

**SABOR DA
SAÚDE**

Sabor da Saudade

National Movement of Families of Missing Persons

Regional Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay

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*“Saudade” is a unique Portuguese word that describes deep emotional longing or nostalgia, often for something or someone that is gone, distant or missing. Because it has no true equivalent in other languages, we chose to keep the book’s title as it is.

As Brazilian musician and thinker Gilberto Gil once said, “Every saudade is the presence of someone’s absence.”

Foreword

by Marcelo Rubens Paiva

The invitation from the International Committee of the Red Cross to choose a dish that reminded us of our father provided a wonderful opportunity for me and my sisters to share memories and relive the happy times we spent together as a family. Smelling the aromas, recalling the flavours... In this way, food connects us to the past and to the people we love.

Dad was not a cook; he belonged to that generation of men who never entered the kitchen. Nevertheless, he was a true epicurean; he enjoyed good food and knew how to appreciate different flavours.

Mum, on the other hand, was an exceptional cook. When friends came over for dinner, she poured her heart and devotion into preparing the menu, turning each meal into a celebration.

When it came to choosing his favourite dish, we almost unanimously remembered that Dad loved ice cream - both of them did in fact. Dad was worried about his weight and regularly tried to diet, but he would take any excuse to go with us to Sorveteria Morais in Ipanema for ice cream at the weekend.

Simple moments that are forever etched in our memories. These sweet, tender memories inspired the creation of this recipe book. Among its pages, you will find not only the recipes that marked lives, but also a little of the history and love that each dish carries with it. We hope that when you try these recipes, you will also relive special moments and create new memories.

May this book encourage you to celebrate life, flavour and, above all, to preserve the memory of those who will not always be by our side.

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The food is ready! Come and eat!

The onion browning as it sizzles in hot oil, crushed garlic and chopped pepper clinging to our hands, sugar dissolving into syrup, eggs being beaten in the mixer. The smell of meat, seasoning and broths rising with the steam escaping from the hot pots. Sounds and smells that set off even more noise, the patter of hurried footsteps arriving and voices asking, “Are you making *that*?”

“That” was how we would refer to all of our beloved missing family members’ favourite dishes. It didn’t matter whether they were savoury or sweet; any one of them would make our mouths water with hunger, set our hearts racing from the sensation that we could hear our loved one’s voice, and even bring tears to our eyes from the longing and grief that seasons our days and nights.

Perhaps, someday, we will gather around a table to enjoy dishes many of us have not made in decades because instead of precipitating the arrival of footsteps, they remind us of those no longer by our side.

The dishes may be prepared by other skilful, loving hands still, we hope their flavours warm and comfort us, sweetening the tears that often fall from our eyes and never, ever, dry.

As mothers and fathers, grandparents, brothers and sisters, daughters and sons, and nieces and nephews, we will share a special moment, a brief pause during which we will seek, not just to remember, but to feel our loved ones close.

We would like to thank all the staff and consultants involved in this project supported by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). We are particularly grateful for the personal commitment of the members of the ICRC Brazil delegation, whose sensitivity and care went beyond simple institutional support and who devoted themselves to the task of bringing together this beautiful book from our recipes and memories. We would also like to thank the Paiva family for their availability and the care they took to write the foreword to this book, as well as Chef Rodrigo Oliveira for his careful preparation of our recipes for the book’s launch.

To all who read this book; it is our hope as family members and organizations that make up the Movimento Nacional de Familiares de Desaparecidos (National Movement of Families of the Missing) that you will savour each dish, feed your soul together with us, and perceive, in the sounds and smells of each recipe, the memories that it holds.

Some days start before the sun comes up. The sound of the kettle simmering already carries the promise of breakfast. Feet tread softly in the kitchen, careful not to wake anyone too early. Breakfast is, in itself, a forward-looking act: it prepares the body and its memories to move onward. It clothes us in its tender care.

In a similar spirit of care, we would like to make it clear that this is not quite a recipe book. It is a book with recipes, true – but each one is accompanied by real stories, told by those who are searching, those who keep hope alive, those who find in flavours a way of being present. It was born out of the crossing of our paths, our struggles and our memories.

For us, cooking is less about technique and more about connection. Less about measuring, more about intention. Less about the result, more about the gestures that make up shared moments. Our recipes are not just a record of what we ate, but of what we experienced. Each one has travelled through time and comes to us as a loving gesture.

In this chapter you will find our memories of breakfasts. In “A Plentiful Table”, we share the savoury and sweet dishes that filled our lunch tables with stories. In “Before Evening Sets In”, there are recipes for cakes, pastries and little treats to go with coffee. The book concludes with “Ending the Day”; our memories of dinnertime, when we would celebrate achievements and make plans for the following day.

The pages that follow bring together recipes recalled by those who prepared them and those for whom they were lovingly prepared. Through this collection, we hope to offer more than just a culinary catalogue: we want it to be a tool for valuing people, caring for them, listening to and recognizing them. A book where longing acquires a shape, a scent and colour, not a manual for cooking, but a map of memories.

There is no need to wait any longer; let’s start the day. Starting the day is about more than simply opening your eyes. It is about acknowledging, each morning, the importance of beginning again, and of keeping the memory of those we love alive. It is about giving meaning to time. About nourishing, with simple acts, everything that endures.

A photograph of a wooden table with a glass bottle of milk, a large pot of rice, and a small bowl of rice pudding. The scene is set in a rustic, warm environment with soft lighting. The glass bottle is on the left, filled with white milk. In the center, a large stainless steel pot contains white rice. In the foreground, a small stainless steel bowl is filled with rice pudding, resting on a light-colored cloth. A silver spoon lies on the table next to the bowl.

Rice pudding for Alison

Ingredients

- 1 teacup rice
- 2 teacups water
- 1 litre milk
- Salt or sugar to taste

Method

Put the rice and water in a saucepan. Cook over a medium heat until the water has been completely absorbed. Once the rice is cooked, add the milk and cook a little longer over a low heat, stirring occasionally, until the rice is very tender. Then, just serve, letting each person salt or sweeten the pudding according to their taste, straight on their plate. This was how I used to make it for Alison, but if you want, when adding the milk, you can enhance it with cinnamon, clove and sweetened condensed milk.

Alison was only five when he first ate rice pudding. At the time, they were all young and only my husband worked, so we didn't have money to buy bread every day. We came to live here in São Paulo, where we had no relatives. Samia and Alison started attending the municipal school, which had a milk programme. So, every month, they received milk.

One day when we had no bread and no money, I had the idea of cooking rice until it was really well soft and adding milk to it. I put the rice on their plates and whoever wanted to eat it with salt added salt, and whoever didn't, added sugar to the rice on their own plate. They were five at the time. My eldest child was living with my mother and my youngest hadn't been born yet. That is how rice pudding entered our lives. Alison liked it a lot.

From that day on, he always asked me to make it. It was no longer out of necessity. It was just because he really liked rice pudding. Sometimes, he woke up in the middle of the night and said, "Mum, I feel like eating something. Will you make me some rice pudding?" I would put it in a bowl he liked, and he would eat it with such pleasure! After he went missing, I kept the bowl.

I haven't made rice pudding for about 12 years now.

*by Mirian Santos, mother
São Paulo, SP*

Alison went missing in 2013, at the age of 20.

Cornmeal couscous for Dione

Ingredients

- 3 tbsp *manteiga de garrafa* (clarified liquid butter)
- 500 g *flocão de milho* (flaked cornmeal)
- 3 tbsp sweet (cassava) starch or tapioca
- 250 g sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt

Method

Put the cornmeal, water and salt in a bowl. Soak overnight so it swells up nicely like bread dough. The next day, mix in the butter, starch and sugar. Add water to the couscous steamer and cook the mix for about five minutes. Remove from the heat and place the couscous in a baking dish. Spread butter on top with a spoon.

Dione's favourite dish was couscous. Here in São Paulo, they add lots of different things to it, like tomato and egg. But Dione liked couscous with sugar.

In the past I would use *fubá* (fine cornmeal) or soak corn and grind it the next day to make couscous. Now that things have evolved a little, we make it with flaked cornmeal. I soak it overnight. The next day, I add sugar and put it in the couscous steamer. It goes very well with coffee with milk.

Sometimes we spread part of the mixture in a layer and top it with sliced or finely grated cheese. Then we spread the rest of the mixture on top and add more cheese. You cut a piece of it, and it's even tastier. It was sort of like a breakfast cake that I made for Dione. He loved couscous.

*by Irene Rita de Oliveira, mother
São José dos Campos, São Paulo*

Dione went missing in 2008, at the age of 20.



Coconut couscous for Fabiana

Ingredients

- One pack flaked cornmeal
- A pinch of salt
- Freshly grated coconut to taste
- Milk, butter, dried beef or other additions

Method

Put the cornmeal in a bowl, add a little water and let it rest for an hour, so it is nice and fluffy before cooking. Once the cornmeal is hydrated, add the coconut and a pinch of salt and mix well. Next, just put it in the couscous steamer and place it over the heat. If you are making it using a tea towel, you need to moisten the towel first, so the mixture doesn't stick. Either way, when you start to smell the couscous, you turn the steamer off and eat it with milk, or with butter melted on top; it tastes really good. You can also eat it with dried beef or fried dried beef. It's delicious!

Fabiana loved my cooking. I made me so happy to watch her eat the treats I made every weekend with such satisfaction. But there is one thing I learned from my mother that my daughter would have eaten every day if she could have: coconut couscous. For breakfast, or even at night - since in the Northeast we don't eat dinner - we had coffee with couscous.

These days I use the couscous steamer, but my mother taught me to make it in a tea towel and that was how I would make it for my daughter. Today, my friends say that mine is the best couscous they've ever eaten. There's no secret to it and I make it the same way I have always done.

The difference is that now, besides love, there is also longing.

*by Ivanise Esperidião, mother
São Paulo, SP*

Fabiana went missing in 1995, at the age of 13.



Sweet couscous for Rogério

Ingredients

- 2 teacups flaked cornmeal
- 1 teacup water
- Salt to taste
- 1½ tbsp sugar

Method

In a bowl, mix together the cornmeal, salt and sugar. Add a little water to hydrate the mixture and set it aside for 30 to 40 minutes. Separate the grains well with a fork so they are nice and light. Put the mixture in the couscous steamer and bring it to the boil, then leave to cook for 30 to 40 minutes.

Rogério has been missing for 43 years, and I have never stopped looking for him. The dish he liked most was cornmeal couscous, because he started eating it at a young age. He spent some time with my mother and, since they didn't have the money to buy bread every day, she made couscous. So, it was the dish he liked most, because he was used to eating it. He had it for breakfast, sometimes with afternoon coffee, and often for dinner.

When he came to live with me, he kept this tradition going. At that time, there weren't the nice mixes there are today. It was plain, fine cornmeal. Later on, we were able to find flaked cornmeal, which is fluffier. Fine cornmeal is thicker and starchier, but it was all we had.

He liked it so much he used to make couscous farofa. He used to make it... or does he still make it today? But what he really liked was sweet couscous, very moist like a cake; it's so good. It was the dish that marked our life together.

*by Marina Ferreira Souza de Paula, mother
São Paulo, SP*

Rogério went missing in 1982, at the age of 11.

Joel's coffee porridge

Ingredients

- Roast coffee grounds
- Granulated sugar
- Fine cassava flour
- 2 litres water
(Feeds six hungry children)

Method

Brew filtered coffee directly in a saucepan and sweeten to taste. Set the pan over low heat until it begins to boil. Add the cassava flour little by little, stirring continuously with a wooden spoon so it cooks without forming lumps. Be careful how much flour you add: too much will make the mixture overly thick.



There were six of us siblings: Lígia, Joel, me (José), João, Altair and Denise, aged between four and 13. It was 1961 or 1962, we're not quite sure, given how young we were and how much time has passed. We lived in Nazaré (das Farinhas), in the Bahian Recôncavo, our homeland. Joel became a victim of political disappearance in March 1971, when he was 21.

Our mother, Elza Joana, was the guardian of our father, João Vicente, who lived with a disability. She sometimes travelled to Salvador, the capital, to sort out family matters and issues for other retirees and pensioners in the city.

When our mother travelled, she left everything carefully planned and organized, especially when it came to food. Joel and Lígia would be in charge of the “feast” in her absence. One time, she left saying she would be back on Friday, and when Friday came around, she didn't return. The food ran out, and we had almost nothing left. Or rather, we had nothing at all but coffee grounds, sugar and cassava flour.

We had no idea what had happened. Elza always came back when she said she would, with a big food parcel. The time she didn't come back, we were in despair. What could have happened? Was our mother not going to return? How would we survive?

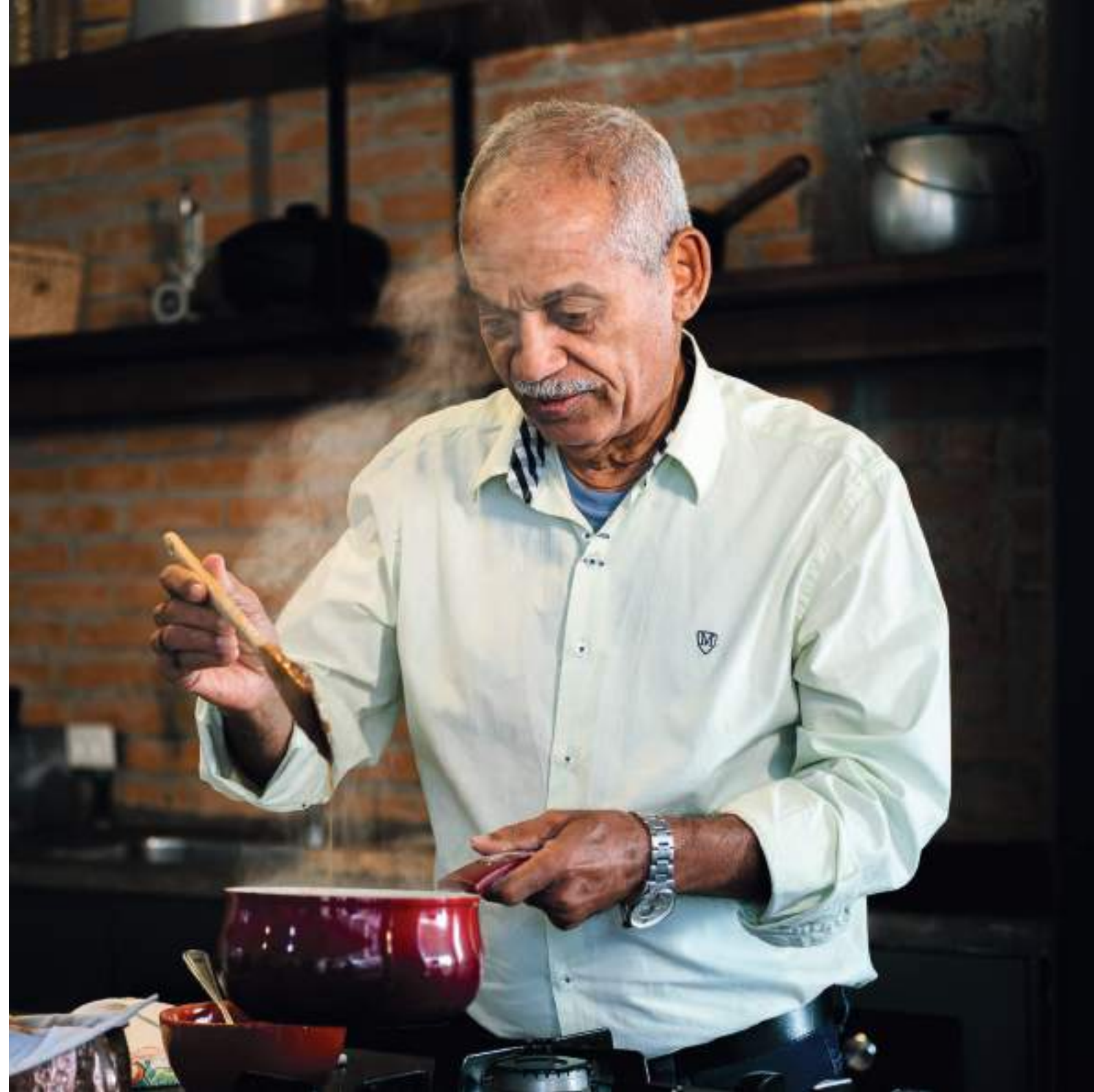
Hunger stricken as we were, Joel, who was methodical and organized, quickly made the decision that we would eat porridge for breakfast, lunch and dinner. There is a popular saying that “hunger is the best seasoning”. It was exactly like that with the porridge “festival”. It seemed like the most delicious food in the world.

Our mother's absence felt like an eternity. When, at last, she returned, she told us that the bus she was on had fallen into a ravine, rolling over three times. Twenty-nine people died, including the driver. Our mother survived without a single scratch.

Her return was a great cause for celebration at home. We would remember coffee porridge for ever, just as we would remember our brother Joel.

*by José Vasconcellos, brother
Maceió, Alagoas*

Joel went missing in 1971, at the age of 21.





A Plentiful Table

Lunch is the focal point of the day, and the main meal served at the table. For that reason, there is always something ceremonial about it. It is the moment when routines seem to revolve around the kitchen. On weekends, no room is left untouched: smells invade bedrooms, voices mingle, and the fire sets the day's rhythm. The midday meal sustains the body, rearranges routines and establishes bonds.


While breakfast propels us forward, lunch invites us to linger. Steaming pots, golden, creamy bakes, flavourful stews, cooking rich in stories. They all harbour a desire for constancy: for the day to last a little longer, for company to stick around, for absence not to weigh so heavily.

In this chapter, we recall the set tables, the platters in the centre, the announcements of lunch being served, the encouragement to go back for seconds, the highly anticipated dessert. A sense of abundance not always resulting from material plenty, but from the generosity and joy of sharing food prepared with intention.

Cooking for someone is always an act of care. For many people, cooking is also an act of hope. It requires faith that there will be a time to eat together. At every noisy, full table there is also a silent pact: everyone sits, shares and belongs. For that reason, it can also be the place where a person's absence is even more intensely felt. Even if no one says it, everyone knows that there is someone missing.

But we still set the table. Preparing a meal is also a way of affirming the continuity of our lives. By feeding those who are with us, we honour the memories that were created and are part of us. It is a way of making gestures and tastes last.

For us, the "plentiful table" in this book is also a manifesto. It is a space where, as the relatives of missing persons, we recognize the diversity of our tastes and journeys and insist on sharing them with one another, focusing on what unites us. Because we realize that, by sharing stories from our kitchens even amid absence, we reaffirm an essential value: we move forward *together*.



Cod and fried potatoes for Elson

Ingredients

- 1 kg desalted cod steaks
- 1.2 kg potatoes, peeled and sliced into rounds
- 100 ml olive oil
- 2 medium onions, sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- 100 ml white wine
- Black pepper to taste
- Salt to taste
- Parsley to taste
- A handful of olives, preferably black

Method

Season the cod with salt if you feel it still needs it. Drizzle some of the olive oil in a frying pan and fry the cod steaks on both sides, then set aside. In the same pan, brown the potatoes and lightly sauté the peppers. Set everything aside on a plate lined with kitchen towel. Add the remaining olive oil, garlic, onion and bay leaf to the pan and sauté over a low heat until the onion begins to brown. Add the potatoes and peppers and season everything with black pepper. Next, add the white wine, let it boil for about five minutes, then turn off the heat. Serve the cod on a platter, spoon the sauce over it, and finish with the olives and chopped parsley.

Uncle Elson loved cod, and he also loved to chime in with tips while it was being prepared. According to him, removing the olive stones was the highest compliment you could pay someone. “We think that everyone should be able to enjoy good things,” he used to say, “so never let the olive stones or the seeds of the peppers show.” And he would burst out laughing, believing he was just teasing. But he never actually did it. He was always the sweet uncle with good taste, from a family of excellent cooks from Minas Gerais. I am trying to earn my place there too. But I will never cook like my mother.

I was fortunate enough to cook a few things for Uncle Elson, and he always enjoyed whatever he was served.

Cod with fried potatoes was one of the dishes I made him. The first time I tried it, he – in his usual jokey way – made fun of me: “Getting ideas now, are you? You’ll end up messing up a recipe like that.” I didn’t mess it up, and he loved it. Afterwards, every time he saw me, he would ask, “Is there any cod?” And he would pepper the whole of our lunchtime together with wisecracks about the cooks and with words of appreciation for the culinary offering. There are lots of other recipes he enjoyed that live on in the memories of many of his relatives’ homes. I’ve just washed my keyboard with tears of longing, grateful for the times I spent with my Uncle Elson; not thinking about his disappearance, but about how much he enjoyed life.

Dear Uncle Elson, we will never forget you.

*by Maria Helena Soares, niece
São Paulo, SP*

Elson went missing in 1975, at the age of 61.

Brigadeiro for Victor

Ingredients

- 1 carton sweetened condensed milk
- 1 carton cream
- 20 g cocoa powder (50% cocoa)
- 1 tbsp butter
- Chocolate sprinkles to finish

Method

In a heavy-bottomed saucepan, mix the sweetened condensed milk with the cocoa powder until smooth. Add the cream and mix until combined. Lastly, add the butter. Set over a medium heat and keep stirring until it reaches the point where a spatula opens up a trail when you run it through the middle of the mixture. Turn off the heat and transfer to a stainless-steel container to cool, covering with cling film touching the chocolate mixture. The next day, grease your hands with butter or wet them with water and weigh out 20-gram balls. Roll them and coat them in chocolate sprinkles to finish.

Victor liked chocolate so much I even used to say he was made of chocolate. Every weekend he had to have *brigadeiro*. He would pick up ingredients himself during the week to make sure none were missing and there would be no excuse not to make it. I worked through Saturday, and he worked through Friday. So, on Friday, he would bring the ingredients over. I loved seeing how he took the initiative to buy the ingredients. I would prepare the mixture, but he would roll the little balls.

I don't know how I managed it, but after he went missing, I went off to study, to learn, and I took a course at Senac. And in 2020, with all the support I received from the ICRC, I discovered that I could make sweets. And so, making *brigadeiro* became a profession for me.

The more I make, the more I feel his presence with me. I always feel like I'm making it for him to come and eat. Even today, if I am missing an ingredient, if I forget to buy something or have an ingredient I don't like, I think to myself, "if he were here, he wouldn't have forgotten it."

It is not something that makes me sad. On the contrary, making *brigadeiro* has become something I take a lot of pleasure in. I love going into the kitchen and making it because the more I make it, the more I remember him. I remember that time. It doesn't make me sad. I am sad because he isn't with me, of course. But I am happy because I'm making his favourite sweet.

*by Maria Régia da Silva, mother
São Paulo, SP*

Victor went missing in 2009, at the age of 22.

Barbecue for Luiz Felipe

Ingredients

- 1.5 kg rump steak with the bone in
- 1 kg sausage
- Garlic bread
- Coarse salt

Method

Put the meat on the grate of a charcoal grill and season with coarse salt. Add the sausage and garlic bread. Turn the sausage and garlic bread over, paying attention to how well done it is. Flip the steak over and salt the other side. When the steak, sausage and garlic bread are cooked to your liking, remove them from the grill, put them on a chopping board, slice and serve with farofa and lime, if you like.

He was two years and nine months old when he went missing. He was already eating everything at that age, everything! But one thing he really loved was barbecued meat. We couldn't have a barbecue every weekend, but sometimes, usually on Sundays, we did.

We would start around 10am – by 10:30am at the latest the brick grill was ready. And Luiz Felipe would always stay close to his father's grill. He would grab the fork, wanting to poke the meat.

I would make lunches of rice, beans and mayonnaise, but he wanted meat. He wouldn't eat the beans, or go near the potato salad. "I want meat, I want meat, I want meat!", I can still hear him crying.

*by Lucimara dos Santos Machado, mother
Telêmaco Borba, Paraná*

Luiz Felipe went missing in 2017,
at the age of two years and nine months.

Couscous farofa for Samuel

Ingredients

- 500 g flaked cornmeal
- 40 ml oil
- 2 *calabresa* sausages, diced
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 tomato, diced
- Parsley and spring onions to taste
- Butter to taste

Method

Prepare the couscous in the traditional way: add water and a pinch of salt, leave it to rest and then cook it in the couscous steamer. When the couscous is ready, sauté the sausages and garlic in a pan with the oil. Grind the couscous and add it to the pan with the diced tomato, parsley and spring onions, and the butter. Mix well to make the farofa. Finish by adding more salt, if necessary.



When he was released, he came to live with me. The first thing he wanted to eat was couscous farofa with *calabresa*. I don't think they had those kinds of things in prison. So, I bought the ingredients and made it for him. And whenever he came to my house, he always asked me to make this dish. He liked other foods too, but he always wanted couscous farofa.

After he moved, when he came to visit, I would make a little lunch. He would eat lunch, and sometimes dinner too, and there would still be some food for him to take home! He liked to come here and stay with us on weekends. He had two children. He has two children, I mean. And we would get together on the days he came over, sit at the table and just talk. He would talk about prison, about what his life was like there. And we celebrated many good things together.

He left one Monday, and has not returned to this day.

*by Maria Vilani de Oliveira, mother
Maracanaú, Ceará*

Samuel went missing in 2024, at the age of 29.



Steak *au poivre* for Priscila

Ingredients

- 1 piece beef tenderloin or striploin, approx. 1.5 kg
- 15 g black peppercorns
- 200 g salted butter
- Salt to taste
- 200 g mustard
- 200 g cream

Method

Cut the steak into thick slices, season with salt and crushed black peppercorns (not ground), and set aside. Mix the mustard with the cream until it forms a homogeneous sauce and put it in the fridge. Heat a little butter in a frying pan and brown the steaks until they reach the desired level of doneness, adding more butter as needed. To finish, drizzle the butter and pepper sauce from the frying pan over the steaks. Serve with the cold mustard sauce, white rice and golden potatoes on the side.

Priscila always loved the kitchen. Her grandmother was a great cook, and she loved helping her or just watching her cook. She would sometimes do the grocery shopping for the house. Cooking was a family affair; we spent so much time together in the kitchen!

Priscila has a favourite dish which, as soon as she ate it for the first time, she wanted to learn how to make as well. It was always me, her, her grandmother or her aunt who made this dish! Whenever I was preparing steak au poivre, while the meat was resting in its pepper crust, she almost always came into the kitchen and asked to make the mustard sauce she loved so much.

It is very hard to write about this dish, which I haven't made in 21 years. But after writing, the joy of reliving that wonderful time that God gave me brought me a sense of peace.

I am going to make it, and I invite everyone who reads this recipe to make it too!

*by Jovita Belfort, mother
Rio de Janeiro, RJ*

Priscila went missing in 2004, at the age of 29.

Lasagna for Alex

Ingredients

- ½ kg fresh lasagna
- ½ kg mozzarella
- 300 g ham
- ½ kg sauce with minced meat
- Plenty of tomato sauce

Method

Prepare the minced meat sauce to your taste. Assemble the lasagna in layers: start with a thin layer of tomato sauce, followed by the lasagna, minced meat sauce, ham and cheese. Repeat until the baking dish is full and cover with a final layer of mozzarella cheese to finish. Bake for 40 minutes until golden on top.

At our house everyone likes lasagna. But Alex! His little eyes lit up with joy when I made it. I usually made it every two weeks, on a Sunday, with plenty of filling, sauce and cheese, plenty of mozzarella. He also really liked carrot cake with chocolate syrup and flan. But his real favourite was lasagna. A soft drink, lasagna, potato mayonnaise with carrot and freshly made, fluffy rice. He would be delighted!

*by Angela Queiroz, mother
São Paulo, SP*

Alex went missing in 2000, at the age of 18.



Lasagna for Alex and Cláudio

Ingredients

- 1 kg minced meat
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 g black pepper
- 10 g salt
- 200 g cream
- 300 g cheese
- 300 g ham
- 500 g lasagna sheets
- Filling

Method

In a saucepan, sauté the minced meat with the onion, black pepper and salt. When the meat is well browned, add the cream and about 235 ml of water. Bring it to the boil and then remove from the heat and set aside. Place a layer of lasagna sheets in a baking dish, followed by a layer of sauce, a layer of cheese and a layer of ham. Repeat the process about four times or until you have used all the ingredients. Finish with a layer of minced meat and bake for 35 minutes at 180 degrees Celsius. Then, help yourself!

Alex and Claudio would ask for lasagna for Sunday meals together as a family. They would hover nearby watching me make it, asking how long it would be before it was ready.

When it was ready, Alex and Cláudio were the first of the family to sit down and eat. They would go for seconds and say it was very tasty.

When I am in the mood, I make the dish to remember the sons I love, who spent time with me in the kitchen, talking. I would pour my heart into it.

I miss the boys so much.

*by Vera Lucia da Silva Oliveira, mother
Colombo, Paraná*

Alex and Cláudio went missing in 2003,
at the ages of nine and ten, respectively.

Angel hair pasta for Maycon

Ingredients

- 500 g angel hair pasta
- 300 g cream cheese spread
- 130 g tomato sauce
- 200 g mozzarella

Method

Place the tomato sauce with a little water in a saucepan. Leave it to cook, but without letting the sauce thicken. Place the pasta nests side by side in a baking dish. Fill each pasta nest with 1 tbsp cream cheese spread. Cover the pasta with sauce and top with mozzarella. Cover the baking dish with aluminium foil and bake at 180 degrees Celsius for 30 minutes.

He's the one who found this recipe, on the internet. Maycon would ask me to make this pasta dish every weekend for the family. He would ask if everyone had already served themselves, then he would eat anything left over, saying, "Mum, this is my favourite kind of food, it's delicious!"

I poured my heart and soul into preparing it, just to see how happy it made Maycon.

I don't make it anymore now, because it is very hard to remember his ways.

*by Elaine Cristina da Silva, mother
Arapongas, Paraná*

Maycon went missing in 2022, at the age of 28.



Moqueca for Benício

Ingredients

- 1 kg dogfish steaks
- 2 lemons
- 2 onions, sliced in rounds
- 2 peppers, sliced in rounds
- 4 tomatoes, sliced in rounds
- 200 ml coconut milk
- 3 tbsp *dendê* oil
- Chopped coriander to taste
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Method

Season the fish with lemon, salt and black pepper, and set aside. In a large pot, layer the onion, pepper, tomato and fish, repeating until you have used all the ingredients. Pour the coconut milk and *dendê* oil over the top. Cook over a medium heat, without stirring, until the fish is done and the vegetables are tender. Finish with chopped coriander and serve.

This was Benício's favourite dish. It became even more significant because on that date, 23 August, he was going to come and eat *moqueca* with me for lunch, and I never heard from him again. So that is the memory that has stuck with me.

He loved fish; he ate it every week. Sometimes, I would say, "Oh, good, the fish has finished, there's no fish, so ...". And then he would bring fish home! If I didn't find the time to prepare it, he would make it himself.

I went a long time without making this dish. Then the children started saying: "Mum, make that *moqueca* Dad liked. Come on, Mum!" But I had lost the taste for it. I would say: "No, we'll make it another time, okay? I bought fish, but we'll just bake it. We'll put some peppers on top. We'll make it another way, not in a *moqueca*."

After about eight years, I worked up the courage to make the fish. It was like a party at home, because it felt like he was there with us. It was wonderful. So, it brought back good memories. It brought back good memories, and I only have good things to say about him.

*by Ivone Maria da Silva, wife
São Paulo, SP*

Benício went missing in 2014, at the age of 61.

Gnocchi for Vitória

Ingredients

- 1 kg potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 egg
- 1 tbsp margarine
- 100 g all-purpose flour
- 100 g grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tbsp salt

Method

Cook the potatoes in salted water. Once cooked, drain and push them through a potato ricer one by one. Add the egg, margarine and 1 tbsp grated cheese and mix well. Gradually add the flour until the dough reaches the point where it can be rolled and cut. Bring a saucepan of water to the boil and add salt to taste and a drizzle of oil. Add the gnocchi to the boiling water in batches and take out as soon as they float to the top. Transfer to a colander and run quickly under cold water. Serve with the sauce of your choice and plenty of grated cheese.

I haven't made this recipe for some time, because my daughter always used to ask me to make it for Sunday lunch: gnocchi with roast beef.

Vitória was a very affectionate, gentle girl. It is hard even to describe what my daughter was like. Not was, is. Because I still believe I will find her alive.

Vitória always liked to help with the housework. And most of all to learn to cook. She liked to help prepare the food, set the table, put whatever we were making on the table. She watched how I seasoned the food; she liked being by my side. Always stuck to me like that, she learned to bake cakes at a very young age. One of the meals she always asked me to make was gnocchi. Gnocchi with roast beef.

On Sunday mornings, we would go to church. When we came back, all we had to do was to finish preparing the gnocchi, because the meat was already ready. She made dessert; she invented so many things. Now, imagine a girl doing that at just 11 years old. Vitória is that girl; full of life, a brilliant, playful girl with lots of attitude.

*by Rogéria Alves, mother
Rio de Janeiro, RJ*

Vitória went missing in 2009, at the age of 11.

Stew for José Ribamar

Ingredients

- 1 kg beef intestines and tripe, cleaned and chopped
- 1 piece beef trotter
- 1 lemon
- 4 tbsp vinegar
- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 fragrant chili pepper, chopped
- 1 tomato, diced
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- Green herbs to taste

Method

In a bowl, combine the intestines, tripe, lemon juice and vinegar and mix well. Put the mixture in a pot with boiling water and cook for 10 minutes. Remove the pot from the heat and rinse well under running water. Sauté the onion and chili pepper in a pressure cooker in the oil until golden. Add the intestines, tripe, beef trotter and tomato and season to taste. Cover with hot water and cook for about one hour after it reaches pressure. Finish with the green herbs and serve with white rice.

When we were children, we loved to play, run, and skip with a rope. After José got married and moved to his own house, he lived a little further away. None of us had much contact then. I remember he went horse riding and liked to fish. We would go to the beach to fish, and it was a lot of fun.

He worked at the São Sebastião market, a traditional market selling handicrafts and traditional food from Fortaleza. He would eat *panelada* stew there at lunchtime, and when he came home, he asked our mother to make the same dish for the whole family. He really liked heavy food: stews like *panelada* and *sarrabulho*, rice and *baião de dois*. We really liked to play together when we were little, and we had a lot of fun. Those are the memories we are holding onto.

*by Ana and Cleide Santiago, sisters
Fortaleza, Ceará*

José Ribamar went missing in 2002, at the age of 42.



Milk flan for Daiane

Ingredients

- 3 eggs
- 395 g sweetened condensed milk
- 395 ml milk
- 60 g sugar

Method

In a blender, blend the eggs, milk and the sweetened condensed milk for five minutes. Meanwhile, put the sugar in the flan tin and set it over the heat to caramelize. Pour the blended mixture into the tin and cook it in a bain-marie for about 40 minutes. Turn off the heat and let it cool. Turn the flan out onto a plate and keep it in the fridge until it is time to serve.

Daiane would devour a whole flan. She wasn't really into food. No, she wasn't that into food. But when she said, "Mum, I feel like eating sweetened condensed milk flan!" I could go ahead and make it because I knew she really wanted to eat it. And that would be once or twice a week. If I made it every day, she would eat it every day. And I wouldn't make just one, because there were always other people at our house, besides our family. I would make two flans, because she would eat half of one right then and there.

She would go for a little walk, go to see one of my neighbours, visit another neighbour, drink a mate and come back. Then she would take another piece of flan and eat it. She would go to the bathroom eating flan, just so you get the idea! Sometimes, there would be no flan left, and I would say, "Daiane, the flan has finished, did you eat it all?" She would reply, "No, Mum, it wasn't me! Uncle must have eaten it!" But it wasn't true, it was her. She adored flan.

*by Luzia Cristina Correia, mother
Cascavel, Paraná*

Daiane went missing in 2016, at the age of 25.

Tapioca pearls in red wine for Marla

Ingredients

- 2 teacups tapioca pearls
- 4 teacups dry red wine
- 6 teacups water
- Sugar to taste

Method

Leave the tapioca pearls to soak in water for 15 minutes and then drain completely. Bring a pot of water to the boil and cook the tapioca pearls over medium heat for 15 minutes, stirring continuously so it doesn't stick to the bottom. Drain again and rinse under running water to remove the starch. Set aside. Add one teacup water, the wine and the sugar to the pot. When it comes to the boil, add the pre-cooked tapioca pearls and cook, stirring from time to time so it doesn't stick, until the pearls are translucent, about 15 minutes. Add more liquid a little at a time if needed. Transfer to a serving dish and let cool before serving.

Marla is incredibly talented, but she's not much of a cook. However, if she has to, she will try out simple recipes. One of the desserts her husband, Alexandre, loved most was tapioca pearls in wine. So, to spoil the love of her life, she made it almost all the time.

We grew up seeing this dessert be a hit wherever she brought it. Whenever there was a family gathering and she was asked to bring dessert, she would always bring this one.

Since Mum went missing I have not made tapioca pearls in wine at home again. But I've eaten it out in a few places. Some tasted good, but none were as flavourful as hers. My aunts make it from time to time, but not as much as before.

There is a lot of emotional memory attached to it: the smell in the kitchen as it was being prepared, her face as she tasted it to see if it had turned out right, her desire to spoil my late father. Since practice makes perfect, her tapioca pearls in wine never failed. They were perfect and sweetened just right.

My son likes tapioca pearls too. I should probably try to make it more often for family gatherings.

*by Camila Gadelha, daughter
Cotia, São Paulo*

Marla went missing in 2001, at the age of 43.

Cod salad for Jayme

Ingredients

- 1 kg desalted cod loin
- Olive oil to taste
- 1 large onion, diced
- 1 yellow or red pepper, diced
- 1 bunch each of coriander and parsley, finely chopped
- 6 potatoes, cut into cubes and cooked only in water
- 150 g large green or black olives
- 1 can peas

Method

With the cod already desalted, check it for any skin or bones, making sure to clean it well, and then shred it with your hands. Fry the cod in the olive oil in a large frying pan along with the onion and pepper until it is golden but not browned. Add the potatoes, herbs, peas and olives and stir over low heat for a few minutes to absorb the flavour of the cod. Place everything in a clear rectangular or oval serving dish and decorate with more olives and sprigs of coriander and drizzle with olive oil. Serve cold.

According to my mother, Elza Miranda, the dish my father liked most was the cod salad she often made. Besides being straightforward to make, it was very tasty and easy to digest. We lived in Rio de Janeiro, and there was a market near our house where she bought real cod. It was fat, full of flavour and cheap, because at the time it wasn't as popular as it is today.

I have no doubt you will never forget this delicious dish, prepared with such affection by my mother for my dear father. She still makes it for us on feast days, such as during Holy Week.

The most interesting thing is that only now, as I wrote this recipe down, did I understand why she keeps making this salad and asking if it tastes good: it is her emotional memory.

Mum, I am so sorry.

*by Olga Miranda, daughter
Maceió, Alagoas*

Jayme went missing in 1975, at the age of 48.





Before Evening Sets In

As the golden light travels across the kitchens of Brazilian homes, it is not unusual for expectations to be fuelled by the smell of coffee. It heralds the slowing down of routines, the time for a break and for pies, snacks, pastries and conversations at the table and in the garden. When the sun begins to set, everything takes on a softer quality. There is small talk, shared silence, a cup of coffee served without the need to ask, the radio playing; it is a time for waiting, as dusk falls.

Afternoon coffee is more than a meal. It is both a break and a bridge. It is a reminder of the gap that often opens up between lunch and dinner. These are the dishes that enfold our childhoods, that bring together families, neighbours and friends. In this chapter, we recount the stories of cakes prepared slowly, batters mixed by hand, sweets made with whatever there was in the cupboard: cassava starch, coconut, carrot, cornmeal, curdled milk, banana...

Each of these recipes transmits the rhythm of the home where it was created. They do not just feed us, they welcome us. Because the dishes we remember rarely serve merely to satisfy hunger: they offer comfort and celebrate companionship. It is food that delights.

Afternoon coffees are full of ritual and repeated gestures: a favourite mug in hand, the cake baked in the old tin, serving something just as a particular person liked it. Small gestures that become more important in someone's absence. After all, it is during these quiet times that the feeling of lack becomes more pronounced – it is gentle, but it runs deep. A name that we are quietly reminded of when our routines are interrupted.

All the recipes in this chapter have an implicit intention: to make you feel at home. To welcome those arriving, those who are already here, those who could not return. The slow slicing of a cake can express things difficult to put into words. In our memories, the table is more than a surface covered by a cloth: it is a setting for inner encounters.

Before evening sets in, the kitchen becomes a refuge. Because even when someone's absence from the table is tangible, memories remain. And in this, we find strength. There is a sense of hopeful endurance that comes with the smell of cake pervading the house.

“Rain fritters” for Jefferson

Ingredients

- 2 eggs
- 2½ teacups all-purpose flour
- 1 teacup milk
- 1 teacup sugar
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- Oil for frying
- Sugar and cinnamon to finish

Method

Mix all the ingredients and fry in hot oil. In a bowl, mix the sugar and cinnamon. Dust over the fried fritters.

I had to be both father and mother to my son. At first, I didn't know how to cook. I'm learning to cook now, from the internet. Because I'm part of a group where sometimes you have to bring a pie or something, so you have to learn how to make these things.

I think the only foods that remind me of my son to this day are rain fritters and popcorn. My mother also made rain fritters for me and my siblings when we were little. There were six of us kids and she used to make them for us. Even though it's a simple recipe, it made everyone happy. I learned how to make it, and I really enjoyed it because there were always lots of kids at my house, my son's friends, and I liked to make them happy. I enjoy painting the children, you know, taking the batter, smearing it all over their faces. We mess around a lot, make a big mess. We throw a party!

I did that with Jefferson and his little friends. These days, I have two children at home, and we still do it.

*by Mirian Rodrigues Torres, mother
São Paulo, SP*

Jefferson went missing in 2014, at the age of 24.



“Storm cloud fritters” for Wellington

Ingredients

- 1 egg
- 1 tbsp butter
- ½ teacup sugar
- 1 teacup milk
- 1 teacup all-purpose flour
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- Oil for frying

Method

Combine the egg, butter and sugar in a bowl. Gradually add the flour and the milk. Lastly, add the baking powder. In a deep frying pan, heat the oil and roughly shape the fritters using two spoons and carefully place them in the oil to fry. Using a slotted spoon, remove the fritters and put them on a plate lined with kitchen towel. Dust with sugar and cinnamon, if you have them. Make some good coffee to go with the fritters and take delight in one more moment shared with your family.

My parents, siblings and I lived in a rented house and, unfortunately, some heavy rains caused the wall to collapse, taking our kitchen down with it. My mother worked a lot to save money to help my father rebuild it. I, at just 7 years old, was being cared for by my brother, Wellington. One afternoon, craving something different to eat, I went searching among the remains of the kitchen, gathered some ingredients and beat them all together in a bowl. By the time my brother realized what I was doing, I had a huge bowl of batter in my hands.

Of course, he scolded me, and I was punished, but he couldn't throw away so much batter. The batter was too runny to roll out. So, he had the idea of shaping it with two spoons and dropping it into hot oil to fry. To our amazement, it tasted delicious, and we would make this recipe at least once a week to go with our coffee.

The hardest part was trying to remember, after a week, everything that I had mixed together in the bowl the first time around.

*by Lilian, sister
São Paulo, SP*

Wellington went missing in 2015, at the age of 43.



Carrot cake with peanuts added by Marcelo

Ingredients

- 2 large carrots, grated
- 4 eggs
- ½ cup oil
- 3 teacups all-purpose flour
- 2 teacups sugar
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- ½ teacup roasted, skinless peanuts
- ½ teacup chocolate chips

Method

Start by beating the eggs and the oil together. Add the grated carrot and mix until well combined. Next, add the flour, sugar and the baking powder. Mix well until incorporated. Transfer to a greased and floured baking tray. At that moment, toss the peanuts and the chocolate chips with 1 tbsp all-purpose flour and spread them over the batter. Bake at 180 degrees Celsius until golden and firm. For the icing, place the sweetened condensed milk, chocolate, and cream in a saucepan and stir constantly until it becomes thick like *brigadeiro*.

Marcelo was very boisterous, he spoke loudly. There didn't need to be a lot of people in the house because he spoke loudly enough for everyone. But the house was always full. I would go into the kitchen to make a meal, bake a cake, or something like that. When I least expected it, Marcelo was there helping out, chopping something or other. I would make a whole recipe from start to finish without even knowing what it was, because he was chopping things the whole time.

He was very big. He would come over and hug me, and I thought, "he must be missing me or something". He would stick a piece of paper on my back that said, "If you love your mother, grab her and give her a kiss." The girls would pounce on me, and he would let out that big laugh.

One of the things I remember most about him is his carrot cake. I've never seen anyone make it like he did. He put chocolate chips and peanuts into the batter. He would buy a packet of unsalted, skinless peanuts. Then I would make the cake, and he would put a handful of peanuts inside. When it cooled, we made chocolate to pour on top.

After he went missing, I couldn't make carrot cake anymore. I make it for the sake of my daughter Adriana, but without the peanuts. Without peanuts - that was Marcelo's invention. He was very creative.

*by Vilma Lima da Silva, mother
São Paulo, SP*

Marcelo went missing in 2012, at the age of 29.

Carrot cake with chocolate for Felipe

Ingredients

Batter:

- 3 carrots (if large, only 2), peeled and cubed
- ½ teacup vegetable oil
- 2 teacups sugar
- 2 teacups all-purpose flour
- 3 eggs
- 1 tbsp baking powder

Icing:

- ½ litre normal milk
- ½ teacup sugar
- 2 tbsp chocolate with 70% cocoa
- 1 tbsp margarine

Method

Put the oil, eggs and sugar into a blender. Add the chopped carrots and blend well until very smooth. Transfer the batter to a bowl and fold in the flour gradually, without beating. Finally, gently fold in the baking powder. Bake the mixture in a greased and floured tin for about 20 minutes at 180 degrees Celsius or until a toothpick comes out clean. Let it cool a little, so it comes away from the tin. For the icing, put all the ingredients in a pan over the heat and cook, stirring constantly, until it forms a thick syrup.



I don't think carrot cake is anything special, you know? But it's the cake Felipe likes best. I am including this recipe not just because he likes it so much, but because of the sense of harmony it brought to mealtimes, because it reminds me of the three of them eating the cake they all liked.

Felipe made the others really angry, because when the cake was on the table and they were ready with their little plates, he would go and cut slices of cake and put one on each of their plates, and then he would take the knife, scrape off all the icing from the top of the cake and put it on his slice. Straight away, a fight started: "You're going to eat all the icing!" He liked the icing I made; he didn't like the one with sweetened condensed milk.

When he went missing, I went a long time without making this recipe. Then my other children started asking me for it, so I started making it every year on his birthday. Every year on 14 August, I make this cake. When it falls on a weekend when my children are over visiting, I make it for us all to eat.

And when I'm alone, I make it for myself and take it to the house of a friend with a lot of children, and they eat it.

*by Maria José Barreto Braga, mother
São Paulo, SP*

Felipe went missing in 2014, at the age of 22.



Chocolate cake for Felipe

Ingredients

Batter:

- 4 eggs
- 700 g all-purpose flour
- 200 g oil
- 400 g sugar
- 500 g chocolate powder
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 pinch of salt

Topping:

- 450 g chocolate powder
- 50 g margarine
- 1 tin condensed milk
- 250 ml water

Method

Blend all the batter ingredients in the blender until a homogeneous cream forms. Pour the mixture into a greased pan and place in a preheated oven at 180 degrees Celsius for about 35 minutes. For the syrup, heat the water with 200 grams of chocolate drink mix, stirring until it comes to a boil. Pour this mixture over the cake while it is still hot. For the final icing, heat the margarine together with 250 grams chocolate drink mix and the sweetened condensed milk. Stir continuously until it becomes a thick cream. Spread this icing over the cake.

When they were little and we had many needs – for everything: things we needed to buy, food, and bread each morning – he used to ask, when payday was near, “Mum, when you have money, will you buy the stuff to make cake?” “Which cake do you want?”, I’d ask. “The one with nothing in it,” he’d answer. Because, at the beginning, we just threw in whatever we had at home. Sometimes there were four eggs, sometimes two, and so on. And this became the cake that, once things improved, we kept on making. Why? It was the cake of hardship, but the cake he loved to eat most.

He would say, “Wow! It’s so good!” And when he was sad for some reason or another, he would ask for this chocolate cake. After Felipe went missing, the first time I made this cake was on Mother’s Day. My youngest, who doesn’t remember Felipe, said, “I want you to make that cake so we can celebrate life.”

It became my cake, my cake in memory of Felipe.

*by Lucineide Damasceno, mother
São Paulo, SP*

Felipe went missing in 2008, at the age of 17.



“Five-cup” cornmeal cake for Cristiano

Ingredients

- 3 eggs
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup oil

Method

In a blender, blend the eggs, milk and sugar. Add the cornmeal, the all-purpose flour and the oil. Blend well until combined. Lastly, add the baking powder and mix in quickly. Grease a medium-sized tin and dust with all-purpose flour. Bake the mixture for 30 minutes at 180 degrees Celsius.

This is the story of the cornmeal cake I made for my son Cristiano: the five-cup cornmeal cake. He loved to eat this cake on Saturdays and Sundays. I made it for him to have with coffee with milk, and he would hide a big piece of it to eat the next day. “Mum, I love this cake!” he would say. And he always asked me to make it. I put my heart into making it every week for him. I still make it today, and I think about my son a lot. I miss my Cristiano very much. “Mum, I love you! You and your cake!” he would say. It is very sad for a mother.

*by Lurdes Nunes de Lima Szlachta, mother
Cascavel, Paraná*

Cristiano went missing in 2013, at the age of 26.

Creamy cornmeal cake for Eliene

Ingredients

- 4 eggs
- 4 teacups milk
- 3 teacups sugar
- 1½ teacups cornmeal
- 2 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp margarine
- 100 grams grated cheese
- 1 tbsp baking powder

Method

Place all the ingredients in a blender and blend for five minutes. The batter will be very liquid. While it is blending, grease a medium-sized tin with margarine and cornmeal. Bake in an oven at 180 degrees Celsius for about 30 to 40 minutes.

I learned to make this cake when I was 11 years old, and I think I'm the only person in my family who makes it. It was the cake I made for her. It was also the last cake I made, the last time she was at my house.

She would call me and say, "Beba" - that's what she called me - "I'm really craving some of your cake!" On those days, I could double the quantity and use two tins to make two decent cakes. It's a simple recipe, but with huge meaning. Because it was something we loved to do, get together for afternoon coffee.

After she went missing, it was a long time before I was able to make this cake again. I didn't make it for many years. But my eldest son is crazy about this cake. Because of her, of course. And to this day, when I make it, I make it as if I were making it for her.

*by Édina Torres, sister
Itapecerica da Serra, São Paulo*

Eliene went missing in 2013, at the age of 36.

Corn cake for Stefani

Ingredients

- 150 g *biju* cornflour
- 300 ml milk
- 200 ml coconut milk
- 3 eggs
- 75 ml oil
- 150 g sugar
- 15 g margarine
- 200 g all-purpose flour
- 5 g baking powder

Syrup:

- 75ml leite
- 50 g açúcar

Method

Bring the milk to a boil in a pan. Put the cornflour in a bowl and pour the boiling milk over it. Stir gently with a spoon until well combined and set aside. In a blender, add the eggs, oil, sugar, coconut milk, margarine and all-purpose flour and blend until combined. Mix the contents of the blender with the scalded cornflour, which should be lukewarm by now. Lastly, add the baking powder. Transfer the batter to a greased tin and bake for 45 minutes at 180 degrees Celsius. While it bakes, make a syrup by heating the milk with the sugar. Moisten the cake with the syrup after baking and dust sugar on top.

Every week, Stefani asked for the corn cake with cornflour. For me, the cake is nothing special, but for her it was. I understood that what she enjoyed wasn't so much the cake, but the moment. The time together as a family. Her favourite time was that afternoon coffee time. It was when we would sit at the table and talk. And she was very talkative.

I haven't made this cake since. I'm going to try to make it again now. Because it's a kind of taboo that needs to be broken. There are so many other things we stopped doing because of what happened.

But we must keep trying to break this taboo even if just to be able to make our lives a little better.

*by Zenilda Maria Marques Rochinski, mother
Porto Amazonas, Paraná*

Stefani went missing in 2012, at the age of 10.

Pão de queijo cake for Ícaro

Ingredients

- 3 eggs
- 3 teacups sweet cassava starch
- 1 teacup milk
- 1 teacup oil
- 150 g grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tbsp salt
- 1 tbsp baking powder

Method

Preheat the oven to 180 degrees Celsius. Grease a round cake tin with oil. Blend the eggs, milk and oil together in the blender. In a bowl, mix the cassava starch, cheese and salt. Add the mixture from the blender to the bowl and mix carefully. Finally, add the baking powder and mix gently for a few seconds. Pour the batter into the tin and bake for 30 minutes. Serve and enjoy.



From a tender age, Ícaro was enchanted by the art of cooking. At 13, when we visited our friends Dri and Renatinho, his passion entered a new chapter. That day, Renatinho was baking a cake, and as soon as Ícaro saw him mixing the ingredients he ran over and asked to learn. Smiling, Renatinho gave him the recipe and challenged him to follow it to a tee.

Ícaro, determined as always, readily accepted the challenge. He measured the ingredients with precision, patiently mixed the batter, and waited anxiously for the cake to bake. When the smell filled the house and the cake was out of the oven, everyone gathered at the table to try it. Just one bite was enough for the compliments to begin. It turned out just right!

After that day, Ícaro started a tradition: every Saturday we would gather for afternoon coffee, with his delicious cake as the star of the show. And, of course, like a good Leo, he immediately declared with sincerity, “No one can make a cake as good as mine!” And who would dare disagree? After all, besides being talented, Ícaro always did everything with love.

*by Luana dos Santos Linhares, mother
São Paulo, SP*

Ícaro went missing in 2024, at the age of 20.



Cassava starch cake for Frankelson

Ingredients

- 1 1/8 cups milk
- 3/8 cup oil
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 500 g sweet cassava starch
- 6 eggs
- 1 pack grated cheese
- 1 tsp baking powder

Method

Boil the milk with the oil and salt in a saucepan. Put the cassava starch in a bowl and scald it with the hot milk, mixing well with a spoon. Once the scalded cassava starch is lukewarm, beat it in a mixer with the eggs and grated cheese. Lastly, add the baking powder and mix well. Place in a preheated oven in a greased baking tin with a hole in the middle for about 30 minutes or until golden.

Frankelson really liked to cook. He made very good ice cream and coxinha (meat croquettes). He just asked me to buy the ingredients, but he made them himself. The only thing he asked me to make for him was cassava starch cake, because he couldn't make it and he loved that cake. I taught him how, but it never worked out right. When he wanted to eat it, he would say, "You stay right here beside me, I'll make it, and you tell me if I'm doing it right or wrong." I don't know what he did, but the cake wouldn't rise at all.

On the other hand, he could make delicious ice cream, but I couldn't. So, I would say to him, "Well, I'm not able to make your ice cream and you're not able to make my cake!"

My son was a very cheerful child. Anything he saw someone do, he wanted to do too; he would stay there watching, he was very curious. When I arrived home from work, my kitchen would be all dirty, so dirty!

But I think that was the happiest time of my life. Because when I got home, all three of my children were there.

*by Maria do Socorro Monteiro Feitosa, mother
São Paulo, SP*

Frankelson went missing in 1996, at the age of 13.

Soft cake for Leonardo

Ingredients

- 4 teacups milk
- 2 eggs
- ½ teacup sugar
- 2 teacups all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 carton sweetened condensed milk

Method

Place all the ingredients in the blender and blend for about three minutes until very smooth. Transfer to a greased baking tin and bake in a preheated oven at 180 degrees Celsius for approximately 30 minutes or until it starts to brown.

Soft cake was definitely one of my father's favourites. He loved to have a big piece of soft cake with his coffee at 3:30pm. He used to invite the whole family to have cake and liked to prepare a table outside, with a small radio playing the song "Chegaste" with Roberto Carlos and Jennifer Lopez. All of this just to enjoy his piece of cake. It was an emotional thing for him.

He cut the cake like a child, always cutting it badly or with exaggerated gestures. He loved to buy the ingredients and wouldn't take his eyes off the oven, constantly checking if the cake was ready with a toothpick.

I remember him helping my mother in the kitchen and the two of us fighting over the bowl for the leftover batter until one of us got the other's nose dirty.

*by Mariana de Sousa França, daughter
Fortaleza, Ceará*

Leonardo went missing in 2013, at the age of 42.

Rosimary's cake

Ingredients

Batter:

- 200 g butter
- 1 teacup sugar
- 4 egg yolks
- 3 teacups all-purpose flour
- 1 teacup milk
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- 4 egg whites, beaten until stiff
- Butter to grease the tin

Filling:

- 1 tin sweetened condensed milk
- Equivalent of 1½ tins of milk
- 2 tbsp cornstarch
- 3 egg yolks
- 5 drops vanilla essence
- 1 carton cream

Icing:

- 200 g milk chocolate
- 1 carton cream

Method

Start by making the batter. Beat the butter with the egg yolks and sugar. Add the all-purpose flour, milk and baking powder, and mix well. Finally, add the stiff egg whites. Bake in a greased and floured baking tray at 180 degrees Celsius for approximately 35 minutes.

For the filling, mix the sweetened condensed milk, cow's milk, cornstarch, egg yolks and vanilla together in a saucepan. Cook, stirring constantly until it has a consistency like porridge. Remove from the heat, stir in the cream and set aside.

For the icing, melt the chocolate in a bain-marie and mix with the cream.

To finish, divide the cake into two equal layers. Once it has cooled, spread the filling on one half, cover with the other half, and top with the chocolate icing. Decorate as you desire, with walnuts, cherries or sprinkles, or just the chocolate icing.

This is the cake that Rosimary loved to make on her children's birthdays and on Mother's Day, when all the siblings gathered at my mother's house. Our family is very large; we were 13 siblings coming together to share both our struggles and moments of joy.

Rosimary always liked to bring the family together on weekends for a snack and a catch-up. She always opted to make this cake, because it was a big, delicious cake and everyone liked it. After she disappeared, no one in the family ate this cake anymore.

Our family was never the same again.

*by Glória Valadares, sister
Campo dos Goitacazes, Rio de Janeiro*

Rosimary went missing in 2016, at the age of 49.

Caramelized curdled milk for Kaio

Ingredients

- 1 litre milk
- 4 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 2 teacups sugar
- Cinnamon stick and cloves to taste (optional)

Method

Bring the milk to the boil in a saucepan. Add the vinegar to make it curdle. Then, add the sugar, and the cinnamon and cloves to your taste. Cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, until the mixture turns golden and the syrup thickens. Leave it to cool and serve at room temperature or chilled.

Kaio, my son, you were always so full of energy, and you loved sweets. I am proud that I taught you and your siblings to be independent, including when it comes to cooking. I remember how much you loved to watch and help in the kitchen, especially when I made your favourite: caramelized curdled milk!

You loved this sweet so much that, when I made it, there would be no milk left in the house! Over time, I stopped making this recipe as often, but one day, it was served at a lunch, and when I saw it, I couldn't hold back the tears. So many good memories flooded my mind, and I longed to see you so much.

I hope that, wherever you are, you know that you will always be remembered with love and affection. Perhaps, somewhere, you are enjoying some caramelized curdled milk and thinking of us.

It has been 11 years since I last made this sweet. In my house we don't have it anymore. But I know that one day I will bring myself to make it. And perhaps, sometime soon, we will eat it together!

*by Débora Alves Inácio, mother
São Paulo, SP*

Kaio went missing in 2013, at the age of 17.

Coconut knots for Jefferson

Ingredients

Batter:

- 4 eggs
- 120 g sugar
- 500 ml milk
- 20 g butter or margarine
- 30 g fresh yeast for making bread
- 1 kg all-purpose flour
- 2 g salt
- Oil for frying

Syrup and finishing:

- 240 g sugar
- 1 litre water
- 1 packet desiccated coconut

Method

Place the eggs, sugar, milk, margarine and yeast in a bowl. Add the flour gradually, kneading well until the dough comes away from your hands. Leave it to rise for approximately 30 minutes. Meanwhile, prepare the syrup: boil the water and sugar together for approximately ten minutes. After the dough has rested for 30 minutes, take 50 grams of it and stretch it out by hand to form a little rope. Pass one end through the other to make a knot. Fry in oil that is not too hot. Immediately after frying, dip it quickly in the syrup. To finish, roll the little knots in the coconut.

Jefferson always used to ask if we could make the little knots on Saturday afternoon because it was something that meant a lot to him. It was what he liked to make most, especially on rainy days. It became a party. He always helped me make the little fritters. I scolded him because he would eat everything before we had finished. He would stretch out the little knots and eat them raw.

It has been six years since I last made the little knots; it makes me miss my firstborn son a lot. His siblings always joined in in making this recipe and they miss it because I can't bring myself to make it anymore. But I have faith in God that I will manage to do it again.

I hope one day I can make them for my children to eat, when Jefferson returns, with all my heart and soul.

*by Maria Selma Luciano dos Santos, mother
Terra Rica, Paraná*

Jefferson went missing in 2017, at the age of 33.





“Fluffy towel” coconut cake for Leonardo

Ingredients

Batter:

- 6 egg yolks
- 6 egg whites, beaten until stiff
- 500 g sugar
- 500 g all-purpose flour
- 250 g butter or margarine
- 200 ml coconut milk
- 200 ml whole milk
- 1 heaped tbsp baking powder

Icing:

- ¾ cup water
- 1 ½ cups sugar
- 100 g desiccated coconut

Method

Beat the sugar and egg yolks in a mixer. Next, add the butter and beat until pale and creamy. Add the coconut milk and whole milk and beat some more. Turn off the mixer and add the flour, stirring gently with a whisk. Lastly, fold in the stiff egg whites and the baking powder. Place in a greased and floured rectangular tin and bake in the oven at 180 degrees Celsius.

To make the icing, combine the water and sugar and bring to a boil. Add the coconut and leave it to boil a little longer. Remove from the heat and set aside. When the cake is ready, remove from the oven and, while it still hot, poke several holes in it with a fork. Pour the syrup over the whole cake. Let it cool and transfer it to the fridge. Serve chilled.

This cake was the last cake I made for Leonardo before he went missing. Leonardo always asked me to make it, saying it was the best cake I had ever made for him. When his son was born, he asked me to make it for when his friends came over to meet the baby.

After he went missing, I went 14 years without making it. I only started making it again because my other children began asking me to. They said, “Mum, make that coconut cake for us, we are still here with you, don’t forget!”

That is when I came back to my senses and started making the coconut cake that Leonardo loved so much again. But I must confess that I make it with a broken heart and cannot eat it.

*by Josedalva Campioto, mother
Carapicuíba, São Paulo*

Leonardo went missing in 2007, at the age of 28.



Banana pie for Crysthyan

Ingredients

Batter:

- 360 g all-purpose flour
- 180 g sugar
- 30 g margarine
- 3 eggs
- 10 g baking powder

Filling:

- 1 kg bananas
- 20 g ground cinnamon
- 20 g sugar

Method

In a bowl, add the flour, sugar, eggs, margarine and baking powder. Knead well until it no longer sticks to your hands. It should be a soft dough. Line a baking pan with the dough and reserve the scraps for decoration. For the filling, slice the bananas thinly and mix with the sugar and cinnamon. Spread the filling over the dough while still raw. Take the leftover dough, roll it into thin ropes, and decorate the pie in a lattice design. Bake in a preheated oven at 180 degrees Celsius for 40 minutes or until golden.

Banana pie was Crysthyan's favourite. I used to make it on Sundays for our family afternoon coffee, and he and my niece Tati always fought over it. Before it was ready he would say, "Mum, will it take much longer? I'm hungry, it's taking forever!" The two of them would get on my nerves and laugh so much.

When I took the pie out of the oven, it was smoking hot. I would put it on the table, where Crysthyan sat on one side with a spoon and Tati on the other. The two of them would start eating it hot and I would tell them they were going to get sick. I don't know how they didn't burn their mouths or tongues.

Crysthyan said it didn't matter because the pie was so delicious. They laughed and ate it all! We loved seeing them having such fun and laughing because it was so hot. I put my heart and soul into making it, just to see how happy it made Crysthyan.

These days, I can't do it. It hurts too much.

*by Rosângela Nunes, mother
Curitiba, Paraná*

Crysthyan went missing in 2010, at the age of 21.



Ending the Day

Little by little, the night turns down the volume of the day's noise, the fading light adding a gentle hue to its events. Dinner gives us permission to pause and restore our bodies. But it is also the time when the family comes together after a day of work. The time of happy coincidences, like that of our favourite dish being served on the same night that the last episode of the soap opera is playing. A hot soup, the smell of gratin in the oven, the favourite family dessert. At night, flavours do not always communicate subtly. They embrace and nourish us. They urge us not to hurry, but to pay attention.

As much a shelter as a meal, dinner is a kind of bet on our survival. It carries the ability to welcome the here and now and prepare the way for the "not yet". With it, we declare that life goes on. It is a promise, an unspoken agreement that tomorrow is worth fighting for. It not only marks the end of a cycle, but it also makes room for what is to come.

Many hands were involved in the writing of this book. Writing it impelled us to recount the tender parts of our stories, which mix the joy in our experiences with the pain of our search. We conclude as one concludes the day: with nourishment, remembrance and hope. Indeed, what we have shared so far are not just recipes. With our meals, we have also managed to share our stories; stories we will keep telling.

We hope those of you who are reading will accept our invitation to the table, where we listen, give and receive care, and remember.

Coconut-shell soup for Luiz

Ingredients

- 1 kg peeled cassava
- Olive oil, oil, margarine, or butter
- 300 g thin sausage
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 3 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 teacup chopped coriander
- 1 teacup chopped spring onions
- Bell pepper to taste
- Fragrant chili pepper to taste
- Cabbage leaves, finely sliced

Method

Cook the cassava, preferably in a pressure cooker, until tender. In another pan, sauté the garlic and the onion in the fat of your choice until slightly softened. Add the sausage and fry for a bit. Next, add the bell pepper, chili pepper, tomatoes and cabbage to the pan, stirring continuously so they don't burn. Set aside. Remove the core from the cooked cassava and blend the cassava in a blender or food processor until it becomes like a smooth, thick soup. If needed, add hot water to help it along. Pour the cassava cream over the mixture in the pan and stir until well combined. Boil for a few minutes, stirring all the time so it doesn't stick to the bottom. Turn off the heat, adjust the salt, and top with the coriander and spring onions. Serve immediately in coconut shells.

Whenever Luiz and the other grandchildren and great-grandchildren came to spend their holidays at my grandparents' little farm, my great-grandmother, who was Portuguese and a real storyteller, would make this soup for everyone at the end of the day. When the moon began to rise behind the mountains, each of us would take our bowl or coconut shell and sit on the steps of the house listening to scary stories, about werewolves, blind goats, headless mules and gypsies. An orchestra of chirping crickets and croaking frogs played in the background, while the light of the moon and the fireflies helped set the scene.

She sat in a rocking chair with a shawl draped over her shoulders, her presence powerful. We huddled at her feet. One by one, as we fell asleep, my grandfather would carry us to bed. Sometimes my grandfather joined in and recounted other events and tales.

Granddad's stories always revolved around the heroes of the time: Lampião, Maria Bonita, Corisco, and the feats of the *cangaceiros* who fought against the landowners and for equality. When Granddad told his stories, we spent almost the whole night awake, no one slept.

We were well aware they were true stories, because the people in them always showed up around the farm, dressed in flashy leather outfits covered in stars, and wearing colourful scarves. The household routine would change a lot on those days. Grandma, our aunts who were married and some of the neighbours got involved in the many tasks we had to carry out, like helping prepare mountains of food.

On those days, the doors stayed closed, and everyone spoke in low voices.

*by Amparo Araújo, sister
Recife, Pernambuco*

Luiz went missing in 1971, at the age of 27.



Pizza day for William

Ingredients

- 350 ml warm water
- 50 ml olive oil or other oil
- 2 tbsp sugar
- ½ tbsp salt
- 1 tbsp active dry yeast
- 700 g all-purpose flour

Method

In a bowl, mix the yeast with the sugar. Add the warm water and olive oil and stir well. Add the salt and the all-purpose flour little by little, kneading until it comes together. Divide the dough into four parts, shape into little balls, and leave it to rest. Dust the counter with fine cornmeal, roll the dough into discs, prick with a fork, and bake at 200 degrees Celsius for ten minutes. For the topping, brush the olive oil over the pizza and add tomato sauce, along with the topping of your choice. Return to the oven to finish.

Pizza day with William became a special, unique time. We had pizza day once a month. The family would come together at the weekend; we invited cousins, grandparents, uncles. William worried about every detail, because everyone had a task to do and everything had to go according to plan. I made the dough, he rolled it out, my husband cut the vegetables...

There had to be wine. He would put a candle on the table and decorate it as if we were in Italy. It was pizza-and-wine night. But that table is now a thing of the past.

He used to say that it was special to share those moments with the family: "We have to celebrate together while we can," he said, "because we don't know what might happen tomorrow."

And it was on that very day that my son went missing. On the 10th day of the month. We will never forget those times.

*by Loveane Dias, mother
São Paulo, SP*

William went missing in 2016, at the age of 20.



Beans with pasta and beef bones for Cícero

Ingredients

- ½ kg black-eyed beans
- ½ kg beef bones
- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- Fragrant chili pepper to taste
- Green herbs to taste
- Salt to taste
- ½ pack pasta
- 2 tbsp butter

Method

Cook the beans with the bones until the beans are very tender. In another pan, sauté the onion, three cloves of garlic, the chili pepper and green herbs and add to the beans to season them. Add more salt, if necessary. In another pan, cook the pasta as normal. Drain it and sauté it quickly in butter with one of the chopped garlic cloves. Serve the pasta with the bean broth and bones. Finish with green herbs to garnish.

At the time I wasn't working, so I used my lunchtime to make beans with bones, which he liked to eat at night. Cícero worked in general services at the Antares school, in Papicu, so he didn't have a set time of arrival. He usually got home around 7pm or a little after. I would reheat the beans and the four of us – me, him, Naiara and Samuel – would sit down to eat. That's how it was...

*by Maria Natalina Gomes da Costa, wife
Fortaleza, Ceará*

Cícero went missing in 2021, at the age of 41.



Fabiana's chocolate mousse

Ingredients

- 6 eggs, whites and yolks separated
- 6 tbsp sugar
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter or margarine
- 250 g dark chocolate
- Chocolate sprinkles or ribbons for decoration

Method

Place the yolks and the sugar in a mixer and beat on maximum speed until they are pale and have doubled in volume. Set aside. Melt the chocolate together with the butter in a bain-marie. Add it to the yolk mixture and fold gently until well combined. Add the egg whites, beaten until very stiff, and fold very gently to prevent the mixture from deflating. Place in a serving dish or individual cups and top with the chocolate sprinkles. Chill in the fridge for at least two hours before serving.



I left my hometown at 23 and set off with my head full of dreams for the capital of São Paulo, in search of a better life for me and my little girl, who was only three years old at the time. I got a job as a cook and housekeeper in the home of a very wealthy family in the upscale Alto de Pinheiros neighbourhood.

We went to live in a small maid's room in their house. After our arrival, I began to adapt to the rules of the house. One of them was that my little one could not go into any of the other rooms, except the kitchen. She was not permitted to play with the children who lived there either. Eating or even tasting the sophisticated food I prepared was forbidden to us, because the employees ate other food.

One of the dishes I made was chocolate mousse. Once, I brought some for Fabiana to taste. It was a different kind of dessert that I had just learned how to make. Fabiana loved it so much that whenever I prepared it, I made a point of setting aside a little for her, in secret.

That sweet became a marker for the many difficult moments we lived through at that time, far from our family, in a big, unfamiliar city. It was just the two of us. As time passed, our situation changed too. I stopped working in that house and we got our own home. Two more children came along, but chocolate mousse was always part of our story; we served it for every special occasion.

I'm sure these were among the most significant moments of her childhood, up until she went missing at 13. She used to say that when she grew up, she would learn to make mousse so she could tell her future children our stories, and she would get all messy with them eating chocolate mousse.

These are stories that live on in my memory; they are a mixture of joy over the time we spent together and the suffering that comes from irreplaceable absence.

*by Vera Lúcia Ranú, mother
São Paulo, SP*

Fabiana went missing in 1992, at the age of 13.



Pancakes for Hugo

Ingredients

- 9 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 350 ml milk
- 3 medium eggs
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Filling of your choice
- Parmesan and *prato* cheese, as needed

Method

Dissolve the flour in the milk in a bowl. In a blender, add the eggs, salt, sugar and the milk and flour mixture and blend until combined. If the batter is too thick, add a little more milk until it reaches the desired consistency. Place a few drops of oil in a frying pan and spread out using some kitchen paper. Cook the pancakes until they are golden on both sides. Fill the pancakes with slices of cheese and the sauce of your choice: beef, chicken, or vegetables. Place a little sauce on the bottom of a baking dish and arrange the pancakes side by side. Top with more sauce and Parmesan. Put in the microwave or oven to brown lightly. Serve hot.

This is the dish Hugo would ask me to make every Wednesday. “Today is Wednesday, the day of delights,” I would say to him. And Hugo would answer, “Beef pancake with cheese, delight of my life! If it’s with all three flavours – beef with cheese, chicken with cream cheese, and vegetables – I will still melt cheese over the pancake!” And we would laugh. When I scattered the cheese on top and it melted over the sauce, he loved it.

He also loved pancake with white cheese and guava paste. But I can’t even talk about that one. I don’t make pancakes anymore because my “pancake guy” isn’t here.

They too have become memories.

*by Francisca Ribeiro, mother
Guarulhos, São Paulo*

Hugo went missing in 2007, at the age of 10.

Lulu's *rabanada*

Ingredients

- 3 loaves of bread for French toast, sliced
- 1 litre milk
- 1 tin sweetened condensed milk
- 3 eggs, beaten
- Oil for frying
- Sugar and ground cinnamon to taste

Method

Mix the milk with the sweetened condensed milk in a bowl. Dip the bread slices in this mixture and then in the beaten eggs. Repeat the process for all the bread. Fry the bread on both sides in hot oil. To finish, mix the sugar and ground cinnamon on a plate and coat the now fried *rabanada* or French toast with it.



Every meal I make reminds me of her a little. I was never much into celebrations linked to dates; if I feel like eating something, I go ahead and make it. But at Christmas and New Year's we always have *rabanada* (French toast). And when I made *rabanada*, she was my kitchen assistant.

I would put all the ingredients in separate little bowls. Then I would slice the bread and soak it in the milk. She would dip it in the egg, I would fry it and then give it back to her. She would roll it in the sugar with cinnamon and arrange it on the large plate. When I looked over, she was already eating it. I would tell her it was hot and she would answer, "But Mum, I like it like this!"

So, I went a long time without making it. I've tried to make it, because I have five grandkids now, as well as my older children. But my daughter Raquel would end up stopping me and saying, "No, we can't have *rabanada* that tastes like tears!" So today, she's the one who makes it. When I arrive, everything's already ready and I thank God for that!

This recipe represents a memory. A memory of a time, of the 15 years that were stolen from me.

After the disappearance everything changed. But I tried to learn something from it all. I remember hearing something the brother of a missing person said. He said he was an orphan of living parents, because his parents could only think about his sister. And then I thought that, if he felt like that, like someone who was missing inside his own home, how must my children be feeling? So, I came in, sat down and talked.

In the end, in the middle of it all, I had to decide: either I stay inside the house crying and fall into depression, or I fight. And I decided to fight.

*by Luciene Torres, mother
Nova Iguaçu, Rio de Janeiro*

Luciane went missing in 2009, at the age of 9.



Pasta and bean soup for Graciane

Ingredients

- 3 teacups cooked beans
- 500 g chicken breast, diced
- 2 tbsp oil
- 2 chicken or beef stock cubes
- Parsley, spring onions and oregano to taste
- 1 teacup spaghetti

Method

Puree the cooked beans in a blender until they are very smooth. In a saucepan, sauté the chicken breast and add the pureed beans, stock cubes and about one litre of water. Heat gently until the stock cube dissolves. Add the pasta and cook for about 20 minutes, stirring from time to time. To finish, garnish with parsley, spring onions and oregano to taste.

Graciane's favourite dish is pasta and bean soup. As soon as the weather turned rainy, clouding over, and bringing along a fresh breeze, she would say, "Ooh, I've gotten the shivers three times now - can you make pasta and bean soup for me?"

Beans are something you always have to hand. So, my mother always made this soup. She would take the beans, add parsley, spring onions, coriander and other seasonings, and puree the soup in the blender. Sometimes she added a chicken breast and sometimes she didn't, serving the soup on its own, as it was with the pasta.

When we had rolls of *pão francês*, we would grab a little bread roll to eat with it. After she went missing, we did try to make it, but we couldn't. We felt bad doing it without her.

We ended up feeling too sad to eat.

*by Gislaine Ferreira da Silva Nascimento, sister
Paiçandu, Paraná*

Graciane went missing in 2005, at the age of 18.



Neapolitan ice cream for Rubens

Ingredients

Cream ice cream:

- 1 litre milk
- 2 tins sweetened condensed milk
- 6 egg yolks
- 6 egg whites, beaten until stiff

Chocolate ice cream:

- 4 tins cream
- 400 grams dark or milk chocolate
- 1 heaped tbsp butter
- Cacao liqueur, or a liqueur of your choice

Method

To make the cream flavoured ice cream, warm all the ingredients, except the beaten egg whites, over the heat. Stir until the mixture thickens, take off the heat and set aside to cool. Once cool, gently fold in the beaten egg whites. Put the mixture in the freezer and take out every three hours, stirring the ice cream so it doesn't crystallize. Repeat this three to four times. For the chocolate ice cream, melt the chocolate, add the remaining ingredients, and beat in a mixer until it becomes creamy. Put the mixture in the freezer and repeat the same process as for the cream ice cream, stirring it a few times so it doesn't crystallize. Finally, assemble the ice cream cake in layers in a tin lined with aluminium foil: one layer of cream, one of chocolate, and another of cream. Put the tin in the freezer. Transfer the ice cream to a plate before serving.

In my family, the kitchen was the woman's domain. The women were brought up according to the customs of the time, with my mother, the eldest of four girls, a living example of that. Besides loving her studies, she was raised to be the perfect housewife, keeping her house tidy, sewing for the whole family, cooking perfectly and entertaining guests like no other.

When we were little, Mum waited for us to fall asleep so she could cook alone and in silence. And by the next day, the magic had happened. That is how it was with this ice cream, which became a kind of symbol in our family. It all started with my grandmother, who used to make a simple cream ice cream. Then Mum had the idea of adding chocolate ganache, one of our aunts added nuts, and another aunt added a hint of cognac. And that is how our "Neapolitan ice cream" was born, even if it wasn't exactly that. Dad loved ice cream, especially mango. But this homemade ice cream, he just loved it.

When my aunt sent me the recipe, I looked at it and thought, "Oh, what a hassle." But I felt like making it all the same. With my children. This ice cream reminds us of both my father and my mother: his taste and her talent. It also helps us acknowledge the memories that live on among all of us aunts and uncles, cousins and siblings. The memory of a full house, of our mother, focused on her task, and of all of us as children. And of our father, who never went into the kitchen but delighted in tasting delicious things.

*by Nalú Paiva, daughter
São Paulo, SP*

Rubens went missing in 1971, at the age of 41.

Afterword

Food has the power to transport us through time and trigger memories. A familiar smell, a distinct kind of seasoning, the taste of a special dish – all these elements can take us back to moments we experienced with those we love. Often, food does not just keep us going; it links us to our memories.

And keeping those memories alive is essential for families with loved ones who have disappeared. It has the power to preserve, in some way, the times spent with the missing person.

By sharing their memories with others who live with the same sense of absence, the relatives of missing persons weave their stories together like a tapestry; one formed out of pain, without doubt, but also out of hope. This meeting of memories produces invisible ties, fabricated of solidarity, listening and resilience. Formerly individual memories become collective spaces of remembrance and action, where the past is not silenced, but propels us to keep looking for answers, seeking justice and searching for the names and faces that should never have been snatched from our everyday lives.

During the many meetings between the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the families of missing persons, it emerged that gatherings at the table were among the most beautiful and poignant moments shared with their missing relatives. It was at the table, amid laughter, conversation and food, that many memories took shape.

This book was born of the ICRC's commitment to the families of missing persons and of its partnership with the Movimento Nacional de Familiares de Pessoas Desaparecidas (National Movement of Families of the Missing). *Flavours of Longing* shares the stories of families and their missing loved ones, with an emphasis on recipes that play an important role in these memories and stories. It is not just a cookbook, but a tribute to missing persons and a celebration of their lives, through family recipes.

Across the world, millions of people live with the uncertainty of absence; parents, children, siblings and friends who went missing without explanation.

To be left without any news of a loved one is to live suspended, between hope and fear, between the past and a future that does not materialize. In this regard, the ICRC undertakes its humanitarian work on behalf of missing persons and their families in various parts of the world, based on the understanding that all people, without distinction, have the right to know the whereabouts of their loved ones and to have an adequate response to the humanitarian needs stemming from a relative's disappearance.

The ICRC strives to raise awareness about a person's disappearance and the impact and consequences for their families. As a neutral, independent and impartial humanitarian organization, the ICRC works in more than 50 countries on this issue. In Brazil, for more than a decade, it has made efforts to recognize and give visibility to the needs of families of missing persons.

It is essential that governments and other organizations increase their efforts to alleviate the suffering of thousands of people who live with the reality of disappearance and address this issue, which is one of the most complex, challenging, and underreported humanitarian problems in the world today.

Each recipe in this book is more than a set of ingredients and instructions – it is a reminder of a beloved person and a living memory shared as an act of love and resistance. Each recipe contains stories and the hope of reunion. It highlights the need for information, and the right to answers. By cooking these dishes, we not only preserve flavours, we also affirm a refusal to let the absence of loved ones dilute their identities or our bonds with them.

May this book invite us to remember, to care and to stand in solidarity. May we, in preparing each of these recipes, accompany – even in silence – the families on their journey: in the memories that endure, in the love that sustains, and in the ongoing search for answers.

“It was around that time, as evening approached. On those very cold days, he would arrive frozen, run to the shower, while I made a cup of hot *Nescau* and a bread roll in the pan. The last time that happened was on 28 November 2014, the last day we spent together. I miss him so much. Like a book you read and realize the last page is missing. Today I drink my *Nescau* alone.”

Maria Eugênia de Carvalho Silva, mother of Getúlio da Silva Junior, who has been missing since 2014.



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