



APPLE PIE WITH GRANDMA

By Lia Burge Rogers

She came over from The States in 1948, and by the time I was a teenager, had renounced all allegiance. George Bush was the final straw - she flung her passport over the counter at the American embassy and waltzed out, defiantly. The thought of that has always made me chuckle and love

her more - a completely impractical compulsion born out of heart, and principle. All that was left of her US identity was the slight twang in her voice and an all-American cookbook (*The Joy of Cooking*, by Irma Rombauer).

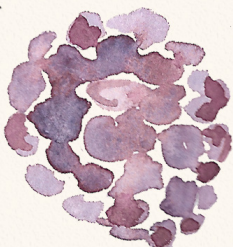




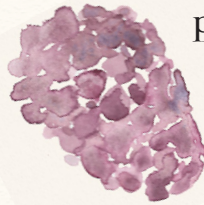
We would bake together on cold winter afternoons, the kitchen, quiet, but for the old ticking clock and a cat called 'Kit-Up' purring in the rocking chair. The book came down from the shelf; tatty, gravy-smattered, and teetering on the edge of its demise, always. Between the leaves, her own recipes on scraps of paper, including one horror I found recently called 'Ham & Pineapple Savoury' involving beef gelatine, tinned tomatoes (?) and a pie crust top. But back to a more palatable pie.

I would drag the burgeoning baskets of apples from the larder, where lingered the smell of cat food and shelves stuffed with tinned food dating back to the seventies. The apple press lived under the counter, cobwebbed from a year's rest, ready to make cider and a-touch-too-sour apple juice with plenty of sediment. "Don't shake it!" she would cry.

Sometimes there were pears. And always blackcurrant jam. We finished the last jar two years ago. A solemn ceremony on toast. How did she do

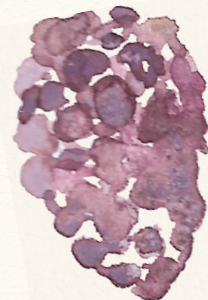


it, this perfect jam? I'm not sure. But I always hoped to inherit the giant pot and long wooden spoon that made me think of Cook in Matilda.



We cubed butter, peeled apples, and pulled winter spices from the spice rack to season a little too heavily, turning the apples golden brown in the pan, thick with cinnamon and sugar. She would dust the tabletop with flour, let me roll the pastry (there were 3 or 4 thick wooden rolling pins, as if an army of sous-chefs were expected in the kitchen at any moment) and I'd make the leaves for decoration - my favourite part of the pie to pick off in secret, later.

I remember her silver fork stabbing the air-holes around my, frankly immoderate, leafy centrepiece. I remember her veiny sculptor's hands buttering the pie dish with a wad of kitchen roll. But most of all I remember her patience, with me, with all of us.



SEVEN BASKETS

There were 7 baskets.
At Easter they contained eggs
and in Autumn, blackberries
that stained the wicker.
The larger ones were graced with mushroom hoards
and earth from the forest floor
come October.
They sat stacked in the pantry
Easter tag ties ripped haphazardly.
They contained gardening gloves.
They contained everything we collected,
surrounded by her love.

In loving memory of the
inimitable Jo Burge,
1923-2011

