

Jeanie's Memories

Jeanie (Gina) Iaione Czerwinski

As I look back, growing up on Mountain Avenue with all those Italians brings back some great memories.

Mom saw to it that we went shopping in the BIG city of Plainfield every week. We would catch the Somerset bus in front of the house and get off at Montgomery Ward's, our first stop. Then on to Elliott's, the lingerie shop, where Tessy would help us, and Mom would spend mega bucks on Vanity Fair slips for herself, Mary, Flo, and me. Then on to Rosenbaum's, Tepper's and Sears before our journey home later in the day. Don't ever recall going out to lunch though!



Shopping also included the street vendors who came down Mountain Avenue once a week. Mr. Lin, the fruitman; the little Italian guy who sold peppers--we knew he was coming because he always yelled out what sounded like "pepperiol" as he was coming down the street; the dry goods vendor who sold undershirts and briefs--Mom was forever buying Fruit of the Loom underwear for Pop, Tony, and Jake.



Pop had a huge garden in back of the house--grew tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, carrots, string beans, garlic, onions, grapes, apples, and figs (had to bury or cover the fig tree every winter, otherwise the tree would be lost to frost). Then, of course, there were the chickens which eventually ended up "under the knife" in the basement and being stripped of their feathers and innards so that they could be cooked for dinner. If I'm not mistaken, there was a duck or two in there also. I remember vaguely a pig hanging from the tree or clothesline--it was in preparation for a pig roast.

In August/September we had to get up at 6 a.m. so we could start canning tomatoes. It was an all-day process and, of course, we had spaghetti with the fresh tomato sauce for supper that evening. It was heavenly!