



A LIFE WELL FED
Recipes to Remember

Confessions from a Pantry

Volume 8: November 18, 2024

Happy Fall!



Lexi - 13, Cole - 2, Ali - 10, Jack - 11, Taylor - 3

Dear Friend,

In 1984, I moved to Covington, Louisiana, where I learned that food is more than just sustenance. The blend of French, Spanish, African, and Indigenous cultures creates a cuisine full of bold flavors, with every meal celebrating this unique heritage. Louisianans have a special word for this spirit of hospitality:

lagniappe (pronounced "lan-yap"), meaning "a little something extra." Whether it's an unexpected gift from a friend, a small token from a merchant, or an extra pastry, *lagniappe* expresses true hospitality. I LOVE this word and have embraced its meaning throughout my life—may you, too, share a little something extra with those you love.

Recipe of the Month



Maple Dijon Vinaigrette

Apples and maple syrup are the perfect pairing for fall. The tartness of apples is a wonderful balance to the rich, earthy flavor of pure maple syrup. This month, I'm sharing one of the secrets in my pantry used in many of my favorite recipes.

[Get Recipe](#)

A Little Something Extra...

While we're on the subject of apples, maple syrup, and my favorite word, here's a little *lagniappe* from me to you. Enjoy!

Maple Candied Bacon



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Maple Cider Side Car



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Seasonal Changes and Sundowning

Fall is here, bringing cooler temperatures and shorter days. For most of us, as daylight fades earlier, our daily routines often shift, inviting us to slow down and prepare for the winter months ahead.

For those with Alzheimer's, shorter days can trigger a state of confusion that begins in the late afternoon and extends into the evening. The transition from daylight to evening can bring anxiety, aggression, or refusal to follow directions, and may also lead to pacing or wandering. This increased state of confusion is known as "sundowning." Two out of three people living with dementia suffer from sundowning. And although it can happen at any stage of the disease, it's most common in the middle stages, and tends to dissipate in the late stages. Whatever stage your loved one is experiencing, there are a few things you can do to minimize the disruption:

- **Create a calming evening routine and limit stimulating activities** by reducing noise and minimizing commotion, large gatherings, and complex tasks.

- **Allow as much natural light in the home during the day** and maintain a well-lit home as the afternoon fades. Research also shows that red or near-infrared light therapy has shown encouraging results in Alzheimer's patients, including improved cognitive function, reduced anxiety, decreased wandering, and better sleep.
- **Proper rest and nutrition throughout the day**, reducing or eliminating caffeine and sugar, will also help with the symptoms of sundowning.

Most importantly, never underestimate the power of human touch. Consider a hand or foot massage to relax tense muscles and increase feel-good hormones, or a warm footbath with herbs and essential oils massaged into their hands and feet. Lavender, rose, ylang-ylang, chamomile, frankincense and other essential oils can help create a soothing environment with a diffuser, or a simple cotton ball for deep breathing.

These moments can be frustrating and will truly test a saint's patience. Consult your doctor about natural remedies like melatonin and herbal supplements, as well as prescription options that are available. To learn more about sundowning, here are two helpful articles from the [Alzheimer's Association](#) and [Mayo Clinic](#).

My Journey



Dad's Day Weekend, Oklahoma State University, 1976

Both of my parents experienced moments of sundowning. My father, living alone in Arizona, often called his children in the late afternoon, often agitated and confused about his finances. His fixation on his checking account raised red flags. To say he was resistant to a change in lifestyle would be an understatement. It was the beginning of a long, challenging journey to create a care plan that would keep him safe while honoring his wishes.

Eventually, both parents were living in memory care which managed sundowning episodes, often implementing quiet hours and routines to reduce symptoms. My mother's sundowning was typically marked by repetitive phone calls and disrupted sleep, like the time she called my sister at 2 a.m., ready to go to church. Every day around 5 p.m., my phone would ring, and within days, I knew each call would start with the same question. Her mood was melancholy, and she would start the conversation with, "I've been thinking...what do you think about me going to live with your dad?" Ughhh, I could hear the heartache in her voice. Though they were

estranged for nearly 15 years, they never divorced, and my mother held onto the hope that one day they would live together again. The first call caught me off guard as she tearfully made her case, and I struggled to hold back my tears. I would do my best to give her my opinion, while gently steering the conversation elsewhere. For a long time, she would ask the same question at the same time every day. I learned to respond with gentle reassurance, offering logical reasons why she was better off in her new home. Each call ended with her saying, “You’re right, I live the life of Riley”—until the next time the phone rang.

Ignoring the phone calls wasn’t easy, but I knew they were safe, and that was what mattered most. I had to allow myself grace, recognizing that my well-being was important too. But there was always one phone call I eagerly anticipated every year—the Happy Birthday call from my mom and dad. In 2015, my dad sang his usual birthday wish. By late afternoon, still no call from my mom, so I decided to give her a call. After a few minutes of idle chit-chat, I playfully said, “Gee, Mom, can you believe it’s May 19th and summer is almost here!” After a few more gentle hints, it became clear she no longer remembered. I ended the call and began to sob. That moment marked the first time I truly grieved what was happening to my mother. The cruelty of this hideous disease had just stolen my favorite birthday gift of all, and I knew I would never hear those words again. That call was the first of many painful moments in a very long goodbye.



Get Ready for What's Next!

The season for giving is here, and I have an exciting treat for you in next month’s issue! I asked friends and neighbors to share their favorite foodie gifts they’ve received from me, and the results are in. The top three were clear winners and absolute standouts that are as thoughtful as they are delicious. These edible gifts are guaranteed to delight! No re-gifting at a Santa Exchange, no banishment to the back of a closet, and definitely no trips to the trash. Best of all, your friends will think you’ve spent hours in the kitchen...but between us, the secret is how incredibly easy they are to make. Stay tuned—you won’t want to miss this!

Until next time, I wish you health, happiness, and a life well fed.



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