

Dear Reader,

Measuring Up is about a kids' cooking competition, the immigrant experience, and the deep love between a grandchild and her grandmother.

In *Measuring Up*, Cici enters a cooking competition so she can bring her grandmother A-má to Seattle for her important 70th birthday. More importantly, Cici misses her very much. My grandmother and I had a special relationship much like A-má and Cici's. I always insisted that I be the one to bring my grandmother flip-flops to change into when she arrived. And, like Cici, I brought lunches to school that made me stand out, like rice balls stuffed with pickled cucumbers or pork sung. But even peanut butter and jelly sandwiches can go wrong. My husband's mom made sandwiches the night before, then left them in the refrigerator. Overnight, the filling dried to a pasty spackle that glued his mouth shut. There is no doubt that there are many ways lunches don't measure up.

Food is such an important cultural touchstone for people from all walks of life. We celebrate major events and milestones through food. For example, Taiwanese Americans enjoy eating fortune cake at Lunar New Year. I've also had my fair share of hoppin John, from the southern tradition of good luck at New Year. And of course there's the champagne toasts at midnight while watching the Times Square ball drop. At the end of the day, food is comfort, love, and a way to bring people together. Food is where cultures fuse and blend together as one.

Measuring Up is also a result of my love of cooking shows, especially those featuring kid contestants. These kids as young as eight years old are masters. Some even started cooking in their kitchens when they were as young as three. My mind is blown not only by such expertise at **such** a young age, but also by their camaraderie. Here is a competition where contestants didn't

tear each other down. I want to capture some of that care and support that go deeper than the competition.

As people, we have many differences. But we also have so many things in common.

Measuring Up is about not only forging an immigrant American identity but also transforming our differences into a common humanity through food.

I hope you enjoy taking a bite out of *Measuring Up* and are whisked away by Ann Xu's amazing art.

Lily LaMotte