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Modern Love

by Penny Jones

The kitchen, not the bedroom, has become these days, the room where we express our love. Through the labour of cooking, as transmitted via the media, men now demonstrate their commitment to girl friend/wife/children by cooking and dishing up dinner when their partner has an unexpectedly late work meeting. (Possible affair not included in this narrative however) They serve breakfast on the run to the kiddiwinks on the way to the Prius and school. They smilingly plait hair, pack sandwiches and remember lost homework from their place at the kitchen island.

They are simultaneously infantilised – can they really be operating like grown ups? Or heroised – can they really be operating like grown ups? While we the grown up women are allowed out to work, or even to have a bit of fun, before returning, by implication, to the domestic sphere where we still belong.

Gone are the days of the barbecue dad, holding sway on the lawn, where we once allowed him enough rope to burn himself and make a mess. Now he is a competent cook, a recipe reader and even knows how to do the washing up and cleaning. Although the portrayal of these TV dads is sometimes questionable. Not even we women know named brands of paper towel, or am I missing something?

Standing in the kitchen the other day I marvelled at the way in which my hubby/ better half/ life partner knew his way around the store cupboard and fridge. He was able to cook a meal without recourse to Google or a book, simply by using what was available. I remembered to compliment him and offered to do the clearing. But he said actually he was going to open a bottle of Prosecco, Skype Jason and discuss tomorrow's menu while he did the washing up. It gave me time to take the dog for a walk so that we could return to the kitchen to spread mud around the sparkling tiles, before retiring to the shed to smoke my pipe.