

Teens Take Susie Fishbein for a Test Drive

Fun Food Recipes Rank High With Generation Text

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Teenagers are a difficult breed. They are hard to pin down. They are cooler than you and me. They speak in code and they correspond in hieroglyphics (-; . They subsist on a steady diet of sugary, caffeinated drinks, fast food and candy bars. To them the kitchen is the room that contains the fridge and the microwave — a place where Mom or Dad can be found preparing meals that they're too busy or too uninterested to eat.

Susie Fishbein, creator of the popular *Kosher By Design* cookbook series, posits otherwise. Her latest offering, *"Kosher by Design: Teens and 20-Somethings,"* aims to fit the lifestyle of the young and on-the-go with fun and fast food. It's an attractive, bright book filled with beautiful pictures of yummy-looking food. There are recipes like Turkey Sliders and Spicy Barbecue Popcorn and Tuna Nicoise Wraps, foods familiar to younger palates, but made over in a contemporary and health-conscious manner.

The question is, can teens and young people for whom the book is designed get into the kitchen and cook these dishes? And more importantly, what do they think of the food?

I wrangled some time with three teenaged cooks ages 13, 15, and 16. They were given the book and asked to choose a couple of recipes that grabbed them and mark them for the tryout.

Mia, 13, and Morgan Brill, 16, sisters who live in New City, N.Y., are bright and polite and know their way around the kitchen. Morgan has been cooking and baking since she was 11, and Mia dreamily mentions her sister's Caramel Brownies more than once. Morgan cites Passover Chocolate Souffle as Mia's best recipe. The sisters help their Mom cook for the holidays. Morgan recalled the day they devoted to pistachio shelling for the Pistachio Crusted Chicken recipe (*Kosher By*

Design Passover) that their Mom made for this year's Seder meal.

For her recipe, Mia chose Veggie Corn Fritters because she loves vegetables (!). Morgan was clearly more interested in something sweet and let me choose between the Easy Fudge and Molten Deep Dish Chocolate Chip Cookies. We settled on the fudge.

What became clear was that these young chefs really knew what they were doing. Adeptly melting butter, stirring batter, and improvising measurements when the tablespoon went missing (3 teaspoons equals 1 tablespoon).

Mia suggested, as she flipped the fritters in hot oil, that the book might have included a utensil list next to the recipes, like in Fishbein's *"Kosher By Design Kids in the Kitchen."* When they were finished, the fritters were delicious. And the chopped broccoli, cauliflower and zucchini added a healthy aspect to the fried snack.

The fudge turned out to be super easy, and had Michael, their 10-year-old brother, eagerly scraping the bowl with his finger. By the end of our cooking hour, the corn fritters were tidily draining on paper towels, the fudge was neatly smoothed out and firming up in the fridge. And the kitchen was in order.

Tessa Quinn, a freshman at Nyack High School, says she's been cooking with her mother — a great cook — since she was a toddler. Her confidence is clear by the way she "eyeballs" the right amount of oil to cook the ground beef in for the Mexican Pizza Empanada recipe, which she chose. She questioned the choice of pizza dough for the pocket-sized snack. It's "too elastic and doughy," she observed as she tried to secure the Mexican spiced meat filling inside the dough sections. Tessa skipped the Tofutti sour cream that the recipe called for, thinking it was unlikely to add anything to the recipe. Despite the pinching and prodding, the empanadas opened up in the oven.

Before starting to make the No Bake Dulce de Leche Cheesecake and while sending a few quick texts, Tessa tells me that she "loves baking, but enjoys the freedom of cooking. You can make a mistake and it will still taste okay." Once she begins, she pays close attention to the dessert recipe. It has several complicated steps, and requires two bowls, a saucepan, and a package of gelatin. She found steps 5 and 6 in the recipe confusing, and thought it would be better anyway if the cheesecake had two distinct layers, instead of incorporating the whipped cream and cream cheese together. She goes home with the misshapen empanadas, and the unset cheesecake. Two days later I receive an email from Tessa telling me that the Cheesecake was "fantastic".

It is noteworthy that all the recipes Mia, Morgan, and Tessa were interested in the cookbook came from the first and last chapters: the munchies and starters section and the dessert chapter. The middle sections that contained recipes for salads, soups and main courses were free of bookmarks.

The verdict? Teenagers want their yummy snacks

and sweet treats, and lo and behold, they are happy to make them for themselves. And, they are even willing to help out in the kitchen, as long as you ask nicely and don't let it interfere with their texting. LOL (-;

Veggie Corn Fritters

(From *Kosher by Design: Teens and 20-Somethings*)



1 small zucchini, with skin, cut into ¼-inch pieces
1 cup broccoli florets
1 cup cauliflower florets
Water as needed
1 large egg
1 cup milk or plain unsweetened soy milk
1 tablespoon canola oil
½ teaspoon fine sea salt
2 cups dry cornbread mix
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
Canola oil for frying
Jarred marinara sauce, warmed, for dipping

Place the zucchini into a 2-cup measuring cup. Break the broccoli and cauliflower florets into tiny florets, cutting away the thicker stem parts.

Add enough of the tiny broccoli and cauliflower florets to the zucchini to make 2 cups. Place into a microwave-safe bowl. Cover with water. Microwave on high for 4 minutes, until vegetables are soft. Drain and set aside.

In medium bowl, whisk the egg, milk, tablespoon canola oil, and salt. With a silicone spatula, stir in the cornbread mix and stir until a smooth batter forms.

Sprinkle the flour over the drained cooked vegetables. This will keep them from sinking to the bottom. Mix vegetables into batter, using your spatula to distribute them evenly.

Heat ½-inch canola oil in a large skillet over medium heat. You will know the oil is ready when you drop a tiny amount of batter into the pan and it sizzles. If it sizzles to vigorously, turn the heat down. Use a ¼-cup measuring cup to add the batter to the pan; do not crowd. Depending on the size of your skillet, work with 3-4 fritters at a time. Use a metal spatula to flatten each fritter as the batter hits the pan. Fry for 2-3 minutes per side, until golden brown. When flipping the fritters, flip away from your body to avoid splattering yourself with hot oil.

Drain on paper towels. Serve with warm marinara sauce.

(*Additional serving suggestion: When I made these fritters for my family I provided sour cream and salsa as an accompaniment.)

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