

The MMCC Story

In the Beginning

For the last ten years, people have asked us, ‘What do you do?’ We pause, take a deep breath, and try to explain the Monday Morning Cooking Club. We started as six passionate and unstoppable Jewish Sydney women who just wanted to create a beautiful cookbook. A book that would sit alongside the best cookbooks in the world and tell the story of our food-obsessed community. We would operate as a not-for-profit group and hoped to raise some money for charity along the way.

Over many cups of tea, and of course the odd piece of cake, our project slowly evolved into what it is today – a commitment to collecting the very best recipes from our community, and an intention to honour and share stories of immigration, survival, joy, family and connection.

Time really does fly when you’re having fun. Little did we know that in just ten years we would have produced and published two bestselling cookbooks. For our first book, *Monday Morning Cooking Club – the food, the Stories, the Sisterhood* (2011), we drew on the best-loved, most precious family recipes and stories from our local Sydney Jewish community. Encouraged by its success, we then broadened our scope to collect recipes from the Jewish community right across Australia with our second book, *The Feast Goes On* (2014).

It’s been ten years of meeting the girls every single Monday morning. Ten years of collecting, selecting and curating recipes from our community’s kitchens. Ten years of testing – prepping, cooking and tasting dishes from around the world. Ten years of sharing (many things), laughing (often hysterically) and arguing (in the best possible way). Our sisterhood has endured and enjoyed a roller coaster of challenges and successes – from the low of our first rejection by a major publisher, to the sense of achievement when holding a copy of our first published book in our hands, through to the joy of the likes of Nigella Lawson, Nicole Kidman and Yotam Ottolenghi telling the world how they love our books.

So here we are, ten years on, still meeting every Monday, and now Tuesday, often Thursday and electronically on all the days in between. We are continually inspired by our community’s love of family, friends and celebrations, which always seem to revolve around food. And we love nothing more than talking about food – especially when we are eating at the same time.



Heirloom Recipes

Our passion is finding those precious family recipes passed down from the older generations, which have never been written down and would otherwise be lost – those recipes without weights and volumes, with a ‘handful of this’ and ‘a pinch’ of that. Our joy is to modernise and accurately document these heirloom recipes and make them easy for any cook to follow, no matter where they live. It’s not just the recipes from the older generations that matter – we also need to document and preserve the dishes that feed and nurture our generation, our communities, and our families.

What a thrill when a handwritten recipe on yellowing paper lands on our kitchen table. So many seem foreign – dishes that we’ve never even heard of, let alone tasted. We’ve worked hand-in-glove with cooks – or families of cooks – to learn, understand and master these new dishes. The result is a collection of fail-proof recipes that we hope will find a new life in kitchens and on tables around the world. Our motto is ‘contemporise traditional recipes and traditionalise contemporary ones’.

We are Curators

We are not merely idle collectors, pasting together other people’s recipes. We are wholeheartedly committed and involved curators. For each book, we receive hundreds and hundreds of recipes. Every single one is a gift to us and so special. We take the time to review, consider, test and taste them all. We wish we could include them all. We thank each and every person who took the time to share their food memories with us. Even though many were not included, without all of them this book would not be possible.

Our books are a partnership between us and our adored cooks. We have so many conversations back and forth by email, phone, Skype and standing together in the kitchen, where possible. We learn something new almost every day and the final, often collaborative, version of a recipe becomes a legacy to treasure. Sometimes, the recipes you see here are our version of the original, converted for home cooks all around the world to enjoy. Thank you to all our wonderful cooks – without you, there would be no Monday Morning Cooking Club. We are privileged to be the trusted gatekeeper of precious heirloom recipes.

The Sisterhood

It’s hard to believe our sisterhood has been together for so long. We’re asked all the time if we still get on. The answer to that question is a definitive yes: we actually have an amazing bond. Monday has become the best day of the week for each of us. At the same time, we have become great friends, confidantes, advisors, therapists, parenting experts and fashion consultants to each other. If only there was a hidden camera to capture the never-ending banter, the hysterical laughter, the circuitous debates and the regular eye



rolling. What's the best way to seed a pomegranate? How can you not remember where the rolling pin is after ten years? How much salt should we add, a measure or a pinch?

Since our last book, Lauren and Paula have taken a step back out of the test kitchen, and we now welcome the delightful Lynn; we are thrilled to have her on the team.

The Global Search

In 2013 we decided to hit the US food scene with gusto. We ran around from early to late, from the hallowed halls of Martha Stewart and NPR radio, to cooking demonstrations at Williams Sonoma and Eataly, to book signings and media interviews – all while *fressing* at every café and restaurant we could squeeze in. We did private charity events, public book signings and scoured every store for our books, delightedly introducing ourselves to the shelf stacker at Barnes and Noble.

As our first two books made their way to kitchens across the world, we realised that the community created by the Monday Morning Cooking Club had actually stretched further than we had ever imagined. We realised we just had to document the food of the global Jewish diaspora for our next book. We reached out to friends old and new, and to home cooks around the world, and spent the next two years searching for recipes that come from the heart, much-loved dishes that have been feeding family and friends for years.

Through emails, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and even the old-fashioned postman, we heard stories of people's love for food and cooking, and the importance of the family table. All over the world, the ritual of cooking grounds us, connects and nurtures us.

And so this, our third book, came to life. *Monday Morning Cooking Club – It's Always About the Food* is a delicious and rich, story-filled snapshot of cooking in the global diaspora. It is a wonderful collection of recipes on its own and the perfect complement to our earlier volumes. We have found some of the very best cooking from our global community. This book holds the most delicious family recipes – not from a restaurant or a test kitchen, but from the heart of our homes.

May these stories and recipes inspire us all to take the time to cook, to share, to eat, to talk and to sit at the table, together.

~ *The MMCC girls, 2017*

Visit us at www.mondaymorningcookingclub.com.au