

the THINKING WOMAN

Dorothy Johnson's Food Forum

The Beginning Baker



THE BEGINNING BAKER can prepare dessert while Mom bakes the main course in this Whirlpool range with side-by-side double ovens.

Any parent who has ever washed five pounds of flour off thirty pounds of child or cleaned the batter for a raisin, green olive and peanut butter cake off the kitchen floors know that children are fascinated by food preparation. For them, as for a lot of grownups, the kitchen is a wonderful place - a room filled with activity, good smells, good tastes and the opportunity to make a creative mess.

The problem, of course, is that children are notoriously poor at distinguishing a plain mess from a creative one. This failure has historically resulted in a great many frayed parental nerves and a goodly number of sore little bottoms. Neither of these, however, is a necessary consequence of kids in the kitchen, according to Barbara Osborne, Whirlpool product home economist.

"Although you sometimes may see your child's culinary curiosity as more a trial than a blessing he's really just showing a healthy impulse to explore the world and shape it to his needs," says Ms. Osborne, "The challenge shouldn't be to keep children out of things, but rather to get them into the sort of cooking tasks they're ready to perform."

Ms. Osborne recommends cookie making as one of the best ways to initiate aspiring young chefs because cookie recipes are usually uncomplicated and the rewards of a good job are quick and tasty.

"Even children who normally might be emptying canisters on the countertop can be engaged creatively in cookie making," she says. "Your three-year-old, of course, can't whip up a batch of brownies, but he or she can cut out sugar cookies, put them on a cookie sheet and decorate them with colored sugar sprinkles before Mom puts them in the oven. They'll have a lot of fun and get a real sense of accomplishment."

With this sort of apprenticeship behind them, your children should be ready for bigger things by the time they reach the recipe reading level. According to Ms. Osborne, drop cookies prepared on top of the range are a good place to let the fledgling cook try their culinary wings. The recipes are usually simple. Both of you can see every transformation of the ingredients, and the results are quick. The youngsters will pick up a surprising amount of information about the baking process, the different ingredients, the importance of measuring correctly and the kinds and uses of different kitchen appliances. The following recipe is a good drop cookie "starter."

CHOCOLATE CHOW MEIN CLUSTERS

14 (4 oz.) vanilla caramels
1.4 c. semisweet chocolate chips
2 T. chunky peanut butter
2 t. water
1 3-oz. can (2 cups) chow mein noodles

Place caramels, chocolate chips, peanut butter and water in a saucepan. Heat over low heat until melted. Be careful not to scorch chocolate. Stir to blend. Add noodles, stir until evenly coated. Drop from teaspoon onto waxed paper. Let stand until nice and firm.

BIT-O-HEAVEN COOKIES

Baking bar cookies should be the next step in the cookies curriculum, according to Ms. Osborne. Baked in the oven, these cookies are very easy to fix because all the young cook has to do with the dough is spread it evenly in the pan, and then bake, cook and cut into bars. Brownies, of course, are the universal favorite among bar cookies, but if you'd like to start your child on something a bit more exotic, try this layered creation, guaranteed to melt in your mouth.

1/2 c. margarine
1 c. graham cracker crumbs
6 oz. pkg. butterscotch bits
6 oz. pkg. chocolate bits
1/2 c. chopped pecans
1 c. peacans
1 c. coconut
1 can sweetened condensed milk

Melt margarine in 9x13-inch pan. Sprinkle graham cracker crumbs evenly over the melted margarine. Add each additional ingredient as listed, layering one on top of the other. Pour milk over the top. Bake for 30 minutes at 350 degrees. Cool and cut into squares.

Republican Women Of Las Vegas Hold Annual Garden Party

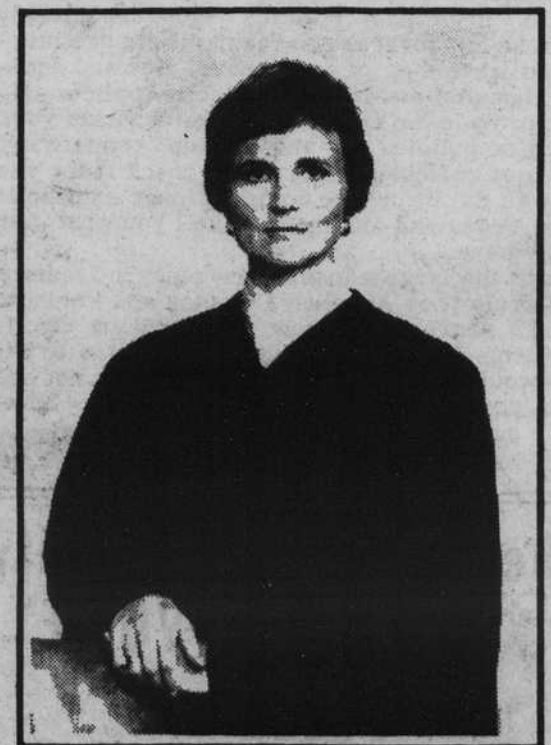
The Annual Garden Party of the Republican Women of Las Vegas will be held on Saturday, Sept. 11 at 7:00 p.m., at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Alex Sample, 7168 Mira Vista.

A steak dinner, no host cocktails, door prizes of original water color paintings are features of the event. All Republican candidates have been invited to attend. Guests may meet and question their candidates for the coming primary election.

Raffle tickets will be on sale for prizes of \$100 cash, an appliance, and a handmade quilt.

To make reservations, or for further information, call 385-7207.

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