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Seasoning a Bond

It is the end of the workday and I sit at my desk, knowing that in a few minutes, I will be leaving. I shut my computer down for the day. What a relief. I just want to go home and relax, as it has been a long day. I put the desk key in the keyhole and lock it up. I gather my purse and other belongings and head out into what is left of the rest of the day. I figure I have no school today, no homework, and how nice it would be to go home, kick back, watch some television, and relax for the night. As I walk to my car, my cell phone rings. "Hello," I say. "What's for dinner, Mom? I am starving," proclaims my son, Justin. The few moments of peaceful bliss I had walking from my desk to my car was gone. I was thinking, oh great, what am I going to make for dinner? I answer back, "I will just stick a frozen pizza in the oven, I am tired and don't feel like cooking today. Is that okay?" "Yes," he says, and then hangs up. I get in my car and start to drive. I drive slowly, listening to the music, looking around at the scenery, and enjoying this time of solitude I have. I know this will be the only time for the rest of the evening that I will have to myself to think.

As I drive up, I am wondering what I am going to make for dinner. I didn't want to make my son a frozen pizza. I did dread cooking, as I did not feel like it today. My brain was still fried from work, and I had had a long, busy weekend. I figure I will just make something simple. Keep it simple. I walk into my kitchen and wash my hands. There, hanging over the stove on

my pot rack, is a big, black cast-iron skillet that my mom gave me when I was about twenty. It stands out from all the other pots and pans. I just stand there and look at it. I grab it and take it off the rack. Holding it with both hands, I gently lay it on the stove. The cast-iron skillet itself is not much to describe. It is very heavy and hard to lift with one hand. It is thick and black and about three to four inches deep. The work I have to do to maintain this pot and keep it well cured is what I remember most about this pot.

As I am stirring the ground meat in this cast-iron skillet, my mind wanders back to when I was a young girl. My mom would put a stool by the stove when I came home from school and told me to put my apron on. "Now wash your hands and put your hair in a ponytail," she would say. I would stand on the stool, stirring the hot food as my mom and I would talk and reminisce. I remember feeling as if I was a part of making dinner and that when our family would sit down to eat dinner, how good I would feel that everyone was enjoying the dinner my mom and I had made.

My daydreaming is abruptly interrupted by the sound of my doorbell. I finish stirring the meat in the pot and lay the spoon down. I see that it is the mailman at the door. He needs my signature for a letter. I sign the letter and go back to the kitchen to finish dinner. As I pick up the spoon to start stirring again, I find myself daydreaming again about this cast-iron skillet. While standing on the stool helping my mom cook, she would tell me that these cast-iron skillets are very special and unique in their own way and that she is going to give me this particular skillet when I am older. "You have to take special care of these, Debra," she would say. "You have to season them." She explained to me that when first bought, they are silver and that by rubbing them with oil all over and sticking them in the oven upside down for thirty

to sixty minutes, they change color from silver to black. My mom told me to repeat this several times. She told me to make sure that after cooking in this kind of skillet not to leave the food in it, that any food has to be removed promptly, as it could take on the iron taste. When I wash it, soap is not used. It must be run under water and cleaned or scrubbed. Drying this skillet has to be thorough or it can rust. I remember my Mom telling me that her grandmother gave her this particular cast-iron skillet and some other ones, too. She told me to make sure I never put cold water on the hot skillet. She made that mistake once, and it split right in half.

I could smell my mom's kitchen at this point, and realized that I was in my kitchen, making Justin dinner and it was my food that smelled so good. How nice it was to remember this about my childhood, I thought. Making dinner wasn't so bad after all; I had actually enjoyed being in the kitchen. I thought it was going to be a burden, as I wanted to rest, but instead, by the time I was done, I didn't even realize it because the whole time I was preparing it, I was daydreaming about the black cast-iron skillet, and what it meant to me. I took the food out of the skillet and set the table. I told Justin about how my mom gave me this skillet and that her mother gave it to her. That night, I enjoyed a nice, peaceful dinner with my son. This was better than any television show I could have watched that night. When we were done, he helped me wash the dishes and put them away. I am so glad that when I came home, I saw that cast-iron skillet. Instead of sticking a pizza in the oven and spending the night relaxing and watching a good movie, I had memories of a time in my childhood that meant a great deal to me. I had spent a nice, but important dinner with my son, and I had actually been more relaxed than I've been in a long time. Remembering my childhood with my Mom in the kitchen made cooking a fun thing to do that day and not a chore.

As time went on, I would come home and make dinner every night, sometimes with the cast-iron skillet. I no longer dreaded making dinner; I actually found pleasure in it. One day, my sister called me and invited us to dinner. When we arrived at her house, I started helping my her make dinner. As I started to wash my hands, low and behold, there above her stove, hanging on a pot rack, was one of my mom's cast-iron skillets. I couldn't help but smile as the memories came flooding back.