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Author's new book explores a fun, easy way to cook in muffin tins



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ELOISE.VALADEZ@NWI.COM, (219) 933-3365

For home cooks tired of serving up the same recipes for breakfast, lunch or dinner, Brette Sember has some new ideas to share.

Sember is the author of "The Muffin Tin Cookbook" (Adams Media, \$17.95), which stars 200 recipes for everything from easy breakfast dishes to flavorful entrees and assorted desserts.

"I tried to think of unusual, fun ways to cook," Sember said.

The author's first book, "The Parchment Paper Cookbook," explored another uncommon cooking technique.

"Muffin tins are the perfect containers. Each one is one portion," Sember said, adding that serving a meal in a tin is an ideal way to practice portion control for those watching calorie consumption.

When Sember started brainstorming for the book, which took three months to write, she simply went with what foods she enjoyed.

"I thought about the kinds of things I like to make and how you can make them in a muffin tin. There are so many things you can make if you use your imagination," she said.

Sember said she enjoyed making mini-pies to frittatas.

In her book, which is subtitled "200 Fast, Delicious Mini-Pies, Pasta Cups, Gourmet Pockets, Veggie Cakes, and More!," Sember offers recipes for a variety of interesting dishes including Ravioli Lasagna; French Bread French Toast; Chicken Paprikash; Linguine Nests; Irish Brown Bread Squares; Strawberry Trifle; Corn Pudding; Meatballs in Spaghetti Nests; and Shrimp Toasts.

Some of the first recipes Sember started creating for the book were egg dishes, including omelets.

"I experimented with a lot of different recipes," she said.

The author believes cooking meals in muffin tins is also a good way to get kids to taste different foods.

"Kids love them. They think that anything made in a muffin or cupcake tin must be delicious. You can get them to try many things."

She said they're also easy to store if you have leftovers. Muffin tin foods can be easily reheated for enjoyment later.

Ravioli Lasagna

12 round ravioli, any kind

1/2 cup part-skim ricotta cheese

1/4 teaspoon Italian seasoning

1/8 teaspoon garlic powder

Salt and pepper to taste

1 tablespoon skim milk

1 (24-ounce) jar spaghetti sauce

3/4 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese

3 teaspoons grated Parmesan cheese

DIRECTIONS: Preheat oven to 400 degrees and prepare 6 jumbo muffin cups with foil or silicone liners. Spray the liners with cooking spray. Cook the ravioli according to package instructions until al dente. In a small bowl, mix ricotta, Italian seasoning, garlic powder, salt, pepper, and milk. Cut each ravioli in half, so you have two circles (it's okay if the filling ends up mostly on one side). (This step allows all the flavors to combine like a real lasagna.) Place 2 teaspoons of spaghetti sauce in the bottom of each cup. In each cup, layer 1/2 of a ravioli (skin side down), 1 teaspoon ricotta mix, 1 teaspoon mozzarella, and 2 teaspoons spaghetti sauce on top. Repeat this two more times in each cup. Top each cup with 1/2 of a ravioli (skin side up). Top with 2 teaspoons spaghetti sauce and 1/2 teaspoon Parmesan. Bake for 15 minutes until bubbly. Allow to cool and set for a few minutes before you remove the cups from the muffin pan.

Spice-Rubbed Pork Tenderloin

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon cloves

1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon ground pepper

1/2 teaspoon nutmeg

1 1/2 cups cooked rice

1 pork tenderloin, about 1 pound, trimmed and cut into 6 pieces

3 teaspoons maple syrup

DIRECTIONS: Preheat oven to 400 degrees and prepare 6 jumbo muffin cups with silicone or foil liners. Mix spices together in a small bowl. Place 1/4 cup rice in each muffin cup. Rub spice mix on each piece of pork and place on top of rice. Drizzle maple syrup on top of pork. Bake for 20 minutes.

Ham and Egg Cups

1 slice round or oval deli ham

1 egg

Salt and pepper, to taste

1/2 tablespoon shaved Parmesan cheese

DIRECTIONS: Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Prepare 1 regular muffin cup by spraying it or using a muffin cup liner. Place the center of the ham into the middle of the cup, and arrange the edges along the inside of the cup. If it sticks up a bit above the cup, that's fine. Crack the egg, and place it inside the ham. Season with salt and pepper, and add the cheese. Bake for 15 minutes, until the white of the egg is set.

SOURCE: All recipe are from "The Muffin Tin Cookbook"

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