



HOME PLATE: Moms share muffins, smiles, kids for the future

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By Janice Denham | Posted: Wednesday, May 9, 2012 12:00 am

From inside or outside my kitchen window, you read MOM. Three wooden letters, a long-ago gift from a son, stack atop each other for a continual memory of this role, honor and responsibility.

Many mothers probably are cast as "characters" more than storybook ideals. We resemble that chocolate chip cookie that tastes perfect in memory, but even the kitchen that provided it when we were kids cannot duplicate today. Like the manager of a baseball team, hopefully mom gets at least a little credit for the effort of putting children into the game of life to enable their talents to grow and take over as they grow up.

They inevitably meet plenty of woe in life, so I smile to know that their smiles are precious and appreciated. When my first-born's preschool teacher complimented his positive attitude, it gave me joy. My other son's kindergarten teacher appreciated that he "got" her jokes and it cracked me up. And when disappointment and fear have hounded them, their smiles amid their tears have gripped my heart and made me proud.

Having Mother's Day in May when the skies overflow and flowers pose their best smiles could not be a better time. The outdoors is fresh with promise and my flower beds declare themselves in bliss.

Memories of efforts to set children on the right path will be the topic of barbecues and dinners on Mother's Day. Our own table may — again — hear about the woeful tale I concocted about how the Liberty Bell was cracked and the boys discovered the truth when they shared the distortion in school. And maybe I earned a gold star for putting together a couple masterpiece Halloween costumes of George Washing-machine and a son's Raggedy Anne outfit.

As for this mom's culinary history, an appreciative nod might go to pasta (mostaccioli) dinners before my teens headed out to school events. My belief was that filling their tummies would help their heads make good decisions.

If that were my goal today, I might choose a grab-and-go menu with single servings. I make a lot of muffins, so a new cookbook, "The Muffin Tin Cookbook" (Adams Media, \$17.95), caught my eye. Author Brette Sember points out that few dishes cannot be cooked ingeniously in easy, compact, individual portions. I rely on sharing mini or regular sizes, so there might be room for a little more, rather than maxis with overflowing measures.

We also agree that nonstick muffin pans still deserve a quick swipe with nonstick cooking spray, including on the top edge, to ensure intact results.

Ham and Egg Cups are easy for a few or a crew. Place the center of a slice of round or oval deli ham in a muffin cup coated with spray or lined with a paper liner, letting the ham edge ruffle loosely along the cup's edge. Crack an egg into the ham's crater. Season with salt, pepper or whatever you like, plus 1/2 tablespoon shaved Parmesan cheese. Bake in a preheated 400-degree oven about 15 minutes until the white of the egg is set.

Egg Crescent Pockets use refrigerated crescent roll dough for puff. I also keep pizza dough on hand for this type of project.

EGG CRESCENT POCKETS

1 pkg. (8 count) refrigerated crescent rolls

4 large slices deli ham, cut in half

1/2 cup herbed goat cheese (or any other variety)

Dried thyme to taste

8 eggs

Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line muffin pan with paper liners and spray inside them with nonstick cooking spray.

Open tube and separate triangles. Place each piece of pastry, shorter-side (opposite the point) on bottom of cup, and fold rest of dough around into the cup, pressing it until it completely lines inside of cup and edges meet.

Fold half-piece of ham so it fits inside liner. Place cheese on top and add a pinch of thyme. Crack an egg and place it in the pastry. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake in preheated oven about 20 minutes until egg white is completely set and roll is browned. Let rest a few minutes before lifting out of pan.

Makes 8 pockets.