

Let food be thy medicine

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Let food be thy medicine

by [prismartist](#)

Summary

“I can’t remember the name. All I know is that I know it, probably from somewhere else.”
Joel shrugs. “Anyways, I’m trying to recreating the blooming thing, but I’m hitting a wall.”

“Do you have everything you need?”

“Yeah, nicked most of these from Timmy and Tango.”

Etho chuckles. “Nice. So what do we need to do now? Need anything to cook it?”

Joel breathes in deep, closing his eyes for a bit. “I think we need to make an earth oven.
But... I don’t know how to make an earth oven.”

Etho perks up. “I can make it.”

Joel opens his eyes and looks at him, hesitant. “Can you?”

“You don’t have to baby me because I got shot earlier.”

“It was through your chest, Etho, I thought we were about to lose a life.”

“Hey, I’m better now, and the faster we make this, the faster I can eat.”

Joel sighs. “Fine, just don’t strain yourself.”

“Sure thing mom.”

Joel raises a hand as if to hit him, but seems to restrain himself. “Alright, alright,” he eventually sighs out. A resigned smile shows on his face as he meets Etho’s eyes. “Then roll up your sleeves, big boy, ‘cause we’ve got some work to do.”

(In which Etho helps Joel remember, just a little bit.)

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

“Ah the bloomin’- darnit.”

Etho looks up from his armour-polishing, raising an eyebrow. “Having trouble?”

“You could say that, yeah.” Joel is making an angry face at the crafting table, on which he’s placed a variety of vegetables. Right in the middle is a lamb’s shoulder, which seems to be the cause of Joel’s upset.

“That mutton say something to ya?”

Joel looks at Etho, confused. “What? No, no, it’s just...” He turns back to the mutton. “I’m trying to remember how to do this recipe.”

“Which is?”

“I can’t remember the name. All I know is that I know it, probably from somewhere else.” Joel shrugs. “Anyways, I’m *trying* to recreating the blooming thing, but I’m hitting a wall.”

Etho sets the armour down and walks over to Joel. “Do you have everything you need?”

“Yeah, nicked most of these from Timmy and Tango.”

Etho chuckles. “Nice. So what do we need to do now? Need anything to cook it?”

Joel breathes in deep, closing his eyes for a bit. “I think we need to make an earth oven. But...” he sharply intakes a breath, “I don’t know how to make an earth oven.”

Etho perks up. “I can make it.”

Joel opens his eyes and looks at him, hesitant. “Can you?”

“You don’t have to baby me because I got shot earlier.”

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It’s been a while since Etho’s had to make an earth oven, but he trusts his memory enough. He gets to work digging down a foot-deep pit. He walks around and gathers some rocks to line it; he

remembers seeing a lot by the ravine's river, but also remembers the last time he used riverbed rocks (they exploded, resulting in a very confusing chat message). So, he resorts to collecting them from the surrounding area around the Relation Ship. He lines the floor and walls of the pit with them, adds a layer of charcoal, then starts to prepare the fire.

He whips out his axe, gathers dry firewood, and splits them lengthwise down the middle, arranging a campfire in the pit. He lights a pinecone—one of the many he's picked up—with a flint and steel, setting it amongst the kindling. They're a strong source of fuel, and they burn brightly and for long enough that the wood soon catches fire. Etho fans it for a bit before leaving it to smoulder, moving back to Joel, who's put the mutton aside and has cut up the tomatoes, onions, and oregano, rubbing them into the mutton with olive oil.

"You a fan of olives, Joel?" Etho had asked as Joel was extracting the oil.

"Didn't use to be, actually. But one day I suddenly decided I loved them. Dunno why."

Etho rejoins him just as he's started on the potatoes, and Joel hands him an extra knife.

"Did you put incisions in the shoulder?"

"Do we need to?"

"It'll help it cook through."

Joel glances at the mutton mid-potato. "Oh. Okay, thanks." He casts Etho a curious look. "How come you know so much about cooking?"

"Y'know, I'm used to surviving on my own. Why, you surprised?"

"I just thought of you more as the, I dunno, the stoic fighting guy. I never would've imagined you to be like, a home cook, in an apron."

"I have many sides to me, Joel." Etho gives a playful wink, and Joel laughs.

"I can see that."

Etho picks up a potato, noticing their slightly grubby nature. "You've washed these, right?" he asks.

"No? We're going to peel them anyway."

Etho's eyes widen. "Don't peel it."

Joel halts again, looking like he's been stabbed. His eyes widen as large as plates. "What?"

"I like it whole. You know, all the taste is in the skin. And it's got a nice snap to it."

"But there's dirt on it!"

"Then wash it."

Joel makes a series of sputtering noises. "Surely that's not enough!"

"Sure it is! I eat it unpeeled all the time."

"You're *sick*, you sicken me," Joel admonishes, looking away. Etho sighs.

“How about you peel half of them and leave the others alone. Compromise?”

Joel pouts, but says, “Okay, yeah, *fine*.”

“Great.” Etho gives a shit-eating grin as he gathers up half (read: most) of the potatoes, while Joel simply sticks his tongue out, too petty to notice. He resumes cutting into the mutton as Etho takes off his gloves and washes the potatoes. Then, they start on the final stretch.

Joel puts the potatoes, tomatoes, and carrots (“I don’t suppose you *also* eat those with the skin,” he had muttered to Etho, who only smiled and shook his head) in the pot, then places the mutton on top. He scatters in the onions and leftover garlic, then asks, “Is the oven ready?”

The firewood had crumbled into a pile of glowing ash at this point, but the heat had transferred over to the coal, emitting orange that throbbed under the dark surface. “Yep,” Etho replies as he walks over to it, self-satisfied.

Joel pours a bit of water in the cast iron, places the cover on it, then a sheet of leather on top, secured with string. Joel squints at it. “I think that’s right,” he says. “Or is it just supposed to be the leather...?”

“You probably need both on, otherwise the dirt’ll get in. Now c’mon, get it in here.”

“Alright, alright, don’t rush me!” Joel fixes Etho with a glare as he approaches the oven. He squints as the heat hits him, and sweat breaks out almost immediately on his skin. Slowly he lowers the pan into the pit, setting it on top of the coals. He steps back as Etho shovels the dirt on top and covers the whole thing until there’s just a mound left, which he pats.

“There we go, all done,” he says jovially.

“Until three hours from now when we have to dig it up.”

“Can’t wait.” Joel grins at Etho, who smiles back.

“Now help me clean up.”

Etho groans. “Do I have to?”

“This is a two-way relationship, Etho, you can’t expect me to do everything around here!”

“Aw, alright.”

"Do you remember where you learned this?" Etho asks as he puts up his mask and opens the pot. It's dug up and now cooking in open air, roasting the mutton within.

Joel hums and shrugs; the muscle memory and smell had jogged a bit of recognition in him, though not enough for full memories. It makes sense; it usually takes much more than cooking mutton to remember other worlds. "A bit. I think this isn't the first time I've cooked it with someone else, at the very least."

"Really."

"Yeah. I think..." He concentrates, trying to translate the gut *deja vu* into actual memories. Joel furrows his brows. "I'm not... used to having this much help though, I think it was a kid?" Joel's expression turns bewildered. "Do I have a kid??"

Etho's eyes widen at him, then crinkle with amusement. "You, a dad? Shocking."

"Trust me, I'm as surprised as you are." Joel huffs.

Etho opens the lid a bit, and Joel catches a whiff of the mutton's divine savoury scent. "You want to know a fun fact?" Etho says as he brushes the dirt away.

Joel raises a brow. "Please."

"I remember all past worlds."

Joel blinks. "You do?"

"Yeah. Every single one. Even before the first world."

"How?"

Etho shrugs. "Don't really know. My memory's not, uh, infallible, you know. Might have picked something up." He pauses. "Or maybe I've just been here too long. Who knows."

"That's very ominous."

Etho chuckles. "That's just how it is."

"Hm. Must be pretty lonely, if you remember but no one else does."

"Eh, I'm pretty used to it. Like I said, been here a long time. Everything becomes routine eventually."

"I..." Joel pauses. "Weirdly enough, I think I get that."

"Really?"

"Y... yeah. Really."

The edges of Etho's eyes crinkle, as if he's smiling, but instead of saying anything, he lifts the pot up and sets it on the ground. "Soup's up."

"It's roasted lamb."

"Eh, potayto, potahto."

"Now *that's* uncalled for."

Etho piles the contents of the pot onto wooden plates, and hands one to a starving Joel. On it, the lamb steams, browned and cut open to show a dark pink meat, juices pooling around it and seeping into the vegetables. Joel sets the plate on his lap, cuts a piece of the steak, and takes a bite.

It's tender and chewy, umami flowing freely and plentiful. Joel hums at the comforting warmth, and if he were maybe more poetic, he'd say something about remembering sunny farms and glimmering quartz.

"Is it good?" Etho asks. His mask is removed.

"Yeah, it is."

"Taste like your other world?"

“I think it does. Close enough, anyway.”

Etho smiles, and piles food onto his own plate. “Good, good.”

“Thanks for the help, man.”

“No problem.”

Joel moves to stab a vegetable, ready to decimate the whole thing when he stops, the smile on his face disappearing immediately. As watery as Joel’s mouth is, there’s a certain something on his plate that’s keeping him from devouring its contents right away.

“Etho?”

“Hm?” It sounds like he’s trying to keep from laughing.

“Take these dirty unpeeled potatoes away from me.”

Etho tilts his head. “Why? I thought you wanted some.”

“You bloody *know* I didn’t, I would *never* willingly consent to putting unpeeled potatoes on my plate. Take it away!”

“Aw, but you’ll miss out. Come on, just try one.”

“Absolutely not.”

“Pleeeaaase? For me?” Etho chuckles- or giggles evilly, rather. “Your loyal soulmate who’s never done anything bad to you ever?”

“You’ve probably tried to kill me at some point.”

“Hey, we’re not counting past worlds we may or may not remember.”

Joel squints and pouts, and ignores how much he must look like a child. He grumbles something unintelligible before angrily stabbing the unpeeled, *disgusting* potato and biting down on it.

Snap.

Oh. That’s what Etho was talking about.

He chews slowly, while Etho watches, grinning.

“So, do you admit it?”

“...”

“C’mon Joel, you can say it, I can see it in your eyes.”

“Okay so *maybe* potatoes are fine with the skin, but-”

“You said it! I win!”

“What, no! You don’t win shit!!”

End Notes

kleftiko recipe ^^:

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/wordofmouth/2016/aug/18/how-to-cook-the-perfect-kleftiko>

hello and thank you for reading !! this one was very fun to write. did a lot of research looking up greek recipes (yes because of Stratos) and how to make an earth oven, which was very interesting. the meal here specifically is kleftiko! i actually cooked it because of this [fjksjfk](#) and it's very good. i'm aware the recipe here is tweaked a bit but i wanted to keep in mind that it's very unlikely that they'd be able to find every ingredient. if any greek people are reading this.... sorry if i ruined it

also if you're interested in the logistics of their past lives it's explained a bit in my other fic [dreams become reality](#) if you want to learn more ^^

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!