

Wyatt Blackstone

English 110 H5

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Time inevitably changes all things, from our governments, to our social norms, and even cooking itself. This is discussed in Michael Pollan's essay "Out of the Kitchen, Onto the Couch" when he describes the transition of the cultural impact of cooking shows, and cooking in general, over the past decades. He talks about how the different types of cooking shows we watch have changed with our societal norms of cooking. As cooking has become less popular and less of a family activity, we have also seen our television programming match this. This is best summed up in the type of cooking shows on air now and then, from the 1960's. Gordon Ramsay verses Julia Child, and Chopped verses Martha Stewart. The action-packed shows verse the ones teaching values and how-to instructions for cooking. Although the amount of networking shown for cooking has stayed relatively the same, the action packed, high paced, theme of our shows and our personal commitment to cooking has dramatically changed. We, and our society, have become less involved in the "family cooking" and more into entertainment shows.

This can be shown when you look back into your childhood memories, a lot of us find us waiting at the dinner table eagerly anticipating one of our favorite meals to be served up by our mother or father. However, now we seem to just be sitting on our couches and chairs waiting to go out to eat or for our premade food to be taken out of the microwave, while we finish the episode of our favorite action filled, do or die, cooking tv shows. This is fortunately not the case in my household. However, there was a noticeable change (partly schedule related) in the

amount of crockpot meals that could simmer away all day and come out ready, to several hours of scrupulous cooking to make a good tasting meal when my brother and I reached high school age. With our busy days and the new changing norm, that cooking isn't as important anymore, we took the easier rout. A good example of this in someone else's life is in Krystianna Ingalls's essay about her favorite meal. She says, "One of my fondest memories of my mom's many crockpot dinners was getting off the bus, walking up our long driveway, and through in the front door to being greeted by the smell of whatever she was going to make for dinner; spaghetti, chicken fajitas, beef stew, salsa chicken, chili, or any other kind of recipe that she could convert into a crockpot recipe (Ingalls)". Krystianna also grew up in a larger family household where cooking and eating meals were a large part of her family's routine, as explained earlier in her essay. Her mother cooked a lot for her family, however, some of her fondest memories where her mother's easy to make crock pot meals that she was able pack up and bring to other family's houses. Like in my household, cooking never stopped happening as my brother and I got older, it just became less relevant and we reverted to the easier forms of cooking.

The convenience of not having to cook, or the ease of the quick crockpot type cooking is not the only reason our society has started to move away from the stove and to the couch. One other reason is that we lack the ability or knowledge of how to cook in general. Part of the reason for this I think is our high school education curriculum. My high school had no opportunity to take any culinary or cooking classes unless we were willing to drive forty-five minutes away to go to a technical school every other day. Some kids did this, but the inconvenience of the drive time was enough to deter most kids from doing this. An example of

this from Christine Nelson's favorite food essay when she says, "personally, I would be afraid to cook the pasta on my own because my mom is a master at making the dish, and I know mine would not turn out the same (Nelson)." Christine is not saying that she doesn't know how to cook but, will not make the food because it won't be the same as her mother's dish with all of her cooking experience. There are many other factors affecting this that varies person to person.

Why are we so obsessed with cooking shows? The progression of more action packed into an episode might be explained by the generational differences in the ever-changing societal norms and need for instant gratification. It could also be our degrading value of cooking in the American household. It is much easier to just sit back on our couches and chairs to watch someone put in the work to cook while we eat our microwave/junk food to satisfy our hunger gained, made by the chefs on TV. As degrading as this apparent "laziness" sounds to our generation and decade, it just shows how intertwined cooking is to our culture. There are much more action-packed television shows we can watch but we continue to watch our cooking shows. This shows us that we still find a comfort in watching someone cook. As stated in Pollan's article, "Food shows are the campfires in the deep cable forest, drawing us like hungry wanderers to their flames. (And on the Food Network there are plenty of flames to catch your eye, compensating, no doubt, for the unfortunate absence of aromas) (Pollan)." Our television shows of cooking are much like watching our mothers and fathers cook for us. It is not only relaxing but also satisfying to watch a pile of random ingredients be put together to make a meal that can bring so much joy and union between people, as seen in the favorite meal articles above.

With the modern trend of cooking shows degrading our motivation to get up off our couches and cook, it makes it up by evolving and preserving our culture of cooking in our society and generation. For the lack of hands on experience and nonvisual senses (smells and feelings of cooking) it has given us new favorite shows to watch and more entertainment we could consume in our lifetimes. I cannot say that this change is for the best, however, it is a change and it keeps us entertained.

Worked cited

Ingalls, Krystianna. "Favorite Meal Essay Round 2." <https://kingalls4.unepportfolio.org/writing-project-1/>. Accessed 20 March 2019.

Nelson, Christine. "My Favorite Dish." <https://cnelson13.unepportfolio.org/food-for-thought/>. Accessed 20 March 2019.

Pollan, Michael. "Out of the kitchen, Onto the Couch." The New York Times Magazine. 29 July 2009.