

Foreword

By Joan McNamara

Food should be fun, simple and shared. There's nothing I love more than feeding people with both food and love. That's the philosophy that is brought to life at Joan's on Third, my gourmet marketplace/café in Los Angeles. It's also what the Monday Morning Cooking Club celebrates: creating a space to bring together family, friends and community around food.

Many Australians drop in to Joan's, perhaps lured by the vibrant gathering place we've created, the rustic communal tables and the irresistible food. One day a visitor from Sydney, Lisa Rosen, started chatting with me about the Monday Morning Cooking Club and their stunning first book. Lisa's mother, a Hungarian Holocaust survivor, is featured in the book, and she was touched by how her recipes were now preserved in print. When she explained that the book is an anthology of wonderful home cooks and family recipes, and that the Monday Morning Cooking Club meets and cooks every week, my curiosity was piqued. I love any mention of 'family recipes' and adored that it was a group of women cooking together. I am part of my own cooking club (of sorts), with an eclectic group of creative, inspiring women. 'The Spoons' meet and cook every month, sharing great food, friendship and stories in total abundance.

The grapevine works well, and only days later, Monday Morning Cooking Club's Lisa Goldberg was visiting the United States, had a book in her suitcase and dropped by Joan's on Third with a copy. I was enchanted by how beautiful it was, but, more than anything, it reminded me of my mother's comfort cooking. As the daughter of hard-working Czech immigrants, where life revolved around the kitchen, I learnt at my mother's apron strings and absorbed her countless secret recipes. There was a connection I felt through the book's stories of Jewish women cooking across generations.

Since those early days, the Monday Morning Cooking Club women have become great (and delicious) friends. I was honoured to host their first Los Angeles cookbook launch in 2013 at Joan's on Third and, since then, both their books have always been sold in our stores because they are in synergy with my philosophy. I'm thrilled we are only one plane trip away, and over the years all the women have dropped by to say hello during their travels. There's nothing like a warm hug, an omelette and, of course, a chocolate brownie, to cure their jet lag.

So that the Monday Morning Cooking Club – and you, the readers – can have a bit of me at home, my chocolate brownie recipe is on page 304. Hope to see you all in Los Angeles very soon!

