

A TASTE OF THE PAST: Preserving Your Food Memories



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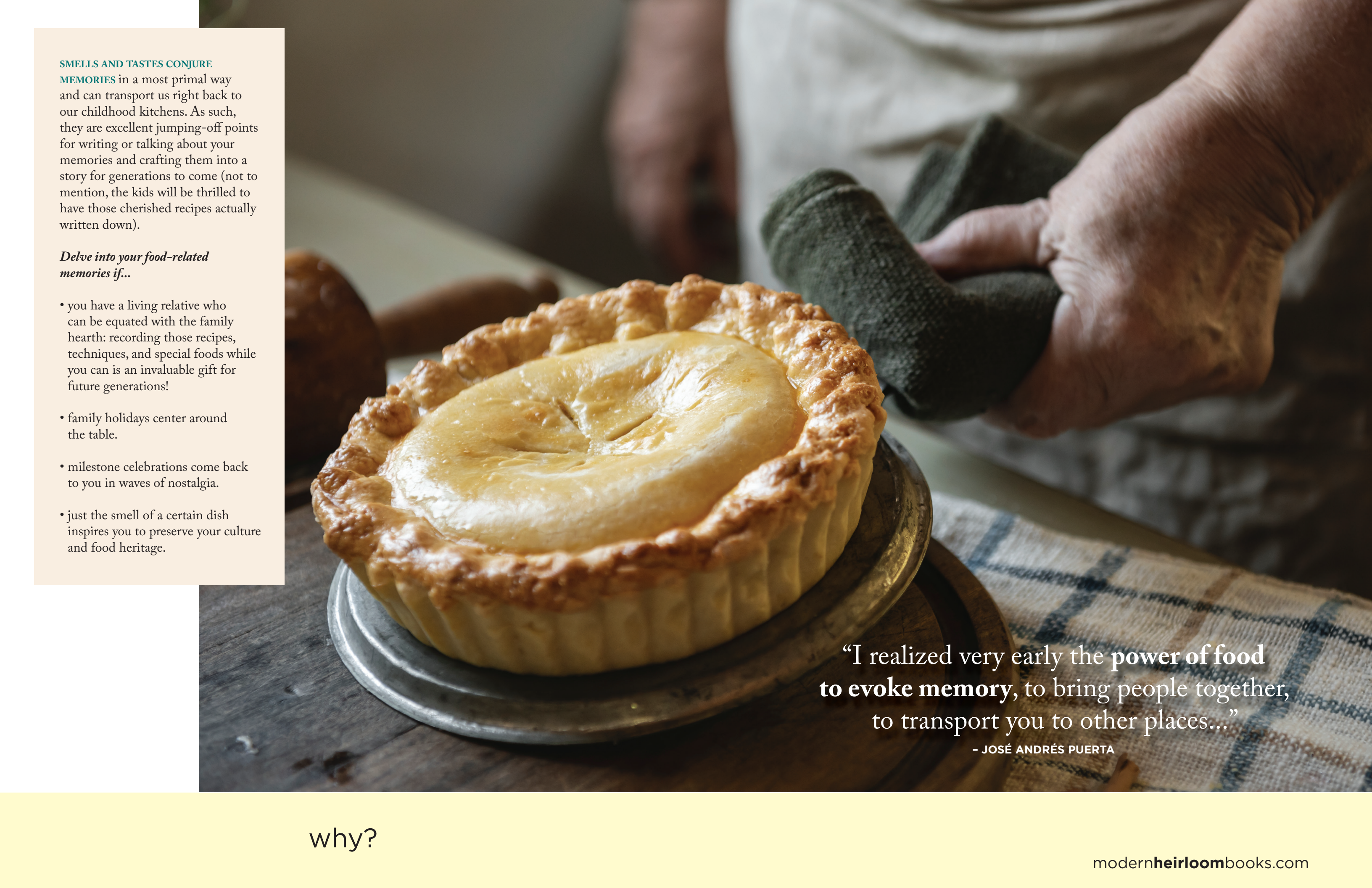
MODERN / HEIRLOOM / BOOKS
by Dawn Roode

SMELLS AND TASTES CONJURE

MEMORIES in a most primal way and can transport us right back to our childhood kitchens. As such, they are excellent jumping-off points for writing or talking about your memories and crafting them into a story for generations to come (not to mention, the kids will be thrilled to have those cherished recipes actually written down).

Delve into your food-related memories if..

- you have a living relative who can be equated with the family hearth: recording those recipes, techniques, and special foods while you can is an invaluable gift for future generations!
- family holidays center around the table.
- milestone celebrations come back to you in waves of nostalgia.
- just the smell of a certain dish inspires you to preserve your culture and food heritage.



“I realized very early the **power of food to evoke memory**, to bring people together, to transport you to other places...”

- JOSÉ ANDRÉS PUERTA

why?

1

Consider:
How do you want
to preserve
your food
memories?

It's wonderful to have a stash of grease-stained, handwritten recipes in a drawer in your home. But it's even better to know that those recipes are preserved no matter what.

By digitizing your recipes (they can be scans of the handwritten cards or typewritten transcripts) you not only ensure they last for generations, but you can more easily share them with loved ones far and wide.

Our two favorite ways to preserve your recipes and food memories are:

No. 1: **In a book** (of course!). Include both recipes and, at least for some of the foods, the stories and memories associated with them. You can go a DIY route or hire us to create a professional heritage cookbook for your family.

No. 2: **In a recipe box.** Consider attaching photos and stories to your recipes and storing them together in a vintage recipe box.

where to start

2

Gather
recipes.

Even if you're an incredibly organized person, chances are you've got some recipes in a drawer, some on the computer, and others in your head (perhaps those are the most important to write down!).

Make a list of everywhere you think your recipes reside, then tackle gathering them all in one place.

Two tips: Ask your loved ones which recipes you should include (you might be surprised what your kids ask for!), and then call your siblings and parents to solicit recipes from them, too.



3

Add pictures.

Do you have photos of Grandma in her kitchen, or Poppa pulling the turkey out of the oven on Thanksgiving?

Go on a treasure hunt to find as many food-related photos as you can. Then, digitize them with an app such as Google PhotoScan or hire a professional to scan them so you ensure you don't lose them (and so you can use them in a printed book if you wish). Make sure to scour your phone scroll for recent images, too.

Also consider hiring a professional photographer to capture a cooking session in your home kitchen. I can recommend photographers across the country, so don't hesitate to ask me for recommendations. You can include handed-down cast-iron pots, serving dishes, and other family heirlooms in the shoot to make it even more special.



4

Find the stories.

For your most-often-cooked foods, traditional fare, and family favorites, write about the memories associated with each of them.


Be specific: Mention the cast-iron pan with the always-loose handle that Bubbe cooked his eggs in. The apron Aunt Ida wore only on Passover. How cherry Jell-o brings you back to your childhood, and the aroma of anise transports you to Brooklyn at Easter. Details, details—the scents and colors and textures...the truth of the story lies in the details.

One fun way to capture these stories is to host a family get-together with the express purpose of reminiscing (over dinner, of course!). Designate someone to take notes, and set up a couple of voice recorders (your smart phone is fine) around the room to get the stories. Oh, and take some pictures while you're at it.

Use the questions on the next pages either as writing prompts or as conversation starters with your family.

get started

where to start



38 Questions to Prompt *Food Memories*


THE KITCHEN OF YOUR CHILDHOOD

- How was cooking in your home (either growing up or when you were raising your family) similar to or different from other families in your neighborhood?
- What do you remember about holidays and special events?
- Describe the kitchen of your childhood: what color were the walls? was it small or big? was there a window, and what was the view? what were the smells? the sounds? were the pots and pans hung on hooks or hidden in a cabinet? was there a pantry filled with...? did you do anything other than cook there—gather with friends, do your homework, talk on the telephone?
- What are some of your earliest food memories?
- What are some of your favorite food memories?
- What are some of your funniest food memories?
- Were there any foods you hated but were forced to eat as a kid? (Did you eat them or sneak scraps to the dog?)
- What did you talk about around the dinner table when you were growing up? What about now?
- What did your mother (or the primary cook in your family) wear when cooking? *An apron? A house coat over her work clothes? A sauce-stained sweatshirt?*
- Were there any comfort foods from your childhood that hold a special place in your heart—in other words, what was your family’s “chicken soup” for the soul?
- Did you have a regular day of the week for take-out food (such as pizza Fridays or, a more recent example, taco Tuesdays)? If so, what was your to-go restaurant of choice?
- What did you snack on when you were little?
- Were you ever a picky eater? Describe when, and if/how you got over it.

Allow these questions to spark questions of your own—be fluid.

ALL GROWN UP

- How did you learn to cook?
- Who taught you some of your most important kitchen lessons? Tell me about them.
- What were your experiences making some of your first dishes?
- What cooking triumphs (or disasters) stand out in your memory?
- How has cooking changed for you over the years?
- What foods always cheer you up?
- What meal do you most often cook for those you love?
- What junk food is your guilty pleasure?
- The way we cook at different stages of our life can be revealing. Do you remember the dishes you relied on when you first went out on your own? Did you cook at all during college? If not, do any celebratory meals or meals cooked by a visiting parent stand out in your memory? How did cooking change after you had children? When they got to be teenagers? When you went back to work?
- If you moved away from your home, are there any foods that you would miss that are indigenous to the area or especially well-made in the region?
- Do you eat for comfort, for health, for enjoyment? Talk a little bit about your relationship with food over the years.
- Do you remember the first time you tasted the cuisine of a seemingly exotic culture? What was it, and did you like it? What were the circumstances?
- Do you have one or more cookbooks you return to again and again? Have the chefs you admire changed over the years?



38 Questions to Prompt *Food Memories*

HERITAGE RECIPES

- What are your oldest recipes and where did they come from?
- What are some of your family's unique food traditions?
- Are there recipes that particularly represent your family's culture, religion, or regional background? Do you know how to cook them?
- Are there any recipes in your family that seem unusual or unique?
- Is there a recipe you wish you had gotten from an ancestor but that was never written down? What memories does it hold for you? Have you tried (successfully or not) to recreate it?
- Do you have handwritten recipes from your parents and grandparents, and if so, where do you keep them?

FAMILY & FOOD

- Who are/were the best cooks in the family? Tell me about them.
- What family dishes would you miss the most if you never tasted them again?
- Who sat/sits at the head of your table, and is it a position of honor?
- Do you say grace before eating, and if so, is there a particular prayer or approach to what is said (e.g., something you're each grateful for, something nice you did that day, etc.)?
- How were birthdays celebrated in your family? Did you have the same cake every year, or something new? Was it homemade or store bought? Did you put an extra candle on the cake for good luck?
- What other food traditions do you uphold (or have you abandoned from your childhood)?
- Do you enjoy entertaining large groups of people around food? What types of celebrations? What kind of host are you?



A few ideas for gathering family recipes:

- Grab a piece of note paper and jot down a list of recipes that hold meaning for your family. Don't just think about holiday meals or complicated dishes—even that three-ingredient soup that you fall back on during busy weeknights should be included. My grandmother used mayo instead of butter to cook up the best grilled cheese ever, and you can be sure I'm passing that simple but critical tidbit on!
- If the recipe was handed down by a relative, indicate with whom it originated, and any tweaks subsequent cooks have made along the way.
- Consider asking family members to fill in recipe cards and contribute them to your collection. It's always wonderful to have notes in loved ones' own handwriting, and reading the memories they attach to the recipes will be a tasty bonus.

“When you invite someone to sit at your table and **you want to cook for them,** you're inviting a person into your life.”

—MAYA ANGELOU

bonus tips

A Taste of the Past Recipe Card Set



A most
unique & loving
host(ess) gift!



Our recipe cards set goes above and beyond capturing ingredients and cooking instructions for your family's favorite foods. Open the cards to reveal space to record your memories of these foods!

Is it a recipe handed down through generations on your mom's side? Was it your child's go-to meal as a toddler? Does the smell remind you of Thanksgivings past, Nanna's kitchen, or early memories in a special home?

Preserve your family recipes and all the precious stories they call forth.

Set includes 10 fold-over recipe/memory cards, 10 additional 4x6-inch cards for even more memories and notes, plus bonus "Recipe for Remembering" pages with tips to make the most of your family history set. Cards measure 4x6 inches when folded, designed to fit in most standard recipe boxes, and come beautifully packaged in an elegant drawstring pouch perfect for gifting the host at your next holiday gathering!

\$30 per set

Order at
[modernheirloombooks.com/
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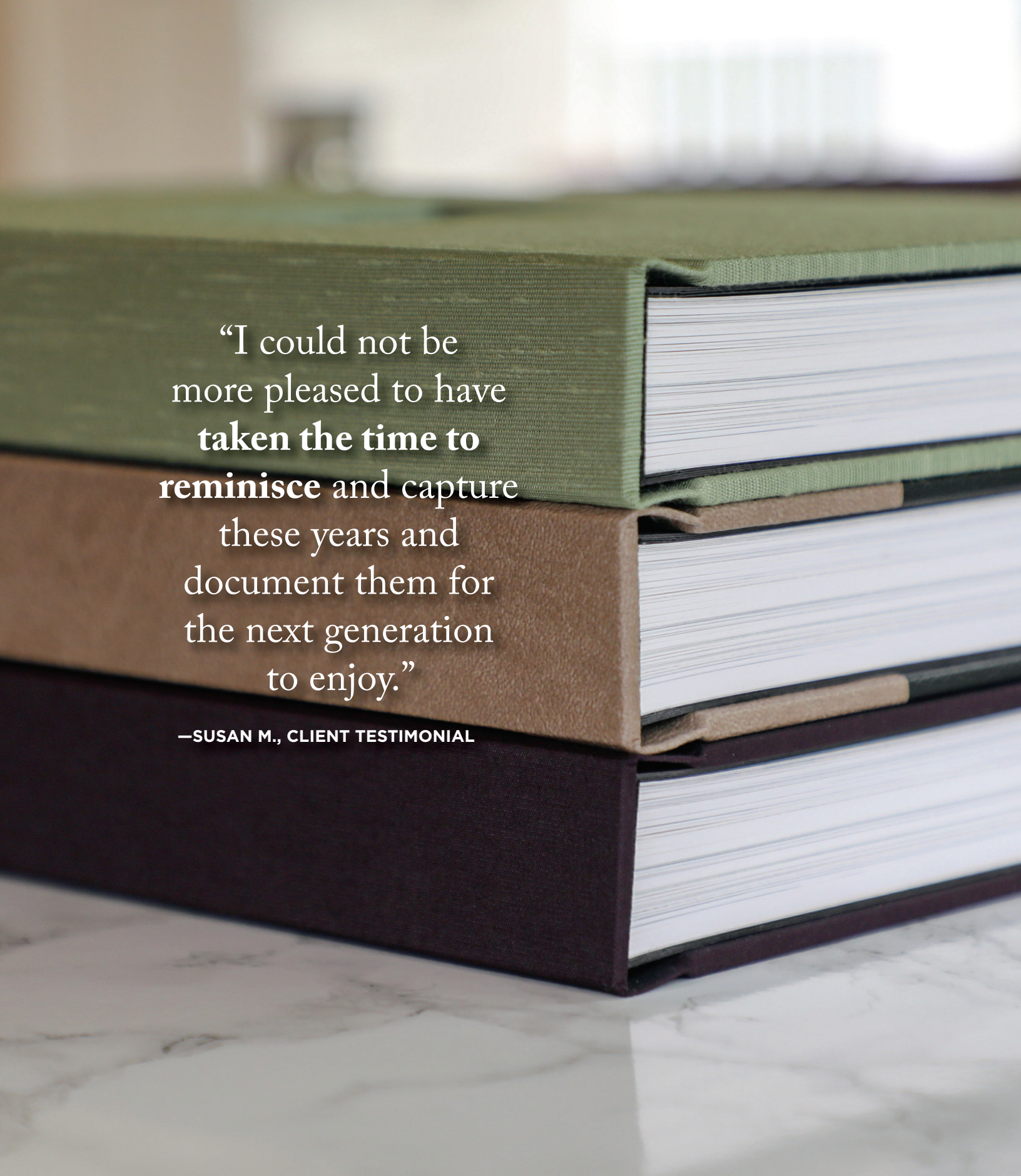
“Pull up a chair.
Take a taste. Come
join us. **Life is so
endlessly delicious.**”

—RUTH REICHL



gift idea

modernheirloombooks.com



“I could not be more pleased to have **taken the time to reminisce** and capture these years and document them for the next generation to enjoy.”

—SUSAN M., CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

Set up a
free
consultation.

Our expert team of interviewers, editors, and designers will transform your food memories into a beautiful heirloom that will be cherished for generations.

An heirloom book of food memories is a most uniquely meaningful gift for your child on the verge of marriage or heading off to college—or simply a gift for yourself, so you can feel secure in the knowledge that your family’s food heritage will be passed on.

Set up a free consultation to learn how we can work together.

Call Modern Heirloom Books founder Dawn at **917.922.7415**

or email

dawn@modernheirloombooks.com



next steps

modern**heirloom**books.com

Our Story

At Modern Heirloom Books I help individuals and families preserve their stories in bespoke coffee table books. We gather stories through one-on-one personal interviews, curate photos and mementos, then create an engaging narrative that brings your family history to life in an heirloom book to be passed on for generations.

Often it's the food memories—recollections of sitting around a family table, sneaking tastes of Nonna's sauce straight from the pot, or learning to grill from Dad—that call forth meaningful stories.

I encourage you to record handwritten recipes from your own kitchen (your kids' favorite meals, holiday traditions) along with recipes from your family archive (the birthday cake passed down from your mother-in-law, the Old-World dishes that bring a taste of your heritage home). Trust me, you are creating a meaningful—and delicious—legacy by preserving these recipes and food memories!

And I am here to help guide you along the way to creating a book destined to become one of your most favored heirlooms. I can't wait to hear your food stories. *Call me!*

Yours in remembering,
Dawn

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me and my son!



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