

The News *Ark Valley*

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From the classroom to the kitchen, Joyal's focus is kids

By Jessica Lindsey

Hot Diggidy Dog Pizza, High in the Sky, Double Decker Pie, Itsy Bitsy Baby Smores.

You don't need a fancy oven to try these recipes. They all appear in Kristen Joyal's new book, "Mommy & Me Cookbook: Recipes for Kid-Size Ovens."

Although the self-published cookbook was a first for Joyal, she and her husband, Roger, own a business called Straight Forward Technologies that provides updating and design services for web sites. Joyal taught math at Valley Center High School before deciding in May 2001 to quit her job of nine years. She wanted to be home with her son and daughter, Alan, 6, and Ashlyn, 3.

"I searched for months for some type of work that I could do while still being at home with my kids," said Joyal.

When her daughter received an Easy Bake Oven for Christmas last year, Joyal stumbled onto an idea.

"It was only a few days before all the mixes were gone and she still wanted to bake," said Joyal. "When we visited the store and I saw how much they were selling for, I decided to try making recipes and mixes on my own."

The idea became a family project. They worked together baking, tasting and naming all the recipes. The idea evolved into a cookbook, and Alan's kindergarten class at Abilene Elementary drew all the illustrations for the book.

"Alan's class ended up doing the inside illustrations after I searched for a way to liven up the inside of the cookbook," said Joyal. "I talked to Alan's teacher, Jamie Pearson, and soon I had more drawings than I could use."

It wasn't all easy, though. Joyal said she learned several lessons along the way.

"I learned my first lesson when I tried a new recipe in all three ovens," said Joyal. "The cookies bubbled over the side and went all over the inside of not one, but all three ovens."

She said the recipes in her cookbook are perfect for small servings. They are designed to be baked in kid-sized light bulb ovens such as the Easy Bake Oven, Barbie Bake With Me Oven and the Mrs. Fields Baking Factory, but they also can be made in a 350-degree oven.

“To help measure the small amounts needed in many of these recipes, we have also attached the dash, pinch and smidgen measuring spoons to each cookbook,” said Joyal.

The cover of the cookbook shows Joyal’s daughter, and the inside includes pictures of other family members. Family and friends have been involved since the beginning, said Joyal.

Many of the recipes were scaled down from Joyal’s grandmother’s recipes, and a conversation between Joyal and her sister-in-law yielded a title for the book.

“My sister-in-law, Sheila Chiskowski from Rhode Island, gave me the inspiration for the title,” said Joyal. “Right after Christmas I made a comment that I should write a cookbook. At that moment, she said, ‘You could call it the Mommy and Me Cookbook.’ At that point, I don’t think either one of us thought we would have a cookbook in our hands by summer.”

The cookbooks are for sale at McKibbin’s Daylight Donuts in Valley Center, area Leeker’s stores, and Between Friends, Better Book Room, Perfect Peace and Borders in Wichita. They are available online at www.amazon.com. Joyal hosted a book signing at her home Saturday, when the kindergarteners who provided illustrations signed copies of the cookbook.

Joyal said she loves teaching and misses the profession, but she is grateful to be more involved with her children.

“For now I hope to sell enough books to pay our expenses for publishing the book,” said Joyal, “and then sell enough to finance me staying at home with my kids until they are older.”