To me, a good fried chicken sandwich is the closest thing there is to perfection. My love for fried chicken started young. Chicken nuggets were a regular, and in my young eyes, an essential part of my diet. However, as I got older and my love for cooking blossomed, I began to see past the crispy-golden crust, and into the work behind its creation. My passion for fried chicken culminates in the fried chicken sandwich. A beautifully orchestrated combination of flavors, fried chicken laying between two soft, fluffy buns, smothered in sauce, resting on a bed of lettuce, and christened with a delicate assortment of pickles. The excitement that eating a good fried chicken sandwich brings me is only beaten by one thing: making one myself.

Being a young and arrogant fried chicken aficionado, I was dismayed when my first sandwich failed. The chicken was the consistency of rubber, the store-bought pickles were soggy and uninspired, and the bun was dry and equally bland. Here, in all my disappointment, I was at a crossroads. I could easily have settled, but my desire to make the perfect sandwich was too strong. I changed my marinade over and over again, doing everything I could to procure the tender chicken I longed for. I began to do my own pickling, experimenting with different brines, seeking a balance between sweet and tart. I taught myself how to bake, mastered the difficult tangzhong that is essential to good buns, and learned the importance of proofing the dough.

My brother used to say, "nothing is perfect. " He did this mainly—and always successfully—to bother my mom, but whether he meant it or not, I think he may have been right.

If perfection could be achieved, what would be left to strive for? Would we just settle for mediocre? Sit comfortably in second? Happily eat our soggy sandwiches with no desire to improve them?

When I took the first bite of my almost-perfect sandwich, I didn't feel what I thought I'd feel. I didn't feel done. It didn't feel perfect.

My fried chicken sandwich is just one example of how perfectionism has impacted my life. For whatever reason I have never been able to shake the feeling that every task, no matter how meaningless, has to be done right. Busy work, assignments that take others minutes to rush

through, take me hours. It's frustrating, as if there is some invisible force holding me to an unreasonably high standard at all times. I remember days when I'd go home, take out my notes that only I would ever see, and correct them for grammar. For what? What could I possibly stand to gain from the absurd ritual of meticulously critiquing even the most arbitrary things?

For better or for worse, when you hold yourself to such a ridiculously high standard in everything you do, the margin for error narrows. While it's easy to reflect on the time lost and all the frustration born out of this tedium, it would be unfair to brush aside what it has given me. I can reluctantly admit that even though much of it is a pointless affair, the pursuit of perfection pushes me, and is in part to blame for the anxious and driven person I am today.

I haven't finished my fried chicken sandwich and I don't intend to. I enjoy the process, the experimentation, and above all, I enjoy the challenge. And while I might never make the perfect sandwich I once dreamt about, I am more than happy to say that I tried.