

Do you know someone that loves to cook? Do you know anyone that can take ordinary ingredients and create an extraordinary meal? I love to cook. In the past I concentrated on preparing foods like my mother did, I guess it would be called wholesome home cooking. A couple years ago I discover the food network and this is when my cooking changed.

Until I began watching the food network and many of my favorite chefs I used the same type of canned herbs and spices that my mother used in her cooking. My mother did not know the names of spices that were not common place. She used salt, pepper, sage and cinnamon. Once I started watching the chefs I realized that there was a whole world of herbs and there were many names of spices I had never heard of, let alone used in my cooking. I started checking the produce section of the store and found that there were many fresh herbs that were available instead of using dried. I could not believe the difference having fresh herbs and spices makes in the taste of a dish. By making some minor changes in ingredients and techniques I have become a very good cook.

Last year I planted several herbs in pots on our deck. The pots provided a wonderful spicy smell to the deck. Using herbs that were picked moments before use made a huge difference in the taste of the dishes I was preparing. I have started learning the names of spices and what types of foods they are used with. My teenage daughter began taking an interest in cooking because she was enjoying the new taste of the foods I was putting on the dinner table. She began helping me in the kitchen with the chopping and other preparations. For Christmas last year she made a handy chart with names of spices and herbs or in with the types of foods they are used with. She made the chart on the computer and then had it laminated. We have it hanging next to the spice cabinet so it can be used for a quick reference. I have started buying my dried spices at the area food cooperative. I can buy them in what ever quantity I need so that they are always fresh. It makes a huge difference by spices differently and using them differently. I now grate my own cinnamon and nutmeg. It is amazing how even these common spices come to life when they are grated right into the recipe rather than shaken from a container that has been sitting in the cabinet for years. Also the use of fresh lemons makes all dishes taste like they come from the finest restaurant. I enjoy cooking even more now that I am producing higher quality dishes.