

1.

Everybody at school was talking about *JuniorChef*. Jake felt left out. He'd only watched half of the first episode before Dad switched channels.

Jake hadn't thought it would be super interesting anyway. Contestants on the show talked about cooking as if it was the only thing they could ever be interested in.



Didn't they practice pulling faces in front of the mirror?

Hadn't they tried flying with helium-filled balloons?

Or imagined lasers that could clean your teeth while you sat on the toilet?



But Jake's friends liked *JuniorChef* as much as the kids on TV kids liked cooking. Jonah and Zak thought one of the judges was mean. Benji liked it when someone totally stuffed up. Almina could only watch one TV show every night, and *JuniorChef* was it. Stephanie rushed home from drama lessons to watch.



One morning, Mrs Paul stood in front of class and said, 'Wasn't *JuniorChef* great last night?' Jake hung his head. At that moment, he knew he'd need to start watching it – yesterday.

'If you must,' Dad said. 'Just don't expect me – or Nana, for that matter – to start serving up meals like you see on TV!'

Jake laughed.

As if!

2.

Soon Jake was as interested in *JuniorChef* as his friends were. He'd never dreamed that cooking could be fun. Now, it seemed tempting.

One day, Jake told Dad he was going to cook dinner all by himself. For ages, he couldn't decide what to make. Finally he boiled sweet potato, mashed it with baked beans and topped it with a sauce that blended everything in the refrigerator door.

'It's one of my own creations,' Jake said.

'Only one of them?' Dad asked.





'You and Nana should put your heads together in the kitchen. With your imagination and her experience, you'd make a great team.'

When Nana visited, he talked to her about it.

'I learned cookery at school,' she said.

'Nothing fancy. As long as we get enough healthy food, we should all be happy.'

'Could you teach me, Nana?' Jake asked.

'We used to make pancakes — remember? That was fun when you were little.'

'But I want to cook *properly* ...'

Nana smiled. 'If you like, Jakey.'

The first thing Jake wanted to make was smoked salmon. Auntie Lyn had once bought him a smoked salmon and cream cheese baguette, and it was awesome.

