

ACCENT

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Recipes call for packaged ingredients

Cookbook authors forgo fresh foods for speedier recipes

By J.M. HIRSCH
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nothing says good home cooking like packaged foods.

Or so goes the message from the latest batch of cookbooks aiming to satisfy Americans' desire to produce more and better meals by spending less and less time in the kitchen.

The trend is a bit more brazen now, not just turning to processed foods but bragging about it.

Thus we have "Fast Fixes With Mixes" from the editors of Taste of Home magazine and Nancy Silverton's forthcoming "A Twist of the Wrist," a not-so-subtle play on the opening of jars and cans.

Taste of Home, a hugely popular brand of folksy magazines and cookbooks that publish readers' recipes, is a natural for this category. Its recipes generally skew to the cream-of-mushroom-soup-casserole crowd.

"Fast Fixes with Mixes" (Reader's Digest, 2006, \$15.95) isn't the book to turn to for your next dinner party, no matter how pressed for time you are. But for easy weeknight comfort food, it's worth at least a look.

Silverton's "A Twist of the Wrist" (Knopf, March 2007, \$29.95) includes 137 recipes.

Thanks to the natural foods revolution, it is possible to get some phenomenal prepared products that combine ease with whatever natural, organic, artisanal or gourmet philosophy guides your food choices.

This is a world away from cans of cream of anything soup. And so Silverton can give us seared beef filet with white beans, bitter greens and black olive tapenade (the beans and tapenade are the packaged items).

Somewhere between Silverton and Taste of Home is "Homemade in Half the Time" (Rodale, 2006, \$19.95), edited by Shea Waggoner.

She creates peanut butter, banana and raisin waffle sandwiches fashioned from frozen whole grain waffles, and white clam pizzas with Parmesan cheese that rely on refrigerated pizza dough, canned clams and jarred garlic.

It's not a bad approach, and Waggoner provides helpful chapters on make-ahead meals, recipes for slow cookers, and grilling.

The ridiculously simple egg-Cheddar-chutney muffin sandwiches were quite good, getting lots of flavor from jarred chutney.

EGG-CHEDDAR CHUTNEY MUFFIN

Start to finish: 10 minutes

1 multigrain English muffin, split
1 tablespoon fruit chutney (such as peach-ginger)

1 hard-boiled egg, sliced
2 slices (about 2 ounces)
Cheddar cheese

Heat the oven to broil.

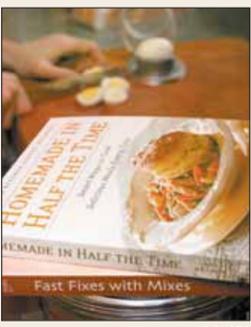
Place muffin halves on foil or an ovenproof plate. Divide the chutney evenly between the halves and spread. Top with slices of egg, then a slice of cheese.

Broil 6 inches from the heat source for about four minutes, or until the cheese is bubbling.

Eat as an open-face sandwich, or bring the halves together.

Makes 1 serving.

SOURCE: "Homemade in Half the Time" (Rodale, 2006)



AP PHOTO

Cookbooks like "Homemade in Half the Time" and "Fast Fixes With Mixes" make use of packaged food for ingredients.



STAFF PHOTOS BY JOSH MARSHALL

Center Grove students audition for "The Little Mermaid," a play they will stage to raise money for the Parents Supporting Academic Enrichment group. Since the production involves singing, children were asked to sing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" as theater staff members, including Maryann Carlson, walked among them listening for good voices.

Staging a fund-raiser

Center Grove students display their acting gifts

By JENNIFER LEWIS

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A mermaid and other fairy-tale characters will take Center Grove students under the sea to keep them on top of their studies.

Children in kindergarten through Grade 8 will perform "The Little Mermaid" on Saturday as a fund-raiser for the academic booster group Center Grove Parents Supporting Academic Enrichment.

The organization works with school administrators to identify the needs of gifted and talented students and how to best educate them.

The group's second annual production is produced by Missoula Children's Theatre, a traveling organization that is spending this week with the young actors before moving on to a new city.

This year's play features a cast of 60 students and four behind-the-scene workers. About 130 Center Grove students auditioned Monday.

Students rehearse Tuesday through Thursday and end the week with performances at 1:30 and 5 p.m. Saturday at Center Grove High School.

The parent group presented "The Jungle Book" last year, raising more than \$2,000 from ticket sales. That was enough to pay for 19 teachers to attend staff-development programs during the summer.

Cassie Burnett, mother of three daughters and the president of the Center Grove Education Foundation, formed Parents Supporting



Third-grader Bethany Ulrey auditions for a part in "The Little Mermaid" at Center Grove Elementary School.

IF YOU GO

'The Little Mermaid'

Who: Center Grove students in kindergarten through Grade 8

When: 1:30 and 5 p.m. Saturday

Where: Center Grove High School, 2717 S. Morgantown Road, Greenwood

Admission: \$6 for adults and \$4 for students in advance, \$8 for adults and \$6 for students at the door

Tickets: Available through Friday during school hours at Center Grove elementaries and during rehearsals at Center Grove High School from 4:30 to 9 p.m.

Academic Enrichment four years ago.

"We are going to be positive and try to make a difference in the kids' education, that was a must for me," Burnett said.

Through conversations with administrators, the group decided teachers needed to learn more about gifted students. But not much funding is available for teachers to attend conferences on the subject.

So Burnett and other parents organized "The Jungle Book" as a fund-raiser that involved and benefited the students.

Parents are around to offer help during rehearsals and performances, but Missoula Children's Theatre staff run the show.

"We are there kind of supervising the kids, but the directors take charge of the whole thing," said Ann Clute, a member of Parents Supporting Academic Enrichment. "They tell us what we need to do, and we do it."

Clute's daughters were both involved in the play last year.

Sydney Clute, 13, is in seventh grade at Center Grove Middle School Central. She was a student director last year.

"I helped all the kids memorize their lines," Clute said. "I had to move stage props, make sure all the kids got on stage OK, help with their make-up and got all their costumes."

In "The Little Mermaid," she plays a scout, a part with lines.

Clute has been promoting the project among her classmates.

"I talked it up with my friends and told them how much fun it was last year and tried to get them to do it with me," she said.

Some of her friends joined her at the audition



About 130 Center Grove students auditioned for parts in "The Little Mermaid." The production will be at 1:30 and 5 p.m. Saturday at Center Grove High School.

Monday at Center Grove Elementary School.

Parents organizing the fund-raiser hope for increased attendance this year as word gets out about the project. By selling tickets throughout the week before the play, Burnett hopes to get more people interested in seeing the performances.

Tickets will be available through Friday during school hours at Center Grove elementary schools. Tickets also will be sold during rehearsals at Center Grove High School from 4:30 to 9 p.m. through Friday.

Advance tickets are \$6 for adults and \$4 for students. Tickets purchased at the door will be \$8 for adults and \$6 for students.

Burnett encourages parents to take their children to the production.

"I hope people will come and bring their kids, because their kids' friends are going to be in the play," she said.

Tilapia takes on savory note with prosciutto

By J.M. HIRSCH
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Whitefish is such an underappreciated ingredient.

Its ability to mate so well with so many diverse flavors — never mind the speed and ease with which it can be prepared — make it a natural for the weeknight kitchen.

For the minimalist, there is the simple drizzle of olive oil with a shake or two of salt and freshly ground black pepper. Or liven it up with a handful of chopped fresh herbs. Either way, the natu-

al flavors of the fish will shine.

If fried is more your thing, but you'd rather skip the mess and fuss of oil, slather the fillets with a blend of equal parts mayonnaise and mustard, then dredge them through breadcrumbs and bake until crisp and flaky.

As for variety of whitefish, I've never been all that picky. Whatever is fresh — generally haddock and cod — works fine. Both are inexpensive, readily available and score low on mercury concerns.

But recently I've become enamored with tilapia, which has become

one of the darlings of the eco-seafood movement. In addition to being low in mercury, tilapia usually is farmed in environmentally friendly (or at least friendlier) ways.

And it doesn't hurt that it tastes great and has a pleasantly firm texture.

For this recipe, I wanted something fast enough for a weeknight dinner. Rolling the fillets in thinly sliced prosciutto was the answer.

The oven-crisped prosciutto (similar to bacon but so much better) provides a nice contrast to the fish.

PROSCIUTTO-BAKED TILAPIA

Start to finish: 35 minutes, 10 minutes active
8 slices prosciutto
4 tilapia fillets (about 4 to 5 ounces each)
Salt and pepper, to taste
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 roasted red peppers from the jar, drained and finely diced
4 toothpicks
Olive oil cooking spray
Heat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly coat a rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray. Evenly spaced four slices of prosciutto on the baking sheet. Place a second slice over each

one. Set one tilapia fillet over each pair of prosciutto slices. Season fish with salt and pepper, then drizzle each with ½ tablespoon olive oil. Spoon a quarter of the peppers over each fillet. Starting at one end of each fillet, carefully roll it up, holding the prosciutto so that it wraps around the outside of the fish. Poke a toothpick through the center of each roll to hold it together. Bake 20 to 25 minutes, or until the flesh feels firm and flakes easily. Makes four servings.