

When we lived back on the island I had a wild idea that if my husband just downloaded the app for the local grocery store we frequented, it could cut down on his frustrations while shopping.

At that time he worked a block away from the store, and if we ran out of something or needed a last minute item I could text him before quitting time and he'd run over and pick things up. The issue that we always had was that with food allergies only some products are safe. This meant that I'd often get a frazzled text or phone call asking which of the items on the shelf was the safest for our family. I kept an entire album on my phone full of product photos of safe items.

But when the grocery shop came out with an app, I realized I could just select the exact item needed and put them on a grocery list. Not only would it provide my husband with the photo, it would tell him what aisle to go down, which side to look on, and roughly which shelf it would be located on. A dream come true, right?

Kind of. What do I mean? Sit back and enjoy this story from nine years ago, and you'll understand....

Wednesday evening, on a whim, I decided that for the kid's event on Thursday I'd pack them sandwiches. Except, we were out of luncheon meat. I scrambled for my phone, and tossed ham on the grocery list so my husband could pick it up on his way home.

Then, while waiting for his imminent arrival home, I set about making dinner, folding laundry, and packing lunch boxes. Most days I'm aware of the time, and get a little worried when The Hubs is running late getting home. He has the unfortunate knack for finding the smallest shards of glass on the road and walkways that result in punctured tires. So much so, I keep trying to convince the local bike shop roadside assistance could be their new "in" thing.

Somehow, I failed to recognize the late hour while I was folding all that laundry and packing lunches. It wasn't until The Hubs crawled through the door, and I do mean that literally, that I glanced at the clock and realized how late it was.

“What’s wrong? Why on earth are you crawling?”

“It was the ham, that thing was heavy!”

“Heavy? I only asked for 300 grams like we always get.”

“You didn’t say to only get 300 grams, I got the whole leg.”

“Wait, like a leg-leg? As in you brought the whole pig leg home? Why on earth would you do that?”

I’m convinced this is a joke, except for the fact that he’s still sitting on the floor covered in sweat and breathing heavily. While sitting there he opens his backpack and I can already smell the ham because it’s been double smoked. I hate ham in all its forms. The guys, however, love it.

I purchase sliced ham for sandwiches now and again. Yet, at no time in fourteen plus years of marriage have I ever served a leg of ham. I realize he’s not kidding when he hauls an entire leg of ham out of the backpack and plops it on the counter. I’m left gaping at it because I cannot believe he brought home an entire leg of ham.

“I hope you like it,” he says, causing me to look up. “It cost me \$33.”

“What? Why on earth would you buy \$33 worth of ham? Just, no. Why would you do that?”

“You put it on the grocery list. It clearly said: double smoked leg of ham. So, that’s what I got.”

“I put ham on the list, but it was the kind from the deli.”

I’m convinced of this fact, I don’t need to look in the app to verify what I’m saying. After all, why on earth would I select any other form of ham?

“I don’t think so, it just said leg of ham. I thought, ‘that’s weird, she’s never had me get a leg

of ham before. She must have some new fancy recipe she's trying out."

"With ham?"

"How am I supposed to know these things? I don't try fancy new recipes."

He's off the floor now, trying to guzzle some orange juice to make his legs stop shaking.

I can only reply with a single word, "Ham."

"I don't try out fancy recipes!"

He's frustrated now, after all he just biked 4 kilometers home, the last leg straight uphill with a 4 kilogram leg of ham in his bag. I really can't blame him, but I'm still mystified by the misunderstanding.

"Ham."

"Yes, we made that clear."

"I think we should return it," I say, now inspecting this odd piece of meat on my kitchen counter. "I have no idea what I'm going to do with it."

"What? I just hauled that thing home, and I am not biking back to the shop with it!"

"We could go in the car. I mean, I don't even know how to cook it, does it need cooking if it's been smoked? How on earth am I going to slice it?"

"With a knife."

"Don't be so rude."

"I'm not, I'm being practical."

The orange juice is gone, the kids are hovering in the doorway, and dinner is on the verge of being over done. Yet, I'm fixated on this strange piece of meat sitting on the kitchen counter. My mind is running in circles as I envision Pa Ingalls and his smokehouse, and then my mind flicks to Laura and Mary with the big bladder balloon. I will never be able to eat this piece of meat.

"It has a bone in it." A lame excuse, but I can't mention the memory, the kids might never eat anything again.

"It is a leg," he says, hanging up his bike helmet and bag.

"Of ham!"

"Yes, you said to get ham. I got ham."

"Thanks."

"You know, I nearly called you before I bought it. I thought you'd never really mean for me to get an entire leg of ham, but it was on the list, so I bought it."

"You should have called."

"I can see that now," he says, disappearing down the hallway to change.

When I finally stop staring at the meat, I have to hunt my phone down. As it turns out, I did select an entire leg of ham. The kind the butcher sells, not the deli. I stare at the error before glancing back at the meat.

"When's dinner?" he asks, reappearing. "I'm starved."

I refrain from pointing to the ham, and suggest we pop it in the freezer for now so we can get dinner out of the oven. The next morning I raced down to the local IGA on the corner, pickup a small amount of ham to finish the lunchboxes with. I try to forget about the fact that I have an entire leg of the stuff in my freezer.

Author's Note:



That leg of ham became a legend in our family. It took a while, but the shock of it eventually wore off. I never did return it. On principle of biking all the way home with the crazy thing it was decided we had to keep it. It went into the deep freeze, and every time I pulled things out there it sat glaring at me. I had no idea what to do with it, or how many meals it would have taken to use it all up. Or how I'd manage to choke even a few bites of it down.

When we did finally defrost it, it was discovered that while slicing it with a knife was possible it did not result in beautiful thin slices one could put on their sandwich. The dog appreciated that ham the most. And whenever I put ham on the grocery list thereafter, I included a text.

There's this funny thing about grocery lists. If it's on the list, it gets purchased, but if it's not we forget it. My kids have attempted, over the years, to add some very strange things to the list. The most memorable that comes to mind is the replica working cannon that was once added. I can't say much, my own father would always stick to the list, too. I once decided to try seeing if I could add double stuffed oreos to the list. To my shock, it worked.

The Reluctant Author:

