

How we eat now

What if kids ate food from your childhood?



To mark our 300th issue, *Emma Freud* 'treats' her family to the food she grew up with. Were they impressed?

@emmalfreud

My amazing, active, tap-dancing mother recently turned 90. We celebrated with her favourite childhood meal – ham and potatoes – and began talking about the foods of our youth. I have a hazy glow about the meals she made us in the 70s and 80s and decided to revisit them to see if the emotional culinary memory was all that remained, or if they could pass the timeless *Good Food* test with my own children.

BREAKFAST

Spam and cheese toasties. I pan-fried the spam until its edges were crispy, layered it into sandwiches with grated cheddar and relish, toasted them and offered them to my teenage sons. Had I called them cheese and ham toasties they'd have loved them. But I stood defiantly in the face of pork-based prejudice and proudly presented the spam for what it was. My children kindly said they didn't want to deprive me of all the joys and left me to eat them all. Shock news – still delicious.

LUNCH

A can of spaghetti bolognese on toast, a childhood favourite from the days when Heinz canned ravioli was the closest our house got to authentic Italian food. To me, this was glamorous. To children who have eaten non-canned pasta, it was mushy. What started as 'Can I have it without the toast?', ended as, 'Can I just have the toast.'

TEATIME

Went better, well for me anyway. The return of the adored **sandwich spread** sandwich. 'You'll love it,' I said to my 15-year-old, 'it's like a tangy mayonnaise with bits of things in it'. He passed. So we moved on to the revered yellow and pink cake that was only brought out for special occasions – **Battenburg**. The children were confused. 'It's SO sugary'. 'How can you say that – you eat Krispy Kremes?' 'But that's new sugary, this is old-fashioned sugary.' Apparently there's a difference.

SUPPER

Oh the joy of assembling a **cheese & pineapple hedgehog**. I proudly presented my grapefruit studded with tiny fruity dairy skewers as a retro amuse-bouche. Verdict: 'Weird'. 'Then say hello to your starter – it's **Mr Brain's Pork Fagotts**.

They're like meatballs, only the meat is mixed with a packet of stuffing, a pig's liver, and it's served in a glutinous gravy'. I could tell I had lost them. To be honest, I lost myself on that one too. Moving on... I didn't have my first Chinese meal until my 18th birthday and will always be grateful to **Vesta chow mein** – our favourite Asian supper, and 50% of my student diet. But it was like sucking on a stock cube. The deep fried crispy noodles were fun, despite looking like toenails, but the dehydrated vegetables were drowning in what tasted like liquid MSG. Spirits were revived by the tinned **Fray Bentos pie**. The pastry is still good and the soggy layer is still delicious, though the meat filling is pretty painful. And for the first time in 40 years, I mixed the white powder of **Smash** with boiling water, added a knob of butter and tried it. It was... spectacular. What began as a retro joke became a vow to never mash a spud again.

PUDDING

We went the full 1970s dessert trolley, starting with a **trifle made from four satchets of Bird's Dream Topping**. I served it with the **Neapolitan ice cream** that had tasted so great in the days before Britain discovered luxury ice cream. In my head, they were heaven. In my mouth, they were bland. Even the legendary **Violetta** wasn't what I remembered. The crispy bits are still deliciously unexpected, but the ice cream part tastes like Hoover fluff.

I'm not going to lie, by this stage I'd be pushing it to say my children were relishing the meal. But I held an ace up my sleeve – the violently coloured airy-goo of the legendary **Angel Delight**. Almost neon in hue, this embodies that greatest of all childhood flavours... pink. And what I realised was that our response to food is partly about what you're eating, but partly about the emotions it inspires. A nostalgic food memory can change something from 'technically disgusting' into 'blissfully pleasing'. To my boys, Angel Delight was a lurid mixture of whey powder, emulsifiers and gelling agents. To me, it was then, and always will be, the taste of school holidays, weekends and birthday treats. I ate the bowlful to the surprise of my narrow-minded kids and revelled in the power of the imagination to rework our culinary experiences.

Good Food contributing editor Emma Freud is a journalist and broadcaster, and director of Red Nose Day.

Meat fondue

To celebrate 27 years of *BBC Good Food*, it's time to revisit this 80s classic. This is a fun assembly job, which can all be done before your guests arrive. Make some sauces yourself (right), and buy the rest.

SERVES 4-6 PREP 30 mins
COOK 25-60 secs per piece
A LITTLE EFFORT

1 litre good vegetable oil to serve
crusty white bread
green salad

800g beef tenderloin or 4 rump steaks, cut into 1-inch cubes

1 Prepare your sauces (see right) in advance, and put in little bowls around the fondue burner, along with the meat, bread and salad. Season the meat.

2 When your guests are ready to eat, fill your fondue pan half-full of vegetable oil and heat on the hob until it's hot, but not smoking. You're aiming for around 375C, but if you haven't got a thermometer, throw in a cube of bread – when it takes about 30 secs to brown, it's ready.

3 Put the fondue burner on the table carefully so that it's stable, then, following the manufacturer's instructions, light the flame and put the pan on top.

4 Give each guest a fondue fork for dunking the meat in the hot oil. It should take 25-30 secs for rare, 30-35 secs for medium and 45-60 secs for well done. When the meat is cooked, dip it into the sauces, and pile it onto the bread. If you have some raw king prawns to cook in the fondue, they work really well too.

GOOD TO KNOW gluten free

PER SERVING (6) 321 kcal • fat 23g • saturates 6g • carbs none • sugars 5g • fibre 3g • protein 28g • salt 1.84g

Horseradish sauce

Mix **1 tbsp grated horseradish** with **3 tbsp sour cream, juice 1 lemon** and a pinch each of **salt, pepper** and **cayenne pepper**. Chill until serving.

Chilli vinegar

Mix **3 tbsp white wine vinegar** with **2 tsp sugar, 1 garlic clove**, grated, and **1 medium red chilli**, finely chopped. Set aside until needed.

Salsa verde

Put handful each **parsley, basil, mint, coriander** and **tarragon** in a blender with **1 tsp Dijon mustard, 1 tbsp red wine vinegar, 2 tbsp olive oil, 4 anchovies** and **1 garlic clove**, grated. Whizz together.

Aïoli

Mix **3 tbsp mayo** with **juice 1 lemon, 1 tsp Dijon mustard** and **1 garlic clove**, grated. Chill until needed.



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