



August 27, 2015 – Grand Rapids, MI

## When I Was a Kid...

I began cooking young, probably around 10 or so. My grandmother was a cook; not a chef by today's standards, but a very, very good cook. She worked as the head cook in the cafeteria of a manufacturing company back in the day when they had such things. She also worked weekends at a private-park kitchen; think of it as a place where companies held summer picnics for their employees. In addition to that, she and my mother also catered weddings.

I had a single mom who worked second shift, and we lived with my grandparents who were also working, so it was either learn how to cook or not eat—and you can tell from my photo, I liked eating. Fortunately I liked cooking, too, and learned a lot from my grandmother. I worked with Mom and Grandma side by side and helped prepare food for weddings with up to 500 guests, served family style. If you've ever catered, you can appreciate what that means. But I learned to cook that way. Keep in mind that it's not only parents who can teach kids to cook; grandparents, aunts and uncles, and family friends can include the kids in meal prep.



Paula was also a working single mom who taught her son to be independent and that being part of a family meant sharing the workload. Matthew started doing his laundry when he was about seven. Later when he could appreciate the stove and be safe with hot objects, she taught him how to make his favorite egg sandwich and other things as well. When he went away to college, he was the most prepared freshman in his dorm.

We live in a different world than when I grew up. Today, I think it's more important than ever that kids learn to become independent. Cooking is one of the ways they learn to do that. (Paula adds, "Never send them away to college without knowing how to do their own laundry and sew on a button!")

When kids cook, it has to be safe and appropriate for their age. That's how we'll finish this week on Saturday.

What are you prepared to do today?

**Dr. Chet**

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