

My Mother's Dishes

She passed away 13 years ago and I inherited them...

Last weekend I fulfilled my annual duty of hosting some 10 ladies living in Northern Westchester for an evening of Pokeno at my house.

What's Pokeno? Well, in the Bingo category, I think of it as a card game that most of us should be able to play even as mental, hearing and/or other capacities start declining ...

What's the real fun? Well, you get to take turns hosting, offer up your cooking and home, exchange, meaning contribute and try to win seasonal "Schatzkies" (yes, home decorating bargains around \$20 found at TJ Max or Home Goods), and maybe take home the big pot with \$7.00 from each player and/or little pots of quarters or dimes for the likes of "4 of a kind," "center," "outside 4--" or "inside 4 corners."

In between taking turns announcing cards, winning and losing, we snack, drink lots of flavored seltzer, joke/goof around, catch up on local news, kids, the latest. You get the idea.

To give you a sense of the challenges involved, I took Friday off to re-arrange my furniture, set the table, shop appetizer -, main dish -, dessert and snack supplies, cook and be ready by 7:00 pm. Contrary to my usual occupation, I was on my feet and physically busy all day, but managed to change and take the garbage out just before my guests started arriving.

The easiest, most pleasant moments during all my "prepping" are the ones, when I set the table with my mother's china, counting the plates and silverware I need, selecting the serving plates. A table set for 12, even 10 as last minute cancellations come in, just looks impressive.

The party itself goes by so quickly, I just roll with my menu.

The next pause comes during clean-up, when the party is over and I see the dishes, glasses, silverware all neatly piled up on the kitchen counter. I look at them and cannot help thinking how many times my mom must have looked at similar piles, too much or too precious for the dishwasher..., exhausted, but with the satisfaction of knowing she had pulled off another feast for friends or extended family.

I leave the dishes for the morning and go to bed still hearing my mom saying, "just go to bed, you are too tired, you will only break things."

The next day I sleep in and take my time washing, drying and putting my mom's dishes away, hopeful I will have a reason to use them again, latest for the next Pokeno in about a year.