

A smart cookie

Kiwanian's cookbook project is a recipe for success

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Who can pass up a cookie?

That is the premise behind the Blue Spruce Kiwanis Mountain Neighbors Cookie Cookbook that is a fundraiser for area food banks. Proceeds from the \$10 cookbook go to the food banks at Evergreen Christian Outreach, Mountain Resource Center in Conifer and Loaves & Fishes in Idaho Springs. It is available at Mount Evans Home Health Care & Hospice, the Bread Lounge in Bergen Park and Evergreen National Bank.

But here, as they say, is the rest of the story.

Kiwanian Beth Foster, who organized and created the cookbook, got her inspiration from pandemic binge-watching the "Great British Baking Show," which gave her the itch to bake.

"That morphed into the idea of creating a cookbook to help the food banks in Evergreen and beyond," she explained, noting that the pandemic had hurt Blue Spruce Kiwanis' regular fundraising efforts.

Foster enlisted foothills residents to submit their favorite cookie recipes. Going the extra mile — and wanting to work on her baking skills — Foster decided to try the recipes before putting them into the cookbook.

"I've done amateur cookbooks," she said. "One of the main problems is that often the recipes don't work well because with home recipes, people know things we might not know. I also decided we had to test the recipes to make sure they were right for high altitude. Besides, we were still in lockdown, and I had nothing else to do."

Foster convinced her good friend Debbie Schwartz, receptionist at Mount Evans, to be her co-baker, and together they baked and re-baked as necessary all 66 recipes. Foster also took photos of the cookie creations, which became part of the cookbook cover.

Schwartz said Foster simply asked her to join the endeavor, calling it appealing because "we were putting

recipes into the book that were families' recipes with great stories. The recipes run the gamut. It's been a lot of fun. It's a wonderful project."

When the recipe providers stop in at Mount Evans to buy a cookbook, Schwartz has them sign her copy.

Some recipes needed adjustments for high altitude, Foster said, and after baking batch after batch, she and Schwartz donated them to the Evergreen Shelter Program for the homeless, the Evergreen Christian Outreach food bank and Mount Evans.

"Another thing I like about the cookbook is it really contains recipes with different levels of difficulty," Foster said. "I wanted to be sure every word was right. If I wanted to learn to bake cookies, this was the way to do it."

And of course, each cookie needed to be tasted to make sure it was at its appetizing best.

Foster said while all of the cookies were delicious, her favorite is Stephanie Richardson's Chocolate Chocolate Chip Cookies.

"It's a chocolate chocolate chip cookie, but it has three kinds of chocolate chips in it," she explained. "I can't tell you exactly what makes it so good, but when I baked it, I thought, 'Man, this is the best cookie I have ever eaten in my entire life.'"

Schwartz's favorite recipe is Wendy's Biscotti that was submitted by Pat Thoms.

Foster said she was surprised to learn that Bob's Red Mill All-Purpose Gluten-Free Flour could be substituted in the recipes to make the cookies gluten-free.

Linda Kirkpatrick of Evergreen submitted her Pan-Fried Strawberry Cookie recipe, explaining that she and her cousin used to make the cookies for Christmas.

"She taught me how to make them, and they're the most colorful (cookies)," she said. "They perked up a box of cookies."

Peggy Eggers of Evergreen said the recipe she submitted was d's Grandma's Molasses Ginger Cookies, which came from the grandmother of her daughter's boyfriend a long time ago.

"I had been looking for a ginger cookie recipe for quite some time," Eggers said. "These were delicious, so I got the recipe and stopped my search and have been making them



Mountain Neighbors Cookie Cookbook

66 high-altitude cookie recipes shared by 43 Coloradoans who live and work in the mountain communities west of Denver



The Blue Spruce Kiwanis Mountain Neighbors Cookie Cookbook is for sale with proceeds benefiting area food banks. COURTESY IMAGE

ever since."

Eggers said the cookie cookbook was a great idea, and she's been trying a new cookie recipe every couple weeks.

"My husband is not complaining," she added.

Foster called the cookbook one of the best projects she's ever done between finding the recipes and talking to people about the project, plus it helped while away the hours when she was homebound during the pandemic.

"The testing was just fabulous," she said. "I was probably a pretty mediocre baker going into this. Now I can create cookies without a recipe."

"If I could make a living out of this kind of project, I would," Foster added. "There's nothing bad about cookies."

Two of reporter Deb Hurley Brobst's cookie recipes are in the Blue Spruce Kiwanis Mountain Neighbors Cookie Cookbook.