

The kids were coming for Sunday dinner, and Matilda bustled around the kitchen. George dutifully stayed out of the way, one eye trained out the window as he waited. Scott arrived first, kids racing to the door. Nora trailed after with the baby, pausing as Mike and Hetty pulled in, offering hugs before everyone congregated on the porch. George hurried to warn them.

“She’s made *the* casserole.”

Groans replaced the laughter and hubbub. Nobody wanted to tell Matilda they detested the family casserole, which only got worse over the years.

Nora smiled. “Distract her boys. I’ll crank the oven up.”



I had a writing prompt suggest creating an awkward scene where you have to tell someone their family casserole is terrible. I detoured from that plan as I envisioned a family delighted to be together, only to find out the worst thing imaginable would be served, and it reminded me of the day I accidentally served my family goat.

Years ago, back on the island, we frequented a veggie shed. In American terms, they are almost like a farmer’s market that’s open every day of the week. One day my favorite veggie shed clerk told me they now had grass fed beef in the freezer if I was interested.

I bought two pounds and went home to make dinner. With two pounds, I figured I’d double the recipe, and we’d have leftovers for lunches. Except, while cooking, I was certain I detected the faint odor of goat.

The thing is, I can be super weird about raw meat. Okay, fine, I can be weird about meat. I’m aware of where meat comes from, but I don’t like to think about it while eating. As the

mother of two boys who enjoy telling some of the grossest stories ever, I've sat at the dinner table with both fingers in my eats.

So, smelling goat might be real, or it could be my weirdness. My husband flitted into the kitchen at one point, and I asked him about the meat. He'd know if it was real or not, considering he's eaten goat before. After a quick taste, he assured me the sloppy joe mixture was fine.

Later, sitting around the table listening to all the weird reasons the kids came up with for why the meal was called sloppy joes, I'd not gotten past the first bite because now I tasted goat, too. Not wanting to distract my kids from their meal, I sat there saying nothing. Minutes later though, my husband sets his fork down and said, "Sorry, I just.. I can't eat this anymore. It tastes like goat!"

I promptly ran to the sink and started washing my mouth out, much to the kids delight. The flavor lingered, and no amount of water fixed the situation. While on the verge of adding soap to my mouth, I decided what we needed was chocolate cake. Except, that was during the winter of endless rain that flooded our town, and nothing was open. Instead, we threw dinner away, something else the kids fully delighted in, and I offered everyone cereal.

To this day, whenever something smells or tastes weird, it's not abnormal to hear, "Yeah, but don't do the goat thing to me again, okay?"

The Reluctant Author

