

Insightful, funny stories about life in a culturally diverse family.

**What? No Spaghetti and Meatballs?**

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## When Mayo Meets Pastrami

I first met Darling Spouse over twenty years ago, in an age where Disco music ruled, and Hip Hop music was still a generation or so away. We both worked at the same High Tech Company, and I was taking lunch orders for some folks. This task was generally performed when one of us needed a break and a chance to get some fresh air.

When I reached Future Darling Spouse's desk, I cheerily asked: "And what can I get for you?"

He looked up from his work briefly and replied without an ounce of hesitation: "Pastrami on Rye, Please."

Now to me, pastrami is one of the most God awful foods on this planet! Consisting of a highly indigestible, horribly greasy, and completely tasteless meat-like substance, which, when consumed, rots in your stomach, then clogs your arteries. To my recollection, the only people who knowingly ate pastrami were starving children inhaling a school lunch. I vaguely remembered being one of those children and having such a lunch at my local elementary school. I am quite certain I spent the entire afternoon in the nurse's office with a whopping stomach ache.

None-the-less, I gave Darling Spouse a game smile, while hiding my shudder of distaste and said: "Sure thing!"

When it was my turn at the local Deli, I presented the order. The Deli Lady didn't blink an eye as she wrote the order down, but shot back the question: "Mustard or Mayo"? I blinked, and she gave me an impatient look.

"Uh, well, Mayo, I guess." I had no clue what condiment could possibly help that stuff. I decided to put all queasy thoughts aside, as I returned to the office and started distributing sandwiches.

When I reached Future Darling Spouse, he practically snatched the package away from me, and with a quick "Thanks," he ripped open the wrapper and inhaled a huge bite, as I walked away.

A retching-like cough and gasp stopped me in my tracks.

I whipped around to see a look of utter horror on his bright-red face.

"They ... put ... *Mayo* ... on ... the ... pastrami!!" Future Darling Spouse managed to gasp, as he spit out the last of that huge bite.

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“OH!” Was all I could manage, puzzled. “Are you allergic?”

A look of utter disdain replaced the look of horror, and he shook his head in resigned disgust.

“Hardly. It’s just that where *I* come from, you never *ever* put mayo on pastrami! It’s sacrilegious!” His voice softened, though, as he looked at my woeful expression.

“Never *ever* put mayo on pastrami?” I managed to echo, a flush of embarrassment creeping over my face, as I inwardly cringed at my lack of sophistication.

But...

He married me anyway!

And, by the way, where *he* comes from the pastrami is actually quite flavorful and not at all greasy or fatty.

Who Knew??

## **Motherhood and Apple Pie**

The arrival of May has me shaking my head in wonderment. My two sons are growing up faster than I can fathom. They are both thriving, and I know it will only be a heartbeat or two away before they are high school seniors and off into the ever-challenging world of Adulthood.

But for now, they're still my "boychiks". My little boys. They always will be, of course – despite what they might think now! And so my mind floats back, as it usually does in some way or form, as Mother's Day approaches, to a time in my life when having a child was unfathomable. Not in my Grand Plan of life at all.

You see, I was a committed Career Woman – not that you couldn't have a career and be a Mom at the same time – I just didn't want to. I felt I had more than enough to handle with my husband, my new "dream home", and a blossoming career as a technical writer and trainer, and president of my own consulting business. Forgotten, or at least put aside at the time, were my earlier thoughts of a career as horse trainer and freelance writer. Of helping my Fellow Woman or Man. Of making a Difference. Now it was all High Tech, all the time. Bring on the Email, the conference calls to Israel at 5 AM, the Clients in Montreal!! And, most important of all: bring on that Unholy Dollar!! Yep, I was one Busy Lady.

And then It Happened. That missed period. Or maybe it was two. I was far too busy to remember. And that funny feeling that something wasn't quite the same with my body anymore. "Couldn't be," I thought. "I was being Careful. Very Careful." But just in case, I went and got The Test.

And... It was pink. Not at all convinced, I actually went to my doctor and got a blood test. Which was followed by the phone call: "Congratulations, Mrs. Krieger!" A bubbly voice informed me at the other end of the phone. "You're two months pregnant!"

"No I'm NOT!" I replied emphatically. "I couldn't possibly be!!"

"Err, maybe you should speak to a nurse..." The now not-so-bubbly voice at the other end of the phone stammered. "Just a minute; I'll put her on!"

And that's how it began. My not-so-glorious entry into Motherhood. Nine – well, seven, technically – months of denial and disbelief. How

*Jennifer Grisdale Krieger*

could I be pregnant? I took precautions!! And how would I ever take care of a baby?!? I'd never even changed a diaper before, much less cared for an infant. Had I ever even held one? I couldn't remember.... Everywhere I went: Montreal, New York... I saw Mothers with Babies. Young babies. Caring for them in a loving, tender way. As if they actually *LIKED* doing it! As I lugged my briefcase around, teaching courses and writing technical manuals, silently cursing my swelling body and swollen feet, I wondered how they did it. And how I would do it.

As winter melted into spring, and then heated up into summer, I kept wondering, and fighting off that growing feeling of P-A-N-I-C!! I'd set out a path for myself. A Career Path. Which included a Husband (who was equally career-minded) and a Home (that didn't have to be House Beautiful, but had to be Nice), but Not a Child. Or – GASP – Children!! How would I manage it all? And, more to the point: how would I like managing it all?? What if my Well-Planned, Precisely-Designed-and-Implemented Career Path became a muddy, overgrown trail?? Or, worse still, not even a trail at all??

It was an Unthinkable Thought.

But, it could happen. And what if it happened to Me???

It was with these disturbing uncertainties that summer cooled into early fall. And that ever-growing belly forced me to Slow Down (ARGH!!) and begin to face the Inevitable. A sharp turn in the Career Path. A new road sign called "Path of Life". It wasn't just about Me anymore; it was about Us.

The "Us" appeared at the dawn of a glorious late September morning. Kicking and protesting all the way. "Not ready to enter this world yet," he seemed to say, face screwed up in a mournful howl. "That makes two of us," I thought, holding this little, screeching creature in my arms. An ugly little critter, with a flat, oddly-shaped head (from being stuck in the birth canal for hours) and a long, scrawny neck. "Looks like ET," I thought glumly, and even Darling Spouse agreed.

I brought him home a day or two later. Still howling. Still looking like ET. My Mom fussed over this tiny critter with great Motherliness. Helped me change a diaper. Marveled over its first Poop. "At least everything

*What? No Spaghetti and Meatballs?!?*

seems to be functioning,” I thought dismally. “Now if only it would stop crying and let me get some *SLEEP!!*”

Mom went home, and – of course – It didn’t stop crying. Not that night. Or the next. And those relentless inner voices kept hammering: “How’re going to do this, Jenn? Help support your family? Keep your (all-important) Career on track? Take care of this Cranky Little Critter???”

And then it happened.

I sat on my rocking chair, Critter howling on my shoulder, as I gently, but desperately, patted his back. Sitting in the baby’s room, my back to the window, the dark, still night reluctantly giving way to dawn. Suddenly, It stopped crying. The ... Critter ... stopped ... crying!! For the first time in too many hours. I looked at him. He had actually lifted his head a little and was looking out the window, an expression of growing wonderment and fascination crossing his face. I turned and looked, too. “What could he be seeing?” I thought, desperation giving way to curiosity. “What on Earth...???”

And then I saw it. The first golden rays of sun streaking across the dark sky. Darkness giving way to Dawn. The Miracle of it. I saw it, and he did, too.

At that moment, I became a Mother. And it was OK. Everything was OK. The Path would be found again. And while it might be muddy at some points, it would definitely be there. To be followed and forged. Through the rough spots. Together. All Three of us.

And, soon, all Four of us.

Happy Mother’s Day, Ladies!!

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