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Friends, family, and everyone who loved our Mama Lin—thank you for being here to celebrate the life of my mom, Linda Marie Harrison.

It feels right to say her full name, because she lived a full life.
And it feels right to say her nickname—Mama Lin—because she opened her arms so wide that a whole neighborhood fit inside.

She was born in Portland on January 22, 1962, and she left us on September 2, 2025, at 63—still too soon for all of us who wanted more time.
But if you knew her, you also know this: she used every minute as if life were a market day and the stalls were overflowing—she sampled everything, and she shared everything she found.

In her twenties, she threw a backpack on her shoulders and disappeared into the great green of our national parks.
She collected trail names and sunrise stories the way some people collect postcards.
I think that was the beginning of her faith—out under the pines and the big sky.
She was a spiritual seeker, not the kind to preach, but the kind to listen to the wind and say thank you.
Gratitude was her practice.
Service was her prayer.

When she came back to the city, she carried the wild with her and put it into the most unexpected place: a tiny neighborhood café.
From that kitchen, she built a life—farm-to-table not as a trend, but as a promise to local farmers, to food security, to every person who crossed her threshold.
She taught us that food is love you can taste, that the distance between a field and a table—and a person and their neighbor—should be as short as possible.

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That café became more than a café.
Music nights spilled onto the sidewalk.
Food drives filled the pantry by the door.
She rallied folks with a chalkboard and a grin, and suddenly there'd be a band in the corner, a farmer with a crate of tomatoes, and three new best friends at a table meant for two.
"Gather, nourish, repeat," she'd say, wiping her hands on her apron.
It was her mantra, and also her map.
And then, when the room glowed and the clatter softened, you'd hear her add, "Joy shared is joy doubled."
She made joy a communal project.
Somehow she also made responsibility joyful.

At home, she answered to the name that makes my heart catch—Mama.
I am her daughter, and I was lucky enough to share a deeply close and joyful relationship with her—a mother-daughter friendship built on adventure and trust.
We were co-conspirators in spontaneous plans and slow mornings, secret hand squeezes, and the kind of honesty that lets you grow without fear.
We had a thousand small rituals, but there's one I carry like a lighthouse in my chest.

Sunrise drives to the coast.
Thermoses of cocoa at our feet.
Old records humming from the speakers—she insisted vinyl had a different kind of soul, and I believed her.
We would sing along until the road turned quiet, then watch the waves in companionable silence.
No speeches, no lessons, just breath and tide.
I think that's where she taught me how to be brave—without saying a word—how to greet the day with warmth, how to let the big things be big and still feel safe.

She did everything fearlessly and with color—vibrant, generous, endlessly

creative.
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If you ever tasted her cooking, you know she couldn’t resist a new recipe.
If you ever hiked with her, you know she’d veer off to chase a birdsong and come back with wildflowers in her hair.
If you ever saw her paintings, you know she could translate light into watercolor in a way that made you swear you were smelling the salt air.
And if you ever flipped through her record collection, you know there was a story attached to every album—who she was when she found it, the friends who were there, the night the needle skipped and everyone laughed so hard they cried.

Home wasn’t just the four walls where we lived.
Home was her open door.
She and Susan—her partner of 18 years, her anchor and her joy—created a kind of haven together.
A place where the porch light meant, “Come as you are.”
Where my sister Jenna and I learned that family is us, yes—and also the people you make a plate for and pull up a chair for.
It’s not an exaggeration to say she was “auntie” to half the block.
She remembered names, favorite pies, and the small courage it takes to ring a doorbell when you need a hand.
With Susan beside her, she built a community out of casseroles, playlists, and the unshakable belief that people deserve to feel seen.

If you ask what people will miss most, I think of three things.
Her laugh—the kind that started in her shoulders and caught like wildfire.
Her open-door dinners—no RSVP, just a “you’re here, I’m thrilled, sit down.”
And her way of making every person feel seen—like the universe got a little quieter so she could hear you better.

As a chef and café owner, she fought for local farmers long before it was fashionable, because she understood dignity—what it means to pay a fair price and to feed people well.
As a community organizer, she turned music nights into fundraisers and food

drives into friendships.
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As a spiritual seeker, she found meaning in gratitude and nature and the practice of showing up for others, again and again, without fanfare.

As a mother, she did what mothers at their best do—she made us brave by loving us without conditions.
Jenna and I learned that mistakes are part of the recipe, that you taste as you go, that you try again, that you add a little more salt and a lot more patience.
We learned to adventure wisely and trust boldly.
We learned that sometimes the most loving thing is to sit with someone, looking at the waves, and say nothing at all.

She left us with sayings that fit in your pocket, ready when you need them.
“Gather, nourish, repeat.”
“Joy shared is joy doubled.”
Today, those words feel like both instruction and blessing.
Gather—like we are gathered now, all these stories making a single, beautiful river.
Nourish—one another, and the causes she cared for, and the parts of ourselves that want to grow.
Repeat—because goodness isn’t a one-time event; it’s a habit.

There’s grief here—of course there is.
It comes in like the tide, it surprises us in the grocery store aisle, it knocks on our ribs when a song drifts through the kitchen.
But in the middle of it, there’s also her favorite kind of sunrise—quiet, bright, full of promise.
Her life teaches us how to carry both.
To let sorrow soften us without erasing the color.
To keep making room at the table.

To Susan—thank you for loving her with such steadiness and joy.
The way you two folded your lives together made a bigger home for all of us.
To Jenna—my sister, my co-navigator—you carry her spark every time you

choose wonder over worry.
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To our extended family and the long list of neighbors who call her “auntie”—your presence here proves her instinct was right: community is a verb.

And to everyone who passed through her café, strapped on a backpack beside her, sat in her kitchen, hiked a trail, or danced in the corner at music night—thank you for being part of the chorus that made her life sing.

If you’re looking for a way to honor her, I think she already told us how.
Choose a farmer’s market and learn a name.
Cook something new and invite one more person than you planned.
Turn a regular Tuesday into a music night.
Donate to a food drive, or start one.
Wake up early once in a while and watch the sun come up, cocoa in hand, and hum along to an old record.
Most of all, make someone feel seen—really seen.
That was her superpower, and it’s one we can share.

My favorite memory—those dawn drives to the coast—will be my compass.
When the world feels too loud, I’ll picture her hands on the wheel, the light breaking open, the soft chorus from the speakers, and the wide blue ahead.
I will remember that silence can be holy, that joy is meant to be shared, and that a life well-lived is one long table with room for whoever arrives.

Linda Marie Harrison—our Mama Lin—backpacked through wilderness, built a café that became a community, and turned ordinary days into celebrations.
She was vibrant, generous, fearless, and endlessly creative.
She taught us to gather, to nourish, and to repeat.
She showed us that joy multiplies when we don’t keep it for ourselves.

We miss you, Mama.
We will keep your light moving forward—on our porches, in our kitchens, on the trails, in the quiet moments when gratitude is the only prayer we need.

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Your legacy lives in the recipes we pass down, in the canvases that catch the light, in the records that crackle on a Sunday afternoon, and in the way we greet each other at the door.

Joy shared is joy doubled.
You proved it, every day.
We'll keep proving it, together.

Thank you for loving us the way you did.
Thank you for the courage and the color.
Thank you for the sunrises and the songs.

Gather, nourish, repeat—always, in your name.

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