

# A Story a Week ...

... from woodblock printmaker David Bull

## Salad Days ...

In last week's story I mentioned in passing that for a time I lived alone with my two daughters, and how it was a problem for me that the local supermarket had a poor selection of ready-made foods. That may have given the wrong impression - that we never did any cooking for ourselves!

Actually, the two girls and I did quite a lot of cooking during those years. Well, I'm being a bit polite to them when I say 'the two girls and I', because it was I who was responsible for getting the evening meal ready most days. Because of the difficulty of obtaining interesting and healthy ready-made dinners, I did end up doing quite a bit of cooking. I'm not about to put my experiences down in writing in the form of a cook-book, but the meals I prepared were adequate, and accepted well by my daughters.

(It also wasn't uncommon for them to have friends over for dinner with us, and I was always curious what stories those friends would report to their own family when they returned home. I can well imagine what their mothers might have asked them, "What did they give you? Could you eat it?")

It would not be fair to my daughters though, if I neglected to include in this story some mention of their contributions to our meal routines. Although in those days they were too young to be 'playing' with a hot stove, they helped a lot in other ways. In addition to frequently setting the table, and washing the dishes many evenings, one of their main jobs was helping to cut up the ingredients before cooking.

And speaking of cutting up the ingredients reminds me of one of our favourite dishes - our Mongo Salad! Just the same as many parents, I had a bit of a problem in getting my kids to eat enough vegetables. I wanted them to eat a good wide variety of greens (and fruit), but they were sometimes a bit conservative in their tastes, always wanting the same few types. So I came up with the Mongo Salad as a way of getting them to be more enthusiastic about eating fruit and vegetables (I suppose I should be honest and say 'us' rather than 'them'!)

This salad became a regular on our dinner table, and they always helped me prepare it - and in fact, some days they prepared it entirely on their own, going shopping for the ingredients, and then cutting and mixing everything together. The 'recipe' for a Mongo Salad was simple - just buy a selection of fruit and vegetables, peel and cut everything up, and then serve it all in a very large bowl.

But there were two 'rules' that had to be followed in order for the dish to be called a true Mongo Salad. The first was that there had to be no fewer than 12 types of fruit or vegetable represented. This was easy to do, as of course these days there is always a good selection available, no matter what the season. The second rule is what really counted: if the three of us were able to finish the entire bowl, then it hadn't actually been a Mongo Salad after all.

Well, kids are kids, and you can guess how it turned out most of the time. Whenever we had this, we really wanted our creation to achieve fabled 'Mongo Salad' recognition, so we ate, and ate, and ate! Broccoli ... banana ... carrots ... cantaloupe ... celery ... you name it, we shoveled it down enthusiastically, trying to get to the bottom of the large bowl.

More than ten years have passed since those times, and the other day, preparing for this story, I wrote to Fumi and asked her if she remembered Mongo Salads.

"Yeah!!! I haven't thought about that in soooo long!! That was such fun!"

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