

MILCHIDIKA WITH MARTY

SHE CUT THE SANDWICH ON THE DIAGONAL

Because of the Corona virus, I have been reluctant to do our weekly food shopping in the local supermarket and have been buying many things online and, so far, have been pleasantly surprised at the quality.

Last night I barbecued a steak that we bought online from the Omaha Beef Company and I commented to Isabelle, "This was one of the best steaks that I ever eaten. Further, did she realize that she was married to a steak connoisseur, as well as a roast duck connoisseur, and most importantly a pastrami connoisseur."

I began to wonder, when did I become such a food critic. I do not remember ever having steak at home when I was growing up. My parents were not poor, "they macht a leben" but steak was not in the budget.

If my mother prepared a meat dish, it usually was something swimming in gravy. There was always a basket of rye bread sitting on the kitchen table, and after finishing the meal, you dunked pieces of bread in the gravy to sop it up and wipe the plate clean.

Our dinnerware was what was known as "Depression Chinaware" which were blue glass dishes, cups and bowls that were mass produced very inexpensively. Each time my parents went to the local movie theater during the 1930s the management would give the patrons a free glass dish or a cup to induce them to see the film. Those free dishes soon became our daily dinner ware.

I remember that our drinking glasses were the glassware that originally contained the Yahrzeit candles which seemed to be continuously burning on the kitchen counter, to remember a departed "Tante" or "Oncle".

Juice glasses were the small glasses that once contained a shrimp cocktail. A "schanda".

My parents lived in a two bedroom apartment in Astoria, they shared one bedroom and rented out the other bedroom (my room) to an uncle who I resented; for having not only to give up my room, but also to give him the nice big, comfortable bed, while I slept on a cot. I am sure a psychologist could do a whole study on that one.

I had a cousin who lived nearby whose father was a doctor. They lived in a big corner house, which contained his office. The house had a huge front porch and a big garden. Boy did I envy him because he had his own room, full of toys, electric trains, and most importantly his own big bed.

Occasionally, I would make a play date with him, which also involved his mother making lunch for the two of us. I was so impressed at lunch time. First, they had white china plates, and blue water glasses. Better than Yahrzeit glasses, and besides that, the water glasses were square not round.

In addition, I was always impressed by my aunt who always seemed to wear a beautiful dress on just an ordinary day, while my mother walked around in an old worn "schmatta" house dress.

But lunch was the big thing. She would ask, "What would you like for lunch?" We had a choice. The system in my house was my mother might buy a package of bologna that week, but that was it. When the bologna was finished, she would then buy a package of cheese. But we never had two different things in the refrigerator at the same time.

So, having been asked what we would like for lunch, my aunt further asked, "Would we like white bread or white toast?" We only had rye bread at home.

She then asked, "Would we like a triple decker sandwich?" I did not know what that was until she explained that it was three pieces of bread, with something different in between each layer.

So now I was going to have a triple decker, bacon and tomato sandwich on white toast which was all held together with toothpicks. Not only toothpicks, but they were colored toothpicks.

But the final touch was that she cut the sandwich on the diagonal. My mother always cut it straight across, I never had a sandwich cut on the diagonal and held together with colored toothpicks.

As to how I became a roast duck and a pastrami connoisseur is the topic of another story.