

Learn to Cook & Love to Share

By: Ying-Mei Liu, Head Nurse of Ward 11A, Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital

My childhood memory was happiness. In early school years, family members delivered lunch to me, and a full course of dinner prepared by grandma would be ready upon coming home from school. When I boarded during high school, meals were provided. Finally, I came to work in the hospital where food is served in the cafeteria. All along, I only needed to reach my hands and open my mouth to get food and drinks. Other than the cooking class, I took in my junior high school, making a trip to the kitchen and cook was a farfetched fairy tale. "Cooking" had never existed in my head.



Head Nurse Ying-Mei Liu enjoys cooking during her free time. Photo depicts Head Nurse Liu (2nd right) at the 2013 Annual Conference of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association.

Challenge Cooking; Flops Bring out Laughter

Hospital work was very busy after I married. I often left home early and came back late, especially when there is nurse shortage. By the time I finished work the moon and stars were already up as I walked home. Mostly, my two kids cooked rice in turns, and my husband prepared main dishes upon his returned from work. The responsibility of preparing dinners was shared usually among the three except for the holidays. Life like this went until one day my high school daughter said, out of nowhere, “Mom, you are so indispensable.” Just when I was baffled, “What have I contributed to the family?” She

continued, “In and Dispensable,” as they laughed and fled.

Although it was only a tease, it caught me thinking for quite a few days. I decided to take a cooking class with coworkers. I did not try to get a C-class chef license, but I did learn the basics to make my dishes more palatable. Because I am vegetarian, I picked mostly veggie menus to try out at home on holidays.

There were many failed attempts at the beginning. I still remember one time after I tried to show off, there was a horrid scream: “What in the world is this? It tastes awful!”



After trial and error, Head Nurse Ying-Mei Liu now is confident to share her dishes to others.

In order to become better cook, my coworkers were forcefully given my try-outs, appetizing or not.

Variety of Cuisines Well Liked; Fun from Cooking, Joy from Sharing

My 80 year-old mother-in-law is currently living with us. For a long time now, she is only able to eat soft food due to tooth ailments. Since taking culinary class, also with the help of many on-line cooking programs, I have learned to make tofu jelly, steamed eggs, veggie bowl cakes, veggie oyster omelets, steamed bread, veggie buns, and definitely a variety of fruit juices to supplement vitamins. As long as they are easy to chew, she gets alternatives to her ordinaries, and that makes her melt into smiles.

Now my coworkers who try the tofu jelly, veggie bowl cakes, veggie oyster omelets, steamed bread, veggie buns, veggie burgers, veggie broths and all kinds of fruit juices would praise “Yum”, which awards me with joy of cooking and, most importantly, sharing. The “want more” look on the faces of my friends and family motivates me to continue cooking.



Photo shows Head Nurse Liu attending the voluntary service for the disabled on the International Nurses' Day.