As soon as I arrived home and opened the front door, I was greeted
by the flavour of soy sauce mixed with sweet rice wine wafting about
in the hall. This is it. This is what I have been dreaming of.

Instead of saying, ‘I’m home’, I said, ‘Smells good!’ and took off
my coat. I could see my husband in the kitchen wearing an apron,
struggling with a frying pan in one hand. I walked by the kitchen,
glancing in his direction out of the corner of my eye, and took my
time changing into my house clothes. When I came back, broiled
sardines and hot salad were on the table.

I was chatting with my friends once when the topic of getting along
with your husband after his retirement came up. We all wanted our
husbands to cook. This was a wish we all shared. ‘Won’t it be wonder-
ful to find dinner ready when we come home?’ Not satisfied with that,
one friend even said: ‘Just once, I’d like to call home just about the time
dinner is all ready and say, “I don’t need dinner tonight”’. We got quite
excited saying this would be paying back for our plight all these years
and imagined how much of a kick we’d get out of it. But in the end,
we came to the conclusion that it would be a waste of all the ingredi-
ents and we couldn’t possibly do that. We were housewives all right.

I told my husband of this conversation partly as a joke. I don’t
know if this was one of the reasons but last autumn, my husband sud-
denly began to go to a ‘cooking class for men over sixty’. His very
commendable motive seemed to be his desire to manage his own diet.
My husband is slightly diabetic and has some dietary restrictions. The
dishes taught in his cooking class were mainly fish recipes and other
healthy dishes, and the calories were all calculated as well. It was just
what one would expect of a cooking class for senior citizens.
So eight years after retirement, my husband has started to work in the kitchen, although the occasions are still few and far between. As a wife this should be a very welcome state of affairs but . . .

As my husband always wants to begin everything by fully equipping himself, he is not satisfied with the old pots and pans at home. He wants to have the same utensils as the ones used in the cooking class. Even with something like measuring spoons, he doesn’t trust the measuring spoon that I’ve been using for years. A blunt knife is of course out of the question.

I’d like to complain, ‘Why don’t you use what we have at home?’ but he might then say, ‘Well, then, I won’t do any more cooking.’ I don’t want that to happen, either. So thanks to my husband’s cooking, we have an array of new cooking utensils.

What makes me secretly grind my teeth, though, is the way he tries to follow the recipe, word for word. If the recipe calls for one level tablespoon of sugar, it has to be really one level tablespoon, exactly. If there is a dent or a little bump on the surface of the sugar, he will try again and again until it is exactly one level tablespoon, no more, no less. If the recipe says, ‘Sprinkle some minced chives on top’, chives they must be. Substituting with green onions is unthinkable. I don’t say a word. ‘Patience, Patience!’ What a lot of patience one needs to keep one’s husband cooking happily!

‘Isn’t this a little too spicy?’
‘No, it’s just right.’
‘I overcooked it and it has become too dry.’
‘Oh, I think it tastes just fine like this.’

Whether it’s too hot or all dried up, I have nothing but words of praise.

After a little while, either because he has got used to cooking or because he has learned to cut corners, he is now a bit more relaxed. ‘It says use pork but there’s some ham in the fridge, so I’ll use that instead,’ he’d say. He has also begun to show interest in recipes other than the ones he learned in his cooking class. He bought a book, *Easy Recipes for the Microwave Oven*, and he is enjoying trying those recipes almost as if they were some kind of experiment. When he started, making one dish was the best he could do, but he can now produce two dishes for one meal.