

OPINION

Memories of Fancy Dinners - To Go

Mom of five remembers back to a time when she never cooked and ate at the best restaurants all the time.

By **Alicia Gonzalez** January 14, 2011

Before I became a wife and a work-from-home mother of five, I spoiled myself with delicious meals cooked to order by the greatest chefs, every night.

Dinnertime was my favorite part of the day. I indulged myself with the best meals from restaurants throughout the Bay Area. I never looked at the price on a menu and always ordered to go. An appetizer, entrée, and dessert were my minimum purchase. I didn't know how to cook. More importantly, I didn't care to learn. [Black Angus](http://www.blackangus.com/location/default.aspx) (<http://www.blackangus.com/location/default.aspx>) was one of my favorite places to order dinners from and I did so at least once a week.



PHOTOS (2)



I considered the custom to be an act of fulfilling a basic need. The idea of eating microwave meals or fast food was absurd to me. Eating great meals felt like taking mini-trips around the world via an exceptionally exquisite culinary train. I loved the hole-in-the-wall joints and well-known chains equally. I loved trying different places and experiencing new foods.

Despite my frequent travels, vicariously through many wonderful meals, I also longed for a home connection. I was a meat and potatoes girl. Nothing satisfied my craving for a home-cooked meal quite like a dinner from Black Angus did.

Ironically, my mother was not a good cook. I remember her demanding that I eat processed fish sticks and liver. Ugh! But I believe that she put a lot of love into her awful meals. Eating at Black Angus gave me the same feeling of knowing that a lot of love went into my meal, and it tasted so much better!

I always requested an extra loaf of freshly baked wheat bread and an additional side of garlic-mashed potatoes, no matter what the rest of my order was. I alternated between steak and chicken entrees, but usually chose steak, well-done. I frequently slipped into comfortable pajamas before devouring my meal, so that the elastic waistband would be forgiving of my overly full tummy.

Even after my oldest two children were born, I sometimes coerced my husband into bringing home a Black Angus dinner just for me. It wasn't as frequently as I wanted, but it was enough to feel that I had remained faithful to the freshly baked wheat bread loaves that graced my plate weekly, so long ago.

Since my triplets were born, one year ago, I haven't been to any of the restaurants I used to frequent. I don't have personal chefs anymore, and I'm the only one who cooks to order. My traditions of nightly culinary vacations are now distant memories.

Even when I personally cook something fantastic, I am not motivated to devour my serving. Sometimes I'm too tired from cooking a great dish to eat it. As I look at my husband and children inhale their meals, I think about how lucky they are to have me, their personal chef, at no cost to them. I remember the time when I willingly spent small fortunes for the same privilege, and unlike them, never complained about the wait.

Last night I dreamed that I won a lifetime supply of Black Angus appetizers and garlic-mashed potatoes. When I woke up this morning, I searched for proof of my winnings. It took me a few minutes to realize it was only a dream. I was disappointed.

Around noon, I couldn't resist the temptation to succumb to my desire for a big juicy steak and excessive servings of carbohydrates drowned in melted butter.

With the older kids at school, I whisked the babies off to Black Angus. Upon arrival I jumped out of the van and immediately breathed in the delicious odors of culinary bliss that were mingled into the breeze. I had already gotten the babies out of the van, into their stroller and heading toward the entrance before I realized I did not have my purse. I had left the house so spontaneously that I forgot it at home. I did not have any money with me at all. Alas, I did not go in.

I will not let the memories of fancy dinners become merely memories of a past-life. Next week, no matter what, I'm going to pamper myself with an array of mouth-watering items from the scrumptious menu options of my favorite (http://maps.google.com/maps?ll=37.682787,-122.128039&spn=0.002208,0.003755&z=17&key=ABQIAAAxvVdoPAV18-LJ9dCcAKcMBQTETKH9mhN2GmL5AqaXx2Pqdf2-xSySRMmlz14wPQsJd4kRXzMCFjCnQ&mapclient=jsapi&oi=map_misc&ct=api_logo) Black Angus restaurant.

About this column: Alicia Gonzalez is the editor of Macaroni Kid, a local publisher of family-friendly events and information in San Lorenzo, Hayward, San Leandro and Castro Valley. Alicia is a real estate broker in Hayward, and a mother of five