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Can We Make It? Coming-of-Age in a Covid Kitchen

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Recommended Citation

Erickson, Maila, "Can We Make It? Coming-of-Age in a Covid Kitchen" (2020). *Senior Honors Projects*. Paper 887.

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Can We Make It? Coming-of-Age in a Covid Kitchen

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Introduction:

If stories in the news and in social media are any indication, food seems to be a **surprising focus of the pandemic** for young and old. Personally speaking, I delved into cooking during the spring quarantine. This honors project sought to discover how other people in their early to mid-twenties might have **modified their food preparation habits** and what the **experience of cooking in quarantine** meant to them, while also triangulating these findings with my own experiences.

Methodology:

- Conducted literature review
- Completed CITI Program training and obtained IRB approval
- Developed questionnaire
- Conducted 5 qualitative interviews
- Transcribed and coded interviews to identify common themes
- Composed a creative non-fiction essay based on original research and my personal experiences

Stress in Food Procurement



- “There was a general malaise in the store.” - Emil
- “All the really cheap brands...were all gone, so all that was left at that point was ultra expensive stuff [...] It was like [...] through the scarcity you had to spend a lot more money if you wanted beans.” - Montara
- “It felt very dystopian.” - Beryl

Coming into Our Tastes



- “I literally just got things that my mom would buy which wasn't super great because I don't always like the same food.” - Fiona
- “When you make [tomato sauce] on your own, it's way better and more satisfying to make.” - Imran

Newfound Confidence



- “I have a lot more experience under my belt [...] I've never cooked with yeast before and now [I have].” - Beryl
- “I'm a much better cook now than I used to be.” - Fiona
- “This might even prompt me to try cooking the daal” - Imran

Appreciation for Cooking



- “It definitely was exciting to have all the time to try super long things [...] there wasn't anything else to do.” - Montara
- “Cooking was something you did normally, nothing changed about its process. So, it made things feel normal.” - Fiona
- “It felt like a practical way to occupy my time.” - Beryl

Ownership of Family Traditions



- “This was my first time making [matzah ball soup]. I'm happy that mine turned out fluffy.” - Beryl
- “My roommates and I celebrated my half-birthday [...] And so we made the same type of cake, chocolate peanut butter frosting” -Fiona

Conclusion:

The pandemic has **catalyzed the younger generation into adulthood** in myriad ways: many filed for unemployment, worried about their health, and made tough financial and personal decisions, all while navigating the uncertainty that usually comes with a major life transition. Throughout it all, **the kitchen played a crucial role**. Analysis of the interviews reveals five strong themes: Stress involved in food procurement, a discovering of their own cooking style, a growing sense of self-confidence as cooks, a newfound appreciation for cooking, and a sense of ownership of long-standing family traditions. Coupled with my lived experience, it is clear that cooking in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic proved a **valuable coming-of-age experience** for many.

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