

Today is my mommy's birthday and what she wants is to have everyone in the restaurant sing to her

I love my birthday, but our sons were even more excited than I was this year.

They were excited to give me my gift, a rice cooker (hurrah!), and to take me to dinner at Buca di Beppo, an Italian restaurant in White Marsh, Md.



We hadn't been at our table for more than two minutes when the wait staff marched by singing and bearing a lit candelabra.

"Meatballs, pasta, we made them fresh for you..."

Our sons were enthralled.

"Homemade marinara, lots of garlic too..."

Leo recognized right away that they were singing because it was someone's birthday.

"It's your day at Buca, so we're here to say, have a happy birthday the Buca di Beppo way!"



"Will they do that for you, Mama?" Leo asked

"Um, probably not," I said. "They don't know it's my birthday." (Thank goodness.)

That was all Leo needed. When the waiter stopped by a few minutes later, our 7-year-old said, "Today is my mommy's birthday."

The waiter smiled and made a friendly response.

When the waiter came back minutes later, our 5-year-old repeated, "Today is my mommy's birthday." Another smile.

Leo wanted to make sure we got results. Next time the waiter came by, he asked whether people would be singing the song at our table. So the waiter whispered into his ear, and Leo sat there grinning.

Now you know that I didn't really want them to sing. Everyone would turn and look at me! But I knew our boys would love it. And I am definitely at the point in my life where the birthday celebrations are more for them than for me. So I played along.

Soon enough the wait staff marched over and sang. I just sat there and soaked it in. It was impossible not to smile. Our children were jumping out of their skin with joy.



Then we blew out the candles and split some tiramisu.

On the way home, the boys sang at the top of their lungs.

"Meatballs, pasta, we made them fresh for you..."

Have I mentioned how much I love my birthday?