



# A Safe Plate



CHILDREN'S  
AID FOUNDATION  
OF CANADA

Recipes and stories of young people from  
child welfare





**Food is nourishment.  
Food is memories.  
Food is connection.**

For the young people from care sharing their stories and recipes in this book, food is comfort, safety, stability.

As you make their meals, we invite you to think of them, honour their stories and consider how you can make a difference for future generations of young people impacted by Canada's child welfare system.

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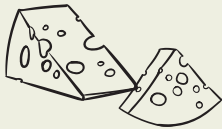
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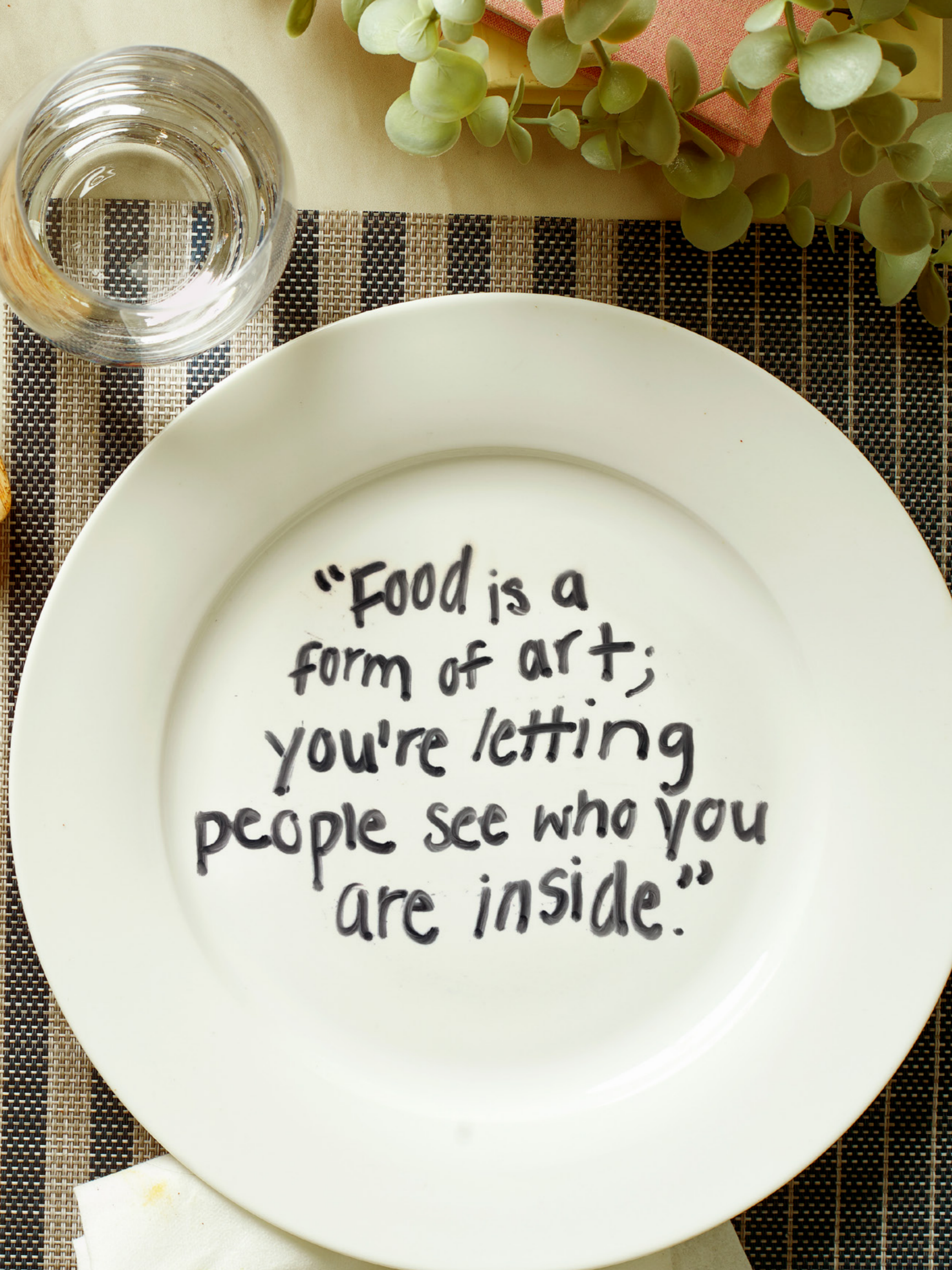
Jay's Famous Potato  
and Lemon Salmon

"My mom struggled every day to make ends meet.

She was working three jobs but could still barely afford to feed us and pay rent.

There were many days I went to school hungry."

- Former youth in care and recipient of support from Children's Aid Foundation of Canada

A top-down view of a dining table setting. In the center is a white ceramic plate with a handwritten quote in black ink. To the upper left is a clear glass of water. To the upper right is a small arrangement of green, round leaves. The plate and glass sit on a dark, woven placemat, which is on a light-colored tablecloth.

“Food is a  
form of art;  
you're letting  
people see who you  
are inside.”



**Raised on a reservation in Manitoba, Lexi (she/her) is currently finishing her final year of high school before applying to college.**

I put myself into care when I was 16 following a dispute with some family members. I lived in a foster home for six months before getting my own place, all while doing my best to stay in school and stay focused. I'm 19 now; it's been a tough few years, but I'm getting myself back on track.

Food has always been the one thing that's given me stability in my life. When you're cooking, you're not stressing, you're not thinking — you're just making a meal and doing something good for yourself and your family.

When I was growing up, I would often help my mom with the cooking. This pasta dish is a recipe we created when I was a kid, when my mom was in the mood to try something new. It ended up being my favourite dish of all time, and I requested it every other night that first summer we started making it!

There was a time that we were living in a house without any Wi-Fi. We were totally disconnected from the outside world, so we'd spend our time playing board games and cooking together. This dish will always remind me of those days, and of the best parts of my childhood.

I hope you'll enjoy it as much as I do!

# Lexi's

## Jumbo Pasta

### Ingredients:

- 1-3 tbsps of cooking oil
- 1 package ground beef (approx. 1 lb or 450 g)
- 3 cups (750 g) elbow macaroni
- 1 ½ cups (375 g) shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 cans tomato soup (each 12 oz or 350 mL)
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper, to taste



**Serves: 5**

**Total prep and cooking time: 1 hour 30 min**

### Instructions:

Cook the ground beef in a pan with a small amount of cooking oil.

While the meat is cooking, bring a large pot of water to a boil.

Add elbow macaroni with a dash of salt and cook until tender. Drain and put back into the pot.

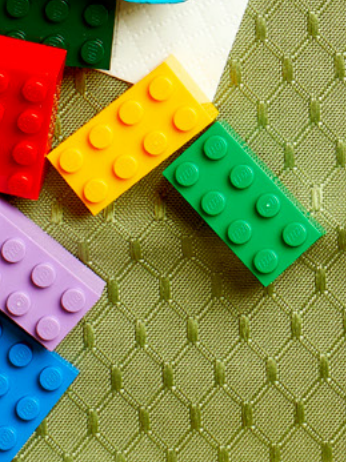
Once meat is done and brown, add it into the pot with your drained macaroni.

Add 2 cans of tomato soup to the pot and stir with a spoon until it is heated through.

Add your cheddar cheese and mix until melted.

Enjoy!

**Tip from Lexi: This pasta dish goes great with garlic bread!**



# RJ's

## Mushroom Pork Chops and Rice



"Food is such a powerful way to empower your inner child – to be alive, to be healed, to feel safe and to feel protected as you continue moving through life."

### Ingredients:

- 1 can (12 oz or 350 mL) cream of mushroom soup (any brand)
- 6 pork chops
- 2 cups (500 mL) instant rice (such as Minute White Rice™)
- 1-2 tbsps cooking oil
- 1 ½ pounds (680 g) broccoli florets (fresh or frozen)
- Salt and pepper, to taste



**Serves: 6**

**Total prep and cooking time: 20-30 minutes**

### Instructions:

Add two cups (500 mL) of water to a medium-sized pot and bring to a boil by setting it on the stove top at medium to high heat.

Once the water is boiling, add the broccoli florets. Turn the temperature to medium heat.

Let cook on medium until tender (approximately 10 minutes).

While your broccoli is cooking, season both sides of the pork chops with salt and pepper to taste.

Heat oil in a medium pan.

Place each pork chop in the pan and flip regularly until fully cooked (about three to four minutes per side).

Remove cooked porkchops from the pan. Using the same pan, add one cup of water (250 mL) and half a can of soup.

Once the soup is mixed and heated, add two cups (500 mL) of instant rice.

Leave on medium heat, stirring occasionally until the rice is cooked.

In a separate saucepan, heat up the other half of the can of soup.

Place your rice, pork chops and broccoli on a plate.

Pour the heated soup over the chops and broccoli as a sauce.

Season with salt and pepper as desired.

Optional: drizzle soy sauce on rice.

Enjoy!

**Based in Montreal/Toronto, Raymond (they/them) is an Indigenous changemaker, conversationalist and creative professional. Raymond currently works as an Indigenous Network and Knowledge Sharing Manager at Community Food Centres Canada while completing their studies at McGill University.**

My biological mom is a survivor of the Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children. Her experiences there led to a life of survival mode, which in turn led to many obstacles for our family to overcome.

After seeing the impact of her alcoholism, my mom made the courageous decision to seek treatment and I went into care. I was then raised by a loving Jamaican family, who introduced me to so many classic dishes from their culture, like jerk chicken and rice and peas.

The recipe I've chosen to share here is one from my biological mom, passed on from her elders. It's a dish

she would make in the rare moments of simplicity and beauty during my childhood, and one that reminds me of the good times we had together, despite the chaos.

This meal was a constant in my life growing up, whether I was living at home or visiting my mom while in foster care. When I first moved out on my own, it was one of the first dishes I made for myself. It always reminds me how important it is to find the good moments, no matter what's happening in your life.

This is one of those meals that can be as simple or as fancy as you want or need it to be. You can use canned mushroom soup and instant rice, or you can make your own mushroom soup and boil up the rice of your choice. It's easy, cheap and quick, but best of all, it's comforting — and delicious. When I'm cooking, I'm in charge — and I'm making my mark in the world. I hope you're able to find the same joy and meaning in cooking as I have.





**Chanice (she/her) was born in Toronto and raised in Richmond Hill, Ontario. She is the founder of a non-profit called Project Outsiders, a youth-led social organization that works towards better outcomes for youth in and from the foster care system.**

Food was a big part of my life growing up. Whether we were getting together as a family, gathering at church or attending a community event, there were always so many traditional Jamaican dishes to enjoy, like curry chicken, saltfish, festival dumplings — and this recipe, macaroni pie.

When I entered care at age 14, it was important to me to stay connected to my cultural background and introduce other young people in my group home to the flavours of Caribbean cooking. I quickly learned how to make these dishes on my own, and discovered that macaroni pie was a huge hit in every group home I lived in. It became a way for me to connect with others, bring people together and celebrate Black experiences of food, joy and life.

Macaroni pie is a classic dish very common in Black families, and everyone makes it a bit differently. I've adapted it to my own tastes by using chicken stock and crushing Ritz Crackers™ on top to create a delicious crust. It's just so good!

These days, I make macaroni pie any time I want to indulge in a bit of self-care. I'll do a face mask, put on a Netflix show and make some macaroni pie. It's a dish that's always been there for me, and I hope you'll be able to find the same joy and comfort in it that I do.

# Chanice's

## Macaroni Pie

### Ingredients:

**For the blonde roux (a butter and flour mixture used to thicken sauces):**

½ cup (63 g) of all-purpose flour  
4 tbsps of salted butter, melted

### For the cheese sauce:

¾ cup (177 mL) of heavy whipping cream or half-and-half cream  
1 ¼ (295 mL) cups of chicken stock  
4 cups (908 g) shredded hard cheddar cheese  
¼ tsp of white pepper (you can use black pepper but the black specks will show)  
Salt, to taste

### For the noodles:

1 ½ (231 g) cups macaroni shells or penne  
A pinch of parsley  
A tbsp of salted butter

### For the toppings:

1 cup (227 g) of shredded hard cheddar cheese  
1 cup (227 g) of crushed Ritz Crackers™ or another brand of butter cracker



**Serves: 6**

**Total prep and cooking time: 1 hour**

### Instructions:

Preheat your oven to 450°F.

Add eight to 10 cups of water into a large pot and set your stove burner on high; let the water come to a boil. Once the water begins to bubble, add your macaroni shells or penne to the pot with a dash of salt. Depending on the type of noodles you're using, cooking time may range from five to 10 minutes; check the instructions on

the packaging. Set a timer and remove noodles from the heat when they're al dente (cooked but still slightly firm). Remove the water by pouring the noodles into a strainer over the kitchen sink.

Melt four tablespoons of salted butter in a separate pot over medium-low heat.

As soon as the butter is melted, add the all-purpose flour and immediately stir with a wooden spoon in a figure-eight motion until the flour has completely absorbed all of the butter, 30 seconds to one minute. There should be no dry pockets of flour left in the mixture.

Continue cooking, stirring constantly, until the mixture is smooth, slightly thickened, and tiny bubbles begin forming, 30 seconds to 1 minute.

Cook for an additional three to four minutes, stirring regularly, until the roux smells nutty and is a pale golden colour. If any lumps of flour remain, break them up with a spoon.

Once the flour reaches a pale golden colour, gradually incorporate the chicken stock using a whisk. Continue to stir until the roux begins to thicken, one to two minutes. Add the cream to the mixture and stir until fully incorporated.

Slowly add four cups (908 g) of shredded cheddar cheese to the roux and continue to mix until it is fully melted.

When your pasta is cooked (see instructions in step 1), add a tbsp of butter and parsley to the noodles then mix with a spoon.

Add the cheese sauce to the macaroni and mix until all of the sauce is incorporated.

Pour the macaroni and sauce mixture into a baking dish.

Top with additional shredded cheese and crushed Ritz Crackers™ or another brand of butter cracker.

Place the baking dish in the oven for 10 to 15 minutes or until the top appears golden brown.

# Chelsea's Pizza Nachos



"Food has always been something that's provided consistency for me, much in the same way Children's Aid Foundation of Canada has."

## Ingredients:

- 1 bag tortilla chips (whichever kind you prefer!)
- 2 cups (500 g) shredded mozzarella cheese
- ¼ cup (62 g) sliced black olives (canned or fresh)
- ¼ cup (62 mL) pizza sauce
- ¼ tsp dried oregano
- ¼ tsp garlic powder
- ¼ tsp crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

**Add your favourite pizza toppings and make it your own! For example, cilantro, pickled jalapenos, pepperoni, etc.**



**Serves: 5**

**Total prep and cooking time: 30 minutes**

## Instructions:

Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C) and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Spread a layer of tortilla chips on the baking sheet, ensuring they are evenly distributed.

In a small bowl, mix the pizza sauce, dried oregano, garlic powder, crushed red pepper flakes (if using), salt and pepper. Adjust the seasoning according to your taste.

Drizzle the pizza sauce mixture over the tortilla chips, making sure to cover them evenly.

Sprinkle the shredded mozzarella cheese over the sauce-covered chips.

Distribute the sliced black olives and other toppings.

Place the baking sheet in the preheated oven and bake for about 10 to 12 minutes, or until the cheese has melted and the toppings are heated through.

Remove the nachos from the oven and let them cool slightly.

Serve the pizza sauce nachos while they're still warm and enjoy!

**Based in Ottawa, Ontario, Chelsea (she/her) works as a family navigator helping young moms access the support they need to finish their high school education. With support from Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada, she earned a college diploma in child and youth work and is now attending Laurentian University, where she is working toward an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology.**

I was four years old when I was placed in foster care along with my three siblings. We spent a few years moving around to different foster homes; sometimes we’d be together, and other times we’d be separated. Amazingly, we were all adopted together when I was about seven.

Food was always something we bonded over. Whenever we found ourselves under the same roof, we’d spend long hours gathered in the kitchen of whichever foster home we were living in, making meals or eating together.

**No matter what was happening in our lives or what challenges we were facing in care, we knew we could always reconnect over food.**

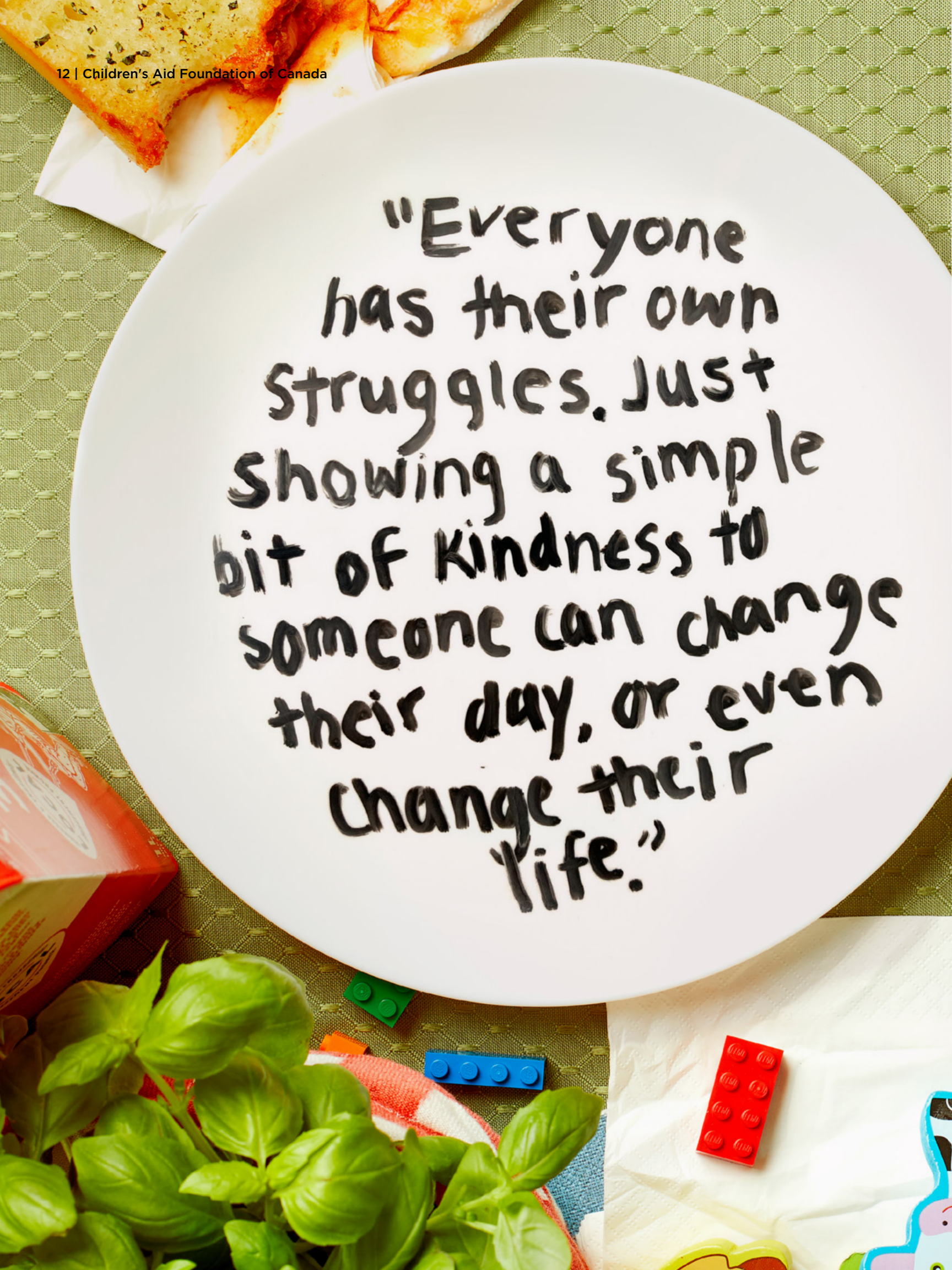
It was in one of the homes where we were together the longest, that this recipe was created.

One night, the four of us were craving nachos — but we didn’t have any salsa. What we did have, however, was pizza sauce. I remember feeling so proud of myself as I poured the pizza sauce over tortilla chips, sprinkled cheese on top and stuck the whole thing in the oven.

In the years that followed, it would become a dish I’d turn to whenever I was struggling or missing my siblings. It always brought me a sense of comfort — a sense of home. I hope you’re able to find the same joy and meaning in cooking as I have.



"Everyone has their own struggles. Just showing a simple bit of kindness to someone can change their day, or even change their life."







**Nancy (she/her) is a mother to an eight-year-old daughter and a personal support worker at a hospital and a nursing home for individuals with Alzheimer's. She lives in Toronto, Ontario.**

When my seven siblings and I were brought into care, we were all separated. I ended up in a group home, where I lived with eight kids between the ages of three and 16.

Scared and overwhelmed, I was incredibly shy and barely spoke to anyone. It didn't help at all that the food was completely unfamiliar to me.

Coming from a home filled with Asian cooking — Vietnamese, Chinese, and Cambodian — I desperately missed those smells and tastes. And as the only person of Asian descent in my group home, no one could relate. I felt so alone.

That all changed when my mom started bringing home cooked food to our regular visits. I would bring the leftovers back to my group home, which quickly became a hit with the other kids. Being able to share my family's food and culture meant so much to me and helped me feel connected to my history and identity.

Now, as an adult, I've been learning how to cook those dishes for myself — including my mom's recipes for fried rice and spring rolls shared here.

Food has become such an important way for my mom and I to connect and spend time together, and I'm even teaching my own daughter to cook — passing down the tradition and helping her learn about our culture along the way.

# Nancy's

## Traditional Cambodian Dish of Khmer Fried Rice and Spring Rolls

### Ingredients:

#### For the fried rice:

½ cup (50 g) of cured sausage quartered lengthwise and sliced (not bratwurst or Italian sausage!)

4 eggs, well beaten

⅔ cup (80 g) carrot, finely diced

⅔ cup (80 g) French beans, finely diced

3 garlic cloves, minced

1 tbsp sugar

1 tbsp soy sauce

1 tsp salt

4 cups (681 g) cooked rice (use a rice cooker or cook on the stove; [visit this link](#) for simple instructions on cooking rice on the stove)

¼ cup (13 g) spring onions, sliced

1 tbsp vegetable oil

1 tbsp oyster sauce (optional)

1 tsp sesame oil (optional)

#### For the spring rolls:

½ lb (225 g) fresh ground turkey or chicken

1 cup (52 g) chopped yellow onion

3 cloves of minced garlic

2 cups (104 g) shredded cabbage

1 cup (52 g) shredded carrot

1 tbsp fish sauce

1 tbsp soy sauce

1 tbsp sugar

½ tsp black pepper

1 package or 25 pieces of spring roll shells

1 egg white

6 cups (1.5 L) of vegetable oil to fry spring rolls

Sweet fish sauce for dipping

“It’s so important for foster parents and group home workers to recognize the role that food plays in helping young people feel secure and comforted during such a difficult time in their lives.”



**Serves: 4**

**Total prep and cooking time: 45 minutes**

### Instructions:

#### For the fried rice:

Heat a little vegetable oil in a wok on medium high and add the sausages. Stir the sausage pieces until they get a little colour. Remove the sausage pieces and set aside, leaving the oil.

Add the eggs to the wok and swirl around to make an omelet. When the omelet is just cooked through, remove from the wok, allow to cool a little and slice into bite-sized pieces.

Add a little oil and cook the carrots and beans until they’ve softened a little and then add the garlic and fry for one minute.

Over high heat, add the sausage pieces back into the wok. Add the rice, sugar, salt and soy sauce and stir-fry until all the rice has been incorporated into the mix and has taken on a little colour.

**Instructions continued:**

**Spring rolls:**

In a large bowl, mix ground meat with onion, garlic, cabbage and carrot; add fish sauce, soy sauce, sugar and black pepper and mix well. Set aside.

Gently pull out each spring roll shell to separate from other shells.

Lay one shell flat on a cutting board or plate, spoon some meat filling and place on  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the shell.

Roll the shell tight and seal the end with a brush of egg white. Repeat with additional spring roll shells and filling until the filling is gone. Note: If you haven't made a spring roll before, the back of the spring roll pastry package usually has illustrated instructions.

Heat oil in a large skillet or wok at medium temperature.

When the oil is hot, deep fry spring rolls in batches until golden brown. Don't overcrowd the pan.

Remove spring rolls and rest them upright in a colander (strainer) covered with paper towel to drain excess oil.

Serve hot with lettuce, mint or mixed herbs and sweet fish sauce for dipping.

**Tip from Nancy:** This recipe for fried rice can be adapted in so many different ways! Feel free to add any type of veggies you want and use different meats or tofu. Get creative and make it your own.







"This recipe  
reminds me of who  
I am and where  
I come from."



# Jessie-Lynn's Yorkshire Pudding

## Ingredients:

1 cup (250 g) flour	4 large eggs
1 cup (250 mL) whole milk (3.25%)	½ cup (125 mL) beef drippings
1 tsp salt	Cooking spray

**Tip from Jessie-Lynn:** Yorkshire pudding contains a lot of carbohydrates, making it a great recipe for anyone who isn't sure where their next meal will come from. It will help give you the energy you need to get through the day.

**After aging out of foster care in Newfoundland, Jessie (she/her) is now living in Ottawa, Ontario, where she is in her first year of a Master's Degree in Public Policy at Carleton University.**

I grew up in a very challenging and unstable home environment; I moved 12 times and lived in four different provinces before the age of 14. That's the same age I came into foster care while living in Newfoundland, where I had one placement and experienced more stability than I had living with my parents.

**Growing up, I developed an unhealthy relationship with food. But some of my best memories are of making this Yorkshire pudding recipe with my dad.**

This recipe has been in my family for generations. My grandmother taught my dad how to make it when he was 13, and he taught me. We would make it together during our monthly visits when I was in care, and I would make it for my foster family as well — especially if it was Sunday, when people across Newfoundland enjoy a traditional meal called Jiggs Dinner. It's something I continue to make today and love sharing with family and friends.

Besides being simple, delicious and filling, I love this Yorkshire pudding recipe because it represents my family's history. Although I had a tough time growing up, I'm proud of my ancestry and the family traditions that have been passed down.



**Serves: Up to 12**

**Total prep and cooking time: 40 minutes**

## Instructions:

Pre-heat oven to 400°F (200°C).

Mix flour and salt in a large bowl until well blended.

Make a hole or well in the middle of the flour and salt mixture.

Add the milk to the hole/well and whisk (using a hand mixer if available) until consistent.

Add the eggs to the mixture.

Beat eggs into the batter using a hand mixer until blended and frothy.

Preheat an empty muffin pan in the oven for five minutes (without the puddings in the tray) until hot.

Take the muffin pan out and generously spray each muffin hole with cooking spray.

Carefully pour batter into each muffin hole, filling up three-quarters to the top.

Put the muffin pan in the oven and bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until risen and golden brown colour.

Take the muffin pan out of the oven and place the puddings on a serving dish or in a serving bowl. Yorkshire pudding is best served with a roast beef dinner and gravy, but it can also be enjoyed on its own with margarine or butter.

**Tip from Jessie-Lynn:** Do not open the oven door to check on the puddings! The sudden temperature change will make them deflate.

# Christina's

## "On a Budget" Chili



### Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp of olive oil to coat pan
- 1 onion
- 2-4 cloves of minced garlic
- 1 or 1 ½ lbs (450 to 680 g) ground beef
- 2 tbsps chili powder
- 1 tbsp paprika
- 1 or 1 ½ tsps cumin
- A couple pinches of salt and pepper
- 2 cans (56 oz) of diced tomatoes
- 1 can (6 oz) of tomato paste
- 1 can (15 oz) black beans
- 1 can (15 oz) kidney beans

**Optional Ingredients (see the recipe for how to use them!):** 1 carrot, 2 potatoes diced, 2 cups (650 g) chopped cauliflower florets, and 1 tbsp turmeric



**Serves: 4-6**

**Total prep and cooking time: 1-2 hours**

### Instructions:

In a large pot, cover the bottom evenly with olive oil, about half a tbsp. Do not over pour!

Heat the oil on low to medium heat and once it's hot, add the onion and garlic.

Stir occasionally until onions are translucent, about one to two minutes.

Add an additional half tbsp of olive oil to the pot and add ground beef, breaking it up and stirring to incorporate with onion and garlic.

Add chili powder, paprika and cumin and incorporate with the beef by mixing together.

When the beef is starting to cook through, add the canned tomatoes, kidney beans and black beans (and any optional ingredients) to the pot, juices and all.

Add the tomato paste and stir frequently to avoid it from burning.

Add the remaining spices and let boil on medium heat until the sauce starts to thicken; approximately 30 minutes.

Turn the heat down to a low simmer for another 30 minutes.

Turn off the heat and let sit for a little while to let the spices soak in as it cools.

Serve in a bowl and enjoy!

**Tip from Christina:** You can freeze the leftovers and eat them for about three to four months afterwards. Freeze them the same night after the chili has cooled for best results.

**Christina earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Manitoba in 2019 and is currently employed with Futures Forward as the Student Support Case Manager for the Tuition Waiver program.**

Born in Brandon, Manitoba, I spent the majority of my life in a rural community close to Killarney, Manitoba. I was apprehended three days after birth, made a permanent Crown ward at 12 and aged out of care at 21.

Over the years I learned that food is a powerful force, and I made many batches of cookies to network in professional settings, ease my anxiety and make a home out of any space I was occupying.

My family never had a lot of money or support, which was particularly frustrating for my mother as she struggled to meet me and my siblings' needs. A doctor eventually recommended she bake for us: I vividly remember standing on a vinyl chair beside her as she passed the bag of flour, her hands holding the bag as I scooped some out and dropped it into the bowl between us.

Even today I measure my life in terms of specific recipes I shared with or prepared for others. This chili recipe is close to my heart; it was one of the first dishes I learned while living on my own. Whenever money was scarce, this long-lasting and filling chili gave me a lifeline.





“I think gratitude is a good eraser of negative feelings.”

**Based in Scarborough, Ontario, Jada (she/her) is a sales associate in the legal technology industry. After aging out of foster care, she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from York University and a Master’s Degree in Political Science from the University of Toronto.**

When I was 16, I got my first job at a Cajun restaurant in Scarborough. The job meant so much to me: independence, financial freedom and the seeds of a future of my own making.

I grew up in kin care, which means I was raised by and with family members. Although I was lucky to have this new loving home, complete with three cousins who I consider siblings and my aunt who became my other mother, being able to earn my own money helped me feel in control for the first time. For a kid who came into care at the age of five and learned early on that life can be tough, that feeling of being in control was life changing.

**So was Voodoo Pasta.**

Creamy, comforting and delicious, Voodoo Pasta — one of the restaurant’s signature dishes — quickly became a Sunday night tradition for me.

Coming from a family where food is the ultimate love language, Voodoo Pasta has been a way for me to show love for myself for almost a decade now. No matter what life throws at me, every Sunday I can count on my Voodoo Pasta night. I always look forward to that time just for me: getting my pasta, turning on a favourite show and just being kind to myself.

I invite everyone reading this — especially young people in and from care — to develop a self-care tradition for themselves. Whether it’s a Voodoo Pasta night, going to a movie on your own or learning a new hobby, use that time to take a step back from it all and take care of yourself.

# Jada's

## Voodoo Chicken & Shrimp Pasta



**Serves: 4**

**Total prep and cooking time: 45 minutes**

This recipe has been adapted from the original version created by Upper Beaches Bourbon House in Scarborough. I prefer it with chicken and shrimp, but you can make it with whichever protein you prefer!

### Ingredients:

½ lb (453 g) large shrimp, peeled and deveined, tails removed (note: you can also buy pre-peeled frozen shrimp; defrost in warm water and remove the tails)

1 pork sausage (approx. ½ lb or 226 g) sliced into rounds

3 tbsps Cajun/Creole spice mix, adjusted to your spice preference

Olive oil

½ of a medium yellow onion, thinly sliced

½ of a red bell pepper, thinly sliced

¾ cup (177 mL) heavy cream

1 tsp dried thyme

1 tsp smoked paprika

1 tsp brown sugar

1-2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

½ cup (113 g) crushed tomatoes

¾ cup (177 mL) chicken broth

1 tsp Worcestershire sauce

1½ cups (339 g) bowtie pasta or other pasta shape of your choice (penne is a good alternative)

Kosher salt to taste

Black pepper to taste

Grated parmesan cheese to taste

Chopped parsley for garnish

### Instructions:

Bring a large pot of water to boil for pasta.

Mix shrimp with two tbsps of Cajun seasoning and coat well. Set aside one tbsp for later.

Heat a large skillet over medium high heat and drizzle the bottom of the pan with olive oil.

Add shrimp and cook for two minutes or so until starting to curl.

Turn shrimp over and cook for another minute or two until pink and cooked through, and then remove to a plate and set aside.

Drizzle pan with a little more olive oil; add sausage and brown until caramelized, about four to five minutes. Remove sausage to a plate and set aside.

Add pasta to salted boiling water and cook until al dente (cooked but firm), a minute less than package instructions. Once cooked, strain and set aside.

Returning to your pan, lower heat to medium and add another good drizzle of olive oil. Add the onion, red bell pepper, thyme, smoked paprika, one tbsp Cajun seasoning, brown sugar and a generous pinch of salt.

Sauté until onion and pepper have softened a bit, scraping up any browned bits that you can. Add the garlic and cook for about 30 seconds.

Add crushed tomatoes, chicken broth and Worcestershire sauce and bring to a simmer (low boil), stirring and scraping up any brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Simmer for a couple minutes.

Add cream and stir to combine; bring to a simmer.

Add cooked pasta and sausage and stir to combine and heat through, two to three minutes.

Add more chicken broth or cream if it seems dry or you'd like more sauce.

Salt and pepper to taste and then lastly, add blackened shrimp and combine, or place shrimp on top of pasta. Sprinkle pepper, parmesan and parsley over top to taste.



# Jay's

## Famous Potato and Lemon Salmon



**Serves: 4**

**Total prep and cooking time: 1 hour**

### Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp of olive oil
- 1 ½ lbs (680 g) unpeeled golden baby potatoes, washed and cut in half
- 3 tbsps of melted butter
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper, to taste
- 1 tsp oregano (dried)
- 1 tsp marjoram (dried; if marjoram is unavailable, double up your oregano)
- 1 tsp thyme (dried)
- 4 thawed or fresh cut salmon filets
- 1 medium lemon, or 3 tbsps of lemon juice
- 1 tsp red chili flakes
- 1 lb (450 g) broccoli florets

### Instructions:

Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C).

As the oven heats, cut your potatoes in half. Line a sheet pan with aluminum foil.

Place cut baby potatoes onto the sheet pan.

Melt butter either in the microwave or in a small saucepan on the stove.

Pour butter on top of potatoes and season with salt and pepper to your liking, oregano, marjoram and thyme.

Put potatoes in the oven and cook for 40 to 50 minutes, flipping them halfway through.

As your potatoes cook, prep your salmon.

Heat pan on the stove over medium heat and add a tbsp of olive oil.

Place salmon and broccoli in the pan and squeeze lemon juice over the salmon and broccoli.

Sprinkle salt, to your liking, and red chili flakes on the salmon.

Place salmon and broccoli in the oven for approximately six minutes, flipping halfway through.

Serve potatoes, salmon and broccoli together.

**Tip from Jay: Salmon can be a little bit expensive. I recommend buying it on sale and freezing it if you can!**

**Based in Northern Ontario, Jay (they/them) hopes to work with individuals experiencing addiction.**

I came into care as a result of an adoption breakdown; it just didn't work out with my adoptive parents and I was placed in a foster home.

I had some really challenging experiences with food while living in foster and group homes, which led to an eating disorder that I struggled with until the age of 19. It was at that point that I left care and learned how to cook for myself — a skill that helped me feel in control of my life and what I was putting in my body.

Today, I love cooking, experimenting and making meals for my friends. I especially love salmon, which contains so many essential nutrients and can be made in so many different ways. It took me

about two years of playing around with different tastes and textures to perfect this particular salmon recipe!

As someone who was raised in foster care and as a member of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, I frequently felt silenced and out of control growing up. To me, this recipe represents me taking back control over my life. It's something I created, it's something I'm passionate about and it's a way to keep my body and mind healthy.

When I'm cooking, I'm in charge— and I'm making my mark in the world. I hope you're able to find the same joy and meaning in cooking as I have.



# Helping young people thrive since 1979.

In 2022-2023...

Our generous supporters contributed an incredible



to help uplift the lives and well-being of the kids and families we serve.



15,102

children, youth and families reached



12,422

reported improved social-emotional well-being

We partnered with...



104 child- and youth-serving agencies in...



11 provinces and territories

**The young people featured in this cookbook all have lived experience of the child welfare system.**

Whether or not they have directly received support from Children's Aid Foundation of Canada on their journeys, they reflect the courageous, resilient individuals we serve as Canada's leading charity dedicated to improving the lives of children, youth and families involved with the child welfare system.

Before you move on to the next recipe, we invite you to take a moment to learn about the populations we support, a few of the programs we deliver and how our donor community is making a difference.



### **Who we help**

The children, youth and families we serve represent three distinct priority populations, each facing unique and complex challenges and needs.

#### **Children and families at risk**

Nationwide, almost 300,000 children and youth living with their families are considered at risk of abuse, neglect or abandonment and are under the close watch of child protection agencies.

#### **Program highlight: Safe at Home**

Recognizing that domestic violence has profound impacts on children who experience or witness it, we have launched an innovative new project called Safe at Home that aims to strengthen families experiencing intimate partner violence — and prevent violence from reoccurring. Now in its second year of a five-year pilot, Safe at Home unites two leading programs for families experiencing domestic violence in a combined approach that aims to maximize their impact while building knowledge and capacity across the child welfare system. Learn more in our [2022-2023 Annual Report](#).

#### **Children and youth living in government care**

59,000 young people across Canada are living in foster homes, institutional settings or with extended family (kin care) as a result of abuse, neglect or abandonment.

#### **Program highlight: Big Steps to Success**

Developed by Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, Big Steps to Success connects children in care with trusted mentors. The program hopes to reverse one of the most devastating trends facing kids in care: low rates of high school graduation.

Since its launch, 100% of mentees who have passed the one-year mark have reported feeling more engaged with their schoolwork and school community.

#### **Youth transitioning out of care**

Each year, thousands of youth “age out” of the child welfare system, suddenly confronted with navigating life on their own — sometimes as young as 18.

#### **Program highlight: The National Mental Health Program**

The Foundation’s National Youth Mental Health Fund is dedicated to breaking down barriers to tailored mental health supports for young people in the process of leaving care. Since its launch in 2021, 416 young people have accessed services at nine child- and youth-serving agencies nationwide — and over 98% have reported that their mental health has improved.

**To learn more about the work and impact of Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada, please visit us online at [cafdn.org](https://www.cafdn.org).**

WONDERING  
HOW YOU CAN  
HELP? WE'VE  
GOT A RECIPE  
FOR THAT.

# You're making a difference just by reading and using this cookbook.

**You're making a difference just by reading and using this cookbook. But there's even more you can do to help improve the lives of the children and youth we serve.**

As a charity, Children's Aid Foundation of Canada relies entirely on the support of generous people like you to reach young people nationwide, design and deliver innovative new programs and advocate for a better child welfare system.

Donating is easy and every dollar counts. Here are just a few of the ways you can take action today for young people like those featured in *A Safe Plate*:

- Sign up to make monthly donations. With the option to donate in a small amount each month, this is a simple and manageable way to make a big impact over time.
- Make a one-time gift in any amount of your choosing.
- Make a special donation in honour or in memory of a loved one.

There are many other ways you can show your support, including naming Children's Aid Foundation of Canada in your Will, making a leadership gift or donating goods and services.

For more information about how you can make a difference, [visit us online](#) or contact the Foundation team at [info@cafdn.org](mailto:info@cafdn.org).

From all of us here at Children's Aid Foundation of Canada: thank you so much for your support. Your generosity will change lives.

Sincerely,

**The team at Children's Aid Foundation of Canada**

# Glossary of terms

**Adoption:** A legal process in which a child or young person becomes a full, permanent legal member of a family that is not their biological family.

**Child welfare system:** A system of government and private services designed to protect children from abuse, neglect and abandonment and strengthen families experiencing vulnerability.

**Crown ward:** A young person under the age of 18 who has been removed from their parents' care and placed under the permanent supervision of the child welfare system.

**Foster care:** An all-encompassing term often used to describe a situation in which a young person is removed from their biological family home and placed in a temporary government-funded living arrangement to protect their safety. Foster care placements can include private homes, group homes, kin care or other institutional settings.

**Foster home:** A private home or homelike setting where a young person is placed in temporary care. Young people in foster homes are typically cared for by one or two foster parents, who are responsible for ensuring their safety and well-being.

**Group home:** A residential setting in which several young people who have been removed from their biological homes live under the care of supervising adults.

**Kin or kinship care:** An arrangement in which a young person who has been removed from their biological home lives with and is raised by a close relative or family friend, thereby maintaining strong connections to their biological family and community.

## Resources

### Need financial support for groceries?

If you're a young person in or from care and experiencing food insecurity, you can find your local food bank through [Food Banks Canada's online search tool](#).

You may be able to find many of the ingredients listed in these recipes at your local food bank, or a staff member or volunteer may be able to help you identify alternative ingredients.

### Need other support?

For information about how you can access financial support through Children's Aid Foundation of Canada, please visit the [For Youth page](#) on our website.

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A Safe Plate is more than just a cookbook. It's a tribute to the restorative powers of cooking and storytelling. Whether you are a young person involved with the child welfare system, a foster parent, a child welfare advocate, a foodie or simply curious about the lives of young people supported by Children's Aid Foundation of Canada, we hope that A Safe Plate will leave you with a deeper understanding of the child welfare landscape, a desire to inspire change and a host of new recipes to try.

Follow us on social media:



Children's Aid Foundation of Canada is our country's leading charity dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth involved with the child welfare system.

For more information about the work of Children's Aid Foundation of Canada and to donate today, please visit [cafdn.org](https://www.cafdn.org).