

Cooking is the Ultimate Giving

It was a beautiful day in Mumbai, India. The streets were bustling with the sounds of cars, trucks, and horns. My name is Raj. I am in the sixth grade and I lived in an apartment with my mom and dad. My dad worked in a well-known company and my mom took care of the household and in her leisure time, she made cooking videos and uploaded them on her YouTube channel. As usual, I rode bikes and played games in the garden downstairs with my friends. Usually, when I go back to my apartment, I see my dad come home from his office. But that day, he was running a little late.

When I got home, I asked my mom, "Where is dad? When is he going to come home?"

"I'm sorry dear, but your dad called me a few minutes back and told me that he was having an important meeting and that he had some good news to share with us," she explained as she stopped recording her video.

I nodded and went to my room to do my homework.

It was almost dinner time, and my dad was home.

"Dad! Where were you? Why are you so late? And what's the good news mom was talking about!" I exclaimed.

"Hey, relax buddy. We'll talk about it all at the dining table, but first, let me go and freshen up." He elucidated.

As my dad went into his room to freshen up, I started to help my mom set up the dining table.

"Mom, what do we have for dinner today?" I asked her eagerly.

"Well, it's a surprise!" She told me.

Now that my dad was here, we couldn't wait to hear the good news that he was going to share.

"So, the good news is that my company is promoting me to a new project in the U.S.A.!" He explained.

"Wait. WHAT?" My jaw dropped.

"And the good thing is that you both along with me!"

Our tickets are scheduled a week later from now to Los Angeles, so we need to start packing our luggage as soon as possible.

"YAY!" My mom and I were so excited to hear this and couldn't wait to share this news with my neighbors and friends.

My mom started serving us our dinner, and as soon as she opened the pot, I could immediately smell the flavorful aroma of my favorite food: Biryani! It's a type of flavored rice with a lot of vegetables and spices.

It was almost time for me to go to bed.

"Good night Mom, good night Dad," I said to my parents.

As I lay down on the bed, I kept dreaming of going to the U.S.A.

One week later

I couldn't believe that one week had already passed by so quickly! Today was the day we were going to fly. Our flight was scheduled for late at night, so we left our apartment four hours before our flight departure. It was my first international long-journey flight that was going to last for at least 12 hours. We got our boarding passes and checked in our baggage. We were at the gate, waiting to board our flight. A few hours later, the airline started to board the passengers. We all went inside and took our seats. I explored the T.V. that was right in front of me.

"Look guys, there are so many movies to watch!" I showed the screen to my parents.

Then, the plane started to move. I think we were taking off! Believe it or not, we were in the air in a matter of seconds. After an hour, the crew started to serve food. We ate and tried to sleep.

The Next Day

It was almost time for the plane to land. We got off the plane, did the Immigration and Customs, got our baggage, and waited for the taxi to drop us off at the company's allotted apartment. As soon as we reached, we arranged our luggage into our built-in closets. As we had a long journey, we had jetlag. So, my mom, who was a very good cook, prepared something quick to eat.

The next morning, my dad went to work while my mom and I explored the neighborhood stores and tried to enquire about the schooling system. My mom started the enrollment process in the

school. In the meantime, we got to know the neighbors as well. Some of the kids I met were of my age.

A few days passed by, and I started school. I started to take the school bus with my other neighboring friends. It was fun! I was getting used to the U.S.A. culture and its schooling system. My mom would cook mouth-relishing dishes and pack those for my lunch, yet, in my school, some kids didn't like the smell or the way the food looked, so they didn't sit nor talk with me. They would say *YUCK* and laugh at my food. This made me feel upset. I didn't want this to happen to anybody else. I shared this with my mom. So, she gave me some wise words.

"Listen to me, Raj. If people are bullying you at school, then you have to use your words to tell them your concerns. Don't just ignore them; speak up for yourself and tell them to not do this again," She said wisely.

But, she also wanted to help me physically so she started sharing the dishes with our neighbors. In a couple of days, my mom started to get orders from people who liked her food. Soon, she was quite famous for her culinary skills.

One day, my mom was watching T.V. with one of her friends and they saw this MasterChef commercial. She suggested to my mom saying, *Why don't you go ahead and participate in the MasterChef since you are so talented at cooking!* My mom thought for a while and was encouraged by her friend. So that day, during our dinner, she told us all about her wish to participate in the

MasterChef competition. My dad and I were so delighted to hear this news from her! We motivated her to go and participate.

My dad took out his phone and dialed the given number so that he could register her as soon as possible. We all were so happy that we couldn't believe that one of our family members was going to participate in an international competition. Now, we were just waiting for my mom to be selected for the audition.

A few days later, my dad got a text message from MasterChef saying that my mom was selected for the audition. We couldn't believe it!!

All our neighboring friends were high in spirits since she was going to the competition.

The day arrived! We went to the studio for her audition round. After the audition was done, they made us wait for another hour until the results were announced. Our fingers were crossed and our hearts were pounding to hear the announcements. In a few minutes, they started to call out the participants. They had to choose fourteen participants, and fortunately, one of them was my mom!

As soon as they called her name, we all clapped and cheered for her as we were so joyful, and she went up to the judges to collect her apron. During that time, the judges asked her, "Would you like to say anything else?"

"Yes, I would love to. I just want to say that the food and cuisine we have in our diet is very important to our health, and no one should be making fun of it. We should always respect

everyone's food. It's okay if you don't like that cuisine, but never disrespect it." Everyone applauded her.

"Very encouraging speech!" The judge described.

My mom was so positive in spreading the message that my family and I were proud of her. Since then, whenever I went for lunch in the school cafeteria, if someone teased me for the way my food looked and smelt, I would just use the same words that my mom used in her speech during the MasterChef audition.

All three of us were getting busy in our own lives, I started enjoying school and making new friends, and at the same time, my mom was getting promoted to the next rounds in the competition. Even after getting selected for MasterChef, she kept continuing her YouTube channel which also got a bunch of subscribers while my dad was engaged in his office work. But at the end of the day, everybody was happy in their own lives.

THE END