

"Uncle Spaghetti" by Catherine Hammond
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Every summer my parents and I drive the 360 miles to uncle Joseph's remote village near the Swiss border.

Salt-and-pepper haired, with twinkly eyes and a mischievous smile hiding under a bushy mustache, my uncle is a writer and the best storyteller. All through our visit, he showers me with scary stories during the day, gentler ones at bedtime... I am 6 years old and I adore him.

On this particular August evening, he feeds us his specialty: "Rainbow spaghetti à la uncle J". Don't bother asking him for his secret recipe though, he will never tell anyone, friend or family. "Mmmm this is really delicious! Where did you find these multicolored pasta, Joseph?" asks my mother. "You don't exactly live close to any specialty shop that I know of..."

"You're right! This is all my doing. I grow them in between my tomato plants, green peppers and yellow zucchini. That's where they get their color from".

"Oh... no wonder they taste so fresh!" says my mother with a twinkle in her eyes.

"Can't beat homegrown, that's for sure!" adds my dad, straight-faced.

"Tell you what" says uncle Joseph, "Tomorrow I'll show you where I planted them".

"Show me now, pleaaaaase uncle, I want to see them now!".

"No little Cat, it's way too dark outside. And after such a long trip you should really go to bed early so we can have lots of fun tomorrow, all right? "

The next morning, before I even have a chance to ask, he greets me with "Want to see my pasta patch after breakfast?"

To this day I still remember how disappointed I felt. All that build-up for a couple of rows of freshly tilled soil dotted with tiny holes every half inch or so... really?

"I sure hope today's fun will be way more exciting than this, uncle!"

From that day on, no more spaghetti for dinner. Just as well after such a let-down.

A couple of days later, I had forgotten all about his famous patch when... "Little Cat, want to come check on the spaghetti with me?".

When you love someone, even if you are only six, you don't want to hurt their feelings. "Sure, uncle, wait for me!".

Sprouted from every tiny hole in the dark soil, the spaghetti had grown by at least two to three inches ! The look on my face must have made him so happy.

"You did not believe me, did you, little Cat ? Well now, we'll check them again in a few days and if they are ready, you and I can pick them for dinner, all right?".

And we did.

When my spaghetti farmer of an uncle knew they were ready for harvesting, the four of us once again enjoyed his delicious homegrown spaghetti dinner, picked by his six year old niece who loved him so much.