

Burnt Offerings

Inge Danaher © April 2015

I hated them when I was a child and I would gag when I ate them. One day I was served a plate of Mum's favorite "Bratkartoffeln" (bit like a Farmer's Breakfast), which we had regularly for dinner. They consisted of sliced boiled potatoes, fried with diced bacon and onion bits and finished off with an egg on top. My Dad said the bacon and onion was only done when it was black, so I guess to please him, Mum would burn them. I didn't mind the potatoes at all but the burnt offerings would make me gag.

One day I thought I would outsmart him. At home everything on our plate had to be eaten and if you ate too fast, another scoop would land on it, in front of your face. So you learnt to slow down for the stuff you hated and speed up with the delicious food. I still find it difficult to eat slowly. Maybe in a large family you often run low on food but I must say our sizes belied that. We didn't look like the starving children of Africa whom we offended when we didn't lick our plates clean.

So this day I carefully spat out all the burnt bits of bacon and onions into my hand when he wasn't looking and placed them under the rim of my plate. I was obviously not very smart and didn't look ahead as to what could happen when Mum took the plate away. Yep ... a nice ring of burnt bacon and onion bits that had been partially chewed and were now cold to boost.

You guessed it. My father's eyes lit up when he discovered them. I don't remember exactly how long I sat there gagging and swallowing until the last burnt offering disappeared from view.

I think my Dad must have grown up on burnt food. His mother and sisters must have burnt all the food when he was a child. Maybe in the war years they all believed charcoal was good for you. He also said Potato Pancakes (another regular meal) were not done unless they were black on the edges. So one day when Mum was in hospital having my young brother he made them himself and the smoke filled the house and wafted down the street.

I don't mind them as much now but then I don't let them get totally black. LOL