



LIFE IN THE KITCHEN

What I Cooked on My Rebirthday for the Community That Saved My Life

by CAROLINE WRIGHT



I had just turned in my third cookbook when I found out about my brain tumor. It was discovered after a few months of unusual behavior that I had attributed to the stress of my looming deadline while raising two little boys then under the age of 4 and having just moved to a new city.

There had been signs, I see now from the safety of survival, but I was too busy to notice my body's cry for help. It was the radiant orb in the MRI I had just after Valentine's Day to learn more about my headaches that caught my undivided attention.

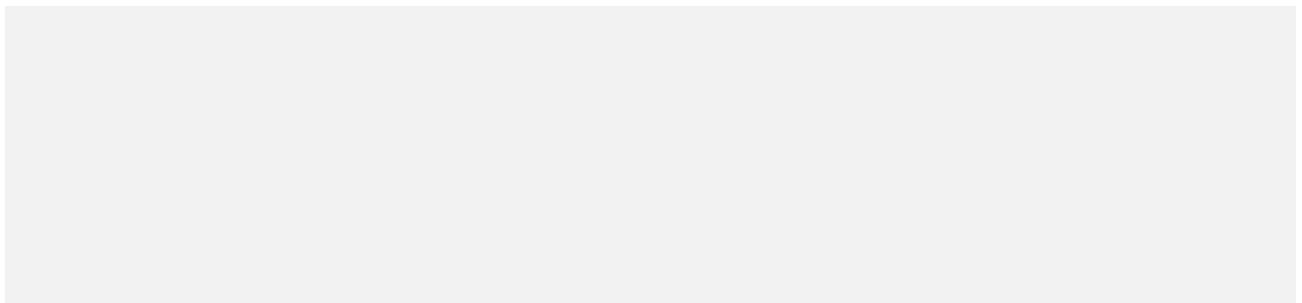
A few weeks later, after a surgery that I was told might take away my defining abilities as a person — to walk and speak, much less write and cook — I discovered that the intruder was, in fact, cancerous. Not just cancerous, but the very one all the doctors I had met had scoffed at as an impossibility: a glioblastoma, or otherwise known in some circles as The Terminator for its merciless treatment of its patients and 100% recurrence rate. When my surgeons gave me the news, they sent me home with a very aggressive treatment plan that included heavy radiation, a year of chemotherapy, and very little hope.

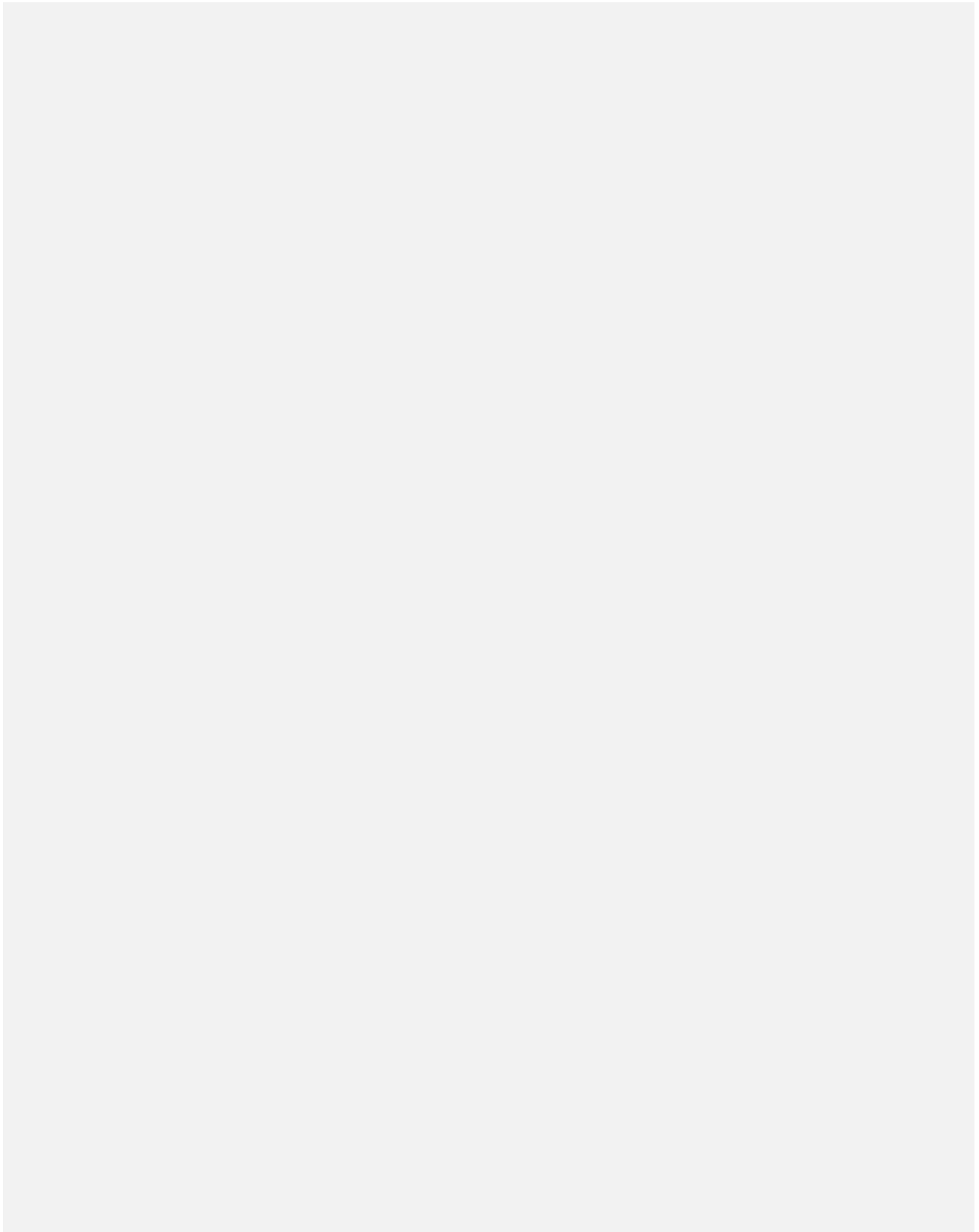


pragmatist, relentless artist, and devoted mother — for as long as I could. I changed my diet, took long walks in the budding Seattle spring, wrote incessantly, and never found the symptoms the doctors had warned me about while still understanding the parameters of my diagnosis.

Being told I was dying at a time when my days held very real bursts of love and joy for my life was a surreal contrast. From my perch at the edge of oblivion, I pushed the boundary of everything I understood about my life: my definitions of fear, love, and gratitude and where they commingled in this surreal place; my friendships, my food, and allowing myself to be truly cared for through both. I examined every aspect of my life and retreated from toxic outlets and relationships, including social media and reading the news that tethered me to the outside world. I listened intently to the quiet voice inside my body that told me the roadmap to find health, the secret to my survival.

When I arrived at my one-year mark, the one my doctors had warned I might not see, the truest parts of me were not just unscathed, but fortified. I was not just living, but truly alive. This is how the anniversary of my craniotomy became known in our house as my “rebirthday,” for it was the day that birthed the person I recognize in the mirror today, a reluctant warrior who became strong at her weakest point. I had managed somehow to smile in the face of certain death, open to it with trembling, welcoming arms, and found the embrace of a supportive community instead.





(Image credit: Courtesy of Adair Rutledge)

Before my diagnosis, I had never experienced what can happen when the energetic power of a collection of lovely people, a vibrant community, focuses its love. My community, one I walked into by chance just after moving to Seattle, found me in the early days after my diagnosis and lifted me up: a collection of neighbors, random acquaintances, and parents from my son Henry's preschool. This community was fostered by a blog on the Cedar-Rainier website, which

sweet preschool. This community was fostered by my blog on the CaringBridge website, which I initially wrote to inform distant relatives and friends of my health news and disseminate suggestions for support, but [it grew into something much more](#).

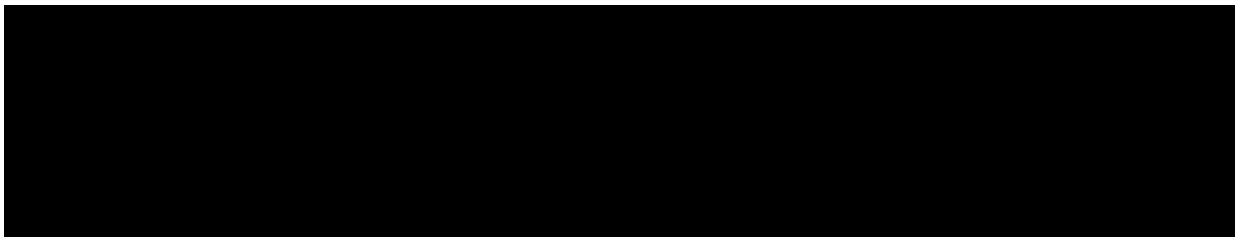
My grassroots Seattle friends made me meals, took my children into their homes, showed up at mine to keep me company at a time when some of my closest friends I'd held my whole life were struggling to face my diagnosis. It was honestly the closest thing to the divine I've ever experienced. We wrote to each other brave, healing words that bound us together through [journal entries on my blog](#). Many of my readers there I had never met, but many more were silent characters from communities of my past. I had overlooked some friendship gems hidden in tall grass, distracted on my path of moving forward, growing up, getting out.

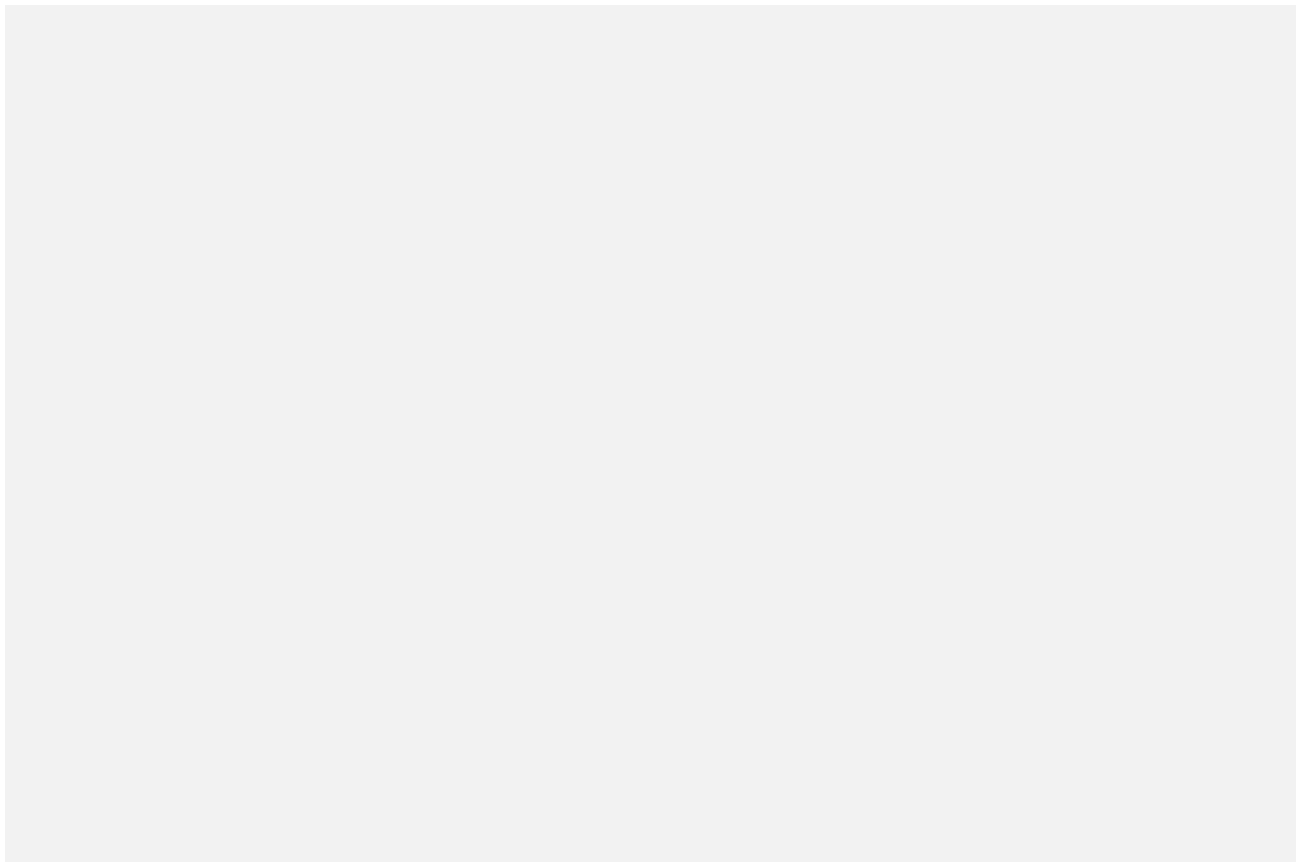
I felt the integration of all of this love like a baptism, doused over me when my inner supply had suddenly and dramatically drained dry. Their words held and healed me, my family. They fueled my fight. I will never forget the power I witnessed of near strangers, given to me as easily as a vase of flowers but more beautiful and ever-blooming. Their love and kindness transferred to me a kind of strength I had never known or needed before. It refilled my inner well that still brims full today.

On my "rebirthday," I throw a party. Not for me, although I am grateful on that day as any other to be alive, but for them. To bring them into my home, shower them with the love and food they offered me without my asking. It is an honor to be able to offer a single token of kindness once a year in service to the great debt I owe my community.

For my "rebirthday" this year, I arrived home after a trip to visit my beloved corner of New York City, the community that raised me before my sons did and well after my parents tried. A part of me (maybe the part that lounges around the now overflowing inner well inside me, awkwardly in a swimsuit) still can't believe that the words "home" and "New York" are separate. It is one of many surprises of my adult life, this trail of a thousand utterances of "yes" that led me to a little yellow house on a hill in Seattle.

It is there that I opened my doors and ushered in my community, our dining table filled with offerings that are still only food at a party until they show up. Their love shown in their presence, in that moment as it was years ago, transforms the space, each other, my collection of quiche and dip and punch. Just like that, in the glow of community, we are all reborn. Together.





(Image credit: Courtesy of Caroline Wright)

Deep-Dish Quiche

This is a recipe outline of sorts — quiche is one of those things that can be filled with tasty leftovers, making sense of little odds and ends. I made four of these quiches over the span of a few weeks, cooled them completely, then froze them on wire racks. Once frozen, I wrapped each quiche in plastic then aluminum foil. After labeling them to avoid confusing a future version of myself, I popped them back in the freezer. On the day of my brunch, I returned each to the oven, still frozen, until they were heated through (again, 350°F for 1 hour). With *crudit *

to the oven, still frozen, until they were heated through (again, 350 F for 1 hour). With crudités, a few dips (also from the freezer), and a humble assortment of fresh fruit, I had a very easy menu for my big day and could focus on my guests!

[PRINT RECIPE](#)

0 Ratings



I made this!

Deep-Dish Quiche

INGREDIENTS

For the crust:

- ☐ 1 (5-ounce) log soft goat cheese
- ☐ 1 cup shredded mozzarella
- ☐ 1 cup arrowroot flour, optional
- ☐ 1/2 cup psyllium husk
- ☐ 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast
- ☐ 1/2 teaspoon Himalayan or kosher salt
- ☐ 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- ☐ 2 teaspoons xanthan gum
- ☐ 2 large eggs

For the custard:

- ☐ 1 1/2 cups half-and-half
- ☐ 6 large eggs
- ☐ 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- ☐ 1/2 teaspoon Himalayan salt
- ☐ 1/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

For the filling:

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- ☐ About 4 cups cooked vegetables
- ☐ About 2 cups grated or crumbled cheese
- ☐ Up to 1/2 cup chopped fresh herbs, optional

INSTRUCTIONS

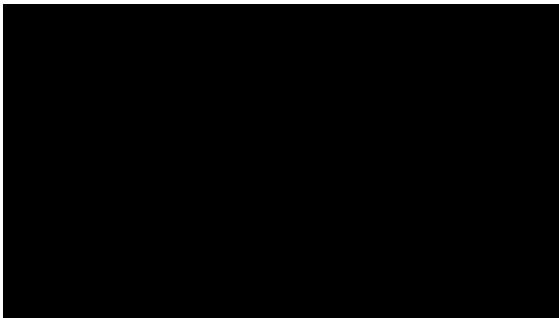
- 1.** Preheat oven to 350°F with rack in lowest position. Combine crust ingredients, without the egg, in the bowl of a food processor. Pulse until the mixture resembles fine pebbles or a coarse meal. Add egg and pulse to evenly combine (mixture will hydrate and hold together when pressed).
- 2.** Turn crust mixture out into the bottom of a 9-inch, deep cake pan with a removable bottom (the kind cheesecakes are typically made in). Press mixture about 3/4 of the way up the sides (and about 1/4-inch thick) and evenly on the bottom. (I use a straight-sided dry measuring cup and press it firmly against the crust, against the sides and along the bottom, until it is as smooth and even as possible.) Transfer cake pan to the refrigerator and set aside.
- 3.** In a blender jar, combine custard ingredients and blend for about a minute to thoroughly combine.
- 4.** Fill your quiche crust with your favorite combination of ingredients – this is a great way to reimagine leftovers! (Favorites of mine include: roasted asparagus with feta and dill, sautéed peppers and onions with grated pepper jack... though the possibilities are endless.)
- 5.** Set on a large rimmed baking sheet and transfer to bottom rack in preheated oven. Bake until the custard is puffed, golden and no longer wobbles when the pan is jiggled, about 1 hour. Transfer the quiche to a wire rack to cool completely. Run a thin knife along the edge of the pan to release crust, then unhinge and remove the ring. Slide a knife or large, thin spatula between the bottom crust and the metal round to loosen it, then pull round from beneath the crust to set the quiche directly on the wire rack. (See note for freezing instructions.)

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A version of this article first ran on [The Wright Recipes](#).



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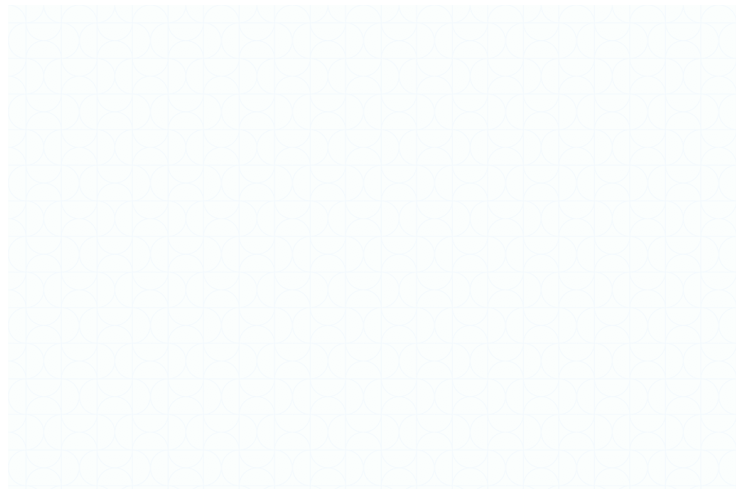
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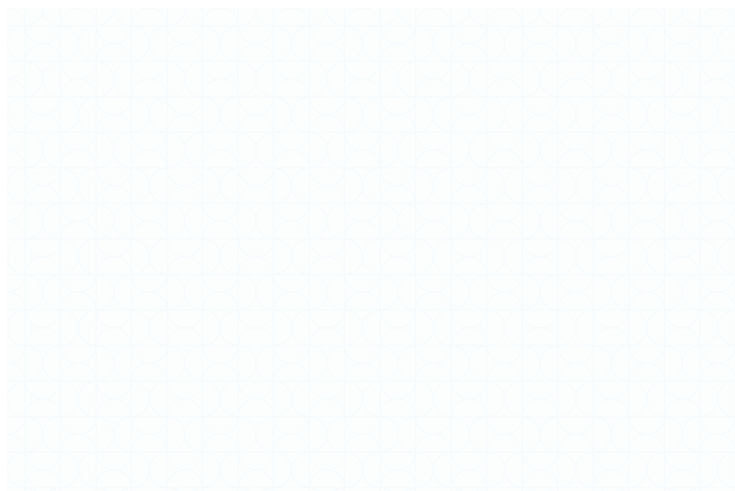
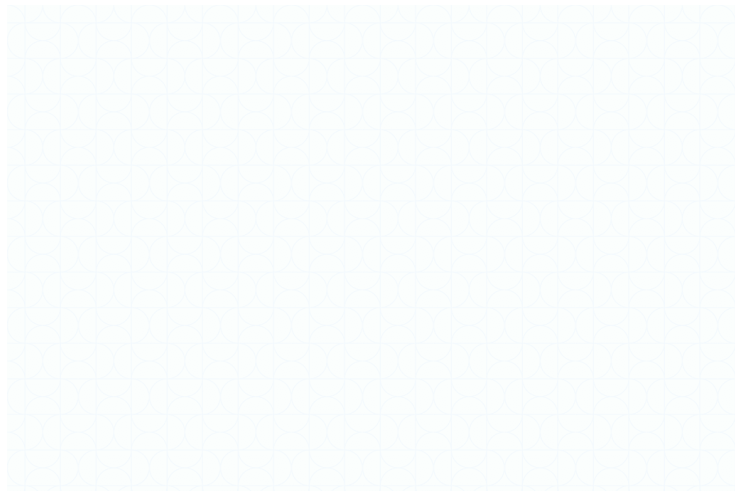
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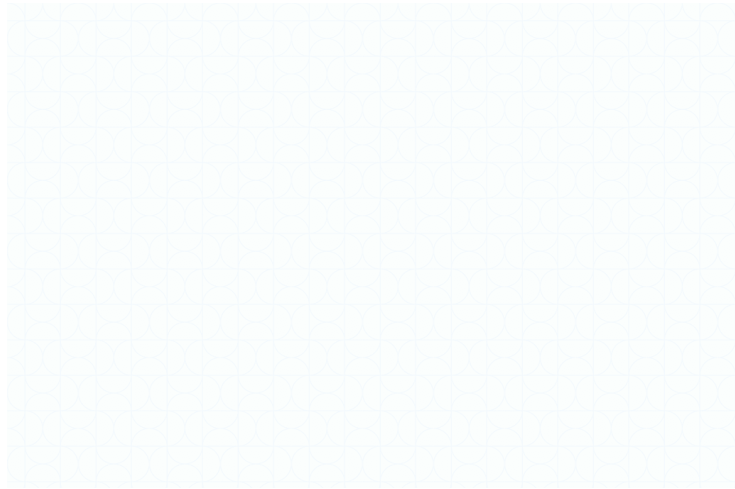
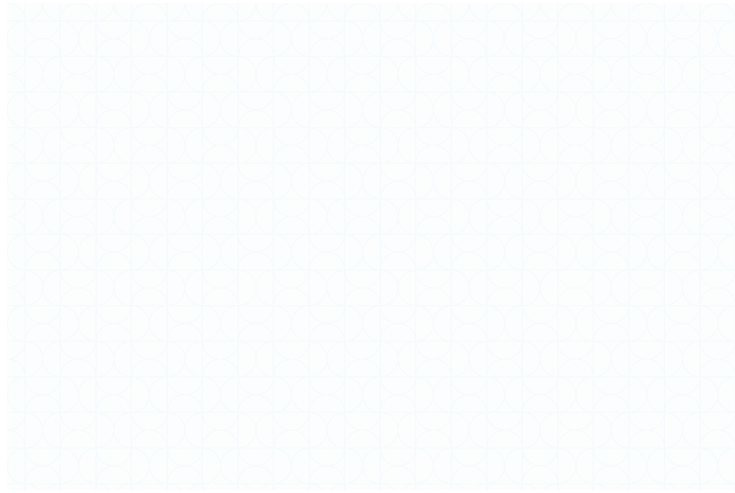
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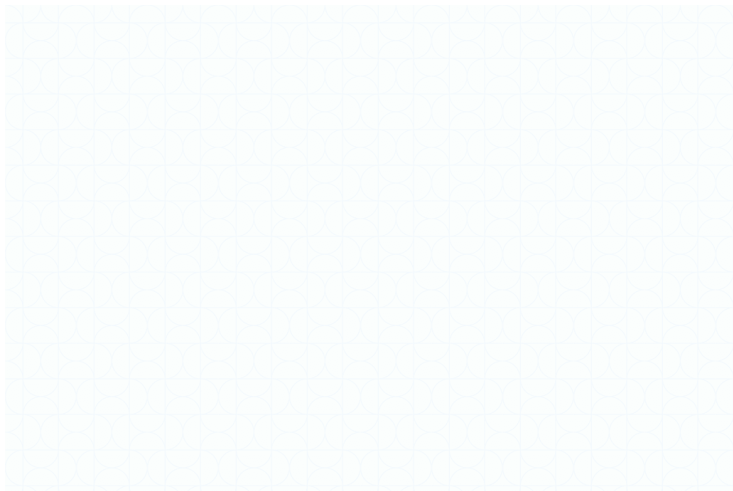
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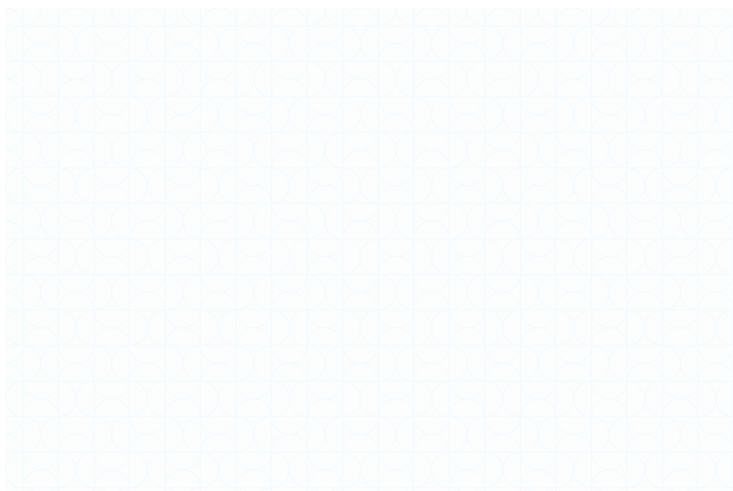
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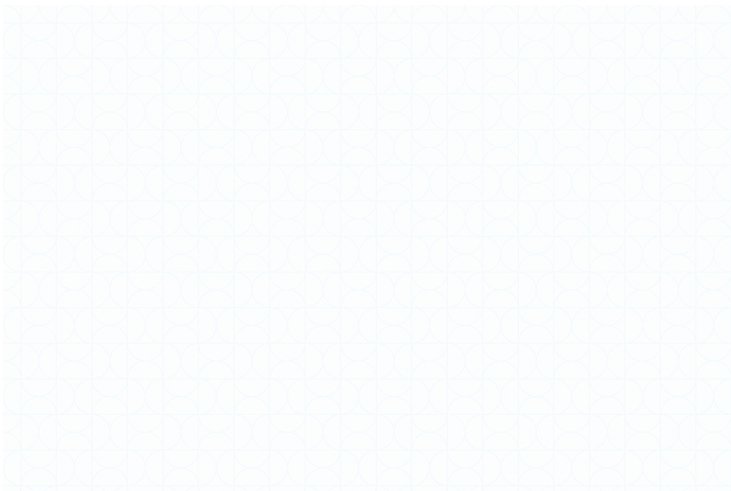
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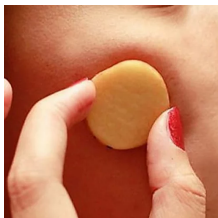
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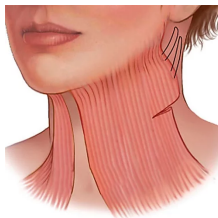
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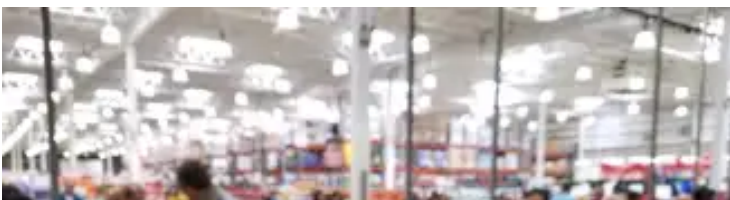


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