NEWS LESSON

The Grandmothers Who Became Famous for Making Bread



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What is something an older person in your family does well?
2. Do you enjoy being busy, or would you prefer a slower life?
3. What makes an ordinary day a good day for you?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**tray**	☐	A	something you say to make people laugh
2	**crackers**	☐	B	doing the same thing as someone else does
3	**protein**	☐	C	not normal, a little surprising
4	**column**	☐	D	a short piece of writing by the same person in a newspaper
5	**joke**	☐	E	the Italian word for grandmother
6	**copying**	☐	F	something in food, like meat or eggs, that helps your body grow
7	**nonna**	☐	G	thin, dry biscuits that you eat with cheese or soup
8	**strange**	☐	H	a flat thing that you use to carry food

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Two women in their late eighties bake together in a small Italian town. Millions of people watch, and now there is a word for wanting their life.

1 Grazia Incampo and Teresa Calia have known each other since they were girls. Both are now close to ninety, and most days they are still at work in a bakery in Altamura, a town in the south of Italy. They make bread and pasta the way they have always made them. Somebody films it. In the videos they cook, they sing, they disagree quietly about the right way to do things, and they laugh a great deal.

2 Millions of people have watched. Visitors now travel to the town and wait outside the shop. When the queue is long, the two women come out with a tray of fresh crackers and hand them round.

3 Somewhere along the way, the internet found a name for what they seem to have. It is called nonna-maxxing. A nonna is an Italian grandmother. Maxxing means pushing something as far as it will go. Put the two together and you get a joke about copying the habits people imagine an Italian grandmother has: cooking at home, walking to the shops, sitting with friends, taking a long time over lunch.

4 It is a strange word for a slow life. Maxxing usually belongs to videos about better sleep or more protein, and that advice can start to sound like a list of things you are getting wrong. Then along comes a woman of eighty-eight with a pan on the stove and a neighbour at the door.

5 Perhaps the appeal is simple. A meal is not only food. A walk is not only a number on a watch. An afternoon does not always need a result.

6 It is worth remembering that the video is short and the life is long. Not every Italian grandmother cooks, and plenty of them have phones and busy jobs. The past was hard work for most people, and no habit can promise anybody a long life.

7 One writer has already made a joke of the whole thing. In the Guardian, Polly Hudson suggested that next year we try minning instead, which means doing less rather than more. It is an opinion in a newspaper column, not a plan for anybody's life.

8 Still, the two friends in Altamura are not following a plan. They are doing what they have always done, together, and letting somebody film it. That may be the only part anyone can copy.

Sources: Washington Post, Nonna-maxxing serves up a recipe for la dolce vita; Dictionary.com, nonnamaxxing; Polly Hudson, Let us make 2027 the year of minning, The Guardian. Picture: .

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Grazia Incampo and Teresa Calia have been friends since childhood. T F NG
2. Every Italian grandmother cooks at home. T F NG
3. The bakery sends its bread to other countries. T F NG
4. The women give crackers to people waiting outside. T F NG
5. Minning means doing less rather than more. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

advice	appeal	borrow	disagree	invite	opinion	promise

1. Good friends can _____ about small things and still laugh together.
2. Nobody can _____ you a long life, however healthy you are.
3. My sister gave me some useful _____ about how to sleep better.
4. That is only his _____ , and not everyone thinks the same way.
5. The _____ of the videos is easy to see: they are calm, warm and real.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. The two friends _____ each other since they were girls. (KNOW)
2. Millions of people _____ the videos. (WATCH)
3. Most days they are still _____ in the bakery. (WORK)
4. Maxxing _____ pushing something as far as it will go. (MEAN)
5. Last summer the two women _____ a tray of crackers to the people in the queue. (BRING)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A phrasal verb is a verb plus a small word, like out or up. The small word changes the meaning, so learn the two words together.

away down off on out together up

1. The two women come _____ of the shop with a tray of crackers.
2. Put the words nonna and maxxing _____ and you get a joke.
3. The soup was too hot, so she turned the heat _____ a little.
4. The women carry _____ working, even though they are nearly ninety.
5. She grew _____ in a small town and still lives there.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Which habit from your grandparents would you like to keep?
2. Is cooking at home worth the time it takes?
3. How would you spend a free afternoon with no plans at all?

9 Role-play: a slower month at home

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the housemate who wants a slower life

You've watched videos of two grandmothers baking in Italy. You want your house to try nonnamaxxing this month: cook at home, eat at the table together, no phones at dinner. Persuade your housemate.

Student B · the busy housemate

You work long hours and you like quick meals. Say what worries you and ask for something smaller. Try to agree on a plan you can both live with.

Useful phrases

I'd love us to cook together twice a week.

That's a nice idea, but I'm really busy.

What if we start with one dinner?

Could we agree on a day to try it?

I don't mind, as long as we're not too strict.

We'll see how it goes.

Tell the class: what did you agree, and who gave up more?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 H · 2 G · 3 F · 4 D · 5 A · 6 B · 7 E · 8 C

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 T

5 Vocabulary

1 disagree · 2 promise · 3 advice · 4 opinion · 5 appeal

6 Verb forms

1 have known · 2 have watched · 3 working · 4 means · 5 brought

7 Language focus

1 out · 2 together · 3 down · 4 on · 5 up

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