

Fellowship and food create forever friendships

Editor's note: With college students returning to the classroom this fall, we thought it would be nice to show you how one woman opens her home and her heart to young women.

By Kelly Nistler

College kids want a lot of things. Some want thrills, others relaxation — they get dolled up for nights spent at loud parties then make their way home for a lazy weekend day camped out in front of the TV.

Others want adventure and make traveling to foreign lands their top priority. Ask any college student what they want and you will end up writing a list that makes your hand cramp: good grades, beer, happiness, a girlfriend/boyfriend, a scholarship, real food ... but every last person, whether they say it out loud or not, has one thing that they really long for during those long months of hard work and adulthood: a home, a place where they belong and can receive that same feeling of warmth and acceptance that most find with their own families in their hometowns.

I was lucky enough to go to a school where such a home environment was offered to me — and the “mom” and “sisters” that I met there have shaped me into the woman I am today and provide me with the unconditional love and support I’ve only ever known from blood kin.

This home I speak of is actually the home of Dorothy Sayre, 54, of Morris. A mother of three grown children who does daycare out of her home, Dorothy is a devout Christian active in the church and with a beautiful, deep personal faith. She is also my mentor and an incredibly close friend.

Six years ago, Dorothy began having young Christian women from the local university (the University of Minnesota, Morris) over to her house one evening a week for cookie-baking and fellowship.

The young women would carpool over to Dotty’s, as she is affectionately called, and there Dorothy would be waiting for each of them with a big hug and assurance that she had been thinking of them. The group — at that time just four girls — would drive with Dotty over to the local Supervalu and buy whatever ingredients necessary for that night’s treat.

Upon arriving back at the house they would spend hours baking, laughing, sharing trials and tribulations of the day, and simply being present with one another. Stories flowed freely and each week, the girls returned back to their on-campus dwellings with lightened loads, warm hearts, and full stomachs.

As girls graduated and new ones filled their places, the tradition began to change as well. With a group swelling sometimes to as many as 18 women at once, it became possible to expand the menu and cook an entire meal together. A flurry of e-mails would be sent between the regular attendees earlier in the day, until they had settled on a dish to make. Dorothy would then go shopping before the girls were set to arrive so they would be ready to jump right into the lengthy preparation.

While some girls folded cloth napkins and gathered candles to create a masterpiece of a table setting, others worked on the main dish while still more girls collaborated on the requisite dessert. It was standard procedure to find a new companion each week so that you got a chance to talk with everyone and develop that deep bond that exists between “Dorothy girls” past and present.

Somehow, there always managed to be enough chairs, even if it meant dragging in a piano bench from the living room or folding chairs from the garage. In Dorothy’s house, there is always an available seat at the table. Hands crossed and heads bowed, each meal begins with a prayer, blessing the hands that prepared the food and thanking God for bringing us to one another. We say special thanks that the Lord brought us Dorothy and made her willing to open her home to a rowdy group of energetic, unique young women.

Unlike in the classroom, the ticking clock was a matter of small importance as we filled our stomachs with the favored dishes and chattered away contentedly.

Once the food had been devoured and we tired of talking, the dishes were quickly cleaned and we began our return to the reality of college life.

Warm embraces were shared and we wished one another good luck on the upcoming test/paper/performance, whatever the case may be. With leftovers clutched tight, we forced ourselves to step through the doorway of our home away from home, already looking forward to next week’s “Dorothy night.”

Kelly Nistler is a graduate of the University of Minnesota-Morris and an aspiring writer. This fall, she won’t be returning to the classroom, but she will always remember fondly the nights spent at Dotty’s house.

Below are some of the time-tested favorites of the Dorothy Girls.

Big Mama Salad

1 ½ heads romaine lettuce
3 green onions
½ bag real bacon
1 Cup chow mein noodles
6 oz cashews

3 T sesame seeds

Dressing:

4 T sugar

½ tsp accent salt

6 T apple cider vinegar

1 tsp salt

½ tsp pepper

Mix: Lettuce, onions, bacon, cashews and sesame seeds

Add: noodles right before serving

Enchilada Hotdish

2 pounds hamburger, browned and drained

1 can enchilada sauce (Old El Paso sauce – mild)

1 small can tomato sauce

Simmer these ingredients

In 9x13 pan layer flour tortilla shells, hamburger mixture, shredded cheddar cheese, flour tortilla shells, hamburger and more cheese. Cover and bake for 30 minutes.

Add lettuce, sour cream, olives, and tomatoes when serving

Peachy Chicken

6 chicken breasts

1-16oz Russian Dressing

1-8 oz Apricot jam

1 pkg onion soup mix (Mrs. Grass)

Mix the ingredients and pour over chicken. Bake 1 ½ hours at 350 degrees.

Cristina's Comfort Chili

1 ½ pounds ground beef

1 T cooking oil

2 medium onions, chopped

1 medium green sweet pepper, chopped

½ cup chopped celery
1 14.5 oz can diced tomatoes
1 T dried parsley flakes
1 T chili powder
½ tsp salt
½ tsp garlic powder
½ tsp ground black pepper
1 15 oz can dark red kidney beans
1 15oz can pinto beans

1. In 4-5 quart Dutch oven, brown half of the ground beef in hot oil, remove meat from Dutch oven. Add remaining meat, onions, sweet pepper, and celery to Dutch oven. Cook and stir until meat is brown and onion is tender. Return all meat to Dutch oven.
 2. Add undrained tomatoes, parsley, chili powder, salt, garlic powder and black pepper to meat. Stir in undrained beans. Bring to boiling, reduce heat. Simmer uncovered 1.5 hours, stirring occasionally.
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Pumpkin Bars

Mix and beat well:

4 eggs
1 C Crisco oil
1-15 oz can pumpkin
2 C sugar

Then add:

2 C flour
2 tsp baking powder
1 tsp baking soda
½ tsp salt
2 tsp cinnamon
½ tsp ginger
½ tsp cloves
½ tsp nutmeg

Pour into greased and floured 12x18x1" pan and bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes

Frosting

16 oz package cream cheese
¾ stick butter
1 T cream or milk
1 tsp vanilla
4 C powdered sugar

Mix well, add sugar to desired thickness

Brown Sugar Cookies

1 C Crisco
½ C brown sugar
½ C white sugar
2 C flour
1 tsp vanilla
2 tsp cream of tartar
1 egg
2 tsp baking soda

Mix ingredients. Roll into balls and dip in sugar. Don't flatten. Bake at 375 degrees.

Hershey's Easy Pizza Brownie

Mix together with spoon:

¾ C (1 ½ sticks) butter, melted
1 ½ C sugar
1 ½ tsp vanilla
3 eggs (beaten)

Mix remaining with spoon only:

½ C Hershey's cocoa
¾ C flour
½ tsp baking powder
¼ tsp salt

Bake at 350 degrees in a greased 9x13" pan for 20-22 minutes. Enjoy with the delectable caramel sauce recipe below!

Caramel Topping

1 Cup butter
1 Cup white sugar
1 Cup brown sugar
1 Cup half and half
1 Tbsp. flour

Mix and boil until thick....Add 1 tsp. vanilla....Serve warm.....