

Unbreakable Recipes

By Pete Clark

Recipes are a form for encoding quantities of named ingredients and their processing to create healthy, nutritional and delicious foods, although there is never a guarantee that all outcomes will be as planned. To err is human and many opportunities for errors exist in the realm of cooking, especially for the beginner or the person who only may prepare hot meals on occasion. I am learning to cook inch by inch and sometimes millimeter by millimeter. I am someone who would forget my name if it was not on my Driver's License, so I make lots of mistakes when it comes to following recipes.

I wanted to bake some cookies, but being in a learning curve, skipping the shopping, measuring and mixing appealed to me, so I went to Wally World and bought some prefab cookies. That is all well and good, but, although I am very good at determining spatial relationships I am terrible at estimating spatial sizes and the first frozen roll of cookie dough I processed demanded a rounded teaspoon of dough for each cookie, and two inches separating each dollop of yet to be born cookie. I knew I was in trouble, but I wantonly forged ahead. When the cookie sheet was loaded, the lumps of dough looked a bit strange and I tried to beautify some of them, making them look even worse, so I gave up and placed the cookie sheet and its occupants into the oven. After the timer beeped, the oven was turned off, the cookies were removed and the pan was set on the surface of the stove. The cookies were as ugly coming out as the dough was going in, but they tasted good. A cookie fell apart when it was lifted with a spatula so I put them back in the oven, thinking they were not done baking. I forgot to turn the oven on again. After a minute I took them back out of the oven and let them cool and lo and behold, they did not fall apart when I lifted them off of the cookie sheet.

Part of my problem with getting things right when it comes to cooking is that I was raised in a home that contained not a single recipe book. My mother was raised on a ranch near Alliance in the Sand Hills of Nebraska and all of her life she did her cooking in the manner of the relatively isolated and less affluent ranchers and farmers of the Western Great Plains. For meat we had antelope, deer and elk. My mother never used recipes in the modern sense. To her there was no $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon, half teaspoon, teaspoon or tablespoon, just a dash of this, a pinch of that, hands full of other things, add whatever liquid or flour until the consistency was just right and season to taste. Reading her recipes today would be like Japanese Intelligence listening to a Navajo Code Talker, learning nothing.