

By Mari Wells

**M**rs. Vargas worked happily in her kitchen. The aroma of freshly baked cookies filled the house. She heard the door open, and glanced at the clock. "I'm in here, honey. Come get a cookie." Jimmy and his friend Mark entered the kitchen.

"What kind did you make, mom?" Jimmy asked.

"They're chocolate chip, of course." She turned from the stove to wink at him.

"It always smells so good here, Mrs. Vargas." Mark said.

"Thank you, Mark. Why don't you stay for dinner?"

"Thank you," Mark nodded and picked up a cookie.

Mrs. Vargas turned the knob controlling the heat to the large stockpot. She turned to the counter and began disassembling the few appliances.

"What are those for?" Mark asked. "My mom doesn't have any that look like those."

Mrs. Vargas giggled quietly. "This one is a pasta maker. I make my own noodles."

"Why?" Mark asked.

Jimmy sat at the table.

"Well, I can control what goes into the food we eat if I make it all myself." She said placing the pieces into the hot water waiting in the sink.

"How do you make everything by yourself?"

Jimmy rolled his eyes.

Mrs. Vargas laughed. "Jimmy wished you hadn't asked that." Jimmy blushed, "No mom, it's just. . ."

"It's alright," she interrupted, "I'll give you the quickest answer."

Jimmy pushed another cookie into his mouth.

"Do you see that big bucket?"

Jimmy got up and hauled the bucket to the table where he pried off the lid.

"That's my wheat. I put those grains into this machine, and it grinds it down into flour." Jimmy dropped a few grains on the table. Mark picked some up and inspected them.

"I use that instead of the bagged flour you can buy at the store."

Mark put a grain in his mouth and chewed on it.

"Do you know Mrs. Smith out on Rainfall Lane?"

Mark shook his head. "I buy my eggs from her. I buy her chickens too. They are free range. I believe that's an even more natural way to raise poultry. So now I know where my eggs and poultry come from."

Mark nodded.

"I grind my flour in this mill and use natural eggs to make dough for pasta, in this case, or the cookies you're eating." She took the tray off the table, "That's enough or you'll spoil your dinner."

She stirred the large stockpot once, "Mrs. Jameson grows a lot of herbs and has a fertile garden, and I go to the Farmer's Market for my vegetables. I make my own marinara. I make a very large batch, then

I can it. Mrs. Jameson loves it." She pulled out two jars of red sauce from the pantry.

"You make your own spaghetti sauce?" Mark asked surprised "My mom buys jars at the store."

"I'm lucky. I get to stay home all day and I love to cook. Your mom has to work every day. She doesn't have the time to do everything I do. She turned back to the pieces of her special appliances.

"Are you making spaghetti and meatballs?"

She nodded as she laid the metal pieces on a kitchen towel to dry.

"How do you get the meat?"

"Mr. Clark has some cattle. I buy beef and milk from him. His wife makes butter and cheese."

"Do you buy anything from the store?"

"Yes, but I'm very careful with what I buy and how it affects us and the Earth." She hand-dried the pieces, reassembled the appliances and stowed them under the counter. "Do you have any homework?"

Jimmy and Mark shook their heads.

"Then go play. I'll call you when it's time for dinner."

Both boys ran out of the kitchen towards the back yard. Mrs. Vargas laughed and returned to her dinner preparations.

When, boys returned to the kitchen. The table had been set. Mrs. Vargas was slicing a loaf of bread. "Wash up boys."

Jimmy led Mark to the hall restroom where they washed their hands. Mrs. Vargas served each plate a heaping pile of long pale yellow noodles and ladled the homemade marinara and meatballs on top.

"Smells delicious," Mr. Vargas said.

"Dig in" She said as she sat down.

"Did you make the bread?" Mark asked.

Mrs. Vargas nodded.

"It's really good." Mark said in between mouthfuls.

"Thank you," she answered.

"You make really good food. It's good you like doing it." Mark said.

"Yes, it is a good thing I enjoy it." 

**"...I can control what goes into the food we eat if I make it all myself."**

