the touch of finesse.

## SEDAP FRIED CHICKEN

### Ingredients

- 1 chicken about 2 kg
- 1 red capsicum
- 1 yellow capsicum
- Curry leaves
- Corn flour
- Oyster sauce

### Method

1. Chop chicken into bite size.
2. Season with pepper, soya sauce and oyster sauce.
3. Coat chicken with corn flour. Deep fry chicken pieces.
4. Fry garlic till brown. Add in curry leaves and capsicum slices.
5. Add in the fried pieces of chicken and stir well.



*Sedap Fried Chicken - taste & tell*

## LONG BEAN TWIRLS

### Ingredients

- 10 pieces of long beans
- Minced pork /chicken
- 1 water chestnut - chopped
- Caviar
- Oyster sauce
- Pepper

### Method

1. Steam long beans till soft.
2. Twirl the long beans into the number 8 or circles.
3. Mix minced pork with water chestnut, oyster sauce and pepper.
4. Fill up or top long beans with minced pork or chicken.
5. Add a pinch of caviar and steam.



Long Bean Twirls

## TOMATO FILLER

### Ingredients

- 4 large tomatoes
- 200 g minced pork
- Oyster sauce
- 1 water chestnut
- 1 large onion

### Method

1. Chop onion and water chestnut into tiny pieces.
2. Mix into minced pork. Add oyster sauce and a dash of pepper.
3. Cut a hole in the tomatoes and dig out some pulp.
4. Fill up the tomatoes with the minced pork.
5. Steam for 10 minutes.



Tomato Filler - Troy shares the same liking as grandpa in many kinds of food.



## KEBAB KENDURI

Kebab creations are the most enjoyable activity to get the grandchildren involved in. It is a very simple process where enjoyment and creativity come hand in hand. Let me describe the ingredients to use and the procedure to follow.

Capsicum, mushrooms, onions, cherry tomatoes, young corn, brinjal and cucumber are some of the vegetables we can use.

Pork, mutton, chicken, ham, sausages, veal and quail eggs can be the source of protein for the young kids.

Cut the meat into bite sized cubes but not so small that it will burn before the vegetables are cooked; and season them with sesame oil, oyster sauce, pepper, soya sauce and a pinch of salt. The general rule is to cut the meat smaller than the vegetables so that they will cook at the same time. Skewer assortment of vegetables alternating with cubes of meat. Allow the kids to create their own kebab and explain their combination of meat and vegetables.

Troy once told me his was a healthy vegetable kebab. Leah, on the other hand, claimed that hers was a seafood creation. Dean announced that the smooth texture of brinjal and the rough cauliflower would complement each other.

Before serving young children, remove the kebab from the skewer and slice the meat and vegetable into smaller pieces to prevent them choking whilst eating.



*Kebab Kenduri can be Kids' creations.*



*These kebabs were done by Dean, Troy and Leah.*

## CHAPTER 4 - SANDWICHES AND PANCAKES GALORE

Dean, Troy and Leah love sandwiches and pancakes for their breakfast and afternoon tea.

Pancakes are easy to prepare. Within 10 minutes, you can whip up the pancake mix and deck out pancake slabs for tea.

### BASIC RECIPE FOR PANCAKES

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup self raising flour
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- A tablespoonful butter
- A little water

#### Method

1. Mix the self-raising flour with water. Stir well to prevent lumps.
2. Add in an egg. Mix well.
3. Add in the milk.
4. Heat the pancake pan. Oil the pan with a little butter. Scoop a ladle of the pancake mix and pour it into the pan.
5. Swirl the pan to form a round thin pancake. Flip it over to brown the other side.
6. The spread can be all kinds of jam.

The grandchildren can top their pancake with their favourite spread and in any way they like.

Sandwiches can be done in the most creative form too. Let the grandchildren stretch their imagination and come up with the most creative shapes or patterns - animal form, faces, flowers and other creations.



*Sandwiches meal a healthy option*



*Pancake passion*

## CHAPTER 5 - DESSERTS

Every member of my family has a 'sweet tooth'. For them a dinner will not be complete without a dessert of one kind or other.

Agar agar delights are a universal favourite of the young as well as the not so young. It is easy to prepare too. Just buy a packet of agar agar crystals. Add sugar and pour it into a pot of boiling water. Stir till the crystals and sugar dissolve before pouring it into a jelly mould. When cool, put it into the refrigerator to chill.



*Agar Agar Delights - more than a display of colours*

To tease your taste buds, enhance the flavor of the agar agar by adding canned fruits such as longan, lychee, pineapple, mandarin orange, rambutan, fruit cocktail or aloe vera.

For a more creative concoction, I recommend the use of fresh coconut water from young coconuts to dissolve the crystals instead of plain water. Slices of young coconut kernel can also be used in the agar agar instead of the canned fruit.

Using passion fruit, kiwi fruit slices and dragon fruit cubes will break the monotony of the traditional fruits. Be bold and come up with the most fanciful ideas. I stop short of using durian and avoid being ridiculous in using cheese or green tea! I know my husband, Anthony, will grimace in protest if anyone should attempt to take fusion food to such an extreme by combining cheese with red beans and create a cheesy an pan.

For variety, santan (coconut milk) and gula Malacca (brown coconut sugar) could be used in agar agar too. These will settle into two layers when the agar agar sets. A tray of colourful agar agar pieces is a pleasing sight especially to young children. Needless to say, it will be the most popular at a party table.

Banana fritters are often my grandchildren's choice of desserts. Whenever I see pisang raja at the fruit stall, I will select a comb to take home. Ask for the comb with a large stem when buying bananas. These bananas are from the top of the bunch, bigger and sweeter and will ripen first. You know you are the first in line to pick the best when the combs displayed at the stall are only partially ripe. Leave them for two more days to ripen fully. The banana will then be soft and at its sweetest for making pisang goreng. I coat the bananas in Adabi goreng pisang flour and deep fry them. My grandchildren love the delightful combination of pisang goreng with scoops of vanilla ice cream.





*Pisang Goreng (Banana Fritter) topped with ice cream*

Pisang Raja is a 'must' for the best result in this banana fritter, or should I call it 'banana tempura' recipe. It remains in shape but oozing in fragrance and sweetness out of the crunchy batter after frying.



*Ripen pisang raja*



*Large stem at top of bunch*



*New species Pisang Raja from Joe Chee's garden*

Kueh Dada, apple cake, fanciful durian cup cakes, gula Melaka (sago) pudding and Ondeh Ondeh are all in my dessert list for the family and when we entertain guests.



## CHAPTER 6 - SIMPLE YET SPECIAL

Two simple desserts that have won praises every time they are served are the lightly pickled guava and the gula Melaka sago pudding.

### LIGHTLY PICKLED GUAVA

I chanced upon this dip which is the ultimate taste bud seducer when I was in China. Whenever we ate at the Thai restaurant, we would be on the lookout for a tray of sliced guava with the seed core removed and arranged around a bowl of dip. Guava slices coated with this dip makes a satisfying finale to a sumptuous, spicy Thai food meal.

I experimented with salted lemon peel instead of the sour plum and found it just as satisfying. Salted lemon peel can be found in the humble supermarkets in Shenzhen and Huiyang where I lived for 3 years. Whenever I visit these cities, I will stock up on lemon peel as it is very cheap compared to that sold at specialty stalls selling pickled fruits in Singapore.



Go for the Thai seedless guava at our fruit stalls. These are very crunchy, juicy and tasty.



*Lemon peel cut into strips*



*Guava sliced*



*Nobody gives this a miss at my party*

## GULA MELAKA SAGO

This very simple dessert is inexpensive to prepare. But I have a word of caution to those with cholesterol woes - it is very rich in cholesterol but it is worth dying for.

The ingredients used are sago, gula Melaka and coconut milk. In the old days, coconut milk was obtained by squeezing grated coconut. I remember my parents having to de-husk the coconut to get at the shell. Then they had to break the shell and drain away the coconut water. Half shells of coconut kernel would then be grated over a scraper and collected in a basin. The milk would have to be squeezed with bare hands into a bowl. Nowadays you can hardly find grated coconut in provision shops. But then these days, coconut milk comes ready in small cartons. I do not favour these now that a better, fresher and creamier supply comes in a pack, refrigerated and sold in the chiller section of supermarkets. The coconut milk has a limited shelf life to ensure freshness so be mindful of its expiry date.

We used to visit Malacca in Malaysia to buy our special gula Melaka which comes in short cylindrical blocks. We can now buy good gula Melaka from the Indian stallholder selling fresh curry mixes at the wet market. The gula Melaka comes in rolls. They have to be cut into pieces and melted in boiling water to make a syrup. Add a stalk of pandan leaf to enhance the fragrance of the gula Melaka syrup. Use only sufficient water so that the syrup will not be too diluted.

High end restaurants in 5-star hotels also serve this dessert. However, all that I have tasted have been rather disappointing. If the sago is not lumpy, the gula Melaka is not authentic or the coconut milk from the standard packet has been diluted. I mention unauthentic gula Melaka because I think more often than not; to cut cost the syrup is made from brown sugar.

The preparation of sago pudding has to be meticulously done to avoid lumps after cooking. Sago grains come in a plastic bag. First soak the grains for 15 minutes in a pot of tap water. After draining the water, put the sago into a pot of hot water and set it to boil until the white of the sago disappears and the grains become translucent. Pour the sago into a sieve to drain away the water. Run tap water over it until the starch is washed off. The last step is to soak the sago grains in a pot of cool boiled water for 30 minutes. Then put the sago into jelly moulds or cups and chill before serving.



*Soaking, sieving and draining are all part of the process to get special results*

## CHAPTER 7 - JESS AND JUD SESSIONS

My sago pudding fans always say, "I have never tasted sago pudding better than this." What they are trying to express is that the sago grains are not lumpy to be so well steeped in the fragrant gula Melaka and fresh coconut milk that the sweetness and 'lemak' taste give this dessert its punch.

Shiok (ecstatic feeling) and 'lemak' have no English equivalent when you describe the taste of this dessert. Suffice to say this is an Asean favourite dessert and it is appropriate to praise it using our Singapore descriptive terms of endearment.



*Ingredients for Gula Melaka Sago -  
Coconut milk is available in packs from the supermarket*

My two sisters, Jess and Jud are my grandchildren's favourite companions! Not only do they accompany them on outings to parks and beaches, they are also tutors and playmates. Once a week the grandchildren look forward to their visit to share an afternoon of learning and fun.

First they will teach Leah and then read to her. Then when Troy and Dean are back from school, they will embark on cooking activities like making pizzas, rock cakes, Thai fruit desserts and popcorn. There is never an opportunity lost for the children to enjoy a hands-on experience in kneading the dough, shaping it into floral or animal shapes and watching their handiwork baked. The story of Gingerbread Man was told to Dean, Troy and Leah at such a unique and appropriate setting.

Tea time with Jess and Jud is not only savouring rich butter cakes and cookies, but a time of love and bonding. After tea, still full of energy, my sisters will get the games going. They enjoy badminton and cycling, not leaving out hide and seek which the grandchildren insist on to round up their day's enjoyment.

Jess and Jud also shower them with incentives like, stickers, story books, jig saw puzzles and snacks. From overseas trips, they will lug back toys and clothes for them. My three grandchildren are very blessed to have the love and care of extended family members.



## CHAPTER 8 - TROY'S WISH



*Jud and Leah studying – What's that word?*



*Cooking is part of day's learning*

The Singapore Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF) runs a program known as 'Make a Wish' for children going through treatment for cancer. This program works hand in hand with sponsors in making children's wishes come true. Children may wish for a lap top computer, visit a place they very much want to, or anything else they have always wanted but do not have the means. Volunteers from the Foundation came to our home to grant Troy his wish. Troy is a wrestling fan. When given a chance he would ask to meet a famous wrestler. This of course was a difficult task for the Foundation to fulfill. His next option was to be a sushi chef. This was rather unusual but the Foundation was delighted to oblige.

On 7 May 2008, the 'Make a Wish' volunteers organised this special event and made it a memorable one for Troy, as well as 25 family members and friends who witnessed and enjoyed Troy's wish being fulfilled. Troy had a first-hand experience working out in full uniform complete with chef's cap, rolling out Japanese delicacies as a Top Sushi Chef. The boss of Dozo, the Japanese Restaurant, and his staff were enthusiastically helpful in making the occasion a wonderful experience for Troy. They showed him the finer points in not only preparing the food but also laying out the table, Japanese style. We were very proud of Troy as he took everything in with full concentration. His hard work and creation deserved our praise as we tucked into a delicious lunch.

Our gratitude goes to the couple who sponsored the whole event. The volunteers from the CCF laboriously decorated and displayed poems, articles and photographs of Troy in one section of the restaurant. These young men and woman are dedicated individuals who through their generosity and care, organised a very well thought out and wonderful programme which certainly made Troy's Day.

Memories of this happy and delightful event have been captured in some of the following photographs.





*Troy donning the chef paraphernalia to prepare sushi*



*Chai Hean and children checking out what is more in the menu*



*Troy with 'Make a Wish' volunteers*

## CHAPTER 9 - FUN- FILLED OCCASION

I believe in providing children with happy memories of their childhood years. What occasion could be more opportune than to do this on Children's Day! On 1 October 2009, I organised a party for my grandchildren. Each of them invited a couple of friends to enjoy the day with them.

The very rare treat of a trishaw ride was a must. I went about searching; yes, you guessed it right; in the internet for trishaw rental operators. The search was not very rewarding. Trishaw associations catered to the tourists and were simply not interested in private rentals. Through persistent enquiries, we found a tour agent with a contact. He was the Good Samaritan. The fee was agreed upon and I crossed my fingers that the trishaw man would find his way to where we live without any problem. I was, of course, concerned that the poor man would have to pedal from his normal plying area to our house which is at least 10 kilometres away! I made another trip to the tour agent to show my sincerity in the deal. I harboured the anxiety right up to the day when my grandchildren's guests started to arrive. To create some excitement and suspense, they were told that a very special treat awaited them.

Bursting with anticipation, we took a walk down the road. Turning a bend, lo and behold, the wonderful sight of the traditional old man pedaling his trishaw confidently towards us, greeting us. A display of emotional relief could well topple the old man off his perch if we had attempted to hug him. The children were overwhelmed with excitement as the pleasant and patient trishaw rider plied them round the housing estate.

I had also other programs to delight the children. Whilst some went on the trishaw ride, the rest prepared their own breakfast. Jess and Jud were at hand to grace the occasion and help the children as they created and prepared their breakfast which included siew mai and wantons. My daughter-in-law guided those who wanted to make sandwiches. I assisted those trying their hands at pancakes and jellies.

Each child had obediently brought a gift to exchange with another. Amidst the chattering and giggling, surprises were unwrapped. The parents were at hand to lend joy and loving care as well as take in the wonderful experience. Nothing could be more meaningful than to give and receive. Although it is my nature to give, I believe that I had certainly received the most satisfaction imparting joy and happiness that Children's Day.



*Breakfast Time!*





*Breakfast Spread*



*Ride of a life time!*

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My special thanks go to Betty Lee from whom I have the honour of lasting friendship. We were classmates from Primary One to Secondary Four. We were also colleagues teaching in the Anglo Chinese Primary School for more than 30 years! Betty edited the script so wonderfully that not a word was left out of her critical sight. I am fortunate to have her input in making this book my prized possession.

Many friends have prayed for Troy's recovery from his illness. The Rosary Group, after the daily morning Mass at the St Ignatius Church, devoutly sought Mother Mary's intercession to Jesus to extend His healing hands to Troy. Jess and Judy in their Church Cell Group have done likewise praying for Troy. To them all, my family and I owe our eternal gratitude.

Theresa Doraisamy (Father Raj's mother) and Mabel Yong, the two very kind ladies reassured me without fail that Troy's wellbeing was always in their prayers. For your kindness ladies, many thanks!

Many thanks indeed to you all for your caring friendship and concern. Thanks be to God that Troy is now well and has blossomed into a gentle and caring person too!

Jeannie Woo, Dec 2010



# Recipe of Love

