

Jeannine's Kitchen

Bring me to Jeannine's kitchen  
where the pride of cooking  
sweeps across her face, and the  
aromas pull you into their goodness.

The heart of the family  
resides in the kitchen  
where meals are prepared  
concerns voiced and smells linger.

Jeannine's kitchen  
features a steaming pot of soup,  
fish or farmer's, simmering on the stove  
where colors combine like  
the splatters on the canvases  
of her artist studio.

Food carries memories  
for this family  
of many yesterdays—  
arriving in from the snow  
to share in the savory,  
the baby bottles in microwaves  
pabulum dripping from lips  
artichokes cooking, steaks sizzling  
potatoes frying, asparagus boiling  
chestnuts in the oven  
fresh strawberries, and  
a glass of red wine to  
ease the food down  
gently, peacefully.

Jeannine glows  
while strutting the kitchen  
amongst the lingering aromas  
and apple pie spilling over  
in a hot oven which she tells  
the little kids not to touch  
but just to eat the pie  
because this is what  
warms her heart.

## Chicken Soup

As a child, I loved visiting Aunt Silva's  
66<sup>th</sup> Street apartment on New York City's west side  
and how the fragrance of chicken soup permeated  
that corridor leading to apartment ICW.

It's as if love poured under her metal door  
all the way down the hallway:  
that aroma of chicken and vegetables  
simmering in a large pot on her small kitchen stove  
in front of a yellow-tiled backdrop,  
as I watched her skim fat off its top  
and teach me to use white pepper,  
not black because it ruins  
the look of the soup.

I loved the steam coming from her soup  
and how it warmed me on cold winter days.  
On inhalation, I felt instantly healed  
as I watched her put soup through the strainer  
into her biggest metal mixing bowl  
and then the ingredients became the main meal,  
with a cup of soup poured over.

For generations, this soup has been called  
Jewish penicillin because one cannot help  
but feel better with all its goodness  
and love poured into a porcelain soup  
bowl with golden rim.

Science has even told us  
that the tryptophan in chicken  
produces serotonin—comforting  
and hydrating during sick times,  
as the steam from the bowl clears sinuses  
that we had no idea were stuffed.

It's no surprise that my childrens' freezers  
have jars of my chicken soup  
moved from one home  
to the next, because like a first aid kit  
it can cure anything  
from colds to a broken heart.

## Kindred Spirits

On the small porch  
beneath her bedroom window,  
where she took her life,  
my grandmother and I  
used to sit for hours watching passersbys.

She taught me  
the art of people-watching,  
inspiring the writer in me.

Now, decades later, I sit  
on my own porch and see  
how narratives form life's tapestries.

I never got a chance to thank grandma  
for her gifts: teaching me to type,  
and her nurturing while my parents  
worked long hours in their retail store.

No chance to express gratitude  
For telling me not to burn bridges,  
to write my thoughts in my journal,  
to smile when sad,  
and to be with those who inspire,  
and to listen to my heart.

But, in the end, I did get to thank her,  
because the trauma of losing her  
lived in my body and was born as poetry  
and I told her so yesterday  
when she returned outside my writing studio  
as a fluttering hummingbird.

Oh how I wish she can hear me sing,  
this song of love  
like she sang to me  
on my childhood porch.