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The New York Times

I Thought I Had to Avoid It, but Now I'm in the Kitchen

A mother and daughter find a connection in a place they least expected.

By Yana Pan | May 9, 2023



My mom and I rarely talk about anything serious. There always seems to be this invisible fence between us, even though I'm an only child, her only daughter.

You know how sometimes you remember the wise thing your parents said to you when you were a kid? In my case, it was my mother telling me, “Don’t grow up like me.” She said that repeatedly when I was young. To me, this meant I’d better have a well-paying career so I wouldn’t end up a housewife like her. Without even noticing it, I let this internalized misogyny shape my life. I’m never “girly”; I hate cooking. (As for the moneymaking career, unfortunately, I ended up in animation.)

In her short film “[Semiotics of the Kitchen](#),” [Martha Rosler](#) shifted the traditional language around the kitchen to something violent, frustrating and radical. And because of how I grew up, the kitchen has always been a frustrating space that I refused to enter. But after all these years of absence, now I’m at the stove. Cooking for leisure is my way of reclaiming feminism — as well as hopefully bringing my mom and me closer.

[Yana Pan](#) is a filmmaker and visual artist in Los Angeles.