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Mostly Martha

By Sandra Nettelbeck

I love to
serve them roasted.
It gives them
a more robust taste.
A wonderful
side dish would be ravioli
with boletus
or truffles, per season.
But you need a good pigeon
You could also cook them
in a pig's bladder
in Madeira, cognac and port.
It keeps the pigeon
safe and juicy.
Serve it with tagliatelle
with onions,
truffles and shallots
in a thyme sauce.
Truffles are perfect
for pigeon dish,
because the delicate
pigeon flavor...
Do you feel ill?
-No, no.
Please go on.
Start with crayfish, mussels...
-Martha.
May I change the subject
for a moment?
Yes.
Why do you come to therapy
every week?
Why do you ask?
Well, I thought perhaps...
it might be helpful to know.
My boss says she'll fire me
if I don't go to therapy.
Why do you think your
boss believes you need therapy?
You know what?
I have no idea.
Table 19 has asked
for the cheque.
On with 14!

-When is 6 ready? -4 minutes.
Gregor says the lamb is great.
-The Steinbergs are here.
I'm busy.
-Martha, please.
one without the duck.
Not too long, or...
-I know.
Dry, Lea.
Qualis go dry, not tough.
And hold off table 9.
-Yes
Let's go through next week's menu
later. -Okay. Lea, table 14!
The quails were tremendous!
Amazing! Magical! -I'm glad.
My husband worships you.
I'm jealous!
I worship everyone who tickles
my palate.
Heaven knows why he married me.
He won't allow me
to make a cup of tea.
There's one thing lonelier
than sleeping alone:
eating alone.
And I love you.
Excuse me.
Table 9 asks what this is.
-Lemon thyme.
Should I remove the plate?
-Please.
What is it? -I'll handle it.
-Now what?
I wanna talk to the chef!
-I'm the chef.
Is that so?
Bernd, please!
- You stay out of this!
Your foie gras is undercooked!
Excuse me?
-I'll take it off the bill.
Never!
-My foie gras is not undercooked!

Believe me, dear,
I know what's what.
I am not your dear! This was
perfectly poached at 1 40C in the oven,
and a water temp.
of 80, for 25 minutes.
And it's got the right rose color.
"Comme il faut,"
as the French say.
I don't give a damn!
It's undercooked!
Would you like something else?
Casting pearls before swines
- What!
D'you think you are
at a snack bar?
You want liverwurst,
go someplace else!
Excuse me, please
Why not pour out the wine too!
With all that smoking
you won't taste it anyway!
I'll never cook for you again!
I told you
to pull yourself together!
No, you always
have to make a scene!
He's a barbarian!
-He's a customer!
If he says it's undercooked,
then it is!
It's cruelty to geese!
-Shut it!
It's perfect!
Not a matter of taste.
I know.
But the customer is king.
And who am I? The fool?
If you weren't the second
best cook in the city
I'd fire you on the spot!
Second?
What's that supposed to mean?
What does she mean by that?

She only said it to annoy me
I'm sure she only said it
to annoy me.
One knows a good chef
by simple dishes.
For instance salmon
in light basil sauce.
Most people think it's no big deal
and put it on the menu.
But frying or steaming
it just right
and putting the right amount of salt
and spices in the sauce is difficult
In this recipe
there's no distraction,
no design,
no exotic ingredient.
There's only the fish
and the sauce.
The fish and the sauce
Just a minute!
Yes?
-You're the new neighbour?
Was the music too loud?
-No.
I live in the apartment above you.
And I thought,
as you have only just moved in
You can't have settled in yet.
Yeah, it's all a bit chaotic.
I haven't had time to clear
it all up.
I've made something to eat.
You hungry?
Are you inviting me to dinner?
-No...
I could bring you something.
You don't even know me!
You're Samuel Thalberg.
An architect,
divorced, 2 kids.
Friends call you Sam.
Frau Schumann talks too much.
The gossip in the basement.

Don't listen to her,
she thinks I'm nuts.
And you are?
-A chef.
Martha Klein.
-Nice to meet you, Martha.
If you're hungry...
-I've an appointment.
I'm sorry.
Don't let me keep you.
Maybe some other time.
-Yes, maybe.
What'll I cook?
Nothing, we'll order pizza
or eat out.
No, that's out of the question.
What does Lina like?
-Everything.
Except oysters.
Nothing that's alive.
No oysters, okay.
-Hang on.
Lina, I've told you
a hundred times
to take off
your rollerskates outside!
Sorry. You still there?
-Yes.
Mom!
- I'm talking. What are your plans?
No plans.
-Go to the theatre, the movies.
It's your day off, right?
Call a friend,
have a nice meal,
go dancing afterwards.
-Maybe I will.
But do it,
don't just say you will.
Who is it?
-It's Martha.
I'll see you on Friday.
-Okay.
I'm not compulsive,

I'm precise!
Precision's most important
in a kitchen.
Precision and timing.
Have any idea how complicated it is
to coordinate 47 customers?
Logistics is half the battle.
Can't master logistics?
Forget cooking.
I hope you like mussels.
We agreed you wouldn't
cook for me.
I didn't cook it for you.
I've just tried out something.
You want me to throw it all away
just because you've got principles?
If you'd at least join me,
I'd say that
we're making progress.
That's a good one!
-Calm down!
One with the hair loose,
one tied up.
I just looked at him and said:
"If you're looking for an actress
who strips
"and lets a priest whip her,
"you're wrong!"
-Only in her spare time.
Like the guy at table 17
who brings a different chick

every Friday:

The special for the Steinbergs.
No salad for him.
she wants it after the fish.
If he stares at my tits again,
he's in for it!
Tip or no tip.
Now I've to ask him
to be patient!
You must eat something.
Could someone
answer the damn phone!

If it's my sister,
I'll be home at one.
Yes, she's here.
Martha, for you
I'm busy!
Keep an eye on it
Yes...?
I'm on my way
Hello, dear, it's me again
I wanted to let you know
we'll be late.
I had to see Lina's teacher,
and that took forever,
so we hit the road
way too late.
I don't know what time it is now,
but I've got about 200 km to go.
So don't worry
when I'm not there.
See you, bye.
Miss Klein?
Have you seen Lina yet?
I was just going to.
No one has told her
about her mother yet.
Do you know
how to reach her father?
Christin didn't keep
in touch with him.
I don't even know his name.
-I see.
Excuse me.
Lina hasn't touched her food.
Could you talk to her?
She should eat something.
I will.
-Good luck.
Does it hurt real bad?
Don't you want to eat anything?
You know what?
When they let you out,
I'll cook you
the best dinner you've ever had.
Is Mom dead?

Yes.

If Martha doesn't find a replacement soon, I'll have my baby right here.

My friend has been in bed for 6 weeks...

In the tank, a lobster eats itself slowly from the inside.

You have to weigh it when you buy it.

If it's not as heavy as it looks, it has been in the tank too long

Some people still kill a lobster by throwing it in boiling water.

But by now everyone knows that for the animal it's the most agonizing death,

because it takes so long for it to die.

The best way to kill a lobster is with a well-placed stab in the neck.

It's quickest I'll be right there.

Go home, Martha.

I just need a minute.

I'll be all right.

You don't understand.

It's no suggestion.

I want you to go home.

I've brought us something.

I'm not hungry.

Neither am I.

Would you rather get some sleep?

I'm not tired.

This Friday you can go home.

Did you know that?

-Yes.

You and I need to talk about what to do.

Can I go back home?

I'm afraid you can't.

Why not?

You'd be all alone there.

I've been alone a lot.

But your Mom would
always come home.
Why can't I live with my father?
What do you know
about your father?
He's called Giuseppe.
Giuseppe.
Do you know his last name?
From Italy.
Well, that's a start.
I'll try and find
your father, Lina.
And in the meantime you could
live with me,
if you like.
What do you think?
-Until you find him?
Until I find him.
I don't want to eat.
Rather have something else?
Aren't you hungry at all?
May I go back
to my room now, please?
I have to go out
for a moment. -Okay
Your dinner's in the oven.
-Okay
Do you need anything else?
Right, I'm off then
I didn't see you come in.
I was on my way out.
I forgot something.
So, how are you?
Fine.
Have you had dinner?
Today?
-This evening, yes...
Neither have I. Would you like
to have dinner with me?
I'm sorry, I can't right now.
That's too bad.
Maybe some other time.
Yes, maybe.
Bye.

-Hadn't you forgotten something?
Yes, of course.
Thanks.
-You're welcome.
I'm off now.
-Okay.
Only a well-fed cook
is a good cook.
First you must saturate
your taste buds
and only then season to taste.
If you're satisfied
on a full stomach,
then you're a really good cook.
What are you doing here?
Tell me the secret
of your saffron sauce.
I beg your pardon?
-Lea didn't want to show me and...
Listen!
How he savours the song!
Fantastic.
Martha...
I meant to call you.
This is Mario.
This is Martha, our chef.
Believe me,
the world would be a sad place
without your pigeon with truffles.
You could've asked!
You had other worries.
-But... -Evening.
Booked a table?
-Yes, Mendel. For two.
Let me show you to your table.
Great. A madman in my kitchen!
It's my kitchen
and he isn't mad.
He's eccentric.
Your coats, please
Eccentric? Are you mad?
An Italian!
-Someone'll be with you soon
We agreed

that I would choose my staff.
Lea would've coped
for a few days.
And what does he want
my recipe for?
I... -Calm down!
I needed a replacement
He's a superb cook.
Be glad he's here.
Lea shouldn't work at all
after 8.
Soon we'll have to do
without her.
If we're lucky,
Mario will stay on.
He could do the fish dishes.
Hang on! The fish dishes!
You know we've got to change.
Nowadays people
want light dishes.
They watch their diet,
their cholesterol,
blood pressure,
salt content of water!
Olive oil instead of butter.
Light!
Want to get rid of me?
Tell me now!
When I do,
you'll be the first to know!
Good morning
Didn't I have
to go to school today?

It's 8:

D'you need anything?
A pen? Maybe paper?
No, thanks
Want to take sandwiches?
-No, thanks.
I can't find my scarf.
-Hurry up.
Put on your jacket.
I won't go without my scarf!

What did you say?

-I can't find my scarf.

You can have mine.

-I want mine!

We're late. Put on mine today
and yours tomorrow, okay?

Is that it?

-Yes.

Thank God!

-But I didn't put it on him.

There!

Good morning.

I'll get you some.

Good morning.

Who are you?

I'm Sam, your neighbour.

There you are.

-Thank you.

Have you had breakfast yet?

No, but we've got

to get to school.

Isn't she a little too old
for that?

Goodbye.

-See you around.

Why go to school

if I'm going to Italy?

Because all children

go to school.

I don't know

when I'll find your father.

Have you started looking at all?

I don't really know

where to start. -In Italy!

Two chefs in one kitchen is like...

Like 2 people driving a car.

Impossible.

My wife and I often drive together.

But you're not both

behind the wheel.

You'll manage to avoid the worst.

The worst?

That he'll put up

with you for a while.

Are you this nice to all
your patients?
Only to those who deserve it.
I know you don't need
a babysitter,
but this way
I'll know you've everything.
I don't need anything.
Or if anything happens,
like a fire,
I don't want you to be alone.
She's probably nicer
than she looks.
And she brought a book,
to read to you.
I can read myself.
Maybe a game.
-Haven't you got any?
When will you be back?
-Late.
It's ready.
Veal's in the fridge,
everything else is here.
All you have to do is...
Heat it up.
Here's the recipe.
You can cook, can't you?
Not a bit.
-Great!
Why, why, why...?
Hire a detective.
No. They find nothing,
and cost a fortune.
My sister once hired a detective
to find her ex-boyfriend.
He bled her,
but never found him.
-Just what I said.
Isn't Mario there yet?
Maybe changed his mind.
-Don't you dare!
Good day.
Missed out on something?
-Not really.

We've been working here
for an hour.
Okay.
Hey, chef.
No, thank you.
I never eat in the afternoon.
Martha, my mother whispered this
recipe to me on her deathbed.
It's been a family secret
for centuries.
I made it especially
for all of you.
You can't say no,
that's impossible.
The memory of my mama is more...
Satisfied?
Yes, very.
I thought your mother
lived in Nice. -Yes, no.
We thought she wasn't
going to make it,
but then...
It was a miracle!

Table 15:

Lia are you ready?
Carlos, 1 lobster, 3 artichokes
Let me know if you need help.
Lea, table 3, 30 seconds.
Carry on with table 6.
-Tables 2 and 4.
Lea, now 1 quail and 1 rabbit.
Carlos, 2 rucola salads, 1 tureen.
Excuse me.
I'll need that.
-You'll get it back.
May I ask you something?
-If you must.
Who taught you to cook this good?
Pere Bise.
Pierre Bise!
Pere Bise.
That's French for "father".
In English he'd be a pear.

What's wrong with you?
Anything wrong with my cooking?
It's my kitchen.
I worked hard for it.
I won't let you take it away
from me.
Why would I want to do that?
What else could you want here?
Now you listen to me.
I don't need this job.
I can work anywhere I want.
I'd like to work here.
I admire you.
It's an honor for me
to cook with you.
But most of all I like to work
where I'm wanted.
You understand, right?
So if you want me to leave,
just say so and I'm gone
Yes?
What's going on here?
What is it you want?
Sorry, Frida, find someone else.
Why? Martha,
what have you done?
Nothing at all.
Please stay, Mario, we need you.
I'd need to hear her say so.
After all, it's her kitchen.
-It's mine, too. -No.
It's your restaurant,
but her kitchen.
Without her, it's just a pile
of metal. It's for her to decide.
All right, if there's no other way.
We'll give it a try.
You want me to stay?
Didn't I just say so?
-Excuse me?
I want you to stay.
All right, I'll stay.
I'll stay.
Your towel's on fire.

"I am at Sam's"
I'm sorry,
I'd hoped the babysitter...
That's OK.
It was a pleasant change.
How could I thank you?
You could go out with me
some time.
I don't go out.
-No? What a shame.
What a shame.
We could stay in together.
Well, good night.
That bitch's not coming back.
I promise.
She wouldn't come anyway.
Did you have anything to eat?
You want anything?
I'll make something.
I want to go home.
Sleep with me in the living room?
-No.
I'll stay until you fall asleep.
-No
All right.
Good night then.
Gnocchi?
You want to serve gnocchi!
Why not?
I've never made gnocchi.
-That's okay.
Mario's, in sage butter,
are glorious.
Wonderful! Was it his idea?
-No, mine.
Gnocchi! Of all things!
They need to be made
with great care.
With gnocchi you take your time.
They tend to get tough and
inedible, if you don't do your best
I always do my best.
With cooking, yes.
Exactly!

Could you do me a favor?
Here,
I just need his address.
If his wife answers,
say you're an old friend
and you forgot the address.
What's wrong now?
If I have to lie,
I want to know why.
I want to send this letter
to Giuseppe.
Could you translate it for me?
as a main course.
She won't touch anything I cook
Give her time.
-How long? Until she's...
skin and bones?
She fainted today.
Do you like it here?
My mother was a vegetarian.
Show you how to make
creme brulee?
No, thank you.
Carry on with tables 7 and 11.
The Steinbergs
want to speak to you.
Excuse me.
Here, smell this.
In Italian it's called "basilico".
You've got company now?
-Temporarily.
And? Do you get along?
I don't know
how to deal with children.
How amusing!
Amusing?
-The little boy in every man.
But seriously.
You prepared the angler?
Lea, take over table 5,
will you?
This is delicious!
Get a move on!
Leave me some.

I thought
I was never going to get...
Thank you.
See you tomorrow.
-Right, tomorrow
Good night.
I hope she finds a home soon.
She needs a home.
Does anyone want a ride?
-Yes, please.
Take care.
Nearly finished.
First this arm...
And now this one.
Wake up!
It's late,
we'll be late for school.
Just tell them
it was my fault, okay?
And that it'll never happen again.
I'll pick you up later!
This is for you.
Could I have
some cheese, please?
The rosemary first.
Smell.
In she goes!
Smells wonderful, right?
Now the fish.
What is it?
-Don't fall down!
Don't fall down!
Watch the potatoes.
Are you crazy,
those are truffles!
Martha! The baby's coming!
We need an ambulance!
An ambulance!
Oh my God!
I'm sorry...
-You forgot me!
No, I didn't.
-Yes, you did!
No, I didn't

I took Lea to the hospital
We were at the market when she...
You forgot me!
All right, I forgot you.
I'm really sorry.
Let's go home
Come, it's freezing here!
Come on, will you?
I'll make you a deal:
make a wish.
You may wish
for anything you like,
and I'll do everything
to make it come true.
Then forgive me
for having forgotten you.
All right, I forgive you.
Wonderful.
I'm off to work.
Are you coming?
Martha?
-Yeah?
Tomorrow's your day off, right?
-Yes.
And Mario, too?
Yes, why?
But why can't I cook for us?
We could cook together...
-I prefer Italian food.
Martha, could I see you
for a moment?
What do you suggest I do?
I can't leave her at home alone,
she's only 8.
Exactly, she's only 8
She should be at home,
play with kids,
do her homework
and go to bed early.
Why don't you find her
a babysitter?
She doesn't need one,
she needs a mother.
It was Lina's idea, not mine.

Now why doesn't that
surprise me?
OK, all right.
And I'll do the shopping.
We've got everything.
-I do the shopping!
He's late.
He's always late.
Men!
What if your letter gets lost?
I sent it by registered mail.
Right.
I'll go!
Where's the kitchen?
-This way.
I'll take it.
-No, I've got it.
Have you got an iron pan?
-Of course.
Hands off!
Tonight, Lina and I will do
the cooking. Just Lina and I.
But I could...
Why can't we eat at the table?
We haven't got a table!
We're camping!
You forgot the plates.
-No, no, no.
No plates.
We don't need them today.
No plates?!
-No plates!
What's wrong?
You suffer from asthma?
Allergy? Hold on.
You've got to breathe
into something,
like this. Breathe!
You've moved it!
Good night.
Good night.
Napoleon's Casaro
killed himself.
He couldn't get

the mascarpone in France.
Or was it
Louis XIV's personal chef?
I can't remember.
Anyway, one of them hit the dust.
Bit the dust.
Bit the dust.
Why are you telling me this?
Some things cannot be changed.
No matter how hard you try.
Have you ever been to Italy?
-No.
Why?
Has Lina got her own room?
Why do you ask?
We only have
her best interest at heart.
She sleeps in my room.
Together with you?
-No, I'm on the couch.
I see.
-It's only for the time being.
I've been in touch
with her father...
Her father?
I thought he was unknown.
I've found him. He's Italian.
He'll come pick her up.
-An Italian?
And you believe
he'll come and get her?
Yes, of course!
Right, anyway,
this is not about
Lina being late
for school regularly.
No?
-No
It's about her not coming here
at all.
And if she comes,
she falls asleep.
And her excuse
for her lack of sleep?

That she has to work late!
She says
she works as a kitchen help,
to earn her board
and lodgings with you!
What did you do
the whole time?
Nothing, I just walked round.
You must go to school,
and that's that.
I don't want to.
-Why not? -Just because.
I can't take you
to the "Lido" anymore.
What? Why not?
That isn't place for a child.
And if I promise to go to school?
Not even then.
I just can't take you.
But why not?
You're only 8, Lina!
-So?
You go to school
and be in bed by 8.
You shouldn't spend
your evenings...
You're so mean!
-Me? Mean?
You're the one telling stories!
Then I won't go to school at all!
Want to become a foster child?
Go ahead!
It won't be my fault!
You don't want me anyway!
Lina, come back!
Let me go!
I want my mommy!
When Dad arrives
I'll get away from you!
Let me in.
-Go away! I hate you!
That's enough, open the door!
No! You can't order me around!
Open the door, or I'll...

You're not my mother
and never will be!
I don't even want to be your mother!
And I never asked to be, damn it!
Sorry to disturb you.
Is everything okay?
May I...?
Could you do me a favor?
-What favor?
Could you look after Lina tonight?
I know it's on very short notice,
but I've got to go to work.
She probably won't
come out of her room.
Could you look in on her
now and then?
One more little devil
won't matter.
Thank you, that's very kind.
Goodbye
Come on, let's play.
Up there!
Film that, Lina, the kite!
Stop it!
This is a serious moment.
Listen to me.
You're not in the picture.
Now you are.
Our first holiday together!
Throw sand at her
-No!
Thanks for the tip!
Mom, I want the camera!
I want it!
Is that her?
At the station,
buying a ticket to Italy.
For 22 marks!
Keep an eye on your niece
in the future.
Don't ever do that again,
you hear?
I was so worried about you!
I'm sorry.

I wish I had a recipe to follow
I know I can't replace
your mother.
I couldn't, even if I wanted to.
I'm just doing my best,
you understand?
I know I'm not doing
a very good job.
But I'm trying very hard,
believe me.
Where were you going?
To Giuseppe?
He'll come, sweetie.
I know he will.
I'm starting to forget her.
Oh Lina, come here.
Do you know what time it is?
It's very, very late.
Cognac, white wine.
Celery.
Leek.
Frida was raging mad,
as you can imagine.
Onions and garlic.
I'm sure you got along fine
without me.
It was hell.
Open your mouth.
Basil
Very good.
Star-anise.
Would you like another?
-Yes!
Hand me the jam, will you?
I'll go!
Martha, could you come?
Can I help you?
Are you Martha?
Christin's sister?
You wrote to me.
I'm Giuseppe Lorenzo.
Lina's father
You'll be fine there.
-Yes

Giuseppe's very nice.
You'll like Italy.
It's beautiful there.
The sun nearly always shines.
And the food is simply delicious.
Have you ever been to Italy?
No, but your Mom
always told me about it.
Yes. Me, too.
Your mom will always
be your mom,
even though
she's not with you anymore.
Always remember that,
you hear?
Ready?
Lina...
That's a beautiful name.
Do you know what it means?
It's short for "Bellina".
In Italy that means
"beautiful girl".
That's "girl".
Beautiful girl. -Yes.
Very good.
Have a good trip.
Drive carefully.
Martha...
If I'd known...
I'm really sorry.
I wish I'd met Lina
under different circumstances.
Giuseppe...
Lina is...
She's a little bit like me.
You know?
A little bit.
She's not easy to get to know.
She likes to cook.
So if you...
Lina will be fine with us.
Of course. I know.
Take care, my angel.
You too, Martha.

Go away, leave me alone.
I can't...
Please.
I told you to leave me alone!
I want you to go!
Okay.
Table 7 wants it rare.
It is rare.
Obviously not rare enough.
Any rarer and it would be raw.
Please, not tonight.
Make a new one.
From the asshole at table 7.

He asks:

Ever seen a really rare steak?
Rare enough?
I'll get you salt and pepper
and you can eat it raw!
You'll get a clean tablecloth
at once.
No need, I'll do it.
Now excuse me,
I've got things to do.
If you go now,
don't come back tomorrow.
I know, but I have to go.
Take care, Frida.
Good luck
I need your help.
Let's go.
Do you think she'll come back
with us?
Of course she'll come back.
Why would she want to stay
with her family
in sunny Italy
when she can go
to cold and grey Germany
to live with a nutcase like you?
You're so mean.
That's not funny.
Lina loves you.
Don't you know that?

Not quite.
Not quite?
Something's wrong.
But I made it
just the way you said.
I followed the recipe
step by step,
the way you wrote it down.
Prebaked the crust
for 15 minutes?
Exactly 15 minutes
at precisely 210C.
You sure your oven
heats up to 210C?
The thing is brand-new.
Perhaps you kneaded
the dough too long?
Not a second
longer than necessary!
Then it must be the sugar.
The sugar?
Did you get the Belgian
like I told you?
Can you tell differences in sugar?
Of course not.
I can taste which kind
you didn't use.
I give up.
I'll be right back.