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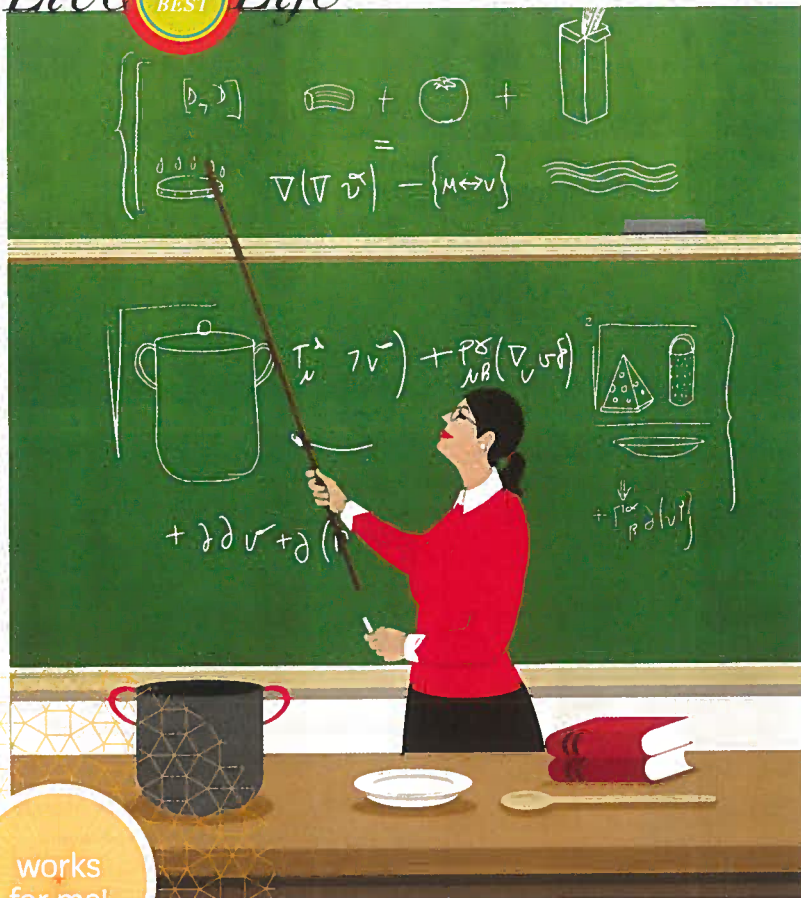
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## Go Cook, Young Man

Four ways to help your son learn to keep house.

**1. Abandon at least some of your rules.** If he wants to live out of the clean-laundry basket occasionally, let him. No one will suffer.

**2. Stress safety above all.** Typical infraction among teenagers, based on my observations: leaving the room when something is boiling on the stove.

**3. Write down your recipes in a notebook, along with 20 rules he can use as a guide** (for example, always double the olive oil; if you don't have fresh basil, don't use any at all; clean up as you go!).

**4. Make a small sewing kit that includes black, brown, navy, and white thread.** I used the cigar box that once held his Digimon cards. —M.D.

balk. (Not that I gave him much choice in the matter.)

For two hours, three days a week, Ray was all mine. I devised a menu, just like my own home ec teacher had, and he executed it. Spaghetti carbonara, say, and sliced mangoes with lime zest for dessert. One day, as his tomato sauce reduced on the stove, he washed and seasoned a chicken for roasting. Then he rolled out my grandmother's piecrust and filled it with apples, all while listening to my dissertation on the importance of preheating an oven.

Three of my four grandparents were

tailors, so Ray was genetically programmed to quickly master the basics, like mending a split seam or refastening a button. One day we covered Advanced Laundry, in which I taught him never to mix a red sweatshirt with white shirts or put sweaters in the dryer. I knew that he would rather have been shooting hoops in the driveway than learning to darn socks with his mother—his one moment of mutiny came when he tried to beg off sewing lessons, even though I insisted that one day, someone would find the sight of him fixing his own shirt very attractive—but it couldn't be denied that he was learning, and more than just housekeeping. "I appreciate more what you do as a mom," he told me one day (just after it sank in that however many loads one washes, laundry is literally endless).

Ray now understands the finer points of making vinaigrette, and more important, he realizes there's nothing masculine about being helpless. Not only can he make his own dinner, he can make it for his family, too. That's what I call a man.

works for me!

# Domestic Help

Before her son leaves home, Marcia DeSanctis is teaching him how to run one.

**IF I'VE SERVED PASTA** twice a week since my 17½-year-old son, Ray, first gummed solid food, that comes to roughly 1,768 pots of the stuff. So one evening last summer, when I asked him for help with dinner, Ray's response surprised me: "What's a colander again?" he said.

I could only blame myself. I was never one for "attachment cooking." Nobody's hands went in the sauce except my own. But that night, as I explained with a touch of panic that a colander is the thing with holes in it, I wondered what else I hadn't prepared Ray for. I felt confident that I'd raised a self-reliant boy, as we all try to do. But could he boil water? Sew on a button? Wash his clothes without turning them pink? No, no, and no. Suddenly it hit me like a ton of boiled rigatoni: He'd be leaving the house in a year to attend college. No way was I going to unleash a spoiled princeling into the world.

As parents, while we focus on our child's confidence and character, we perhaps don't always consider that we are also raising someone's future roommate, boyfriend, guest, husband, or father. I wanted to know that I'd reared a boy who would never ask the woman in his life, "What's for dinner?" So I came up with a plan: I would enroll Ray in a private home ec course, taught by me. By showing him how to make an omelet (or stitch a simple hem), I hoped he would also learn how to be a better man, one who could look after his own needs instead of expecting his girlfriend to do it for him. I was delighted to find that he didn't