The sweet smell of cinnamon resonated through the house. A wave of heat washed over my face as I opened the oven door to reveal my first batch of snickerdoodles. Small domes of sugary cookies shyly peeked from the edge of the door. I smiled as I thought about the joy these cookies would bring to my friends. They like to compare me to the witch in Hansel and Gretel, joking that I fatten children up and then forget to eat them. I don’t particularly love being in the same company as an evil witch, but any rancor I might feel at this comparison is overwhelmed by my enjoyment of their anticipation of my baked goods.

There is something about the warmth of a kitchen filled with the buttery smell of pastry that evokes a feeling of utter relaxation. I find joy in sharing this warm and homey experience by showering the people around me with sweets. The smile that ticks up the corners of someone’s mouth as they bite into my food gives me a sense of pride and accomplishment.

For as long as I can remember, baking has been an integral part of my life. Thanks to busy parents and hungry siblings, I was encouraged to cook from a relatively young age. Time spent in the kitchen naturally piqued my interest in baking, and that glimmer of interest blossomed into a heart-warming hobby that rejuvenates my stressful days, improves upon even the happiest moments, and brings joy to the people around me.

They say that the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach. It has been my experience that the way to ANYONE’S heart is through the stomach. To me, food is not simply about sustenance. The time that I spend in my kitchen, the effort and care that I pour into my confectionary creations, is a labor of love that brings me just as much satisfaction as it does my hungry friends and family.