

THE SPICES OF MY LIFE

A CULINARY COLLECTION OF
RECIPES, MEMORIES, AND MORE



TIFFANY MOEN

INTRODUCTION

Home cooking is falling by the wayside today. Our lives are so busy, and many kids are growing up without the nutrition and satisfaction of a delicious, home-cooked meal. Through my own unusual experience of having to cook for my family of ten nightly, I created tasty and healthy meals that reflect the different ethnic origins of my children. (We certainly couldn't afford to go out—just eating at McDonalds would be \$50!) As a result of my efforts, they are amazing eaters. It's been so worth it! Their friends have learned to taste food that they would normally not have touched. (This story is coming up as part of the “Lip-Smackin' Cabbage” recipe.)

Some of these recipes are quick and easy, and others are more detailed. I want to share with you my enjoyment of cooking, and I hope that other families can benefit from what I have learned.

It's true that I created many of these recipes when I was missing some ingredient. I had to get creative with the spices and figure out what to do to replace the missing ingredients, hence the title of this book. But I also feel that the title matches our family in a special way. Each of our children has added a new “ingredient” and “spice” to our family. When made a part of our family “recipe,” these children brought out a unique side of my creativity. I am so thankful for our one-of-a-kind family and for the children that became *The Spices of My Life!*

I didn't grow up loving to cook. Sure, I helped my mom bake, and I learned some basic skills. But when I was on my own, I was a kitchen disaster. I still shake my head about the first time I cooked for my boyfriend (who, in spite of the results, married me). I made spaghetti, standard fare for an unseasoned cook. After draining the noodles, I guess I should have let them sit a bit longer in the colander. I placed them on the plate, added the sauce, and in the forward motion of placing them in front of Eric's place, the entire spaghetti dinner slipped off the plate and into his lap. Really.

My first attempts at baking were worse. My kids actually used my cookies as flying disks in the backyard. I attempted a birthday cake for Eric and didn't realize there were different flours (self-rising and all-purpose). I didn't use all-purpose, but followed a recipe for such

and added additional baking powder. I kept hearing little fizzing sounds coming from the oven. I peeked in, and of course, it had risen high and was pouring over the pan and into the bottom of my oven. Once I got over that failure and cleaned up the mess, I decided to attempt another cake without adding additional baking powder. It actually turned out! But on the way to the neighbor's (where we were going to celebrate his birthday), I had the cake on the plate in the baby stroller and a baby on my hip. Bad move. The cake fell out of the stroller and smashed onto the street.

I didn't attempt to bake again for about ten years. I figured it was safer to stick with ground beef. But here I am today, having pushed through the trial and error that most of us do when we learn to cook (okay, so my errors were a bit more animated!). My point in sharing all of this is that no matter what you think of cooking, pursue it. There were times when I hated the drudgery of getting something on the table every night. With eight children, ordering in or out wasn't an option, nor were prepackaged foods. Today, I am actually thankful for those roadblocks, for because of those limitations I learned to cook satisfying meals for my family, and my children are the best eaters around. How many kids fight over the extra broccoli? Or will try Indian or Thai and love it?

The only thing that was a failure all around was the goat roast I purchased at the Asian store. I just couldn't get that palatable. The kids drew the line there.

Just a note to you that when I use the word "divided" in a recipe, it means that the ingredient will be used twice in the recipe, at whatever amount is indicated in the directions.

In this book you will find, at the end, cooking tips, an index, metric equivalents for US recipes, and also a helpful kids' chore list for busy families (also downloadable from www.TiffanyMoen.com). Further, I wrote about monosodium glutamate (MSG), which causes many people, including me, migraines and other painful side effects. So there is a brief eye opener about that additive in the cooking tips section. Also in the tips section is a word about cooking rice, how to freeze fresh ginger, how to zest citrus, and how to devise your own Italian and Cajun seasoning.

Thank you for including my book as part of your journey to great meals and special times with your family. Enjoy!

— *Tiffany Moen*

BREAKFAST



WHOLE WHEAT WAFFLE DRY MIX

At our house, Saturday mornings mean waffles. Take the time to make the dry mix in advance, and keep it in the freezer. It will make loads of waffles; just add the wet ingredients when you need them. Our kids' overnight friends enjoy having these waffles with us. We've even had some of our adult friends ask if they could join us on a Saturday morning because their kids raved about the waffles after having spent the night. Twenty years ago I started craving Reese's Peanut Butter Cups when I was pregnant, but I had recently found out that I was allergic to chocolate. How unfair is that, especially for a woman? And a pregnant one at that! So I had to improvise, and I tried peanut butter on waffles with syrup. It fed the craving and has since become a family tradition. Okay, we're not talking low fat when you do this, but sometimes you just gotta have peanut butter!

Makes 5 batches of dry waffle mix

8 cups whole wheat flour

Variation: if you have other flours, such as corn, oat, or barley, you can replace up to 2 cups of the whole wheat flour with any combination of the alternate flours.

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup baking powder

1 tablespoon salt

(Don't worry, this amount is for a bunch of batches of waffles.)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar

$1\frac{1}{4}$ cup dry milk

Mix the ingredients well, put it in a 1-gallon-size freezer bag, and store the bag in the freezer when not using it.

WHOLE WHEAT WAFFLES

Makes 7 waffles

- 1 egg
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup unsalted butter, melted
- $1\frac{3}{4}$ cup water
- 1 tablespoon canola or vegetable oil
- Dash of vanilla
- 2 cups of Whole Wheat Waffle Dry Mix
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon
- Spray oil

Variation: sprinkle wheat germ or other healthy seeds on top before lowering the waffle iron. Feel free to add fresh blueberries or other fresh fruit. Your kids may occasionally talk you into adding chocolate chips.

Mix the egg in a bowl. Add the other liquid ingredients. Stir in the dry mix until well blended. The mix will seem watery, but it will thicken as the waffle iron heats up and additionally as it cooks. Heat the waffle iron, spray it with oil, and pour the mix on the iron. Lower the waffle iron and cook until done. Enjoy!

