

Looking back over the last year it is difficult for me to remember a recipe I used during the pandemic. I often thought about my relationship with food during 2020, but for reasons that most people may not understand. The pandemic brought back memories of a tough time in my family member's lives, and the way we sourced food was a big part of that.

For my family and me, our food habits did not change in the same fashion as others. We continued to cook at home and eat the same foods we always have. There are no recipes for what we make; it's what we put together from memory. It's usually a rice bowl with a mixture of chicken and vegetables. It's constantly changing as we continue to improve from one dinner to the next. Sometimes we use Asian ingredients, while most of the time, we use chilis and salsa verde. The only thing that changed was we turned to pick-up or delivery for our groceries because we were all at-risk individuals, but that was not new for us. Between 2015 and 2016, my family and I cared for my dad, who was diagnosed with ALS in August 2015. The Boulder area of Colorado already had many grocery stores that offered pick-up or delivery, so we utilized these services because my mother and I were also working full-time jobs. We simply did not have the time to go grocery shopping when my brother and dad needed us home. In many ways, the pandemic reflected that challenging time in our lives. The way we cut off from the world and the way we utilized every service available to us. Food for us when my dad was sick and later during the pandemic was not comforting. It was simply a necessity.

Part of this may have been because my dad loved to eat out, and he was my favorite person to travel around with to find new beers and breweries. Watching him go from such a lively person who never stopped talking to bedridden and unable to speak because the disease had attacked his vocal cords changed how we looked at food. Eating out and deriving comfort from food became a thing of the past for all of us. We still enjoy eating out, but we are pickier about what brings us joy when it comes to food. We craved foods we no longer had access to during the pandemic, such as tamales and pozole from Lunada, the Dicken's burger from the Dicken's Restaurant and Opera House, or BBQ from Lulu's. All restaurants my dad loved in Colorado before we knew he was sick. Living in Pennsylvania, there are no comparable restaurants, and it made us homesick, but more than that, I think we were longing for a time when the world didn't feel so dark. When life was about what band was playing at Oskar Blues that night, and the most significant decision we had to make was whether dad and I would try the newest beer on tap or stick with our favorites.