



The veggie garden story

If anyone was ever looking for me, they knew they could find me in the garden. It's my happy place. Let me tell you it can be a big job looking after the garden, particularly the veggie patch, but I wouldn't have had it any other way.

Every time there was a change of season approaching, we'd be planning and scheming what we would do this time, this year, and asking ourselves which seeds to plant? Which plants to tend to, and which to harvest? I loved this part because it was always a new beginning.

I used to put on my oldest, comfiest clothing to wear while gardening, because of course you know they're going to become very grubby, very quickly. I always wore a good pair of gloves too, very thick ones.

Gardening feels so natural. It's great to get amongst the trees and plants, burying seeds, weeding the garden beds, and feeling connected to the earth.

Nothing beats picking some fresh veggies from the veggie patch, and cooking with them right away. Fresh veggies smell so good. Spinach, potatoes, tomatoes, eggplants, and many more! The herbs were impressive too, our mint plant seemed to have a mind of its own. Mint plants can grow to be gigantic!

Growing our own food in the garden was a resourceful thing to do, and we often had extra produce to hand over the fence to share with the neighbours.

Discussion question:

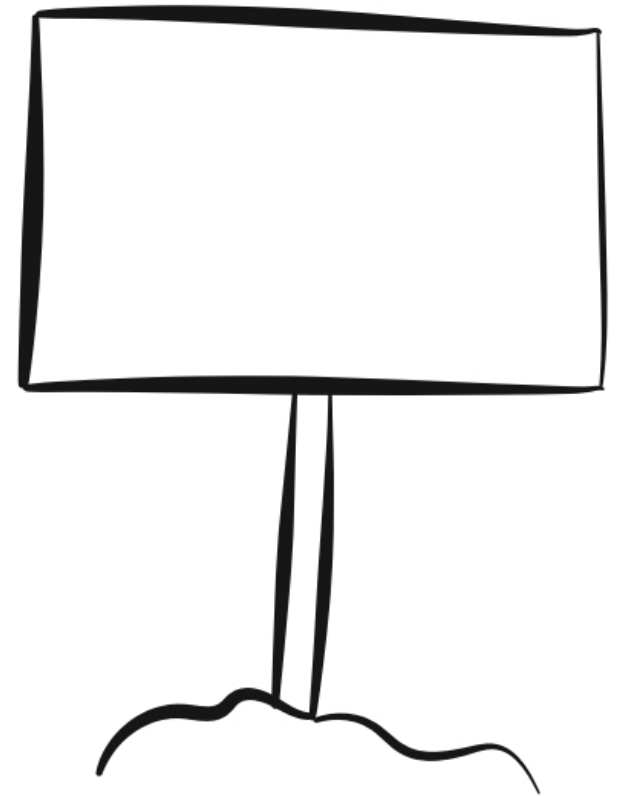
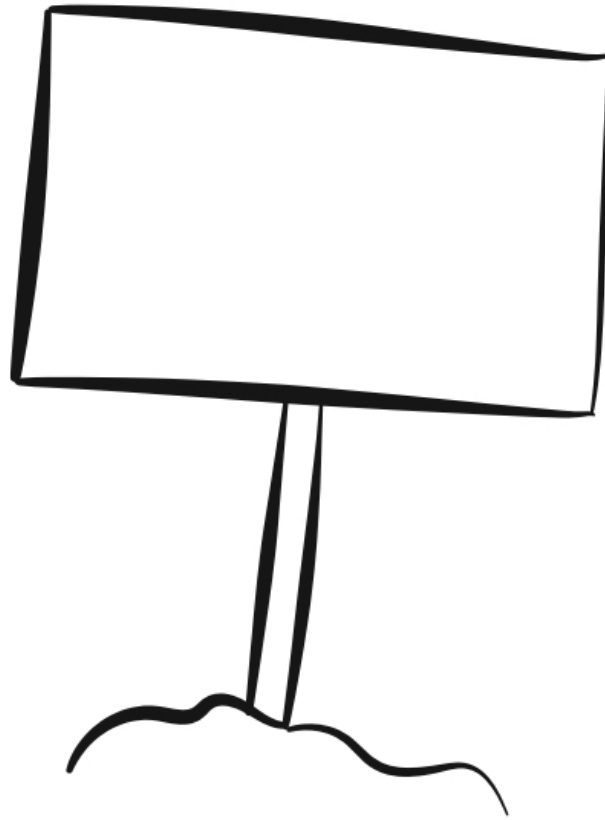
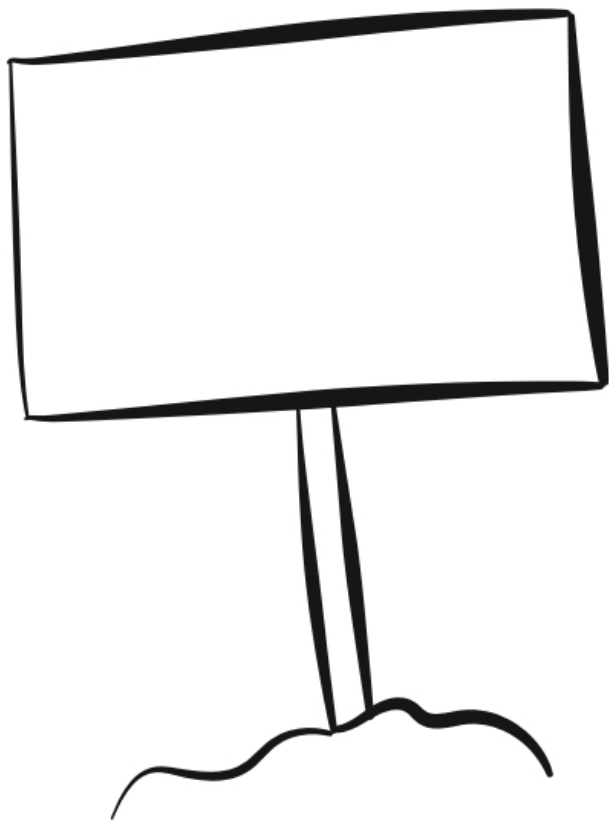
What was your favourite thing to grow in the garden?

Activity (on the next page):

It's almost Spring and some fresh seeds have been sown. Fill out the labels so you can remember which plant is which!



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Birthday party story

There's nothing kids love more than a birthday party. Such a happy celebration, it's wonderful seeing how excited they get in the lead up to it, inviting their friends around to join the fun. You spend a few days preparing all the party food. Fairy bread, chocolate crackles, sausage rolls, jelly served in orange peels, and then, of course, the cake!

In our family, the cake was always the showstopper. A true work of art. When it came time to reveal the shape and flavour of the birthday cake everybody would be guessing and jumping up and down with glee. That was always the best part of the day. I remember once, there was a cake in the shape of a train. It had colourful sponge cake carriages all sitting upon chocolate train tracks, with smarties on the wheels and jellybeans as cargo. It tasted pretty darn good too!

The kids would all play party games - pass the parcel, egg and spoon races, and pin the tail on the donkey. They'd wear themselves out with the friendly competition and laughter, and then all gather round for some sausage rolls and what-have-you, ending up with tomato sauce smeared across all their little faces. The parents would be happy if even just a little bit of fruit managed to sneak in there.

We made sure all the kids went home with a lolly bag. That always felt like such a bonus after a fun-filled day of activities, as if there were not enough treats already!

Discussion question:

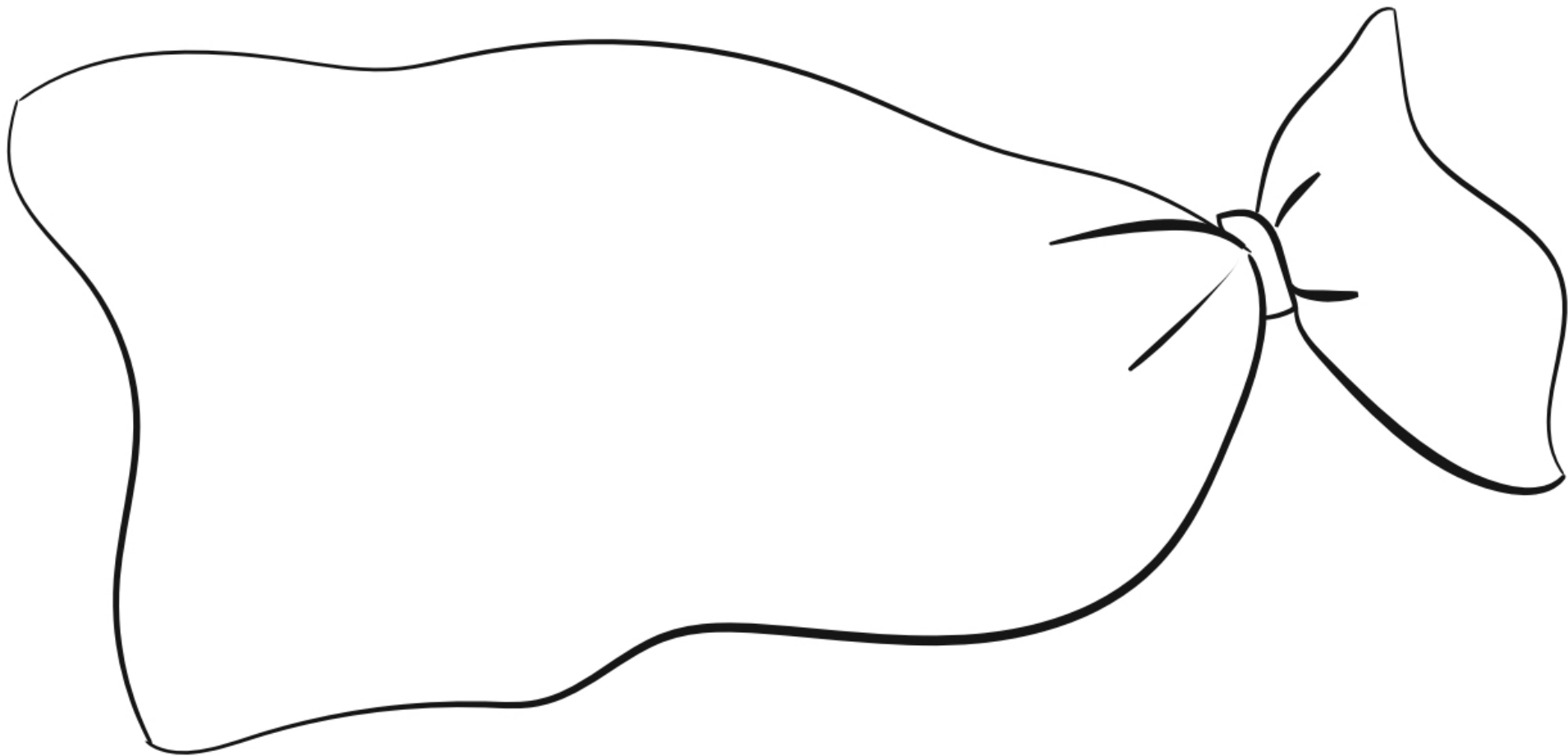
What is the most spectacular cake you've ever seen?

Activity (on the next page):

Here is an empty lolly bag to send home with a birthday party guest. What treats will you fill it up with?



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A cup of tea in the kitchen story

Whenever a friend or neighbour popped around, I would offer them a cup of tea in the kitchen. It makes people feel relaxed you know? They can just sit down and feel welcome while the kettle hums away. I'd always offer them a cake, a bikkie, or something sweet to go with the tea.

I remember once I was caught off guard with a surprise visitor. I wanted to be polite but had nothing to offer them as I hadn't been to the shops. I scanned through the fridge to no avail, then looked through empty cupboard after empty cupboard until, there it was in a flash of pink, a whole packet of Iced VoVos I had forgotten about. Thank goodness for the Iced VoVos!

Over a cup of tea, we would talk about anything and everything. I don't think there was a topic that wasn't covered at my kitchen table. We'd joke around saying we were "solving all the world's problems" over a cuppa.



Discussion question:

How do you take your tea or coffee? Has this changed over the years? Do you like something sweet with a cuppa?

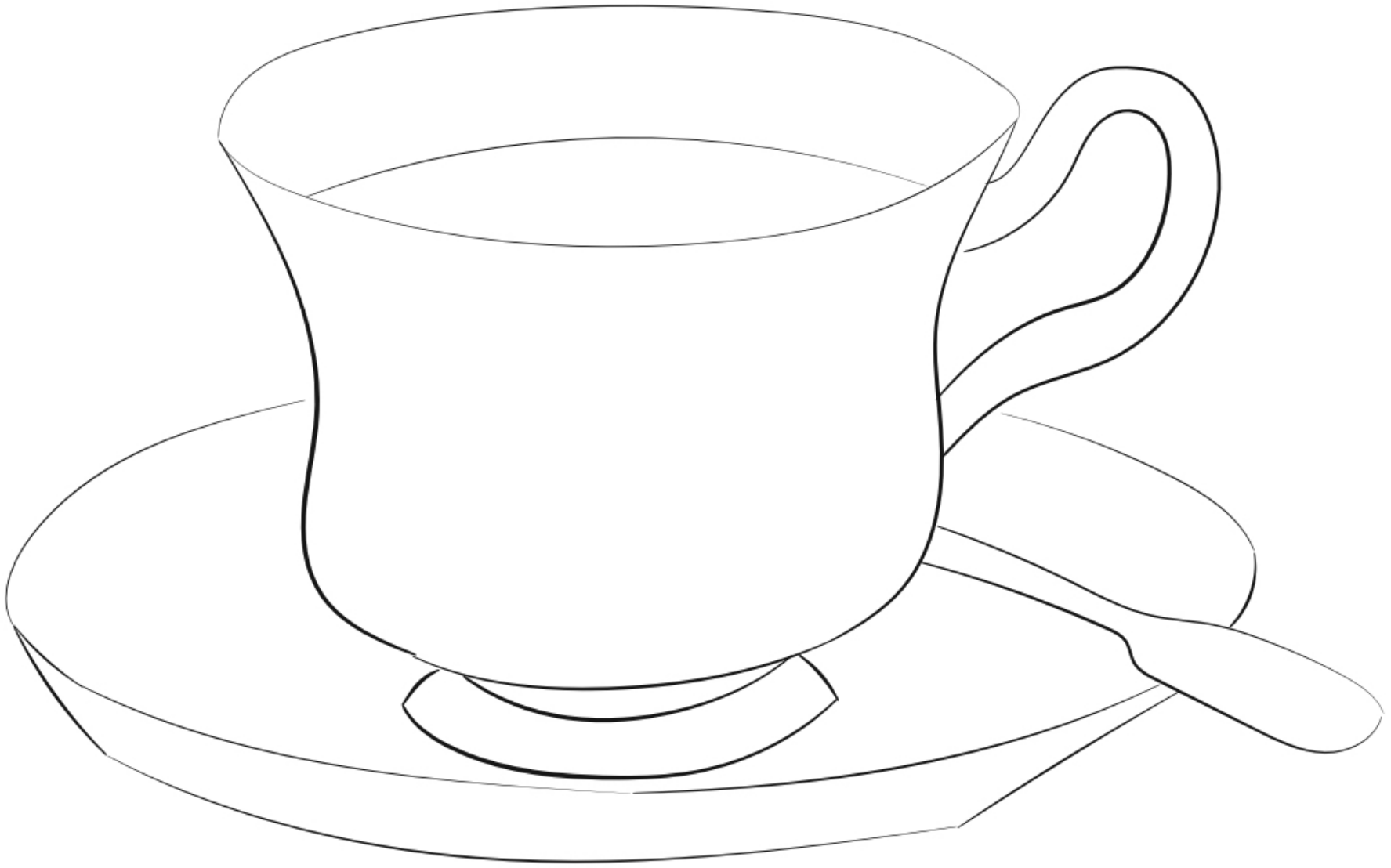


Activity (on the next page):

Afternoon teatime! Decorate this teacup and saucer with a pattern of your choice.



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The campfire story

We went camping every summer, and I looked forward to it all year. Every morning we'd wake up to the sounds of Mother Nature; lyre birds calling out, kookaburras laughing, the hum of the cicadas, and the distant rhythm of the ocean's waves crashing onto the beach nearby.

Whoever was up first would start boiling the billy so we could all have a fresh cup of tea or coffee around the campfire. Life was simpler in the great outdoors, and the most important thing we really had to think about was what we should cook up that night in the camp oven!

I remember one camping trip we all went fishing and I caught a really big fish. I felt so proud of myself because it was large enough to share with everyone. We ate it that night underneath the stars, along with potatoes wrapped in aluminium foil and cooked to perfection buried in the campfire coals.

Sometimes while camping we toasted marshmallows which we squashed onto the end of sticks we had found on the ground. You had to hold them over the campfire flames and time it perfectly so the marshmallow wouldn't get too burnt. Yum. Everything tastes better outside!



Discussion question:

What are some examples of meals that can be enjoyed outside? Do you have any special memories of camping or eating outside at picnics or barbecues?

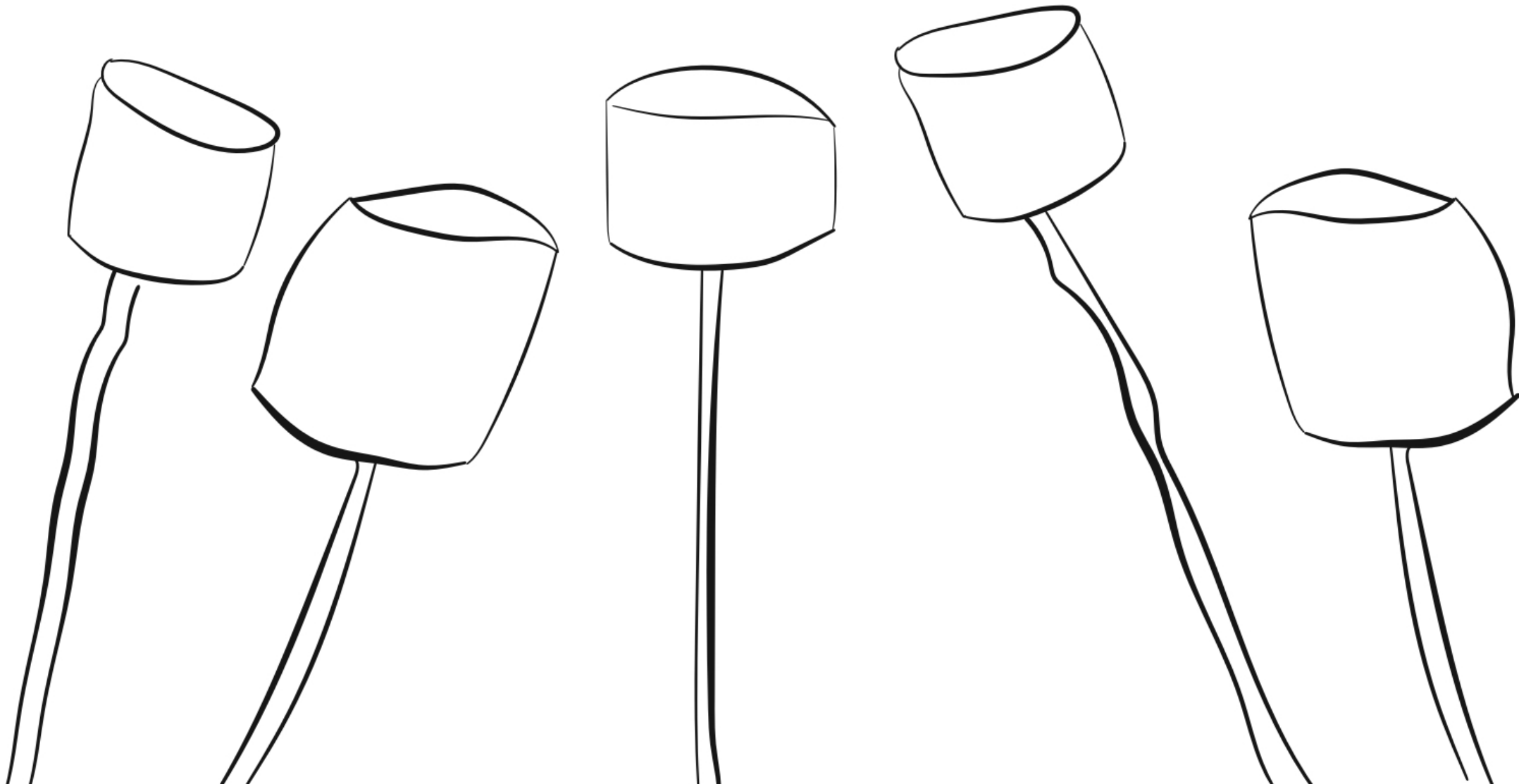


Activity (on the next page):

Use your pencil to colour these marshmallows exactly how you would like them toasted. It's up to you whether you prefer them to be "lightly toasted" or "burnt to a crisp!"



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Guests arriving story

Whenever there was a special occasion, Christmas Day, Mother's Day, birthdays, and such, we'd celebrate at our place. Everyone was welcome at our place. I'd be so eager and excited, checking the clock, waiting for the guests to arrive and I'd think "What's taking them so long?" Then suddenly, they'd be piling in, everybody hugging, kissing, saying hello, and trying to find a bit of room in the fridge to stuff in whatever tasty food dish they were carrying. Everyone would bring a plate of something to share around. I'd peek under the lids of the plastic Streets ice cream containers to see what was inside. Everything would look and smell so delicious.

We always had too much food. Sometimes the leftovers would last for days! We adults all sat at the big table and the kids had their own table which they loved. Nobody to tell them to keep their elbows in or not to eat too quickly or not to speak with their mouth full. It sure was loud, everyone talking over each other. Once the guests had all left, I'd plonk down in a heap for a minute or two to catch my breath and enjoy the quiet.



Discussion question:

Does someone in your life have a "signature dish" that they are known to bring along to celebrations? Do you have one? Or do you have a favourite?

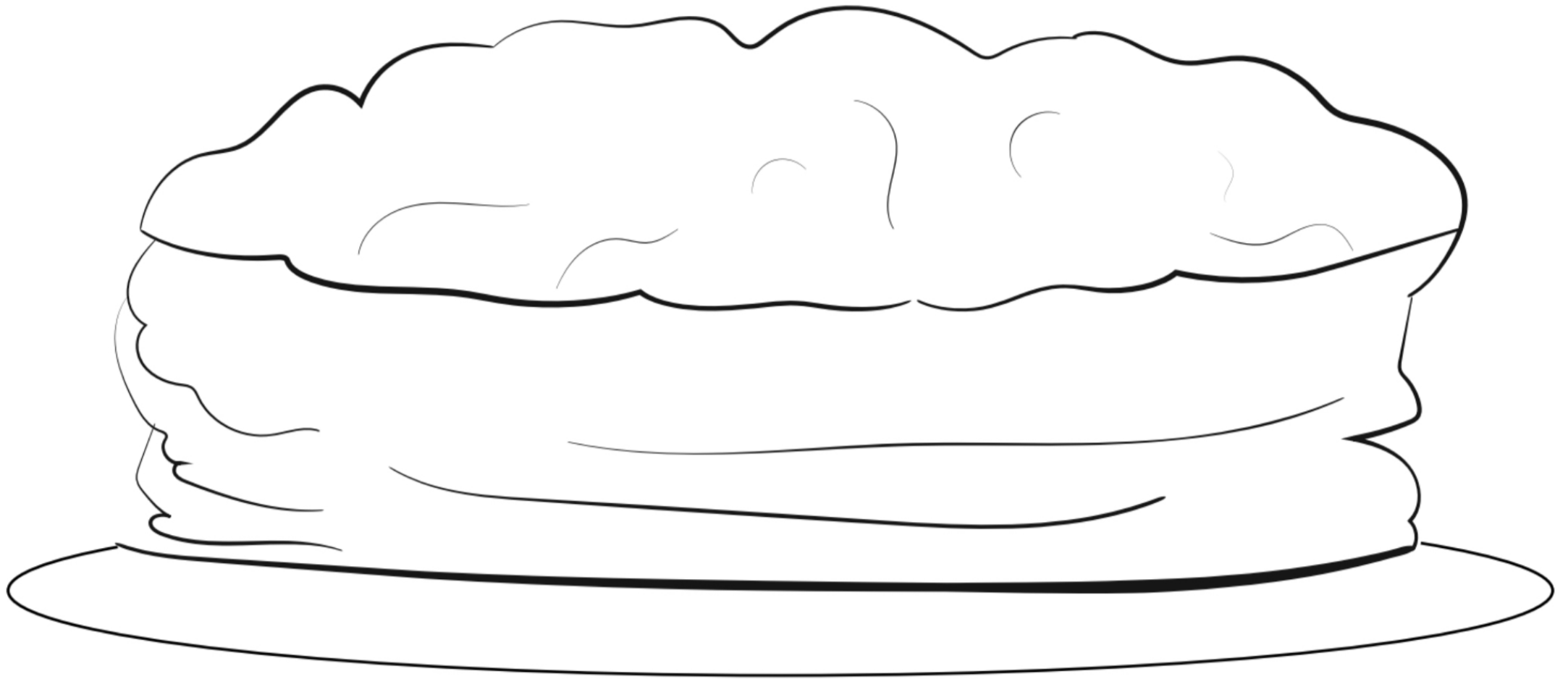


Activity (on the next page):

This pavlova has just come out of the fridge and has been slathered with cream. Draw some fresh fruit to complete the recipe.



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The showground story

Once a year our whole town piled into the local showground for the agricultural show. It was always so exciting and vibrant! There'd be prize chooks of all different breeds competing for best in show, and all sorts of other animals on display, fat pink pigs, black and white dairy cows and enormous black bulls with massive horns and giant metal rings through their noses.

The carnival rides were thrilling. The brave people went on the roller coaster or the rotor and the timid ones among us lined up for the Ferris wheel or carousel. There were side-show alley games, like the one where you try to toss balls into the gaping mouths of a row of moving, gaily painted papier Mache clown's heads. There were fruit and vegetable competitions, including gigantic pumpkins and other colourful gourds, arts and crafts, and many other different stalls and stands with information on all the local farms and produce.

My favourite thing to see was the wood chopping competition. I couldn't believe how strong they all were, chopping the wood at lightning speed with a sharp, shiny axe. The Country Women's Association always had a stall where they sold their home-made, delicious scones with cream and jam. We'd always make time to sit and have a cup of tea and a few of those fresh scones.

If we were lucky, we'd be treated to a big stick of fairy floss, which, although it was quite messy, and my hands and face always felt so sticky afterwards, was so yummy. At the end of the day, we'd collect sample bags from the various stalls that were filled with treats, toys, and games to take home, so the fun just kept on rolling.

Discussion question:

Was there a local agricultural show or fun fair attraction where you grew up?

Activity (on the next page):

Imagine you are entering a produce competition at the local show. Draw a stunning display of fruit and vegetables.



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