

Living Well in the Shadow of Life

L-O-V-E *is spelled* F-O-O-D

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GERIN CHOINIERE**

When I started dating my wife, I had to explain to her that some things are “different” in the Italian culture. One is we always had macaroni every Sunday (we never called it pasta). When you join us for that big meal, do not, and I mean absolutely never, call it sauce. It’s called gravy.

I’ve had more heated discussions with friends that my family calls it the wrong thing. My non-Italian friends explain that gravy is brown, and sauce is red. I explained it is called “gravy” because it is made from a strong meat stock. It is not just tomato sauce.

In order to make a pot of gravy, you put a few cloves of garlic with oil in the bottom of a large pot. Once browned, you add tomato puree and water. You let this warm up for about an hour. Then, you add sausage, homemade (not store bought) meatballs, and pork bones. Leave it on a low flame for 3-5 hours. The sauce soaks up the flavor of the sausage, meatballs and pork while the meat soaks up the flavor of the tomatoes. The result is something that should never be called “sauce”.

It’s a lot of work to make a pot of gravy. It was often an all day Saturday event that resulted in a fabulous Sunday meal. Extra gravy and meat was frozen for future Sunday meals.

My wife has perfected the art of “gravy.” She is also a master at counting meatballs! Do not, and I repeat, **do not** take a meatball from her bowl of meatballs. She has them counted. If you want one, you have to fill out a three-part requisition. It must be signed by a governmental authority. You promise only to take the number of meatballs you requested. Not a single one extra. Why is it important? It’s the same reason it was important to my mother and my grandmother.

As we gather around the table, she knows how many meatballs she has cooked, how many people are coming for dinner,

and how many meatballs each person can eat. There is a sense of healthy pride on the part of my wife. Although she doesn’t have an Italian bone in her body, she has learned what every Italian learned from their grandmother – **L-O-V-E** is spelled **F-O-O-D**. It’s her way of saying family is so very important. It’s not about the food. The food is just an excuse. It’s her way of saying we are family. Even though we are all adults, we are still vitally important to one another. The food becomes a platform to bring our family together as we did so many times before they moved out.

Good things in life are like making a pot of gravy. It’s a process. It takes time. Yes, you can open a jar of spaghetti sauce and microwave it. It will never taste the same as a pot of gravy

that has cooked on a stove for at least five hours.

The same is true in our life. Whatever you want to accomplish or whatever your goals are, you don’t immediately see the results. Yet, you continue pursuing them, and making incremental changes until you reach what you want to accomplish.

Rev. Tony Marciano is the Executive Director of the Charlotte Rescue Mission. The Charlotte Rescue Mission provides a free long term Christian recovery program for men and women who are addicted to drugs and alcohol. For more information, visit their website at www.charlotterescuemission.org.



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