

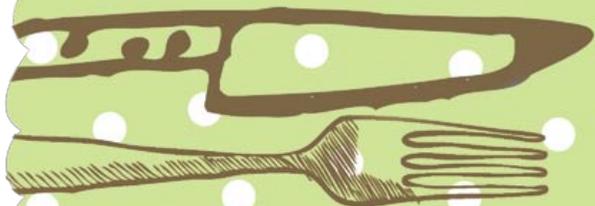
Mrs Candy Madeley

In brief:

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Mrs Candy Madeley and her husband, Mr Peter Madeley



Love transcends borders

Mrs Candy Madeley's strongest memories of being a foster mother happened several weeks after taking in her fourth foster child. Back then, she had the habit of cradling the young baby, Sean*, around in a sarong sling tied around her torso in an effort to put him to sleep.

But as the baby was fast asleep in the sarong sling one evening, Mrs Madeley says she heard Sean chuckle to himself, that made her feel a sense of joy. "That was such a powerful memory for me because it meant that he was happy and safe. Or that's how I interpreted it."

When the family relocated to Singapore in 2006, Mrs Madeley says she wanted to channel her energy into some form of voluntary work. Looking around, she chanced upon a magazine targeted at the Australian expatriate community here. In the magazine, there was a story about a foster mother from this expatriate community who said she was open to talking to anyone interested to be foster parents.

"I met the foster mother for coffee and she told me about her experiences. That gave me the courage to put my hand up to see if we were suitable to be foster parents." The couple has not looked back since and has taken in four foster children in the last three years. Currently, they are looking after one-year-old Sean, who has been with the family since he was three weeks old.

However, coming from a different cultural background means that there are cultural quirks which the foster children need to get used to when they first join the Madeley family. One of the biggest adjustments some foster children have is eating food which is different from what they are used to.

Then there is the case of "completely different sleeping patterns," says Mrs Madeley's husband, Mr Peter Madeley. As the children usually go to bed by 8 p.m. and wake up at 6 in the morning, Mrs Madeley says her foster children who sometimes have access visits with their natural parents will

come back late and want to stay up, which is out of sync with the family's schedule.

Luckily for the Madeleys, one good thing about raising toddlers is that they quickly adapt to the family's routine. "Especially when there's good food, they'll eat it," jokes Mrs Madeley.

Fostering has also made the couple more confident in their parenting skills. "So with the next child, you think, 'Yeah, I can deal with that, I know exactly what is needed.' And we don't worry as much." This is a big contrast to the Madeleys' experience of becoming first-time parents nine years ago. "When we were first-time parents, we worried about everything, whether we were doing the right thing," she says.

Her parenting skills have helped the foster children improve in leaps and bounds in their development. Giving an example of her second foster child, an 18-month-old boy, who was severely behind in his development compared to other children his age when he first came. Not only was he unable to eat solid food, the toddler was also unable to walk properly.

Under her care, Mrs Madeley exposed the child to a variety of learning stimuli and the toddler's growth and development eventually caught up with those his age and he was able to run around and talk. Mr Madeley says seeing the toddler return to his biological family in a better state gave the Madeleys a sense of satisfaction and happiness.

The couple found that becoming foster parents has changed their priorities in life. "You find out what's important," Mr Madeley says. "I'd rather look after Sean than go out after work. It changes your lifestyle."

Mrs Madeley agrees, adding, "I don't go window shopping, looking at Louis Vuitton bags that much these days. It doesn't seem important."

* - name has been changed

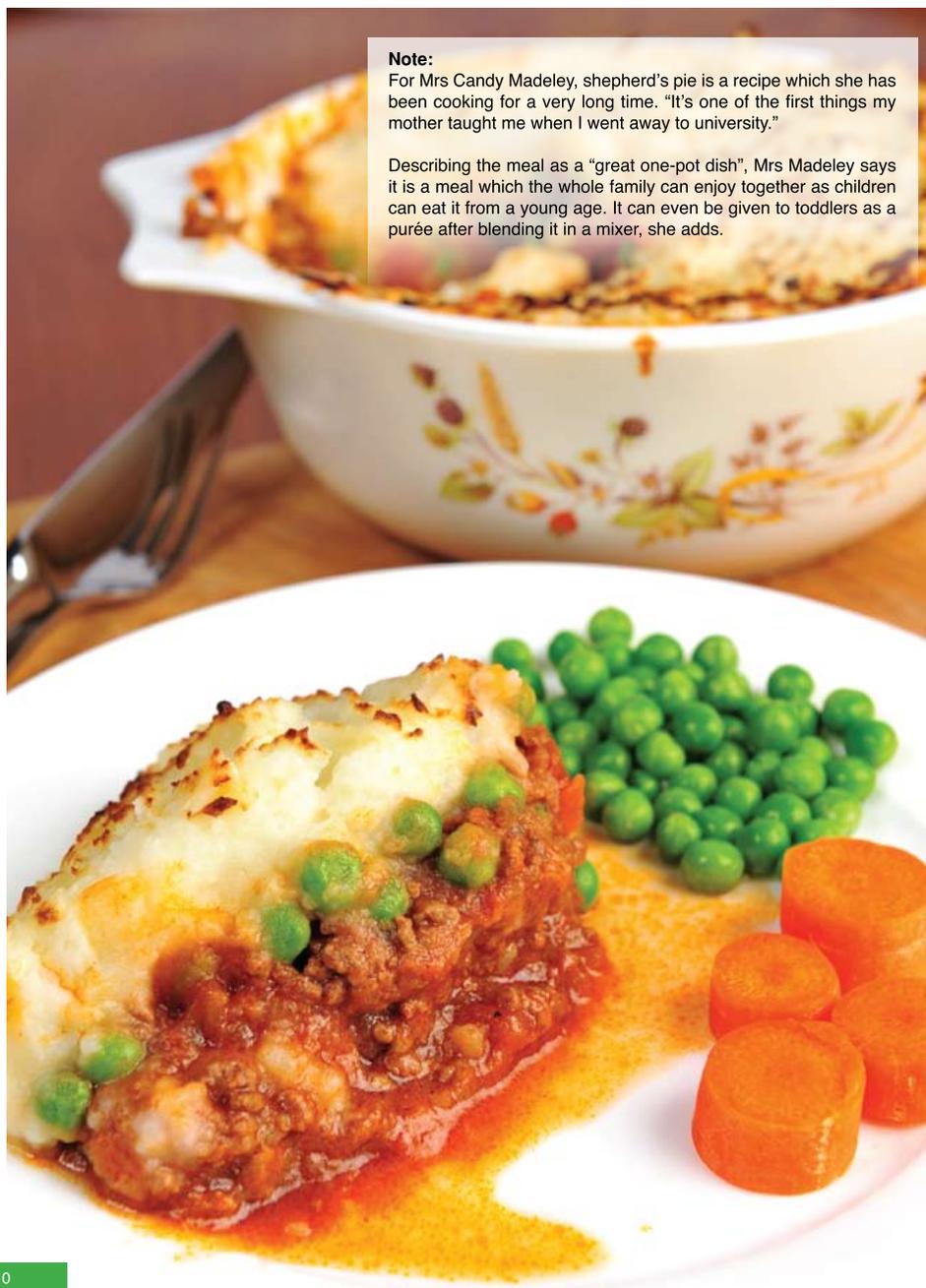
Memento

At the Madeleys' home, toys are used as a way to get the children to learn skills that they would need for their future.

For instance, says Mrs Candy Madeley, one of Sean's* favourite toys, a plush dog, is a good way to demonstrate how to show affection for animals. "When Sean's biting it, we teach him to change his behaviour by showing him how to pat the dog instead. And we allow him to change his behaviour into one which is positive."

* - name has been changed





Note:

For Mrs Candy Madeley, shepherd's pie is a recipe which she has been cooking for a very long time. "It's one of the first things my mother taught me when I went away to university."

Describing the meal as a "great one-pot dish", Mrs Madeley says it is a meal which the whole family can enjoy together as children can eat it from a young age. It can even be given to toddlers as a purée after blending it in a mixer, she adds.



Shepherd's Pie

Ingredients:

- 1 medium onion(80g), finely chopped
- 15ml vegetable oil
- 450g minced beef or lamb
- 400g can of chopped tomatoes
- 300ml chicken, beef or vegetable stock
- 15ml tomato puree or tomato kechup
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 450g carrots, peeled and sliced
- 550g potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 50g butter
- 75ml milk
- 200g frozen peas

STEP

01 Heat the oil and fry the onion until softened.

STEP

02 Stir in the meat until brown. Add the tomatoes, carrots, stock and seasoning.

STEP

03 Bring to boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 40 minutes.

STEP

04 Meanwhile cook the potatoes (either boil in water or steam them) until tender. Drain and mash them with the butter and milk. Cook the frozen peas (boil in water or use a microwave oven) for 3 minutes.

STEP

05 Pre-heat the oven to 180° C. Place the meat in an oven-proof dish (18cm diameter and 8cm deep), top with a layer of peas and finally a layer of mashed potato.

STEP

06 Cook in the oven for about 20 minutes, finished off with a few minutes under a pre-heated grill to give the potato golden, crunchy-topped waves.

This is a comfort food for grown-ups and children of all ages. A portion whizzed in a blender to a fine puree is an excellent source of iron for babies from about 9 months.

