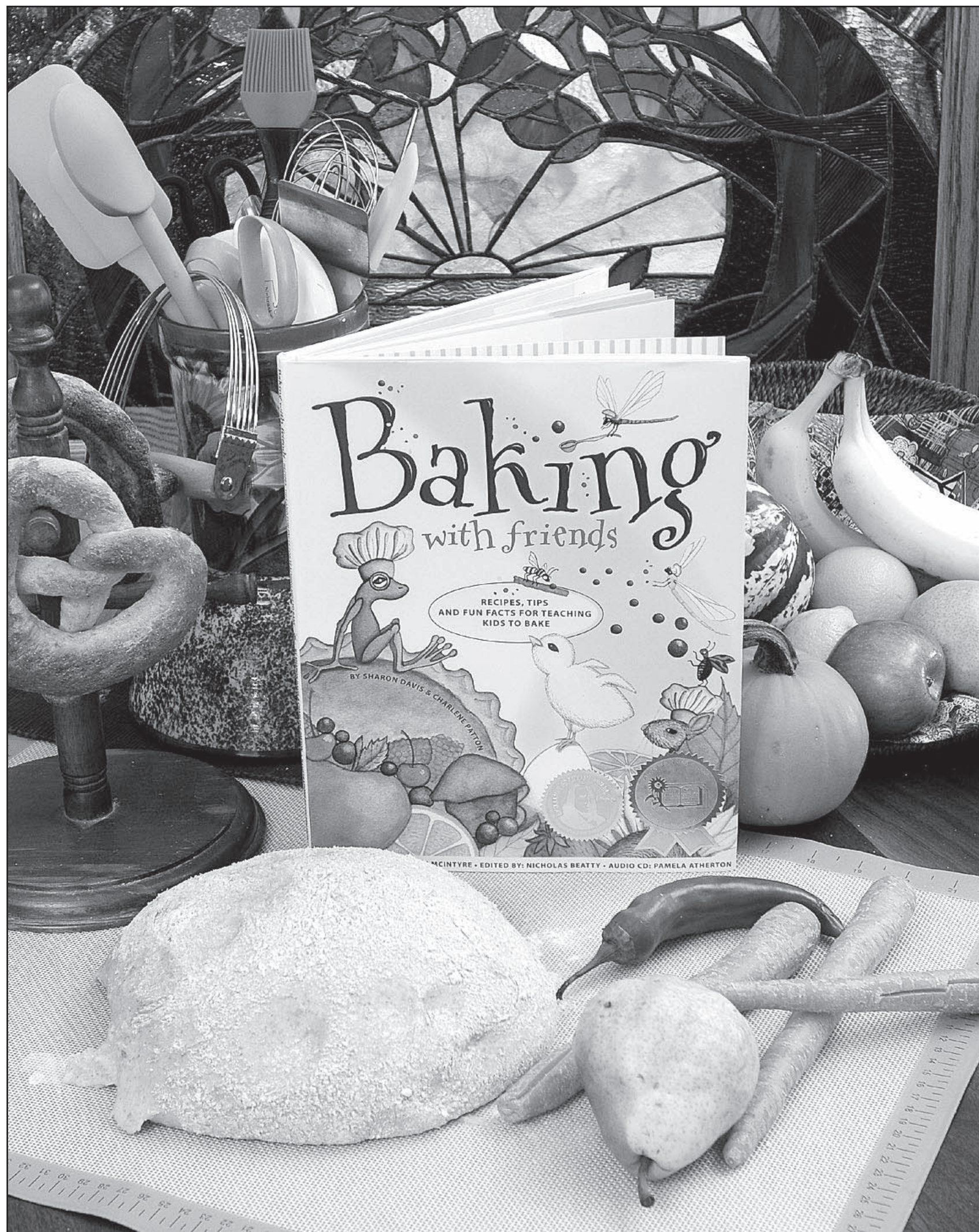


Kids in the kitchen



"Baking with Friends" (Goops Unlimited, \$19.95), which was named a Kansas Notable Book for 2011 and is a winner of the Benjamin Franklin award. The book, with its whimsical illustrations and easy-to-follow steps, also includes an instructional CD. Staff photos by Rod Mikinski

New book aims to teach children reading and math skills through baking

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The holidays are the perfect time to get kids in the kitchen, say Sharon Davis of Manhattan and Charlene Patton of Topeka, authors of a new cookbook, "Baking with Friends." All you need is a pinch of patience.

If the little ones are underfoot when you're preparing a holiday meal, don't shoo them out. Give them a task instead. That's the message of the book the women wrote for the Home Baking Association.

Recently, it was named a Kansas Notable Book for 2011 and won the Benjamin Franklin Award.

"It seems like some parents are afraid to let kids in the kitchen," Davis said. "They'll let them skate-



Gingerbread, topped with whipped cream and cinnamon, is one of the recipes in "Baking with Friends."

Win it!

Win a tote bag from the Home Baking Association filled with the "Baking with Friends" cookbook, instructional videos, and a small baking pan and other cooking utensils. To enter, bake something with your kids, then send us a message telling us what you baked and what they learned to lifestyle@themercury.com. We will draw a winner on Friday.

board, but they won't let them cook. It's crazy, and a little ironic."

Davis said that parents should realize that cooking can increase functional literacy, math skills and good nutrition for kids. The bonus: there's always a treat at the end.

Aside from recipes like Lazy Daisy Cake and Fruited Focaccia, it includes an instructional CD, a baking skills checklist and certificate of completion to motivate kids, a measurement guide and a list that shows a book to go along with each recipe.

Patton pointed out that cooking provides family time.

"The kitchen is kind of the hub of the home," she said. "When kids get involved, they're making fond memories with their families."

For more information or to purchase the book, go to www.homebaking.org.

Confetti Cornbread

Ingredients

1 cup white, yellow or whole-grain cornmeal
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 or 2 tablespoons sugar
2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 egg
1 cup low-fat or skim milk
3 tablespoons melted butter or vegetable oil
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
1/3 cup chopped green onions
1/3 cup chopped green, red or yellow peppers

Directions

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Grease bottom and sides of a 9-inch square or round baking pan.

Combine cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder and salt in a medium mixing bowl. In a small mixing bowl, beat egg with fork or whisk. Add milk and melted butter, beating well.

Add egg mixture to dry ingredients; mix only until dry ingredients are combined. Stir in cheese, onions and peppers. Do not over-mix; the batter will not be smooth. Pour into greased pan.

Bake 25 to 30 minutes, until golden brown and a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean.

— From "Baking with Friends" by Sharon Davis and Charlene Patton



Side dish insider

Detroit Free Press

Once Thanksgiving rolls around — it's a mere 14 days away — something happens to cooks. They gear up to churn out the mandatory players — turkey, gravy, stuffing and mashed potatoes — for that show-stopping meal of the year.

And then they start to worry about what else to place on the table. It just wouldn't be Thanksgiving without all those extra side dishes that add interest and flavor. They play as important a role as the big bird.

Thanksgiving is a holiday of side dishes, in fact. There's no other time of year when ideas and recipes for add-ons take up more pages in food magazines.

Side dishes can be as simple as a plate of roasted vegetables, or you can pull out the stops and opt for richer concoctions.

If you're stuck in a side dish rut, here's your chance to start a new tradition or try a new ingredient.

There are no rules for the number you should have. One or two can be plenty. We advise keeping it simple. You're already making a huge meal, so don't stress yourself out with hugely complicated sides.

Today's recipes feature gratins — a casserole-type dish topped with bread crumbs mixed with cheese or bits of butter.

One is a take on the traditional green bean casserole, but made with fresh green beans, mushrooms and a creamy sauce. You can do all the prep and assembly two days in advance. Add the final topping on Turkey Day and bake it while the bird is resting.

The Potato and Celery Root Gratin with Leeks is a rich, creamy dish similar to scalloped potatoes. If you're not familiar with celery root, also known as celeriac, it's a knobby root vegetable prized for its bulbous end, not its stalks and leaves like celery. In this gratin, celery root adds a nutty, parsley-like flavor that's a good match for potatoes and leeks. You can make this gratin several hours in advance and reheat it in a 300-degree oven.

Brussels sprouts are either loved or loathed, but at Thanksgiving they show up on many suggested menus.

Pan-Roasted Brussels Sprout Gratin with Shallots and Rosemary is a good recipe for those who typically shy away from the tiny cabbage-like vegetable. You can prep and assemble the dish several hours in advance.

Don't be put off by the number of ingredients or the length of the recipes. They're easier than they look.

The best advice is to have a plan, delegate if you can and prepare ahead.

POTATO AND CELERY ROOT GRATIN WITH LEEKS

Serves: 10 / Preparation time: 15 minutes / Total time: 2 hours (not all active time)

Celery root, also known as celeriac, has a knobby exterior that is best peeled (carefully) with a paring knife. Use a food processor or mandoline to thinly slice the potatoes.

Ingredients

3 cups heavy whipping cream
2 garlic cloves, peeled
1 sprig thyme plus 3 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves, divided
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
3 leeks, white and pale green parts only, halved lengthwise, thinly sliced crosswise
Kosher salt
2 pounds russet potatoes, peeled, thinly sliced crosswise (1/8-inch thick)
1 pound celery root, peeled, very thinly sliced crosswise (1/8-inch thick)
2 cups grated Gruyère cheese
Freshly ground black pepper

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a medium saucepan, heat heavy whipping cream, garlic and thyme sprig just until bubbles begin to form around edge of pan. Remove from heat; set aside to steep.

In a medium skillet, melt 1 tablespoon of the butter over medium heat. Add leeks; season with salt and cook, stirring often, until tender, about 10 to 12 minutes. Do not allow to brown. Transfer to a small bowl and set aside.

Butter a 3-quart gratin dish with remaining 1 tablespoon butter. Layer 1/3 of potato slices and 1/3 of celery root slices evenly over bottom of baking dish.

Cover with 1/3 of leeks, then 1/3 of Gruyère. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and 1 teaspoon thyme leaves. Repeat layers twice more. Strain cream mixture into a medium pitcher and pour over vegetables.

Set gratin dish on a large rimmed baking sheet and cover tightly with foil. Bake for 1 hour. Carefully remove foil; continue baking until top is golden brown and sauce is bubbling, 25 to 30 minutes.

DO AHEAD: Make this gratin two hours ahead. Let stand at room temperature. Tent with foil and place in a 300-degree oven until hot, about 20 minutes, while the turkey rests.

— From *Bon Appetit*, November 2011 issue.