

Real Men Can't Cook

by Cory Bickmore

I address my remarks today the Young Single Adult men in the audience. Imagine you and I are in my office having a private conversation where my icy gaze bores like a barbed javelin into the ickiest, tar-filled regions your soul. We must now discuss a topic of vast importance. That's right. We need to have the Cooking Talk.

As a single LDS male and former Boy Scout/campsite demolisher, you have a healthy understanding of tasty food's role in your continued existence. But how to obtain it? Mom is back home, and showing up at a cute singles ward Relief Society president's apartment around dinnertime only works so often (never stop trying, however).

Many would tell you to cook for yourself. Do not permit this clearly shady advice to cloud your common sense. Cooking is little better than a culinary Pandora's box that at best yields extremely questionable chow, and at worst, brings the FBI round to investigate the neighborhood's mysterious outbreak of pet deaths. You see, no bachelor in history has ever liked his own sorry cuisine. Think about it—the last time your taste buds actually delighted in a steaming bowl of Ramen Noodles, your chief concern in life involved escaping 7th grade gym with all limbs accounted for. And the teenage favorite, macaroni and cheese? Yellow Death. So why flush away two hours of valuable flirting time to slave over a doomed pot of fettuccini? Keep those FBI guys far away, man.

Instead tap into the wisdom of countless college generations past. Since the dawn of existence, or at least the mid-morning of it, fast food restaurants have existed for the sole purpose of preserving the lives of undernourished bachelors, meaning all of them. Fast food joints have two subtly attractive features: they serve Food, and they serve it Fast. No more dinking around with that inefficient “do-it-yourself” bunk. And guess what? The pre-made savory meal will not taste like a construction worker's bath mat, or even worse, your own cooking.

If for some inexplicable reason—such as being raised by a clan of spider monkeys—you prefer the oppressiveness of cooking at home, you will need to obtain the necessary food from somewhere. Trashcans, though highly convenient, may not always provide the most balanced of diets. Consequently, you must swallow your remaining pride by purchasing food from an actual grocery store (obtain driving directions from your ward's nearest engaged couple). Do not feel intimidated. The smart man survives this ordeal in one of two ways: by going shopping A) every other day, or B) every other month.

- Shopping Every Other Day: Swiftly purchase only the most essential items (e.g. Doritos), thus permitting you to steer clear of the store's domestic-looking grocery carts.
- Shopping Every Other Month: Load up on planetary quantities of provisions during this shopping marathon. By doing so, you won't have to step outside the apartment for weeks. When your inventory finally dwindles, stretch it out by borrowing food from roommates. You can also easily play on the sympathies of ward girls and nearby relatives to secure frequent meal invitations. When at long last you must shop again, the previously mentioned domestic-ish cart will support your hunger-weakened frame as you wheel about gathering boxed dinners and canned spaghetti. Once home, bring in all your grocery bags in just one trip. After all, you have an ego to feed as well as a stomach.

Now let's not forget to mention Man's Real Best Friend. The ancients had a saying: “If it's not instant, it's not worth it.” That's why so many prehistoric hunter/gatherers revered high-powered rifles. This need for immediate gratification gave birth to the most wildly useful appliance ever to grace a college kitchen, the microwave oven. With practice, a man can prepare anything from chimichangas to jello with miraculous speed. Cleaning the microwave is a snap too: just close its little door and walk away.

With whom should you cook? Answer: no one! Rest assured, the day will come during your college career that someone—a concerned mother or a crazed roommate—will suggest your apartment ought to cook together, or at least rotate daily culinary duties. Do not fear this moment, my friends. The odds of this appalling idea becoming reality makes zero look quite large in comparison, and pretty too, if numbers can be pretty, which they cannot. No group of single LDS males are capable such a feat, lacking both the requisite skill and inclination. As for the source of the suggestion, politely guffaw in the person's face.

This is not to say you cannot share food. Sharing between roommates indeed occurs from time to time, if by 'sharing' we mean 'borrowing', and if by 'borrowing' we mean 'stealing'. And since the word 'stealing' carries with it such an unfortunate connotation, call it 'consecration' instead. Make this small but useful mental switch and *hey presto!* by snitching Joe's food you are now actually helping him serve his fellow man. He has *consecrated* it, after all! What a kind roommate you are! Just don't consecrate the last of Joe's milk until he leaves for class.

Contrary to the natural order of the universe, many apartments of LDS girls do dine together, and what, we may ask, does it ever do for them? Well, a lot. But more importantly, what does it do for you? Nothing! While they're busy bonding over bowls of homemade nonfat soup, you are left out in the cold, forbidden to call or visit during what they so selfishly call "their time". If this infernal practice becomes entrenched, nothing will prevent them from forming a tight-knit group rabidly intent on protecting their precious she-comrades from the innocent suitor, i.e. you. Take steps to ensure this never happens (think water balloons).

Only one situation will move your apartment collective to cook as a group, the highly anticipated and feared Cooking For Girls. It won't be pretty, but it will be worth it.

Inviting girls over to eat creates the illusion of reciprocity for all the times they prepared tasty dinners for your apartment. Unfortunately for you, only Real Cooking impresses LDS females. Since neither Oreo-milk salad nor Wendy's Combo Meals qualify as Real Cooking, you will need a Fake Real Cooking Plan to pull this off. The criteria for this are simple: the meal must be good enough to taste like you genuinely cooked, but simple enough to prevent wasting time with actual effort.

SUREFIRE WINNERS

- **Enchiladas.** Frozen burritos smothered with packets of Taco Bell sauce. Borrow a glass baking dish for a more authentic look (from the same girls you are entertaining, if possible).
- **Brownies.** Brownies invariably wow girls for some inexplicable reason, as if these dense brown bricks rank right beside Belgian Chocolate Cheesecake in preparatory rigor. Of course, your guests never witness the intense group study of Betty Crocker's box, resulting in a frantic scramble to see who might actually possess an unspoiled egg.
- **Enchiladas.** Just never invite the same set of girls over twice.

AVOID

- **Spaghetti.** While technically Real Cooking, the stigma from serving "the only food guys can make" will haunt your apartment forever.
- **Barbecues.** As festive as this seems to you, neither bleeding hamburgers nor spectacular grease fires are pathways to the female heart.
- **Anything that involves kneading, tossing, mixing, rising, stirring, grating, carving, whisking, blending, tenderizing, basting, brazing, broiling, simmering, steaming or marinating.** No girl is ever worth this. Turn on "The Simpsons" instead.

Thank you for listening, my Young Single Adult friends. If you have felt the need to make changes while reading this column, please do so NOW. Your rapidly expanding gut will thank you.