

Nourished by memories: a bereavement first aid pack



Introduction

This bereavement first aid pack is here to help you remember close ones through food.

Inspired by stories from the community and caregivers, the resources inside can help you reconnect with memories in a creative and personal way.

What's inside?

- Community food stories – heartfelt stories from people in Hastings and Rother.
- Sensory cards - create a food tradition for special dates.
- Flavour profiles – experiment with flavours that remind you of close ones.
- Spice memory toolbox – a practical tool to add meaning to your meals. If you're an organisation supporting carers or community groups with lived experience of caregiving, we also recommend using an additional bereavement first aid pack called The Caregiver's Cookbook.

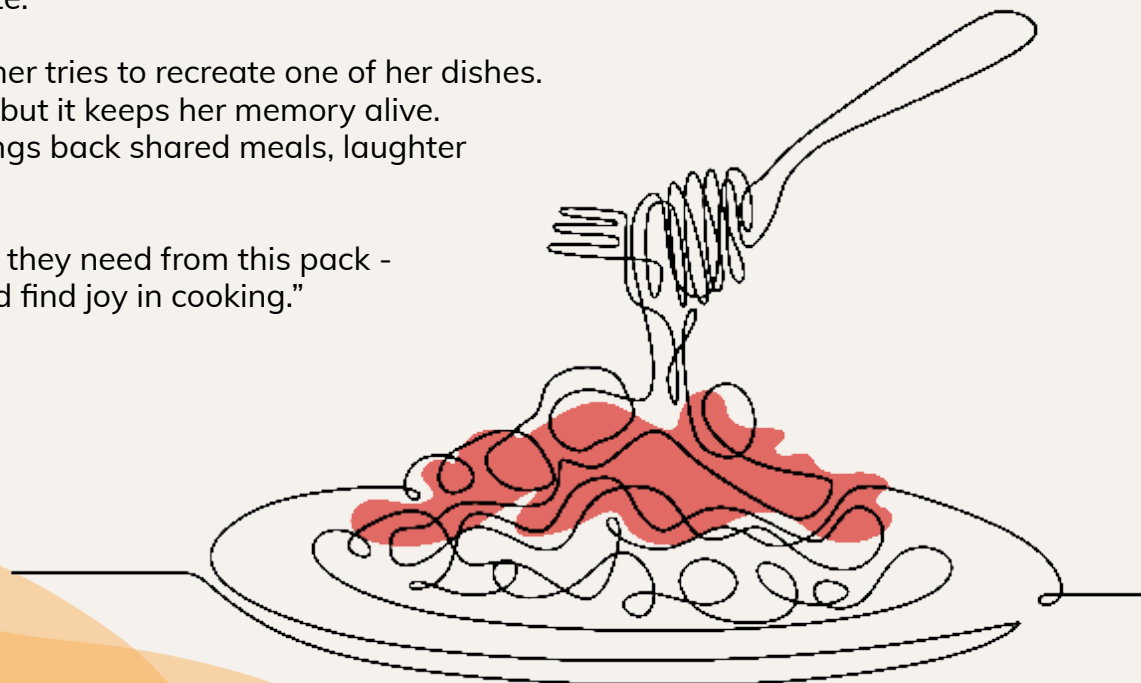
A message from Isabelle Endreo at Rainbow Kitchen Magic, co-designer of this pack

"I love eating and cooking. I grew up in France where food is so important but England has been my home for most of my adult life. Food allows you to travel, communicate, and revisit memories.

"My meals are linked to those who inspired me - family, neighbours, and friends. In France, we always talk about our next meal. My mother's croque-monsieur, my grandparents' pasta, gnocchi, and carrot soup live on. My grandmother's fried choux pastries felt like a party. She still cooked beautifully, thanks to her skills and knowledge, even when she had lost her sense of taste.

"Every Christmas my father tries to recreate one of her dishes. It's never quite the same but it keeps her memory alive. Cooking their recipes brings back shared meals, laughter and love.

"Everyone will take what they need from this pack - to rebuild confidence, and find joy in cooking."



Community food stories

This pack was inspired by stories from Hastings and Rother, showing how food can help act as a bridge between past and present. Here are three stories of how food helped local people reconnect with close ones who have died, or supported them through a life-limiting illness.

Ruth Gordon: growing legacies

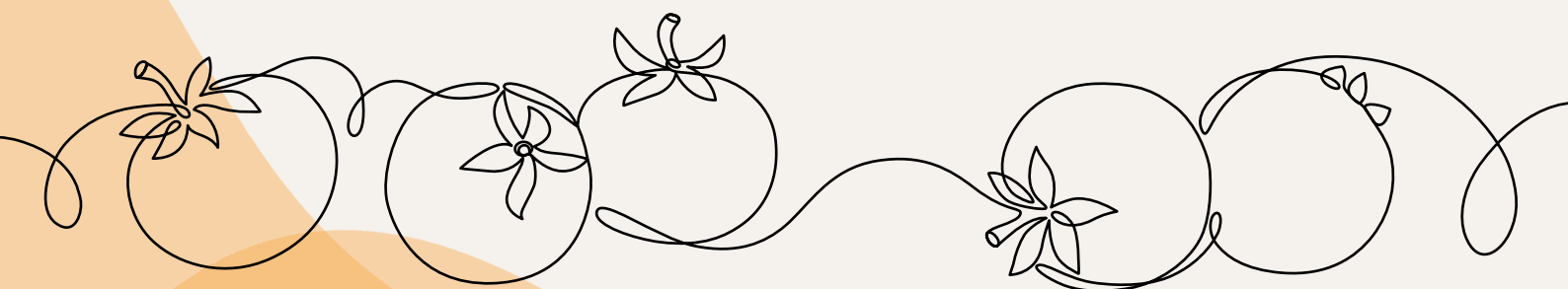
“My dad is an Irish man and it is true what they say, the Irish are obsessed with potatoes. My dad’s love of potatoes was practically a cultural identity, he struggled to enjoy any meal without them. Now he is gone I love to grow potatoes in his memory, it was probably the first thing I grew once I got my garden. I was overjoyed to win first place and a trophy for best potatoes at my local village fete. I was overcome with emotion at the time as it is something I would have wished to have been able to share with him. Now I grow them (and eat them) every year in honour of my dad. I’ve also won first place three years in a row!”



Louise Scotcher: no right or wrong way to grieve

“My father died suddenly when I was eight. We lived in a small village in the middle of Devon and every weekend if the weather was fine, we would pile into Dad’s car and drive to the North coast for the beach, or up onto the Moors where we would play in the pools and rivers and run free. At the end of a long day, he would get out a small Primus stove and open tins of steak, peas and potatoes, tip them in a saucepan and cook our supper. Delicious! When I started hiking in Scotland with my husband, I asked if we could do something similar and we have done this on and off over the last 40 years. This memory makes me feel sad.

“My Grandad became an important figure in my life after the loss of my father. He was a keen gardener and used to send me, his only granddaughter, boxes of sweet cherry tomatoes from his allotment in London. When he moved to the West Country, he grew tomatoes in his greenhouse and I used to like helping him. Now I am also a keen gardener and when I am in my greenhouse, I often speak to him. The smells and colours are just perfect, and it is very much a happy space. This memory makes me smile.”



Isabelle Endreo: a journey triggered by cancer

“My passion for food kept me afloat when, as a secondary teacher in London, I had a cancer diagnosis and went on sick leave. When better, during the cycle of treatments, I experimented and cooked, building and improving my skills and knowledge. I received a lot of support from The Haven, a charity offering complimentary treatments and courses for breast cancer patients. As I recovered, I volunteered in their café, cooking nutritious meals.

“I went back to work at school but something was missing, my energy depleted. I enrolled on a professional cooking course and looking for a gentler pace, we relocated in East Sussex.

“The Sara Lee Trust offered me counselling which helped process grieving my past life and gave me peace of mind. With the Trust, I now offer cooking sessions for patients and their carers, encouraging creativity, confidence and independence to prepare easy, healthy meals. I also design courses for people in the community, occasionally running French cooking sessions and catering for events.

“Cooking simple, nutritious and delicious food is my passion. Experimenting and trying is important, and mistakes are inevitable - why not jump in and try?”

We hope these stories inspire others to reflect on their relationship with food and the support it can offer in difficult times. What small step can you take today to use food as a way to remember those close to you?



Community Spaces

Community spaces in Hastings and Rother that may offer food, courses and opportunities for connection.

Saturday Social (Last Saturday of every month, 10am - 12pm)

St Michael's Hospice, Arthur Easton Centre, Upper Maze Hill, St Leonards on Sea, TN38 0LB.

Email: commvolunteering@stmichaelshospice.com

FAIR (Friends Altogether in Rother) (Third Saturday of every month, 10am - 12pm)

Tilling Community Centre, Mason Road, Rye, TN31 7BE

Email: hello@fair.org.uk

Just Friends

Social meetings, lunches and walking groups each month for those who live alone, or carers. They are in Eastbourne, Bexhill, Hastings, Newhaven, and Brighton.

Email: info@just-friends.uk

Hastings Commons

Tuesday, 4 - 7pm: The Youth Commons evening session (age 11-16).

Wednesday, 4 - 7pm: Pick 'N' Mix creative club (age 11-16).

Thursday, 4 - 7pm: The Youth Commons evening session (age 16-18).

The Observer Building, 53 Cambridge Road, Hastings, TN34 1DT

Email: info@hastingscommons.com

HRRA (Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance)

Offering a wider range of groups, events, socials and activities for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Email: info:hrra.org.uk

Eggtooth Sunday Social (Every Sunday 2 - 4pm)

For neurodiverse people aged 16+ (pre or post diagnosis)

The Nest, 45 High Street, Hastings, TN34 3EW

Email: jacky@eggtooth.org.uk

Rainbow Kitchen Magic

To find out more about the courses Isabelle runs and how to enrol, please check their website:

rainbowkitchenmagic.com

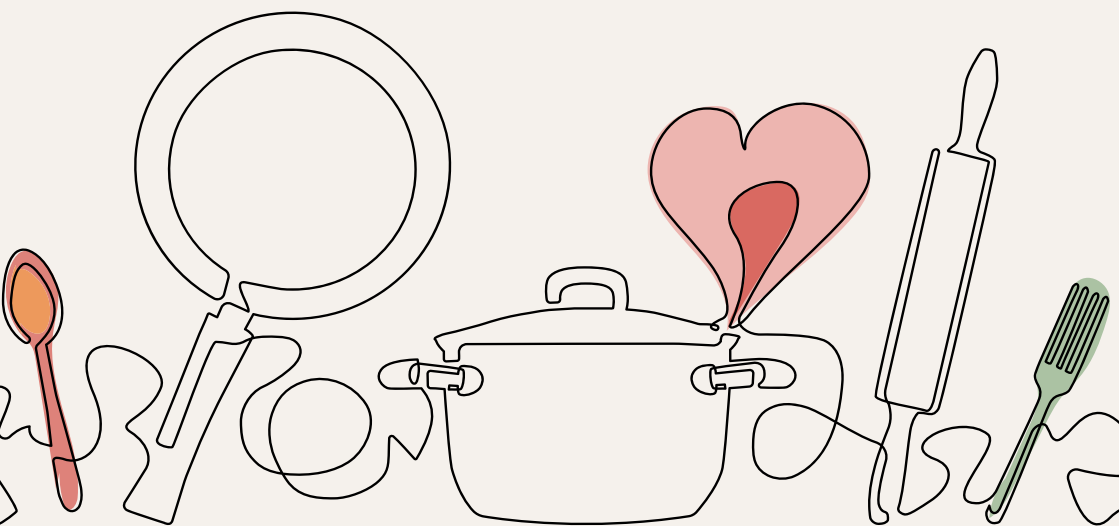
Email: isabellekitchenmagic@yahoo.com

This Bereavement First Aid Pack has been co-designed by St Michael's Hospice and Rainbow Kitchen Magic.

Date of preparation: July 2025



Flavour profiles: reconnect with cooking



Co-designed by
St Michael's Hospice
(Hastings and Rother) and
Rainbow Kitchen Magic



Getting started

This booklet offers a simple guide to flavour profiles. You can use it to create a dish inspired by someone you cared for or rediscover your love for cooking.

How you can use this guide (with a helpful example):

- Who inspires you?
My mum loved pancakes. I will use the flavour profile guide to explore flavours based on what she enjoyed.
- Pick two - three flavours
I choose sweet and sour (mum loved this combination), with a personal twist to suit my taste.
- Choose ingredients
I gather the basics and my chosen flavours: vanilla extract (sweet), lemon juice (sour), and cinnamon(my twist).
- Taste and balance
I taste as I go. The cinnamon is too strong, so I balance it by adding more vanilla to soften the flavour.
- Enjoy
While I enjoy my pancakes, I think of the times spent with mum.
- Experiment
Next time, I'll try nutmeg instead of cinnamon to see how the flavour changes.

Helpful tips

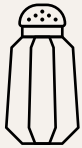
- You can search online or use a cookbook for cooking times and tools.
- It's okay to make mistakes; it's a great way to learn.

Salty



Sharp, briny, and often associated with food preservation.

Common sources



Sea salt



Anchovies



Soy sauce



Cured meat



Olives



Feta cheese



Salted nuts



Capers



Seaweed

Enhance: to make it saltier, add a pinch of salt, soy sauce, or Parmesan cheese.

Balance: if it's too salty, add a little sugar or lemon juice to balance it.

Sour



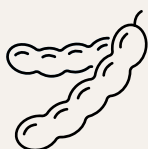
Tangy, tart, sharp, citrus and fermented flavours.

Common sources

Fruits



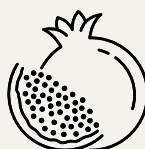
Lemon/lime



Tamarind



Green apple



Pomegranate

Vinegar



Balsamic
vinegar



Apple cider
vinegar



White wine
vinegar

Fermented foods



Kimchi



Sauerkraut



Pickles



Yoghurt

Enhance: to make sourness stronger, squeeze in more lemon juice or add vinegar.

Balance: if it's too sour, try adding a little sugar or honey to soften the taste.

Savoury (umami)



Deep, brothy and rich. Often found in fermented, aged, or slow cooked foods.

Common sources



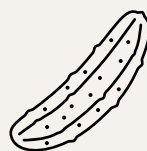
Mushrooms



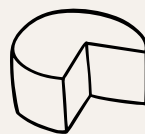
Tomatoes



Fish sauce



Pickled
vegetables



Parmesan



Marmite



Worcestershire
sauce

Enhance: to boost savoury flavours, try adding soy sauce, cheese, or mushrooms.

Balance: if it's too strong, add a little sweetness (like carrots) or lemon juice to lighten it.

Did you know?

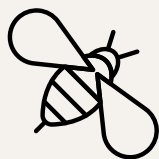
Umami foods can help make meals feel more filling, which is helpful when appetite is low.

Sweet



Pleasant, sugary, or honey-like. Use to complement other flavours such as bitterness, acidity or spiciness.

Common sources



Honey



Jam



BBQ sauce



Maple syrup



Agave

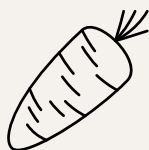


Sugar

Natural sweeteners



Fruits
(e.g. apple,
pear,
mango).



Veggies
(e.g. carrot,
squash,
parsnips).



Sweet
potatoes



Roasted
nuts



Fennel

Enhance: to make sweetness stronger, add a little sugar or honey.

Balance: if it's too sweet, add a tiny bit of salt or lemon to balance it out.

Bitterness



Sharp, earthy, astringent flavours.

Common sources

Vegetables



Kale



Spinach



Broccoli

Herbs



Sage



Thyme



Rosemary

Beverages



Coffee



Grapefruit



Beer

Nuts and seeds



Almonds



Coca/cacao

Enhance: to make bitterness stand out, add coffee, dark chocolate, or leafy greens.

Balance: if it's too bitter, balance it with some sweetness (like honey) or creaminess (like butter).

Spicy



Spicy isn't a flavour, it's a sensation. However, it can add heat and complexity to meals.

Common sources

Chilli peppers and chilli powder



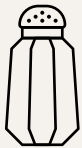
Types of chilli:
jalapeno,
habanero,
serrano
and cayenne.

Hot sauces



Types of hot
sauce:
siracha,
tabasco
and harissa.

Spices



Black pepper



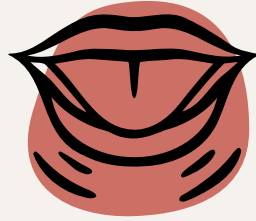
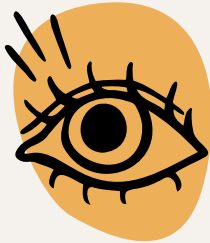
Paprika



Ginger

Enhance: to make it spicier, add a pinch of chili powder or a bit of hot sauce.

Balance: if it's too hot, you can cool it down with a bit of cream or sugar.



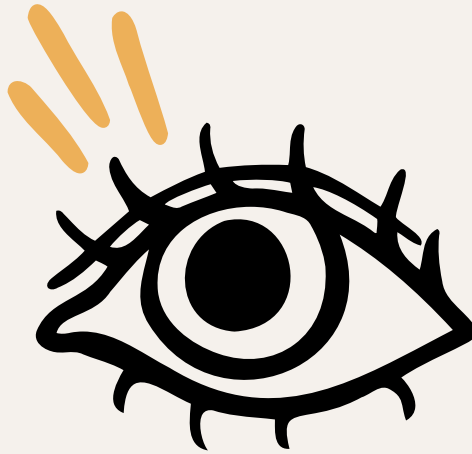
Sensory cards for creating a food tradition

**Prompt cards linking to the five senses.
To help you to connect flavours to memories.**

These cards can help you create a food tradition by thinking about a special date, like a birthday or anniversary.

Simply, pick a date and use the cards to explore different senses. This can help you recreate the experience at home.

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Sight

Think back to that special day. How did the food look?
You might recreate the meal's presentation or add visual touches to your table.



Smell

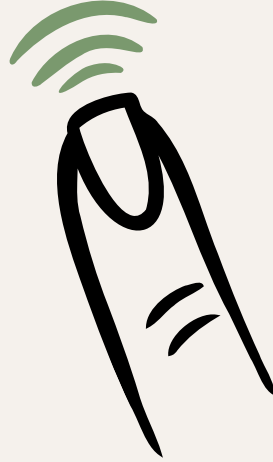
Recall the scents that filled the air.

Could you bring those smells into your cooking or use a fragrance to remind you of that time?



Taste

What flavours made the meal special?
You could add those flavours to your food or include them in something you order.



Touch

Is there an object that connects you to the moment?
Holding it while you cook or eat might help you feel close to the person.



Sound

What sounds or music were part of that day?

Playing them can help set the tone and reconnect with the memory.

Herb and spice memory toolbox

A practical tool to remember someone you cared for through spices and herbs.

Step one: linking herbs and spices to memories

- Make a list of herbs and spices that remind you of a close one. For example, oregano and basil might remind you of a holiday spent with them in Italy. You can browse through old photos or cookbooks for inspiration to help bring back those memories.

Step five: add to your box

- As you collect more herbs and spices, each one can be tied to a different memory or experience.

Step two: DIY toolbox

- Gather the herbs and spices in jars or tins.
- Find a small wooden box to hold them.
- If you like, give it a personal touch with paint or decoration.

Step three: create a personal connection

- You can write or draw a memory for each herb/spice on a tag.
- For example, basil might say, "Eating pizza with you in Italy".
- Simply, attach the tag to the jar you want to personalise.

Step four: adding herbs and spices

- Add your chosen herbs and spices to a meal or takeaway. Reconnect with memories through eating, either alone or with others.

