

Exactly 25 years ago, on Feb. 19, 1985, I was brought into this world by a very generous woman. That woman then gave the most precious gift she could possibly ever give, to two very deserving individuals. She blessed them with a child that they could call their own.

Now 25 years later I have realized just how much genetics actually play in a person's life despite everything else. Not only is cooking a passion of mine, but it is also a passion of the woman who gave me life, Stefanie Young. Secondly, it is a passion of my biological sister, Tiffany, who is a pastry chef in Vero Beach, Fla. Despite being raised thousands of miles away from one another, all three of us share a very special love of the kitchen.

Stefanie was raised in Vero Beach, Fla. She moved to Nebraska early in 2008 when she became a travel nurse and began working in Sidney.

On Dec. 5, 2008, my father and Stefanie were married. Now, this made my life interesting, and as my great friend Adrienne Poppe puts it, I then became my own stepsister!

When Stefanie came into our lives, she introduced us to a whole new variety of southern and tropical foods. She is the mother of four and the stepmother of three, so cooking for a crowd is no problem to her. She loves to plan parties and make all different kinds of event-appropriate meals and appetizers.

Stefanie's mother was a wonderful cook and she learned her cooking skills from her mother, who has since passed.

Stef loves cooking and trying all kinds of new and exciting recipes, just like me! I am lucky enough to have convinced her to share a few of her favorite recipes with us. She has decided to share Seafood Salad and a Dessert recipe that was passed down to her from her mother as well as a Chili recipe that she has come up with on her own. Enjoy!

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Stef's Chili Con Carne

1 red pepper diced

1 green pepper diced

1 med. onion diced

2 cloves garlic minced

1 28 oz can diced tomatoes

1 pkg chili seasoning of your choice

1 lb. ground beef

2 cans dark red chili beans

Saute peppers and onion in olive oil until soft and translucent. Add garlic and saute for 2 min. Add tomatoes and transfer to stock pot. Brown and drain beef and all chili seasoning and beans. Add to mixture in stock pot. Simmer on stove at least 1 hour, the longer the better. Garnish with cheese and sour cream if desired.

Dessert

Crust:

1/2 cup butter

1/4 cup brown sugar

1 cup flour

1/2 cups nuts, chopped

Mix and bake at 400 degrees for 15 min. Cool and crumble.

Center:

1 pkg Dreamwhip

1 8 oz. pkg cream cheese

1 cup powdered sugar

Mix and pour over crust. Refrigerate.

Topping:

Top with your choice of topping such as cherry pie filling, blueberry pie filling, etc.

Seafood Salad

2 cans tiny shrimp

2 cans crab meat

1 pkg shell pasta

1 1/2 cups Miracle Whip

1/2 cup Mayo

1/2 cup celery diced

1/2 cup green pepper diced

1 Tbsp vinegar

1 Tbsp fresh lime juice

1/4 tsp celery seed

salt and pepper to taste

Mix Miracle Whip, Mayo, lime juice and vinegar. Add celery seed,

green pepper and celery. Add Shrimp and crab meat. Cook pasta according

to directions, rinse and drain. Add pasta to mixture.