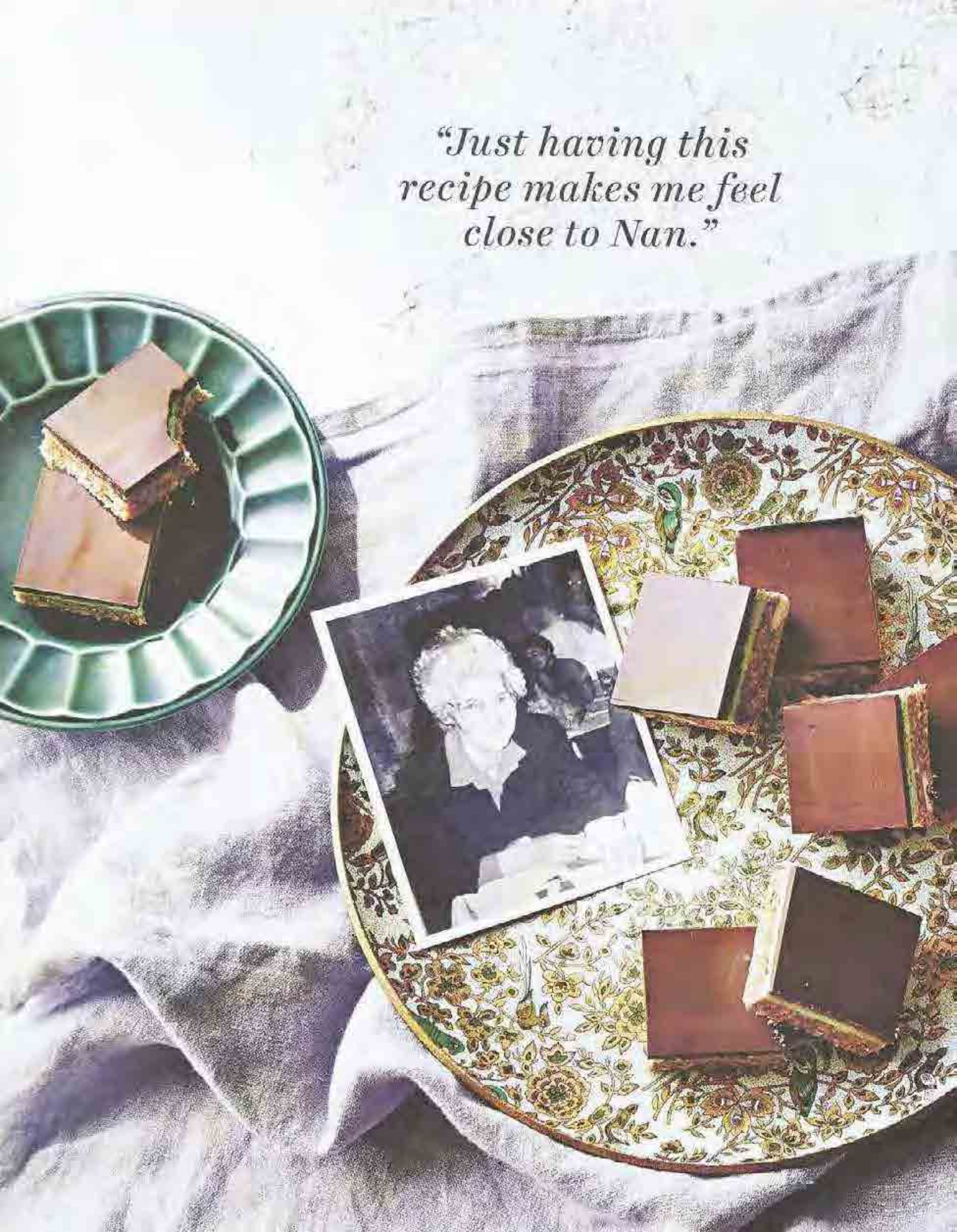
"Just having this recipe makes me feel close to Nan."



MYRA McLEAN

AN OLD-FASHIONED PUDDING PRESERVES THE MEMORY OF AN ADORED MATRIARCH.

THIS UNUSUAL PUDDING is indeed a family heirloom, having been enjoyed by five generations for at least 100 years. "The recipe was handed down to me by my grandmother, Myra Madeline, and my mother, Myra Margaret, also cooked it for us during her lifetime," says Frances Endres.

Born in London in 1870, Myra Madeline Clark (pictured) emigrated to Australia at the age of 24 with her mother and younger sister. The Clarks came to live in the Queensland town of Roma, where Myra's aunt and uncle had a sheep property. She married James McLean, who became the mayor of Charleville and died in the Spanish flu pandemic of 1919, leaving Myra to bring up their three young daughters.

"Although my grandmother passed away when I was 11, I remember her as a very special person," Frances says. "She was gentle and softly spoken, and I loved listening to stories of her early life in London."

Frances's mother made velvet pudding to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries — and also on Sundays. "We used to have a roast for Sunday lunch and velvet pudding was often served for dessert."

An egg custard, sweetened with golden syrup and topped with meringue, this pudding is probably named for its wonderfully soft texture. "It's very velvety to eat — it just melts in your mouth — and the golden syrup gives it a flavour all its own," Frances says. "Both of my daughters and I love to serve it on special occasions, and my granddaughter has now learnt to make it. It has always been a favourite pudding in our family."

VELVET PUDDING

INGREDIENTS

2 teaspoons caster sugar
2 egg yolks
3 teaspoons custard powder
475ml milk
3 teaspoons golden syrup
1 teaspoon vanilla essence

MERINGUE

2 eggwhites
2 tablespoons caster sugar

Serves 6–8
Cooking time 20 minutes

METHOD

Preheat oven to 220°C. Place caster sugar and egg yolks in a medium heatproof bowl and whisk until creamy.

Place custard powder in a small bowl. Add 2 tablespoons of milk, and stir until smooth and well combined.

Place remaining milk in a medium saucepan and bring to a simmer over a medium heat. Gradually add hot milk to egg-yolk mixture, whisking constantly, until smooth and combined. Add custard-powder mixture and whisk to combine. Return to pan and place over a medium heat. Add golden syrup and cook, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until mixture boils. Simmer for 3 minutes or until custard thickens. Add vanilla essence, and stir to combine. Strain custard through a fine sieve into a 4-cup capacity baking dish.

To make meringue, using an electric mixer, whisk eggwhites in a clean, dry bowl until soft peaks form. Gradually add caster sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time, whisking well between each addition. Whisk until sugar has dissolved and meringue is thick and glossy.

Spoon meringue over custard in dish. Bake for 5–7 minutes or until meringue is golden brown. Serve at room temperature.

"Mother made it frequently. It's a good cake for smoko."