



Staff photos by Ryan Mercer

Vale Farrar Kelley and 15-month-old Raleigh share the "perfect afternoon snack" of Homemade Caramel Corn, a favorite from her new book "Recipes My Mother Gave Me," on a recent afternoon in her Portsmouth home.

A gift from mom

Inspired by mother's recipes, Portsmouth mother writes book for practical, everyday cooks

By Kiana Minkle
Staff Writer

One day a year, mothers across the nation are honored with flowers and cards, taken out to dinner and given presents.

This Sunday you can make a few recipes for your mother from a new recipe book inspired by a mom.

Vale Farrar Kelley of Portsmouth wrote "Recipes My Mother Gave Me," a collection of more than 100 of her mother's recipes that she now uses in her own home, where she lives with her husband and 15-month-old son Raleigh, as well as two small dogs that enjoy her caramel corn as much as people do.

The idea began as a gift to her friends who always asked her for her mom's recipes. Every year, she and her mom get together to plan what they will make for Christmas presents, and her idea one year was to make a recipe book of her mom's recipes.

Once it was put together, a scout from Time Life saw it and after two years of work — collecting the recipes and putting the book together — it was finally published, said Kelley.

"It was always a dream of mine to publish my mom's recipes," she said.

Growing up in a family that moved around quite a bit because of her father's job in the Navy, Kelley remembers her family entertaining a lot. So her mom had to cook a lot. And, she said, everyone always loved her mom's cooking.

Cooking for her own parties using the recipes her mother gave her, Kelley has also received many compliments on food she prepares.

"They're my mother's recipes, tried and true," said Kelley.

Kelley said that she likes her mom's recipes because they are simple and easy to follow, and the ingredients are normal items that can be found in any home or grocer store.

"She's really good at explaining recipes and making it sound easy," she said. "Almost every recipe in here my mom and I have cooked 10 or 12 times."

What is good about the recipes in the book, said Kelley, is that you can make a big batch of each recipe and freeze it to use the rest of the week. This is good for families and mothers who don't have much time on their hands to cook during the week. As a mother herself, she enjoys making food on Sunday to use later on.

The book includes recipes for all occasions, such as appetizers and beverages, salads, breads, cookies, entrees and soups. After each section are two lined pages to be filled in by the reader with recipes of their own.

This aspect of the book is important for Kelley, because she feels everyone should collect the recipes that have been used often in their family, ones which they will want to save for their own children to use someday.

"A good recipe evokes so many memories," said Kelley.

Orange Julia

One 6-oz. can frozen orange juice
1 c. milk (whole or skim)
1/4 c. water
3 T. sugar
1 t. vanilla
10 to 12 ice cubes

Place all ingredients in blender. Blend until smooth. Serve in 4 wine glasses (straws are optional).

The Orange Julia is a family tradition at our house for Christmas morning before the gifts are opened. Make them for brunch or your holiday breakfast with English muffins, pastries or popovers.

Serves 4.

See Mom's recipes, Page B2

Mom cooks best

Mom's recipes from Page B1

Recipes that are handed down from generation to generation are often the best ones, because you know that they work.

"I love when my friends give me recipes. Those are the kinds of recipes you've got to save," said Kelley.

Lots of recipes books assume their users know certain things, said Kelley, but hers doesn't. Tips and serving suggestions are included for each recipe, as well as any hints for cooking it.

One of her favorite recipes is Portuguese Sweetbread, which takes longer than most of the recipes in the book to make, she said. Besides the Homemade Caramel Corn, she is also partial to Orange Julia (a family tradition at her home on Christmas morning), Pain Perdu or "Lost Bread" ("great for brunches, coffees and weekend snacks") and Mom's Spinach Salad with Garlic Croutons.

The book is a great Mother's Day present, said Kelley, because the recipes included are

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— Vale Farrar Kelley

ones that mothers can use everyday. And their simplicity makes them very popular.

"Anybody can be a good cook if you have a good recipe," said Kelley.

Feedback from others who have bought the book already are proof the recipes are a hit, she said. She also receives e-mail from readers who have used the recipes for parties to rave reviews.

Kelley is currently working on a children's story, as well as another recipe book, she said.

"Recipes My Mother Gave Me" is available at Stroudwater Books and also at Amazon.com. Kelley has scheduled a book signing at Stroudwater Books in Portsmouth on Tuesday, June 15 at 7 p.m.