

When Mother Cooked With Wood

The chapter wistfully remembers a bygone era, focusing on the warm and fragrant memories associated with a wood-powered kitchen. It begins with the narrator not disputing the efficiency and modernity of gas ranges but hearkening back to a time when the preparation of food was more intimately tied to manual labor and the natural element of wood. The narrative conveys a nostalgia for the tactile experiences of chopping wood and the daily chores that were a fundamental part of life before the convenience of modern appliances.

The wood stove, more than just a tool, is depicted as the heart of the home, where culinary magic happened and where the physical effort required to operate it was a labor of love. The narrator recounts the vanished axe, the chopping block, and the woodpile—all symbols of a self-sufficient lifestyle that demanded physical work, which, though once considered a burden, is now missed.

This reminiscence is not just about the physical act of cooking with wood but also about the sensory experiences it provided: the smells, the sounds, and the warmth that filled the home. The food prepared in this way, from pies to cakes to everyday meals, is remembered as being particularly delicious, enhanced by the effort and care put into its preparation. This chapter, thus, touches upon themes of family, labor, and the simplicity of past times, creating a poignant contrast with the present.