



Friends
GARDEN PARTY
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The Secret Ingredient

By Tammy Borden ©

My mom is originally from Germany and still retains her thick German accent despite being in the United States for more than fifty years now. She has a rich heritage of living through World War II, coming to America through Ellis Island, and countless stories. My mother is strong, both physically and in character, with a quick wit, hilarious sense of humor and unending energy. I hope to be as vibrant as she is when I'm 81. Truth be told, I sometimes wish I were as vibrant today.

My mom and I are both passionate about gardening. We share many joys as it relates to flowers and other greenery in our yards, but also many frustrations. The greatest frustration is what she affectionately calls "varmints." Squirrels, rabbits, deer, chipmunks, etc... these are the types of creatures that can destroy a garden.

We both like to be environmentally conscious in our gardens, trying to avoid lots of chemicals or inhumane ways to solve the varmint problem. One day as we were eating lunch at a restaurant, my mom began sharing about a home remedy she had found in a gardening magazine. It required combining various ingredients commonly found in your home that would get sprayed on flowers.

Try to imagine her thick accent as you consider the dialogue that took place in that corner booth. "I tried a new formula for the rabbits that keep eating my flowers," she said. So I played along. "What's in it?" I asked, expecting the usual ingredients. She responded, "Well, there's water, und Ivory soap, und castor oil..." I thought to myself, "Hmmm... It doesn't sound terribly potent."

She rattled off some other ingredients from her kitchen, which seemed to make the recipe a little more promising. Then she put down her sandwich, gave a mischievous smile, and said with dramatic pauses, "Then... I added... the secret ingredient." I waited for her to finish. Looking at her expectantly, I gave her the look that says, "And the secret ingredient is???" Silence.

She wouldn't tell me! I tried prodding it out of her, but she just kept smiling, laughing at my discomfort, hesitant to reveal the lengths she went to for her concoction. Frustrated, I gave up my pursuit of the answer and went back to my lunch. Just as I was about to take a nice, big bite of my sandwich, she blurted out very matter of fact, "I peed in it."

Have you ever had a laughing fit? That's what happened that day. I couldn't contain my laughter. My mom joined in the giggling as we tried to subdue the moment. Other patrons in the restaurant began to stare, giving that look that questioned, "What's your problem?" If they only knew!

We want a recipe, don't we? Not just for problems in the garden, but we want a formula that will fix the problems of life: the path to financial freedom, the perfect diet, the ten steps to happiness, the "easy how-to". And the magazines, media and infomercials are more than ready to tell us how to make it happen on our own for only three easy payments of \$19.95. In fact, more than 8 billion dollars is spent annually in the self help industry in America.

I've found that I long for a secret ingredient to solve life's problems too, mostly because I'm afraid to expose my own secrets that can hold me in chains and rob me of life. Secrets can take on different forms – maybe hurts from the past that haven't been dealt with, moments of indiscretion that you'd rather keep quiet, a habit that has slowly grown into an addiction, an area in life where you're afraid to admit you fall short. I do believe there is a secret ingredient that will help those who battle with these struggles. Don't worry; it doesn't require peeing in a bucket. But truth be told, it is even more unpleasant for most. It's unconventional in society. It screams against the mainstream, asking something of you that most are unwilling to surrender.

So, what's the secret ingredient to living life to the fullest? Expose the secret. It sounds simple. But for most, the prospect of exposing their secret life causes panic attacks and cold sweats. "But then it's not a secret," you say. Exactly. There is incredible power in secrets. Secrecy is the enemy of our soul. We're often convinced that we need to keep our struggles a secret; that we need to hide it in a veil of darkness. But darkness is where despair resides.

When we expose our secret it allows others to share in our lives and know us from the inside out. It's then that we can enjoy the beauty of being loved for who we are, not who we want people to think we are. Until then, we'll never be satisfied. Many think that rejection or disgust from others awaits those who discard their masks of pretense and expose areas in their life where they might not have it all together. But the beauty of it is that the opposite happens. When authenticity shines through, it draws people in. Let's all be authentic people, exposing our own secrets and admitting our faults. Let's not only share in pains, joys and struggles of others, but allow others to share in ours. That's what relationships are for.