

A note from the author:

My first cookbook was a birthday present at age 8. I have been cooking for family and friends ever since. Over the years, I have collected recipes from many sources as well as inventing my own.

Growing up in the small town of Spenard, Alaska, long winters and long distances combined to make fresh produce a luxury. As soon as the ground thawed, Mom would plant a vegetable garden. And for a few months, fresh vegetables replaced frozen or canned items. My sister Cheryl and I would often raid that garden for an afternoon snack, occasionally getting so greedy that nothing was left for dinner. Mom would scold.... But how mad can a mother get at her children snacking on peas or carrots? Late summer meant berry-picking, mostly raspberries and currants. What a contrast to canned fruit cocktail!

The family moved to Pomona, California when I was 12. My maternal grandparents lived there in an old farm house in the middle of what had once been a Valencia orange orchard. Their 5 acres were surrounded by tract homes, but 2 rows of oranges lingered on at the back of the property. Suddenly, fruits and vegetables were FRESH, and oh, what a difference that made. Grandma Day also loved fresh fruits and vegetables. During the spring, strawberries and biscuits were a Sunday breakfast ritual, with 3 generations working and laughing together in that roomy kitchen. In the summer, Grandma would fill a big pot of water, put it on the stove to heat, and THEN send Grandpa to get some fresh corn.

High school chemistry brought conflict... covering a pot does NOT make the water boil faster! A patient teacher, Mr. Pfeifer, answered questions and explained the seeming conflicts between what I had learned in the kitchen and the rules of chemistry. What seemed to just be traditions, such as always using something sour with baking soda, were actually based on chemical reactions between acid and base ingredients.

Off to college, those cooking skills paid dividends. Other students would buy the ingredients, and I would cook dinner. A free meal for me, and a good meal for the rest.

As a single adult, I continued to cook for my own pleasure. Collecting and trying new recipes became a hobby. Marriage and an instant family made it even more fun. I soon started to play with recipes... modifying ingredients, and trying to duplicate restaurant dishes at home. Time demands and health concerns led to the elimination of some recipes, and simplification of others. Fruit trees and berries in the back yard produced seasonal abundance that led to new uses in the kitchen.

Several years in the Central Valley of California, surrounded by acres of family-owned orchards, made truly fresh, tree-ripened fruit abundant and available. It just made sense to adapt the old recipes to local, seasonal fruit. Overwhelmed by the loss of husband, son, and both parents, I found solace in the kitchen.

Then I moved to Carlsbad, California. A multitude of local restaurants with unique menu items presented new challenges to replicate at home – or inspiration for a new creation of my own. The idea of a cookbook started to form, originally just to share with family and friends. Meeting Cliff brought not only support and encouragement, but a taste-tester-in-chief for final tweaks to the recipes.

I hope you, your family, and your friends will enjoy some really great meals, and make some wonderful memories around the table.

Good cooking!

Beverly Jo

Age 8, in front of the vegetable garden.

