

HOW TO USE THIS COOKBOOK

People are Afraid to Cook. They Think they do not know how. They are afraid to attempt something New.

I started to write a cookbook when my children first went to college. It was for their friends and was titled: *How to Boil Water and What to Do With It*. It literally started: Take a pot. Fill it with Water. Put it on the stove and turn the heat to high. Watch for bubbles...it went on to explain how to cook pasta or vegetables, etc.

Over the years I have taught many friends how to cook. Some of them are so frightened when they first come to my kitchen. I ask them Why. Usually it has to do with Bad Kitchen Memories as a child - being yelled at, criticized or physically or verbally abused in the Kitchen.

So, I ask them what their Worst Fear is. They may say: "Burning Something".

OK, I say, let me explain something to you. Cooking should involve All of your Senses - Sight, Sound, Taste, Feel and Smell. All of them. Start there. So, if a recipe says medium high heat but you start to Hear sizzling or Smell burning, the Heat is too high. Stoves differ these days. Pay Attention.

I will then give them something to sauté. They are so stuck on following the recipe correctly that they cook it on medium high heat and ignore the multiple pre-burning signs . They do NOT stop until whatever it is has been obviously Burned. A friend burned the food in the pan and looked at me, mouth open and Mortified. She was tensed, anticipating my screaming at her as, I assume, she had been as a child in the Kitchen.

I said: "It's OK . It is just food. Here's what we do". I took the pan from her, went to the trash and scraped the burnt food into the bin. I said: "Now, rinse the pan and start over - but pay attention this time" with ALL your Senses . The next time she did not burn it.

So many people depend on a recipe and not their Instincts. They WILL NOT DEVIATE. If it says ONE Lemon, they use ONE Lemon. If You do not taste your dish, you won't realize there is NO Lemon Flavor. You ASSUME there is Because the recipe said ONE Lemon and you used exactly ONE Lemon BUT sometimes You

need two or three. Often it Depends on How Fresh the Ingredient is. You Can get a burning jalapeno or a non-heat one. There is really no way to Tell until You Taste it.

Here is another way to Look at it: When you pick an apple from a tree it is a living thing. The nutrients (vitamins, enzymes, fiber, etc.) are at maximum potency. That apple will last a long time. But each day that passes the enzymes die. That's why sometimes an item does not have the flavor it should - it looks fresh but it too has been treated so it ripens early or late. It has been treated with chemicals so it does not go bad as quickly as it would if untreated. That's why I love the Farmers Market. At least I know everything is fresh and recently picked.

If I am cooking something new, I look at several recipes. I find the common ingredients and then decide what I want to add so it tastes good to me (we all have our preferences). In making a carrot cake, for example, I don't like raisins, but I do like pineapple. So I put in cut up pieces of pineapple and use them instead of raisins. I like to toast my coconut and nuts before adding them. Toasted coconut and nuts are two of my Staples. I like to add more Ginger and Cinnamon than what the recipe calls for. I like to use Honey instead of Sugar. I like adding Orange Zest to the frosting. Most of the time it works out pretty well. Sometimes it does not, but at least I tried. And, truly, that is why I generally avoid baking - it is scientific in terms of Quantities, Technique and resulting Chemical Reactions.

Have you ever watched a Woman who makes biscuits or pie dough or tortillas from scratch without measuring cups or spoons? It is a Little of This and a Pinch of That...if you ask for the recipe they say: "Well, Honey, I just do it by Memory - the proportions are Something like this..." They just Know. They know what goes in, how much of each ingredient, how it should Look and Feel. The Result: Perfect biscuits and pie crusts Every Single Time.

This is my Approach to cooking: A Little of This and a Little of That - and I use All my Senses. So, when someone Asks me for a recipe I have the same type of reply...I do not really use them (Caveat: use one if baking). I combine the ingredients and keep on adding and combining until I am happy with the Taste, Color and Texture.

The goal of this cookbook is to get to **YOU** that point as Well. **So**, take a Breath.

Cooking should be Fun. It should be Relaxing. Feeding People is a Gift of Love. Speaking of which, Do Not Cook if You are in a Bad Mood. I kick people out of my kitchen if they are in a Bad Mood. You Can ONLY Cook with Love.

So, be Brave. MAKE some Mistakes. Learn to Trust Yourself. Keep it Simple. If it is Not Perfect, what will you change next time? Each meal made should be an Adventure. DO NOT WORRY about being judged. Who isn't Grateful when someone feeds them? If someone is critical, remove the dish, tell them to pick up the phone and order a pizza and from now on they are in charge of Dinner. You will happily do the dishes. Alternatively, you could always just tell them from now on you will just cook for yourself and they can fend for themselves. And, whoever does the cooking, the other should do the dishes.