

For the love of food

Every page of Dominica Yang's latest cookbook, *Mum's Kitchen – Back to Basics*, triggers happy food memories. "I grew up with food," says Hong Kong-born Yang. "My family did a lot of bonding through the cooking, eating and sharing of food [...] conversations were always about food."

The cookbook, Yang's fourth, showcases 30 Western, Chinese and Southeast Asian dishes and is a tribute to her "kind mother", Lucia, who nurtured her love of cooking.

"When I was cleaning out our family home of 62 years I found a lot of mum's handwritten recipes," she says, adding that she was encouraged by family and friends to share them in a book.

Some recipes – Kin's Laksa ("it's all about the prawn stock and lai fun noodles") and Sambal Udang (prawns in chilli paste) – have a strong Malaysian influence, reflecting the time Yang's mother spent in Kuala Lumpur as a teenager. Others, such as the "lil devil prawn toast" and mini curry puffs, are a nod to her "amazing host" mother.

And while the book features a mix of cuisines, all the recipes are personal.

"This dish, Uncle Max's Taramasalata 'cod roe dip', I helped make with mum when I was young because it didn't require any cooking," she says, adding that the recipe's name came from a family friend who was a Greek Cypriot.

"I had the task of breaking up the bread and pouring in the olive oil and vinegar."

Sweet teeth are also catered for with traditional Asian desserts such as sago Melaka and Western classics like scones – a recipe she honed hosting afternoon tea with friends – and apple crumble tart.

All proceeds from the publication will go to Priscilla's Home, at the Fu Hong Society, a Hong Kong NGO that focuses on developing the potential of people with disabilities. The charity is close to Yang's heart.

"My sister Priscilla, who passed away in 1964, aged just 10, was born mentally and physically disabled," Yang says. "In 1983, in memory of my sister, my father helped set up Priscilla's Home to provide day training and residential services for those with severe disabilities."

What makes Yang's cookbook stand out from the crowd are fun illustrations by Hong Kong cartoon artist Tweety Bao. "A crossover between art and gastronomy seemed like a good idea," she says. "Cooking is art."

On the third floor of the Hong Kong Arts Centre, in Wan Chai, where the original illustrations featured in the cookbook are on display, Yang explains some of the stories behind the colourful drawings.

In one, Yang – with London's iconic Big Ben clock tower in the background – is on the phone to her mum. "I spent my secondary education in England so I would often call home and ask mum for cooking tips and recipes. Dad would always complain about how much the long-distance phone calls would cost," she laughs.

Other illustrations capture a childhood centred on food, family and friends.

"My parents were very hospitable – there were always lots of gatherings," she says. "This illustration here is a funny story. It shows me and my younger brother helping to prepare for a gathering. Once my cheeky little brother secretly took a few sips of Pimm's [...] He got a little drunk."

Mum's Kitchen – Back to Basics is now available at Hong Kong bookshops.

ON OUR RADAR | KYLIE KNOTT

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Far left: Dominica Yang, author of *Mum's Kitchen – Back to Basics*. **Left:** Sambal Udang, one of the dishes featured in the book. **Below:** artist Tweety Bao's illustrations depict the Yang family's love for food.

