

# The meaning of cake

Bernard Appassamy | 17 August 2018  
7 Comments



Cake is Brian, my watchmaker. Again he refused payment for repairing my late father's gold retirement watch. Brian enjoys Anne Enright's books, thinks of Ireland as the Tasmania of Europe, and told me of his shock at 'the size of Aussie cabbages' when he immigrated here.

\*

Sue emailing me from the country, 'Dad baked two cakes yesterday and delivered two halves, one from each cake. Dad's discovered the 2,4,6,8 butter cake recipe. And it's the first time he's made icing. I'm so proud of him. It was good that Dad moved on from pumpkin cake.'

\*



Reading Tim Winton's 'Betsy' in bed at night, 'From boyhood I had known my father to be a man of kindly nature but irritable bowel.'

\*

Peter taking ten days off work to drive his large family in his taxi van from Sydney to Armidale for his daughter's graduation.

\*

Antonio talking about the only Anglo-Australian in his extended family, 'We call him The Wog.'

\*

Mathilde, my eight year old great niece, asking my 83 year old mother in Mauritius, 'What do you do with your days?'

\*

My mother and I on the phone reminiscing our family racing after Sunday Mass to *Chez Joseph*, our corner store in Beau-Bassin. Closed on that day but from a window down the side, Joseph's wife sold hot *boulettes arouille* (taro fritters) wrapped in local Chinese newspapers.

\*

Standing on the footpath, our neighbour's mid-teen son playing the violin splendidly to his dad washing his car on the street.

\*

Sitting in my GP's waiting room. Next to me, a young dad with his baby girl in a pram facing him. The dad leaning into the pram, caressing his daughter with his right hand, and syncing the moves of his fingers to the beat of 'Shake it Off' over the radio.

\*

Opening my bedroom door to a surprise gift on the floor: a pair of woolen socks from *Le Teddy Intrépide* who returned home through the night.

\*

On the day of the marriage equality vote result, among thousands at Prince Alfred Park, watching from a distance David Marr bawl with joy embracing his partner.

\*

Paul who died last year. One week before, I emailed him from Wellington airport photos of two giant model eagles of *The Lord of the Rings* fame suspended from the ceiling. Paul's last email read, 'Absolute gobsmacker!'

\*

A sign outside the local Japanese bakery, 'Closed for two weeks. We're getting married!'

\*

Standing and waiting in a crowd at peak hour outside Newtown train station at the pedestrian crossing. A crossdresser wearing a one piece orange swimsuit, a tiny matching frilly skirt and platform shoes pushes through. The sound of a communal inbreath as she runs dangerously through the traffic to the other side.

\*

Nick exploding on his mobile with me, 'I'm washing my arse on my bidet!'

\*

Again Nick, after his hip surgery, finally resuming dancing with his wife at the club every Saturday night.

\*

Nev from the new Turkish ice cream shop on their first business week, radiant with glee, 'I make the ice cream. My wife bakes the cakes.'

\*

Outside a block of units down the road, among a pile of domestic items and books thrown away, a 1906 French edition of a classic, *Le petit chose* by Alphonse Daudet.

\*

Ai Weiwei's *Human Flow* on Easter Sunday. Two women followed me in the small, sparsely attended theatre. One of them said aloud, 'This is going to be harrowing. Why don't we all sit closer?' which we did.

\*

Ben, on the phone, singing just for me, 'Don't worry, be happy!'

\*

A bear hug from Ben.

\*

Safdar, who writes and draws about his abusive father and childhood in *The Good Son*: 'We have a complex relationship which means I can love him and hate his guts at the same time'.

\*

Irvin Anneix's short film, part of UNESCO's Grandmas Project, of his grandmother making *Lait de Poule* (eggnog).

\*

Teaching at Long Bay gaol 20 years ago and, a week before Christmas, after a dinner marking the end of a therapeutic program, with 60 inmates and staff, singing 'Silent Night'.

\*

Tapping away at my desk at dusk, and hearing an anonymous man walking down our backstreet singing opera in German at the top of his voice.

\*

Cindy, 'This is Newtown. We don't do cake forks.'



Bernard Appassamy is a Sydney writer and artist who grew up in Mauritius.

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If there's one thing that the recent election campaign and its outcome demonstrated, it's the depth of the divisions that exist in our Australian community.

Our politics is focused on point-scoring, personalities, and name-calling across party lines. The media, for the most part, don't help, driven by the 24-hour news cycle and the pursuit of advertising dollars into a frenzy of click-bait and shallow sensationalism.

What does it mean to be an Australian in times like these? What are the values that unite us?

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## EXISTING COMMENTS

Found memories, easy to read and can enrich everyday life. This is what matters to navigate through life. LOVE IT. Annie

**Annie Damelet | 17 September 2018**

I loved this piece. Every image resonated - like pebbles rippling. A beautiful beginning to my day. Thanks so much.

**Ailsa Piper | 24 September 2018**

From Colm Toibin's "Homage to Barcelona": Picasso's Quarter. He managed to complete in one day what it took normal entrants to the Llotja for one month to do. His drawing style was harsh and direct and utterly sure of itself. He was the small boy who for fun threw pebbles down at passers-by from the rooftop of his studio in Carrer de la Plata, which his father rented for him. He was the small boy who ran and hid when he was identified as the culprit. But he was also the painter who in the same year, when he was only fourteen, worked on the large canvas called Science and Charity in which he was solving complex problems of tone and composition while also managing to conjure up a sense of compassion and pain.

**Pam | 24 September 2018**

Beautiful observations Bernard. They remind us to take the same care while moving through life.

**Catherine Marshall | 24 September 2018**

I like it...muchly: a new voice offering hope instead of judgment? Ain't that what the Jesuits are good at!

**Michael Furtado | 25 September 2018**

I so enjoyed this poetic piece...seeing the burst of green through the cracks in the concrete!

**Marg | 25 September 2018**

Loved it will smile for more than a mile. When I was a boy there was a show on steam radio broadcast from Goulbourn gaol -prisoners singing One with a good baritone voice sang "If I had my life to live over I'd do the same things again" good gaol/ goal?

**John | 27 September 2018**

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