

COOKBOOK REVIEW

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After more than 30 years, the two staples on my cookbook shelf — Betty Crocker and Better Homes and Gardens — have some serious competition: It's the new revised edition of "The Taste of Home Cookbook."

I can no longer tease my daughter-in-law about sitting for hours reading cookbooks, because I could do that with this one. It's more than a cookbook — it's an entire kitchen guide that could educate even the most cooking-challenged.

The first chapter, appropriately titled Kitchen Basics, is filled with information. It has the usual weights and measures equivalents, but it also gives you a guide to cutlery (with photos), cutting and chopping techniques (with photos), how to choose bakeware, bakeware substitutions for when you don't have the right pan, storage guidelines for various foods, herbs and spices and their uses (with photos), and even measuring techniques (with photos).

Do you see a trend here? Yep, lots of photos. There are more than 1,300 color photographs and 1,375 recipes and variations with nutrition facts about each recipe.

Another great feature is the A-Z primer on fruits and vege-

tables. Those strange-looking things at the grocery store, such as broccolini, jicama and kohlrabi, are not only explained, but there also are recipes for using them as well.

For 80 "all-time favorite foods" the cookbook gives you four preparation options — a classic version that's "how Mom cooked — from scratch," a time-saver option that requires less time and effort, light recipes "for those watching their calories" and recipes that have been scaled down to serve two people.

Each chapter even has a special section labeled "Recipes to fit your lifestyle" to make it easy to find these all-time favorites.

I decided to try out one of the four barbecued chicken recipes and opted for the time-saver option — Barbecue Jack Chicken — not so much because I needed to save time, but because I was hungry and the photo made the chicken look really tasty.

With just three ingredients — chicken, pepper-jack cheese and barbecue sauce — it couldn't have been easier. The chicken was tasty, but I was a little disappointed that the cheese wasn't as strong as I expected. Although it could have been that I didn't use enough.

Another recipe, Spicy Mashed Potatoes, was described as "a taste-twist on everyday mashed potatoes." These mashed potatoes had feta cheese, cilantro, garlic, jalapeño peppers and cheddar cheese. If you like spicy food, you'll love these.

Of course, there also had to be a test of something sweet. I

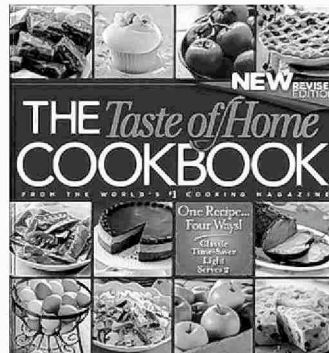
finally decided on the Chocolate Cream Cheese Brownies and Cranberry Crisps cookies. (It was too hard to choose, so I fixed both.)

The brownies were really moist and the cream cheese added a little extra flavor, although it wasn't very strong. The Cranberry Crisps were basically an oatmeal cookie with dried cranberries instead of raisins, which was a nice change of taste. They would make a good holiday cookie because of the nice red cranberries.

"The Taste of Home Cookbook" is from the cooking magazine and includes many reader recipes, so it's like a compilation from a huge recipe swap.

This cookbook isn't going to excite a gourmet cook, but it's a good one that covers all the basics and deserves a space on the home cookbook shelf.

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Recipe worth trying:
Cranberry Crisps,
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