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MATH FOR GROWNUPS

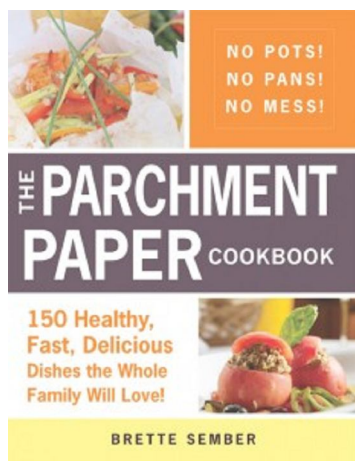
Math doesn't have to be your BFF, but you can get along in public.

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4
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Math at Work Monday: Brette the cookbook author



I like to cook and bake (especially pies and bread), but the idea of developing a recipe that others can use makes my hands sweat. To be honest, I don't really understand the difference between [baking soda and baking powder](#) (except that soda interacts with vinegar in a really cool way), and figuring out how long to keep something in the oven — and at what temperature — is a mystery to me.

So when my friend and fellow writer, [Brette Sember](#) let me know that she has a cookbook coming out, I jumped at the chance to feature her here. It should be

no surprise that math is a critical ingredient of all recipes. [The Parchment Paper Cookbook](#) is no exception. Her recipes offer easy ways to cook healthy meals without pots or pans. You can get a taste of her recipes at her blog: [No Pot Cooking](#).

What do you do for a living?

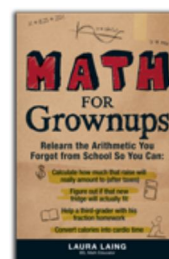
I write books, blogs, and articles, and I also do indexing, ghostwriting, and copyediting. One of my specialties is recipe development and food writing.

When do you use basic math in your job?

I have one cookbook out, [The Parchment Paper Cookbook](#), and [The Muffin Tin Cookbook](#) is on the way. I'm finding there is a lot more math involved in writing cookbooks than I expected! When I was just cooking for my family I did a lot of dumping of ingredients, but now that I have to record my recipes, I have to do a lot of measuring. And I also have to do a lot of conversions of measurements.

Test recipes are much smaller than the ones I publish in my cookbooks. So, after testing a recipe, I have to convert the ingredient amounts for publication. This

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gets a little complicated when you're dealing with teaspoons and tablespoons.

For example, if make a test recipe with 3 tablespoons of an ingredient and I want to quadruple that to make a full batch, I would multiply by 4 to get 12 tablespoons. But I have to express that as $\frac{3}{4}$ cup.

Do you use any technology to help with this math?

Yes definitely. I don't trust myself to get it right, and it absolutely has got to be accurate.

How do you think math helps you do your job better?

I'm able to give readers the most convenient measurement possible for them.

How comfortable with math do you feel?

I have to admit I don't feel very comfortable with math. This is kind of funny because from 7th to 11th grade I was in a special gifted math program where I went to the local university for math with kids from other school districts in my county. We learned a creative approach to math. Regardless, I never felt comfortable with math. So, no, I guess I would say I don't enjoy the math aspect, but it's essential to what I'm doing so I am careful to do it right.

Did you like the math you took in high school?

I got great grades until I took a traditional calculus class with college students in 11th grade. I got a D! I dropped out of the program then. I didn't have to take math in college, because I had earned so many credits through that program.

Did you have to learn new skills in order to do this math?

It is pretty basic, but I had to refresh my memory for some of the [conversions](#).

Thanks, Brette, for appearing in today's Math at Work Monday. Readers, if you have questions for Brette, feel free to post them below. I'll be sure to let her know and ask her to come by for a quick response. And if you're looking for a great holiday gift for someone who is too busy to cook and clean up, check out [The Parchment Paper Cookbook](#). Or pick up a copy for yourself!

You might find these posts interesting, too.

- [Math at Work Monday: Mary Ellen the FBI profiler](#)
- [Math at Work Monday: Jennifer the retail buyer](#)
- [Math at Work Monday: Josh the head of the Maryland Department of Health](#)
- [Math at Work Monday: Katie the costume designer](#)



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WISE WORDS FROM MATH FOR GROWNUPS READERS

Laura on Math at Work Monday: Brette the cookbook author

Living Large on Math at Work Monday: Brette the cookbook author

Kristin Hughes on It's a contest!

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In the garden (1)

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In the kitchen (3)

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Math at Work Monday (23)

2 Responses to "Math at Work Monday: Brette the

cookbook author"



Living Large

October 24, 2011 at 5:04 pm #

Recipes is what I use math for most of the time as well, although not on the scale as Brette! Because I'm so bad at it, I have to ask my husband, "How many cups to a quart" or whatever. I need to refresh with your book, Laura!

REPLY



Laura

October 24, 2011 at 5:07 pm #

You know, this is why I love my plaid cookbook (which is what I call the Better Homes and Garden Cookbook). Not only can I look up how to make a good substitution for buttermilk, but I can look up conversions. One of my favorite rules to break with math is not memorizing things. If I use it enough, I'll memorize it. Otherwise, looking it up is good enough for me!

Laura

REPLY

[Math for Grownups the book \(5\)](#)

[Math secrets \(13\)](#)

[On the road \(1\)](#)

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TWEET! TWEET!

Have you entered the Math for Grownups contest? You could win a copy of the book (and a Starbucks gift card). bit.ly/qa4gKV #mathchat
8 hours ago

New posts from Math For Grownups -
<http://t.co/zOVOf8ud> 13 hours ago

Finally figured it out a few years ago. Triumph!
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bedsheet. haven't figured out how to fold it
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Seeking a coroner or embalmer to interview for
my blog. Anyone have any ideas? Thanks!
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Thanks so much! RT @Mathnasium: #FF
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