

Building My Home Through Food

Janelle Wong

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. What kind of foods do you know how to make?
2. What kind of foods do you associate with home?

Many Flavors in my Kitchen

When I think about my ideal home, I do not first think about a big house or expensive furniture. I think about the kitchen. For me, home is not made in one place only. It is made by all the places I have visited and all the flavors I have loved.

I enjoy going to different places and learning about new cultures. I like new experiences, new customs, and new foods. Wherever I go, I try to learn something from that place and keep it with me. Food is the best example. I can make Chinese *xiaolongbao*, Korean soup, Japanese sushi, American hamburgers, Italian pizza and pasta, Thai curry, Portuguese grilled octopus, and Spanish *paella*. Every dish teaches me something different. Some dishes remind me of patience, some remind me of family, and some remind me of sharing.

A Family Menu that Tells a Story

When I learn how to cook food from a new place, I feel that I bring part of that place into my life. I do not want my home to be limited to only one style or one culture. I want it to be warm, open, and full of life. I want my family menu to tell the story of where I have been and what I have learned. In my ideal home, I can cook many kinds of food, invite good friends from different backgrounds, and share meals together at one table.

To me, this is what home means. Home is not just the place where I live. It is the place where all the things I love can stay together. I believe I can build a home anywhere, because I know how to keep beauty, memory, and flavor with me.



Janelle Wong is an ESOL student at the Borough of Manhattan Community College in New York City. She enjoys traveling, cooking, running, and hiking. Her writing reflects her interest in food, culture, and connecting with people from around the world.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. What is a key ingredient of home for Janelle?
2. What is a recipe that reminds you of home? Write up the recipe. List the ingredients and the steps you take to make it. Present your recipe to the class on paper or digitally.
3. Collect the recipes on paper or digitally and share them with other people in your program.
4. For more stories by students about food, check out Issue 39 of *The Change Agent*.