

Zap The Grandma Gap

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*Connect with your family
by connecting them to their family history*

Janet Hovorka

Published by Family ChartMasters

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To Mom and Dad

Now Grandma and Grandpa to my children,
you are super heroes in every way.
Thank you for passing on the noble heritage that we share.
You have made me so proud to be your daughter.

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Introduction

I honestly believe family history can save the world. When people are grounded in where they have come from, with an understanding of how past triumphs and successes, as well as sorrows and pain, have shaped their family, it strengthens them and empowers them. Family history gives us a broad perspective on the ebb and flow of life and the span of one person's effect in the world. As we come to learn about the people who helped make us who we are, who formed the family into which we were born, and who created the forces that shaped how we were raised, we have a much better framework with which to build our future. When we know our past we can make better decisions about our future. Family history can heal. Family history can help us relate to those around us in a more compassionate and sympathetic way. Family history can teach us how important our decisions are and how they will affect future generations. Family history can change our individual relationships; it can change a family; and thus it can ultimately change a community and even the world.

Whether or not you understand your family's history, it affects your life. If your mother grew up in poverty and fear because of the situations your grandmother faced and the decisions she made in her life, which were based on the way she was raised by your great-grandmother, you may not know anything about that great-grandmother but her life will influence yours. The strengths and weaknesses in your family can be better understood by knowing about that distant relative and the events that shaped her life. If your father was raised with a strong work ethic because his father was raised on a farm with hard working parents, who in turn descended

from industrious emigrants, you may not even know the names of your great-grandparents or where they came from, but you experienced the effect of their lives in the way your father raised you. With a greater awareness of their origin, generational attitudes and character traits can be built upon or changed as necessary.

Learning about family history together creates strong bonds in a family. When you allow it to influence your life, your history can become a framework that protects and empowers your relationships. It connects family members in a way that is personal and unique to your family. Only your own relatives share your family's history. Sometimes it is the only thing disparate family members share. I have seen it used as a way to connect estranged relationships and mend disconnections in a family. It heals, it strengthens, it unites and it fortifies.

Because of these benefits, I am especially passionate about drawing younger people into their family's history. It is soul-nourishing for a young person to know about where they came from and to search out and be inspired by good examples as well as educated by the struggles in their family's history. Young parents who are not aware of their family history are missing one of the best teaching tools available for their children. Likewise, grandparents can connect to and bless their descendants' lives by passing on their family's history. Children are naturally curious and when they are involved in family history at an early age it can be a great benefit to them during their entire lives.

You may be thinking, sure, but my family's eyes roll back in their heads and they suddenly have pressing engagements they have to attend to when we talk about their past. You're in luck. Here are the real life examples and step by step instructions that will connect you to your children and grandchildren by connecting them with their family's history, so let's get going!

Inviting a child into the world of family history needs to be done carefully. Long lectures, lists of names and dates or piles of documents will not interest most children and may turn them off to the subject entirely. Family history must be introduced to a child in an engaging and interesting way that helps them feel the excitement and fun of finding out where they came from. This book will give you the tried and tested ideas about how to interest the children in your family in their family history and invite them to find out more. Some of the activities presented may work with your family

history and some of them may not. Likewise some of the ideas may work well with your child's attention span and interests and some may not, but throughout these pages you'll find plenty of ideas that have been proven successful. Choose the activities that will work well in your family. Use these suggestions to spark your own ideas that apply to your family's history and your family member's interests.

Family history is one of the most important tools you can use to empower your children and help them become well adjusted adults. Like most mothers and grandmothers (as well as fathers and grandfathers) I want to give my children every advantage in life. I want them to be happy. Knowing their family history will help them find peace and contentment. One of the greatest benefits I have enjoyed as a mother is how moving it is to watch the breadth of the family I come from reaching out and then down into the next generation. When I take my children to see the playground where I played when I was their age, or the school that their grandmother attended, or the church where their great-grandmother worshiped, it gives me an understanding of the overwhelming length and breadth of my family and the effect that my life will have on the generations to come. It gives me a strong perspective about my life. The choices I make each day seem much more important. That beautiful inter-relationship of generations fortifies me as a mother and enriches my life.

In this book I'm going to introduce you to Super Grandma. She will show you all sorts of ways to connect with your family and connect them to their past. Anyone can pick and choose from these ideas to find what will work best for their family. If you are young, this book has fun activities to help your parents and grandparents teach you about the important foundation they have set for you. If you are a parent, this book will help you ground your children in their roots and give them the strength to become responsible adults. If you are a grandparent, this book will help you leave a legacy to your children and connect with them on a deeper level. There are sections and topics in every family's past that can engage anyone on some level, and when you do make that association, the benefits are immense. These ideas will help you and your children and grandchildren feel the happiness and power that comes from knowing about your family's past. Use these activities to bridge the generation gaps in your family.



Section One

**Genius Grandma's
bullet proof vest.**

Genius Grandma Knows How Important Her History Is To Connect Herself To Her Posterity And Connect Them To A Healthy Future.

It doesn't take a genius to know that today's youth need all the help they can get. Life can be challenging for these kids. The information and choices they face every day dwarf that of any generation in the past. So why would you turn to Family History to strengthen the next generation? Family history can help you connect with them and fortify them for the future. By its very nature, family history binds a family together and gives children a support system. It is something entirely unique to your relationship with each other. It is the glue that creates a tight bond in your family relationships. Family history gives children personal heroes to look up to, teaches them life lessons and gives them a broad, wise perspective on life.

Genius Grandma knows that by creating a support system of family identity, she can give her descendants the courage to conquer anything. One of the first things a super hero grandma creates for her children is a bullet proof vest. If that's missing, our little super hero isn't going to get very far. Genius Grandma knows that family history can be a bullet proof vest for their descendants that will protect them from many of the pains and disappointments in life. In fact, family history can ground them in the morals and values they will need for a happy and successful life.

The bullet proof vest of family history fits best around the ages of seven to twelve. At this time they are old enough to understand the concepts of generational change, and still young enough to need to be firmly attached to their family. When the bullet proof vest is fastened securely at this young age, it will stretch and mold to the child as they begin to grow into their more challenging teen years. At that point it becomes a scaffolding to strengthen their self image and their faith in the future. You can begin to teach your children and grandchildren about their history at younger ages, and it is never too late to teach them when they get older, but the vest fits best during the pre-teen years.

My personal bullet proof vest was hand crafted in the home of my grandmother. My father's mother was a skilled quilt maker. She made numerous beautiful quilts in many different styles and colors. Grandma usually had a quilt frame set up in the family room. My sister and I would play with our dolls underneath while she and Mom worked. I remember the needle coming up and down through the fabric above as we played house beneath. In her last years, she made sure that each of her grandchildren would inherit one of the quilts she had made. After my grandmother passed, each of her granddaughters received a quilt, except for me. Somehow, when they were distributed, we were one short and I didn't get one. At the time, I wasn't really upset about it. I had inherited several things from my grandmother. However, my mother was very frustrated that I hadn't received one of my grandmother's beautiful handcrafted quilts because she knew that was what Grandma would have wanted.

Grandma died in 1991. In 1996, when my mother was in the loft of the family condo one afternoon, she happened upon one more of my grandmother's quilts that had been overlooked and stored there. She had a feeling my grandmother would want me to have it, so she brought it home to give to me. Within the next few days, before she could get it to me, I suffered the miscarriage of my first pregnancy, a pregnancy we had long waited and hoped for. I was devastated. Mom brought me the thick, warm, corduroy log-cabin style quilt the day after we found out that the baby had no heartbeat. Over the next couple of days, following the resulting surgery and intense emotional despair, I had that quilt wrapped around me constantly. My hormones were adjusting and I was freezing cold for several days, so even when I went back to work, I kept the quilt around me. It was like a huge, warm hug from my grandmother. It became my bulletproof vest against the painful disappointment I was dealing with in my life.

Now that my own children have arrived, and grown big enough to understand, I have wrapped each of them in Grandma's quilt, and told them about how much I wanted each of them and waited for them, and how much I loved my grandmother. As we have cuddled under this quilt, they have learned of her sewing talents, but also of her consistent, cheerful attitude, her faithful service to her family, her adoration of me, and many other things I loved about her. I also tell them about my grandmother's mother, who was well educated and made sure that each of her children had a college education, even in the 1930's. Then, I tell them stories about other ancestors as well. A couple of years ago, by miraculous serendipity, I discovered a picture of me and my grandmother taken in 1974 while she was working on the very quilt I eventually inherited. I miss my grandmother but I am thankful my children and I can have a hug from her at any time.

Most parents today would do anything and everything to raise their children to be successful adults. There are play groups and preschool lessons, music and dance, sports, tutoring and youth groups. Many parents will read books about self esteem, discipline, setting limits and teaching a language. Money is spent on the right clothes, the right furniture, the right car seats, and the right nutrition, but many parents miss one of the most basic and foundational things that can set a child up for success in life—teaching their child about their family's history.

Family history can be a bullet proof vest for the heart and soul. It can surround and support family members in times of need. The courage that is found in their heritage will strengthen them as they head out into the world to make lives for themselves. Not all ancestors are illustrious, but every family has those who succeeded and those who didn't, and for every family story that hurts, there is also someone who overcame the odds and did better. We can learn from all of their stories. Genius Grandma knows how important it is to make sure that all that knowledge is passed down. When the power of family history is endowed on a family they become more connected, not only to each other and to Grandma but to a healthy future.

Understanding and Emotional Healing

If you haven't found someone in your family history who is a scoundrel, you haven't done enough family history. Likewise, if you haven't found someone in your family who has accomplished amazing things, you haven't done enough family history. Every family has both. At the genealogy chart printing company that my husband and I run, we have printed thousands of descendancy charts for family reunions. It never ceases to amaze us how often we see trends running through family lines, even just in the vital information on a genealogy chart. Multiple marriages, divorces, and children born outside marriage may span generations on some lines, but when one person breaks the cycle, intact families follow. When pictures are added to the chart, the contrast seems even more striking.

Lesson Learned

Every family has good and bad in their past. Sometimes in my occupation, I'm asked what to do when there have been abusive personalities and a succession of bad choices in a person's family. Do you really want to teach the family about the family skeletons? While there are certainly horrible situations that have occurred in some families, most all families have some painful issues somewhere along the lines. And in every trial there is always a survivor who overcame the insurmountable challenges that were given them. Of course, you have to gauge the age and maturity level of the child. If you teach about your family's history as lessons to be learned and focus on the resulting triumphs, the problems your family has been through may come to be the most important parts of your family's drama. Those may be the very stories that help and inspire your descendants through the hardest times in their own lives.

Every family has both. At the genealogy chart printing company that my husband and I run, we have printed thousands of descendancy charts for family reunions. It never ceases to amaze us how often we see trends running through family lines, even just in the vital information on a genealogy chart. Multiple marriages, divorces, and children born outside marriage may span generations on some lines, but when one person breaks the cycle, intact families follow. When pictures are added to the chart, the contrast seems even more striking.

In my own family, for example, there are lines of addictive personalities. I know I can't drink or gamble because becoming addicted to something is a trait that I come by easily. I also know I have several ancestors that could be described as overbearing. I would prefer to call them passionate. Any of my sisters would tell you that trait showed up again in me. Many of the attitudes and circumstances surrounding the way my

parents, grandparents, and great grandparents were raised affected my parent's marriage and consequently how I was raised.

In my husband's family, it is easy to see issues that conditioned my mother-in-law to act the way she did. Her grandfather married and then divorced one woman, then married her sister, and is rumored to have fathered other children in their small rural town. As his daughter, and then her daughter—my mother-in-law-- were raised in that same small town, it isn't hard to imagine what an impact her grandfather's reputation had and why my mother-in-law was raised with a huge concern for what the neighbors thought. This concern for other people's opinions affected many of the decisions she made in life and has ultimately played down into my marriage and the way my husband and I interact with each other.

Understanding these trends and how they continue through generations can help us to heal and deal with family members in a more compassionate and understanding way. I have compassion for my husband because of my understanding of how his mother raised him, and how her mother raised her. I believe my husband is more compassionate toward me and my faults because of his understanding of the family that I came from. Likewise, we are both cognizant of the ways we are passing these attitudes and trends down to our children. When we make mistakes we can talk to our children about our learning curve in parenting. Some people say family history is cheaper and more powerful than therapy.

Steve Luxenberg expressed this understanding in his book *Annie's Ghost*. He wrote about how he researched his family history and uncovered a family secret that his mother had been fearful about sharing. He wrote:

My search has allowed me to achieve a freedom of my own: free to see my mother as she was, free to embrace her flaws and accept her choices, free to put aside, once and for all, the pain of not being able

Lesson Learned
While your children or grandchildren may not grow up to identify themselves as self-proclaimed genealogists, they can still grow up knowing a lot about their family of origin. Every little bit helps. Any child can benefit from the blessings of family history because it can heal the past and inspire them. Each time they encounter their family's history, more and more of the benefits from knowing about their foundation will come into play in their lives.

to help her, to hold her hand and tell her convincingly, that, yes, I'm here, I'll always be here, I'm not leaving, I love you and no, nothing you say, nothing you tell me will make me go away.¹

Understanding the pain and problems of the past gives us the perspective to see that most people do their best with what they have been given in life. In addition, we learn that everyone in this world, every family, has issues to deal with and overcome. Recognizing and understanding family problems and differences promotes emotional healing. Family history teaches children that they can overcome their own problems as others before them have.

The increased understanding that comes from knowing about your origins is the foundation of why family history can save the world. When we have an understanding of how past family problems play out in our lives, as well as an appreciation for past positive influences, relationships tend to become more kind, people are more generous with each other and the world is a gentler place. My great grandfather, Joseph Hatten Carpenter, a great genealogist, said, "One arises from the study of genealogy with a clearer and more charitable conception of the whole brotherhood of man."² I couldn't agree more. I believe the study of the micro history of you-- especially the history of what made up your own family--is something so important that it really can affect your outlook on life and the way you deal with people. It can be a crucial ingredient to a person's self image.



Family Issues What are some of the issues in your family's past that you would like to see changed in future generations. What have you done to change those issues? How can you speak to your family about healthy ways to deal with these issues?

1 Luxenberg, Steve. *Annie's Ghosts: A Journey Into a Family Secret*. New York, N.Y.:Hyperion Books, 2009. pg. 350.

2 Carpenter, George Alvin. *Highlights in the Life of Joseph Hatten Carpenter*. Provo, Utah: Self Published, 1978. pg. 57.

Realizing Potential

A child's hero can have a great impact on the self esteem and the goals and aspirations he has in life. When that hero comes from the child's own family, an even greater sense of ownership and power comes into the life of that child. All families have inspiring figures that can serve as encouragement to help youth stretch and achieve great things. If you haven't found yours yet, you just need to keep looking, and when you do find them, be sure to teach your children and grandchildren about them. The self esteem payoffs can be huge.

Once, when my very scientifically-minded son was struggling over yet another dreaded book report, I commented to him that he certainly had it in him to write well because he came from a long line of prolific writers. After a while, he stopped the procrastination and finished the report. I am continually amazed at how such small comments encourage confidence in my children. Teaching them about their family's history is a wonderful way to inspire them with the potential they have to do great things.

A personal experience in my 20's taught me a similar lesson. When my mother wrote a short personal history of my great-grandmother, I found that my great-grandma had lost her husband to an appendicitis attack at about my same age. The history described her struggles as a single mother trying to find a way to care for her two children, at a time when single women didn't have the opportunities they have now. Her story focused on her emotional decisions about who to marry, her loneliness, and her concern about who would take care of her and her children. At the time, I was reeling from a divorce and the rejection of a husband who had left me after only a year and a half of marriage. It inspired me to know that the daunting trials my great-grandmother faced did not

Lesson Learned
Every family, no matter how many challenges, has good examples of sacrifice and courage in their past. What are the choices in your family history that led to good things for you now? Who are the inspiring figures that overcame great odds?

ultimately define her life. She went on to be very successful. As a child, I knew her well and I saw who she had become. I realized that my challenges, like hers, would pass into obscurity in time because I could see the whole span of her life. It gave me the confidence to go forward and become who I wanted to be without getting stuck in what seemed to be an overwhelming situation

I recently learned more about the sacrifices this same great-grandmother made as she built a business

at the same age I am now. While I have been building a business of my own, I've reflected on her incredible work ethic and the way she just "took the bull by the horns" and did what needed to be done. This grandmother ended up with great financial success and quite a flamboyant style. I sometimes indulge myself with small flamboyant extravagances as a way to remember that I will be successful like she was. I look at my challenges and say "I can do this. It's in my DNA" even when things are hard.

Once while working with my children on a family history project about my paternal great-grandfather,

we took some time to read about him and the great amount of family history work he did over the course of his life. It was moving to view the overall perspective of what he accomplished, a little at a time, until it became a great body of work. This great-grandfather was a wonderful example of scholarship and of being a great contributor to the community. As I read to my children, it felt like I was reading them a list of ingredients in their DNA. It seemed that I was reading about who they really are and what they can grow up to be. Of course, they are free to decide who they are and what they will become. However, it was very powerful for me to recognize that these good qualities are already in their possession, ready to be developed and improved upon in this generation. I hope my children will feel the power they have inside to be strong and capable adults who can make great contributions to this world.

Lesson Learned

Don't underestimate children's abilities and interest level. Working with children, I've been consistently amazed at how much interest they have even when you don't expect it. Keep in mind their attention level, tailor your activities to their interests and their age, and you will find that they will surprise you with their excitement about their history. If they aren't all that interested, remember it is all about how you tell the story and analyze the way you are presenting it to them.

All children should know their family history. We want them to be confident and to strike out into the world with a sense of purpose and faith in their abilities. We can send them out into the world with the broad perspective and power that family history brings: that hardships can be overcome, that good choices have long term effects on one's life, and that their choices will affect generations to come. As your children and grandchildren come to know their family tree, they will develop the deep roots necessary to branch out and become successful adults. You can help them reach their potential by being willing to put every tool at your disposal to use toward that end--especially family history.

We have a stately wedding photo of my husband's great-grandparents in our dining room. Frantisek Josef Hovorka and Marie Josephine Kostal emigrated from Czechoslovakia to Chicago, Illinois, then to Wisconsin, where they raised their family. Under this picture is the statement, "What have you done with my name?" When my children and I walk past that picture, we are reminded of what we have to live up to and the sacrifices that have been made to give us the opportunities that we have. Hopefully, we will continue to appreciate and remember that we have been given abilities and opportunities to make good things happen in our lives and in the lives of those who will come after us.



Inspiring Stories Brainstorm about the particularly inspiring stories of your past ancestry. Were there hard working immigrants or farmers who built wealth, mothers or fathers who sacrificed for their families, upstanding contributors to the community? What are the stories you can use to inspire your children and grandchildren?



Dealing With Challenges Do you have a family member struggling with extreme challenges right now? Look for stories in your past of similar trials and uncertainties that may inspire that family member with "I can do this, it is in my DNA."

Gardens

You can also surround yourself with your family history by working with plants around your home, whether it be a garden plot, some planters on a porch, or just some inside plants. Those plants can be related to your family history. Do you know any of your ancestor's favorite plants or flowers? Do you know what plants they grew? Do you have any farmers in your past or do you remember the flowers in your grandparent's yard? Do you have any pictures of family houses with distinctive landscaping?

You can begin on a small scale by planting meaningful plants in and around your home. Plant markers can be used to distinguish plants and connect them to certain people in your history. Children can help care for the plants, whether smaller plantings or a whole garden. Be sure to mention to your family why the plant is associated with your family's past. Small moments like this can help infuse the identity of your family into the next generation.

My maternal grandmother's favorite flower was the lilac. When I was young, she would often try to visit us when they were in bloom because they didn't grow well where she lived. We would bring big armfuls into the house and arrange them in huge, fragrant bouquets, even in the years she wasn't able to visit. Later, when my grandparents moved closer to us, they planted a large hedge of lilacs, and my grandfather taught me about the different varieties and which were valued for smell, looks and etc. Of course, as I have been on my own, I have always loved big bouquets in my house, too. The sweetness of those memories has made them my favorite flowers. I planted one where we live now in honor of Grandma Dana.

We have planted crocuses for my mother, impatiens for Kim's mother, rose bushes for my Grandmother Carpenter, hollyhocks for Grandmother Schwendiman, tiger lilies for Grandma Anderson, and violas for Nama (whose name was Viola). The honor I have for the great legacy these women have left me is beautifully woven into our landscaping. The love, work ethic, and patience they taught me are often stretched in my gardening abilities.

When deciding on plants to incorporate in your surroundings, be sure to include only plants that will grow in your area. If you have moved to a different climate than where your family is from, it may take a little creativity to honor your ancestors with plants. Look online for growing directions and plant care hints, then choose plants that will beautify your home while you teach your family about those that came before.



Favorite Flowers Plant some of your ancestor's favorite flowers. Were any of your grandmothers named after a flower? Do you know what their favorite perfume was or their favorite color? You might even know what flower they loved. Look in family pictures for flowers around the family home, in floral arrangements or wedding bouquets. Which of these flowers might work in your landscaping or in your home?



Plant Markers Use plant markers with the name of your ancestors near the plants that represent them. You can purchase ready-made markers made from ceramic or metal. You can also use rocks or popsicle sticks and label them with the name of the person associated with the plant. Make sure the plants and the markers have a place of prominence so that visitors and family members will see that there is something special about those particular plants.



Vegetables Plant some crops and vegetables. Most of us have some ancestors who were farmers. Do you know what crops they raised? Did they have a kitchen garden? Look for clues in your family's recipes. What fresh vegetables did your ancestors have? What was typically grown in the farms in their area? Did they preserve any specific type of food? Try growing a few vegetable plants in the planters around your home, or clear a space for a garden and see if you've inherited a green thumb.



Herbs Try planting herbs for food or medicine. Before modern medicine, our ancestors relied a lot on plants for their healing properties. Do you have any family stories about using plants for medicinal purposes? What herbs were used in your ancestor's community? What herbs and spices were used in your family's recipes? An herb garden is perfect for a kitchen window sill or when space is a consideration.



Heirloom Plants Grow some heirloom vegetables or flowers. Did you know that many species of plants which our ancestors grew are harder to find today? There are organizations dedicated to maintaining antique plant species and making sure the heirloom varieties live on. Look online for heirloom plant suppliers. See if you can learn what kinds of plants may have grown in your ancestor's community. Be sure to ask about growing conditions where you live. Plant a few types of seeds and you may be able to see what your ancestor's food really tasted like or smell the floral scents they smelled.

Food

Food can be a great way to bring the past back to life. You can literally smell and taste what your ancestors experienced when you cook using the same recipes that they cooked with. When you cook for your children and grandchildren, make sure they know the history of your family's recipes; who made the dish in the past and some details about that person's life. And if there are any entertaining stories about how or when the food was used before, or who ate it, be sure to share those. Food is always a great incentive to spend time together. Use it to teach your family about their past.

Most likely the food you cook is already a mixture of the recipes that were handed down from your family members. Your comfort food is probably what your mother and father gave you as you were growing up, and their comfort food was most likely what the family made for them. Food has so many connotations and feelings attached to it. From celebrations to traditional ethnic foods to favorite foods, your cooking and eating patterns are probably already a demonstration of your family's background.

My ancestors were a big part of our family meals and celebrations. Mom eventually made sure that when we used a recipe she had received from one of her ancestors, we knew whose recipe it was. I come from a long line of good cooks. Apparently, being a good cook was a treasured skill in my family since some of the recipes that have been passed down have "Do not share this recipe, only for family members." written boldly across the top. I guess that means I can't share with you the recipe for honey candy that Mom makes for us during the holidays, and you probably wouldn't be able to reproduce my great-great-grandmother's egg cake anyway since it calls for a pinch of this and a bit of that. Just take my word for it. It is amazing, especially when toasted with butter and sugar on it.

I can share with you my great-great grandmothers' recipe for Cottage Cheese Hotcakes, though. It is one of our favorites.

Cottage Cheese Hotcakes

Beat 4 eggs in a mixing bowl. Add 1 pint cottage cheese and 1 cup sour cream and mix together. Sift one cup flour, 1/2 teaspoon baking powder and 1 teaspoon salt and add them to the mixture. When well stirred, fry 1/2 cup batter for each hotcake on an oiled frying pan. When the batter is added to the pan and the first side is cooking, fresh or frozen raspberries can be added before the hotcake is flipped. (This last part is my delicious addition.)

I hear that Cottage Cheese Hotcakes are an acquired taste although I've always loved the sweet and sour combination of the cottage cheese with maple syrup or raspberries. Luckily, I married a cheese fanatic from Wisconsin so he loves them, and the cheese gene was passed down to my kids so they love them too. It is an easy dinner meal when I don't have much time to cook.

Think about what recipes have been handed down through different lines in your family. Perhaps you have dishes or cooking utensils that your ancestors used. Old cookbooks are a great resource too. Look for the pages that were used the most. If there are special ingredients, you may need to find them at a specialty market or online. Present the food as a gift to your children, or better yet, make an event out of eating it together while you teach them about the background of the dish.



Record Your Recipes You may just instinctively know some of your family's recipes if you make them often. When they are just in your head it is harder to pass them down to the next generation. Write down the ingredients and instructions in a way that anyone could prepare the food without knowing beforehand how to make it. Record the circumstances in which the recipes were used and who used them, along with a few details or stories about the creators' lives. Make

sure your children and grandchildren have copies of the recipes. You can create a cookbook or just a collection of recipe cards. These collections make great gifts for any new brides in your family.



Share Preparation More than just making the food for your family, make sure you include them in the preparation, especially if there is a tricky recipe where the instructions are complicated. Make an event out of making the food together. Some families get together to make complicated and labor intensive recipes like egg-rolls, ravioli or tamales. Carefully display the pictures of your ancestors who made these foods but make sure they are out of any area where they could get damaged by a splash. Share memories of that person or listen to their music as you work.



Involve All Parts Of The Family What foods were passed down from your mother and grandmothers? Don't forget Dad's side of the family, and be sure to include Dad's recipes if he was a cook too. See if you can collect foods from all sides of the family tree by contacting cousins and asking them for their family recipes. You may want to create a family cookbook to raise funds for a family organization or a family reunion. Make sure the kids get involved, too, by inviting them to submit their favorite recipes or by writing about their favorite food memory.



Dishes Did you inherit any dishes from your ancestors that might be used in a family gathering? Maybe you have a special tea set that would make for a great tea party with your daughter and her friends or your granddaughters. My maternal grandmother had a set of party dishes that are beautiful glass plates with a little matching cup for punch. I received them after she died and even though I didn't have much use for them, I'm so glad I kept them. We used them for my sister's bridal shower and it was very meaningful to be able to symbolically have Grandma there with us for that special event. Most of the time when we have a party, everyone wants to use paper plates so we don't have to do dishes, but I love to do the dishes when we use my grandmother's party glassware.