

Five Questions

to ask your grandmother about her cooking.

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The trick is not the recipe. The recipe is easy — she'll dictate it in three minutes.

The trick is getting the part she doesn't think to mention. The part her hands know.

Ask these five questions, in order, the next time you see her. Take notes. Or don't — just listen.

I. The dish you'd want me to be able to make.

Not her favorite. The one she'd be sad if you couldn't. The difference matters — it gets you the recipe she actually wants to live on, not the one she just likes.

II. Where you learned it.

Almost always a story about a person. The mother, the aunt, the neighbor, the woman in the building who did it differently. That story is half the recipe.

III. What people get wrong.

The single most useful question on this page. She has watched people do this wrong for fifty years. She has opinions. The opinions are the recipe.

IV. What you do without thinking.

The steps she'd never write down — the pressure of the hand, the angle of the spoon, the moment she knows. She'll say 'oh, nothing really.' Wait. She'll start telling you.

V. Who you were cooking for, the first time you made it for yourself.

This question is for you, not for the recipe. Ask it last. Don't interrupt.

— IF SHE'S FAR AWAY, OR IT'S HARD TO ASK IN PERSON —

Hearth does the interview for you, by phone.

An hour with our interviewer Lila — on her pace, gentle questions — becomes a hardcover cookbook in her voice. hearthbooks.love/waitlist