

The Foibles of Feeding – A Mother’s Table

By Are We There Yet



Photo credit: Jakub Kapusna, foodiesfeed.com

It starts out ambitious. A fresh, crunchy endive and creamy Roquefort salad drizzled with a delicate mustard vinaigrette, perfectly complemented by grilled salmon steak, its crisp outside dissolving in salty pleasure on our tongues. At least, that’s what was in my head this morning, as I planned this evening’s dinner.

On our plates tonight, as we sat down at the table, was pasta with boiled vegetables. Again.

“The fifteen minute gourmet!” my recipe books proclaim. “Only five minutes prep time!”. Yeah, I’ll five minute you. That’s the time it takes to get the pan out of the cupboard while simultaneously listening to poetry recitals, yelling down the corridor that practicing piano means actually making the keys move, not just looking at them, and pulling the youngest one down from climbing up the shelves to reach the chocolate chips hidden behind an enormous bag of flaxseed and wheat germ mix. It’s enormous because we’ve never used it.

I bought it in one of my motivated moments, cruising through the grocery store at top speed,

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whipping things off the shelf and into the cart so I could make it to school on time for pick up. “Look at that”, I thought to myself. “I’ll just throw this into all of our stunning, organic, home-cooked delicacies that will have simmered on the stove for hours. We’ll be so healthy, we’ll be on the cover of *Amazing Family Life*. The kids will win the Olympics at age 10! They’ll graduate from university by age 12! Everything will be easy and glorious!”

Not exactly. By the time we got home from school, which involved insane driving maneuvers as every parent within 50 square miles tried to squeeze into the same three available parking spots, then reassuring the teacher that my kid will not colour her friends’ nails anymore with permanent markers to look pretty while ignoring the lesson, and pretending that I have already signed up to bring something to the school picnic which I have no idea when it is, hours of simmering on the stove was not an option.

No problem. I reach for the *Fifteen Minute Gourmet*. This will solve everything. In fifteen short minutes, we’ll be sitting at the table, dining delectably.

45 minutes later, I start reading the recipe.

“Take a half teaspoon of cardamom, freshly ground, and mix with lightly roasted basil before sprinkling on tossed trout cubes and grilling”. Who cubes *trout*? And even if I had cardamom *seeds*, which I don’t, then I’m supposed to *roast* basil?? My recipe time had been interrupted by wrestling the younger one out of the cupboards away from the chocolate chips and convincing the older one that yes, it is possible to do homework and have a life, and if she wanted to keep her life then she better do her homework. I abandon speed gourmet and start filling a pot to boil water.

Just as I put the pot on the stove, I hear a scream.

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My older one’s tooth was falling out, and blood was everywhere. In a loving move to rescue her sister, the little one jumped off the toilet, running down the hallway at full speed to get me. Unfortunately, she forgot to pull her pants up. Running with her pants around her ankles, she tripped, banged her head against the wall, and joined her sister with bleeding everywhere.

After everyone was cleaned up and calmed down, I sat both kids at the kitchen table where I could keep an eye on them, put them to work happily drawing pictures of weird-looking farm animals, and turned my attention back to dinner. All the water had boiled out of the pot. In fact, the bottom of the pot had boiled right out, leaving a blackened, useless mess. I got another pot out of the cupboards, filled it with water, and started again.

I made noodles. It was late, we were hungry, and it didn’t matter any more. We just needed to eat.

As they sat there, talking loudly at the same time and waving their arms around to better tell stories about everything that had happened at school, more noodles fell on the floor and their shirts than got in their mouths. They didn’t mind. They just scooped them back up again into their mouths and kept talking.

“Mommy, you make the best noodles in the whole world. Is this gourmet? We love gourmet. Can you do it again tomorrow?”

Yes, kids, we’ll do it all over again tomorrow. And make the best gourmet meal ever.

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