

**WRITING**

# Love Shown Through Food

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**TYPE**

MEMOIR  
NARRATIVE

**GENRE**

GRADES 11-12

I was never one for love and affection, in fact I never understood it. While growing up, my parents never really showed love and affection, even to this day. I never grew up hearing “I love you” and “sleep tight” or “have a good day,” instead it was always “don’t do anything foolish because you’re gonna get in trouble” or some type of scolding before I even did anything. I always tried to say “I love you” or “be safe” to them before they left for work or before I went to school to show some type of gratitude and love, but this morning while getting ready to leave I decided not to say it. It wasn’t that I was mad at them for not saying it back or ungrateful for anything they did, but I just felt like it, especially since I wasn’t gonna get a response other than “mhm” or “okay.”

“Anna, are you ready?” my aunt asked.

“Yes,” I replied as we walked out the front door.

When we arrived at school I just said “bye” instead of, “Bye, I love you.”

I had started to feel so bad, since this was the second time I didn’t say it. It had felt so weird for me not to say but I quickly forgot about it.

Days went by with me not saying it and it kinda became normal. It had bothered me for days, the part of me that still felt sad, as if my parents had never loved me. But they do love me. In fact they had been showing me the whole time, like on this Sunday afternoon when I had been doing homework while my aunt was cooking in the kitchen. She called me into the kitchen to get her something.

“Anna,” my aunt called me.

“Yes,” I replied.

“Come here,” she said.

As I left the living room table and made my way to her, she asked me to get something out the fridge for her. I forgot what it was. As I handed her what she asked for, I don’t remember her saying anything in return, but I was curious as to what she was making so I asked. She told me it was brown stew chicken with white rice and peas (I don’t like white rice and peas).

I asked how she learned and she said it was from my grandmother. I carefully asked her more questions knowing she would get tired of my curiosity. But she continued to answer my questions, telling me about our mixed culture and my grandmother. It wasn't until I paused to muster up the courage to ask her why she never responded when I said "I love you" to her.

She stopped for a moment then asked me what I meant.

"You know when I say I love you to you and everyone else but you never say it back, you always say okay instead," I clarified.

"Anna, growing up we never used to have that, my parents never really said that to us but we knew they did when they cooked or asked for assistance outside," my aunt replied, eyes still focused on the pot in front of her.

"Enough questions now go back and finish your homework" she quickly said after.

"Okay," I replied, heading back to the living room table.

As I sat back down at the living room table, I thought about what she said, trying to understand what she meant. I later did when she called me back for dinner, picking up a plate and big spoon ready to serve me my food. You could smell how good the food was, you already knew what it tasted like before eating it. Steam rose out of the pot as

she lifted the lid to plate it. She asked how much rice I wanted and gave me the parts with the least amount of peas, then gave me two brown stew chicken legs. When she was done, she handed me the plate and told me to sit at the table. While I did I studied the food carefully, thinking about what she had said earlier. As soon as I took the first bite I understood exactly what she meant.

My aunt indeed loves me. From the time she asked me to get an ingredient, to the time she plated my food and handed it to me, to the first bite I took I felt all the love my aunt had for me in that moment and realized every conversation I had with her while cooking to every bite of food I ate that my aunt did love me. And that she was expressing this to me through her cooking and so was everyone else in my household, just as my grandmother did with them when they were growing up.