

“Who
Would
Record
Our
Family
History?”





Many family records were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. They were generally patrilineal, where only the males' names were recorded.

I suppose my family's was, too, although no one is sure if one even existed to begin with.

My mom wondered if our family past was even worth remembering.

I believe it is.

**It's easy to
speak about
our history
to anyone,
except my
family.**

How can I bridge over a decade of lost time
with my relatives? How can I emotionally
connect to my ancestry when my Chinese is —broken—
at best?

I spent the past few weeks and years gearing up
to find out everything I can about my family.
This process is not as simple as it seems.
Our records may be gone forever.
And, thinking about our collective past brings
me to tears every time.

Clearly there is some hidden sorrow that I
can't pinpoint. I am mourning some invisible
break I'll never fix? Is there intergenerational
trauma that haunts me still?

It took weeks simply for me to be able to
ask my mom and ~~the~~ ~~the~~ brief questions
about their lives and this particular recipe,
~~the~~ 赶面 (zhá jiàng miàn).

It's a dish that is at the core of Beijing culture,
and on three generations of women in this family.

This is an incomplete and disjointed history.
Perhaps that describes my journey here

Zha Jiang mian is a Beijing and Shandong specialty.
Wheat noodles topped with pork and soybean paste.
and various sliced vegetables.

My family owned a soybean farm. It was lost
during Mao's rule.

Transnational + historical - its sibling, jajang myeon,
was brought to Korea and adapted. Just like me.

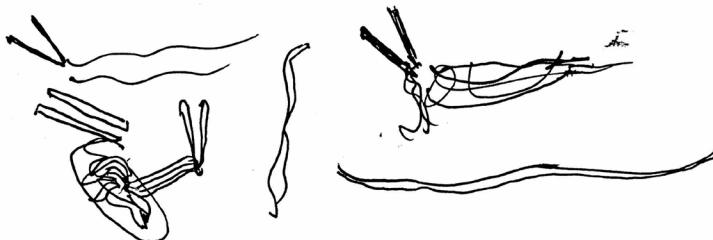
simple + cheap to make, a convenient comfort food.

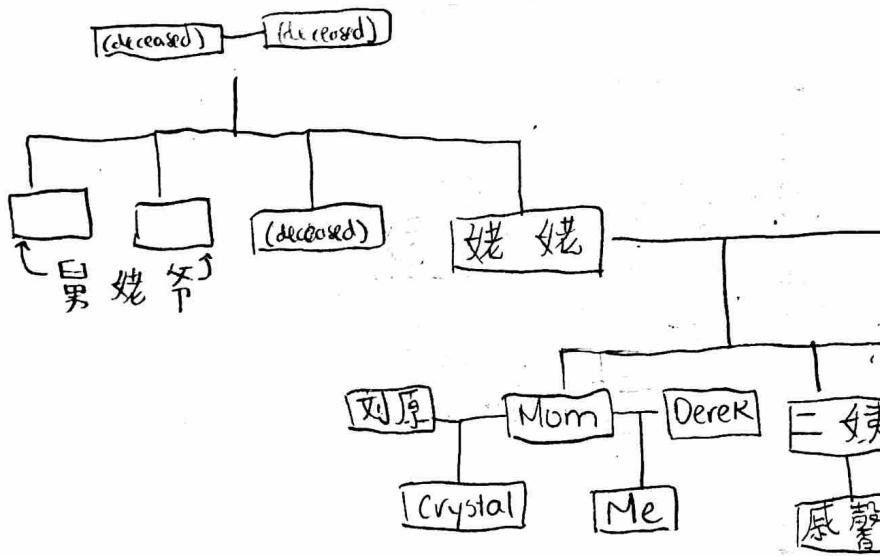




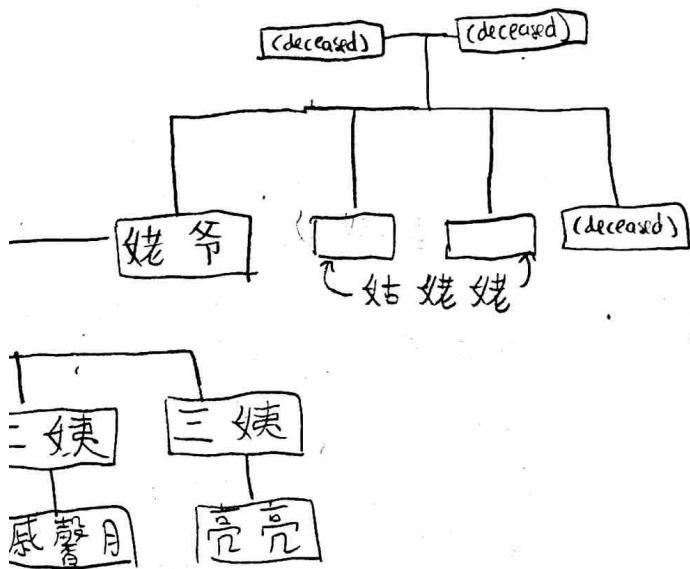
Noodles symbolize longevity. It's something you eat on birthdays to ensure more to come.

I feel like the end of noodle that stretches back in time indefinitely.





A family tree from memory. I
has a distinct title in relation to
forgotten some of them.



y. Each family member
to me, but I have



姓 房 名 王 淑 兰
号 □ 庙 24

I can write endlessly about what I don't know about my 姥姥, who helped raise me in my early years when my mother immigrated to the US. Always overshadowed by my larger-than-life 奶奶。

Mother of three strong women.
Lover of bright sweaters.

My 姥姥's recipe was handmade and rich. She would knead the dough by hand and cut long, chunky strips with a sharp knife. Her own 姥姥 and mother passed this recipe on to her.

A genealogy of cooking.



姓 名 王 梅

I asked my mom what her childhood was like.

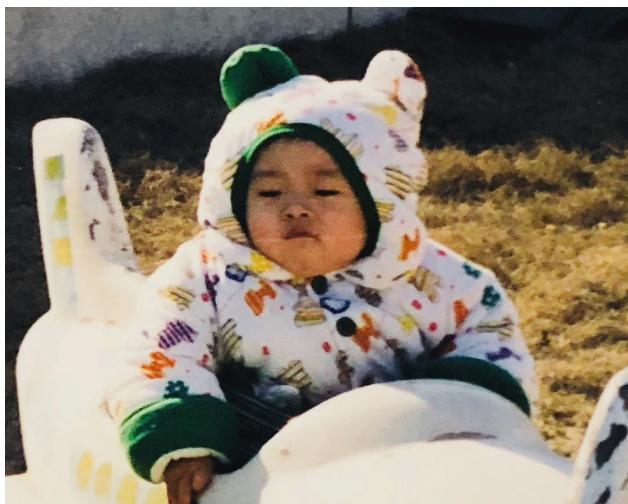
"I don't think I have ever think about that... didn't always have enough food or delicious food!"

For her, food is nostalgia and an integral part of her identity.

Once a single mom,

she made zhajiangmian with pre-made sauce, noodles from C-Mart, and whatever leftover vegetables we had. Her late nights at work, struggling to earn more money in this country, didn't allow her the time to learn to be a better cook.

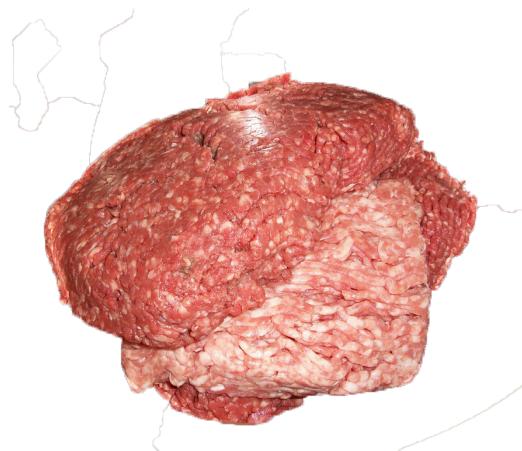
My mom is my role model. I am more similar to her than I think - even in the way we make zhajiangmian.



chinese food is one of the last connections I have to my culture. I feel like a mess of contradictions. I drift around - I've had 9 homes. I've loved them all, and the aroma of food in every kitchen.

i love these
noodles.

the nostalgia.



bit.ly/2JDDDF

for an audio transcription
(my ~~姥姥~~ ~~姥姥~~ herself!) of the recipe.
(+ translation)

She adapted this recipe, passed down generations, to be accessible and easily improvised. A must try!





created with love by