

Children's Literature Reviews

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Sandra Lee semi-homemade : cool kids' cooking.

Des Moines, Iowa : Meredith Books, c2006.

142 p. : col. ill. ; 26 cm.

Annotations:

Includes index.

"As seen on Food Network"--Cover.

Introduces a selection of super-simple, kid-friendly recipes for young chefs, featuring tasty dishes for breakfast, lunch, dinner, after-school snacks, drinks, and desserts, accompanied by lists of essential equipment and utensils for each recipe, tips on recipes that require an adult helper, and instruction in cooking techniques.

Reviews:

Gwynne Spencer (Children's Literature)

While Food Network's Sandra Lee takes it in stride when people criticize her as a "noncook," she certainly has convenience and easy success as primary goals in this book. Unlike her cookbooks for adults, this one has cartoons instead of photos. The language aims to be breezy and hip, but comes off as condescending and cloying, at least to this reader. Contents include safety tips, notes on recipe reading, kitchen gadgetry, cleanup, and health tips. Each recipe includes a header that tells how long it takes, as well as what tools and ingredients are needed. Specific brands that kids will easily recognize are noted. Some recipes have photos on facing pages, but most are illustrated with cartoons. The "Bright Breakfasts" chapter includes recipes for egg nests, breakfast burritos, pizzas, quiche, pancakes, French toast, and granola. The chapter of "Lazy Day Lunches" includes 18 recipes, among them pizza, calzones, sloppy joes, grilled cheese, ramen, and other kid-appeal food. The "Meal Mania" chapter has 14 recipes, including pork chops, meat loaf, and turkey burgers. Ten "Everyday TV Dinners" recipes (e.g., porcupine meatballs, spaghetti, lasagna) are included, while "Brainiac Breaks" provides recipes for easy energy boosters. "Movie Munchies" includes recipes for popcorn nachos, pizza dogs, fruit leather, ice cream sandwiches, stuffed celery, and more munchies. "Sleepover Sensations" features fondues, quesadillas, pizza, and potato bombs. "Groovy Goodies" is the super-sugar chapter with recipes for rainbow ribbon cake (very pretty), tie-dyed cupcakes, and dinosaur cookies. As cocktails are the final focus of each of Sandra Lee's shows, "Dynamite Drinks" can be found in the final chapter. The index is well done, with subject headings as well as recipe listings. The book has an internal spiral binding, but many pages do not turn easily and had to be coaxed into position to avoid tearing them. Each easy-to-make recipe follows Lee's typical formula of being 70% store-bought and 30% homemade. The inclusion of photos for the finished products would have made this the 100%-best not-from-scratch cookbook on the market. Still this would be a good addition to a recipe collection for young adults with little cooking experience who have a high need for success and speedy preparation. It would also be great in the classroom, since most of the recipes take well under an hour. This is not the book for purists who want broccoli forests and round-the-world cuisine. It is, however, the book for ordinary mortals who just want to turn out a decent dish with a minimum of fuss. 2006, Meredith Books, \$16.95. Ages 10 to 18.

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