

7 Life Lessons Learned Making Gravy with My Grandmother

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Perhaps like many of you, I've had the great fortune to be mentored and sponsored by so many fierce, fabulous women over the course of my career. When pushed, though, to name the one woman whose had the most profound influence in my life hands down it was my Grandmom Nina, better known among my Chietti family as the General or the Boss.



Growing up, I spent most family dinners and holidays in the kitchen as her sous chef. I sliced and diced, chopped and mashed, mixed and kneaded, stirred and sautéed, and, post-meal, washed and dried. At Grandmom Nina's side, I mastered the art of whipping meager leftovers into a gourmet feast. I also learned to prepare a dinner for 50+ while entertaining unexpected visitors. And, when she turned "juice mixologist," I was her trusty taste-tester although, honestly, seldom did any of her concoctions yield a "tasty" result.

While we dipped, breaded and fried pound after pound of chicken cutlet, I learned as much about how to "put food on the table" literally as I did figuratively. You see, at age 40, my grandmother turned family breadwinner when she was widowed with seven children, then ages 5 through 16, to support. She worked three jobs to keep them clothed, fed and sheltered. As it turned out, she had as good a nose for business as she did for making "gravy," even winning a sales

award for a line of cleaning products sold out of her home.

For a woman whose only degree was from the “school of hard knocks,” my grandmother’s insights and instincts on what it takes to succeed in life and business turned out to be an inheritance more valuable than any jewelry or any amount of money. They provided a powerful inner compass that has enabled me to become the person and professional I am today.



After her death, I jotted them down and distilled them into seven ingredients, which seemed fitting since she had seven children. They are:

1. Keep “gas in the tank”: keep your mind sharp by learning something every day.
2. Che sera sera: focus on what you can control rather than on what you can’t.
3. Don’t look back: stop beating yourself over mistakes. Let go and move forward.
4. Know who you are and where you are going: act with integrity and purpose.
5. Mind your words: say what you mean and mean what you say.
6. Never say goodbye: don’t burn bridges behind you. Think long-term and strive to find a win-win.
7. The more you listen, the more you learn. The more you talk, the more mistakes you make.

I think of all the time we spent together and the many lessons that were left on the table, so to speak, because I wasn’t

wise enough—or patient enough—to catch them. I would give anything to hear my grandmother say one more time, “Linda, let me tell you a story.”



About the Author: Linda joined Havas PR in 2015 to spearhead the agency’s digital, social and measurement practice areas. With more than 15 years of experience, she specializes in providing strategic counsel and tactical implementation of integrated communications programs, incorporating [PR](#), media relations, social media, content partnerships, influencer marketing, thought leadership and advertising. Her work includes a variety of sectors including financial services, economic development, pharma and corporate responsibility. Previously, Linda was managing director and global head of content marketing and social media at Citi, where she launched numerous digital firsts and served as president and CEO of Women & Co., the bank’s award-winning financial lifestyle community for women. Her honors include PR News’ 2018 PR Professional of the Year, 2018 Campaign U.S. Digital 40 Over 40, 2014 Fox Information Technology Distinguished Alumni Award from the Fox School of Business at Temple University, 2014 Pinnacle in Leadership Award from the Girl Scouts of Greater New York, and 2013 Changing the Game Award from Advertising Women of New York (now known as She Runs It). Linda also served as a judge for The Content Council Pearl Awards in 2018 and 2017. Linda serves as a capstone mentor and advisory council member for the Fox School of Business M.S. in Digital Innovation in Marketing program. She currently serves on the board of directors of New York Women in Communications (and is a past president) and Servo Annex, a digital consultancy.