

The Pot Pie Saga

When you are young, you take so many things for granted. Like directions, let's say. If there are directions on a package of something, most people will read and follow them, right? Silly me, as a young bride and new mom, that's exactly what I thought. Leave it to my dearly beloved to prove me wrong in a very unusual way.

Understand that growing up, my husband was the only boy in a house full of women, having three sisters, a maid and a doting mother. Being raised in a Hispanic culture, he didn't have to do much of anything for himself, let alone cook! If he expressed the desire for so much as a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, his mother had it made and on a plate before the words finished coming out of his mouth. When he went off to college, he had a meal plan at the dorm.

When we married, he made it abundantly clear that cooking was my job. Among other things. But honestly, I didn't really mind, because lucky for him, I loved to cook. And I was good at it. So the first year or so of our marriage was blissful, at least when it came to mealtime.

Then we had our first child. A few weeks before she was due, I began asking him what he wanted me to do about leaving meals for him while I was in the hospital post-partum. This was 1972, after all, and women still stayed a minimum of three or four days in the hospital after having a baby. Those were the good old days for sure!

At any rate, during our discussions about how he was going to manage with meals while I was gone, we hit upon some answers and he made actual progress with preparing a few things on his own, like sandwiches for his lunches, and cereal for breakfast. That left dinner. He did not want to go to his mother's every night, so we hit upon frozen pot pies. He actually liked these handy little "all-in-one" meals. This solution relieved me of having to prepare anything ahead of time and then pray that he could follow my instructions on reheating or cooking it. Please remember again, this was 1972, before microwaves and Door Dash, so I did have to show him how to operate the gas oven, but he seemed to understand and I was confident he could survive my few days away from the kitchen. He was a science teacher and he should be able to follow directions, right?

So, the big day came, and I successfully delivered our first baby daughter in the early morning hours of a dreary Thursday after a grueling 28 hour labor. Shortly after she arrived, he kissed us both goodbye and went home for a well deserved nap. I also slept most of that day, but around dinner time, while eating my lovely hospital meal, the phone by my bed rang.

"Hi, hon," he began. "How are you?"

"Well, not too bad," I offered, "considering I basically pushed an 8 pound bowling ball out of my body this morning!"

He chuckled. "Well you did great and she's beautiful. What are you doing right now?"

"Eating my lovely dinner," I responded. "How 'bout you?"

"Me too!" he said proudly. "I'm eating a couple of pot pies."

"Pot pies! Good for you! How did they turn out?"

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“Well,” he began, “they look okay, but they’re still frozen in the middle.”

“Hmm..I guess you didn’t leave them in the oven long enough. Did you set it at the right temperature and let it warm up long enough?”

“Um, well, uh – I didn’t use the oven.”

It took a minute for my groggy post-partum brain to process that response. “So, how did you cook them then?”

“I fried them!” He seemed very proud of himself. “I just put them into a frying pan with some oil and let them cook. They looked really nice and brown, but the insides are still kinda frozen. So I guess it didn’t really work too well.”

“You fried them?” My roommate looked at me from across the room with a puzzled frown on her face. “You FRIED them?” I repeated. I was trying to grasp where I had failed. We had planned this so carefully. I mean how hard is it to turn on an oven to 400 degrees, throw a pot pie in there and wait 30 minutes? “You fried them,” I repeated to myself. My roommate shook her head, stifling a laugh.

“Yeah, you know it takes at least 15 minutes for the oven to heat up and then 30 minutes to cook them and well - I just didn’t want to wait. It seemed like a good idea at the time. I guess tomorrow I’ll just go to Mom’s.”

I had no words. And things never got better, at least with regard to his cooking abilities. And that is why even to this day, we do not let Mr. Rocket Science Teacher into the kitchen!