

Introduction

I have been baking and collecting recipes and cookbooks since the age of 13, when I took my first home economics class in junior high school. My phenomenal mother, Evelyn Dolores Harris, a consummate baker, had not permitted me to bake in her well-appointed kitchen up until this time. She was pleased, however, to see me take such an interest in baking, as she was a proud housewife who tremendously enjoyed cooking, baking, cleaning, decorating, and caring for her family in general. She began to encourage my newfound interest in the culinary arts and discussed with me the techniques, formulas, and recipes I was bringing home from school. She finally opened up her coveted kitchen to me so I could commence cooking, baking, and experimenting on my own. I could tell that my mother was quite pleased to have me following in her padded-slipper footsteps.

One of the first novelty recipes I learned in home ec was Easter Basket Cupcakes, capped with white icing, green-tinted coconut, a sprinkling of colorful jellybeans, and white pipe cleaners for handles. To this day, every Easter, I still enjoy making this recipe.

As I became an adult, I cooked and baked my way through life while holding down a full-time job as a mortgage banker. I would often bake for my co-workers, which always made me the darling of the office.

When it looked as though the mortgage industry was about to take a downturn several years ago, I enrolled in culinary school with the intention of becoming a big, well-known pastry chef. Halfway through school, which consisted of a 12-month Le Cordon Bleu course, I became ill and was subsequently operated on for a serious stomach ailment. While in the hospital, I received the unwelcome news that I was diabetic. I would have to give up sweets, including baking them, which would undoubtedly be too tempting for me.

I was devastated. Baking was supposed to become my second

career, the one that would rescue me from the impending unemployment line. Next followed a brief period of depression as I tried to figure out another course of action. I had been collecting recipes and devising my own line of gourmet bakery items for years, even before I began attending culinary school. *What could I do with these recipes now?* What a waste of recipes, what a waste of a life, I thought. But after the “oh, woe is me” period, I began to pull myself together and entertain the thought of developing a line of diabetic-friendly pastries. I have to admit, though, that I wasn’t too enthused about the prospect, as I had tasted low-carb and sugar-free products in the past that left a lot to be desired. These products were consistently bad. The bakers mistakenly thought their diabetic food products could not be improved upon. Still, I had no choice. I could not continue to eat as I had in the past if I wanted to maintain my health.

So I began to slowly experiment, at first with dismal results, confirming my initial fears that diabetic desserts were tasteless and disappointing. The low-carb fad was in full force at the time, so I began to read low-carb and other healthy cookbooks, picking up dietary tips along the way. I incorporated them into my recipes. I learned about the dangers of white flour, refined sugar, and trans fats and the havoc they were wreaking on our systems. So I began to blend my flours and reduce the sugar or combine it with artificial sweeteners. I totally eliminated trans fats (though I sorely missed my piecrusts), and I learned to cut milk carbs in half. Hallelujah! I realized I was on to something good. My desserts still tasted great after all of these changes. I was somehow able to retain the satisfying tastes of my original recipes. Even my family and friends had to agree, and not because I twisted their arms!

I began to share my tips, techniques, and recipes on a diabetes Internet forum. They were so well received that I called myself the Diabetic Pastry Chef and started a Web site. I was pleased to now have a renewed purpose in life, one that was more meaningful than my previous one. I am now in a position to help millions of suffering diabetics like myself still be able to enjoy delicious desserts while continuing to maintain their health.

Sugar is of course the standard sweetener for most desserts,

white flour the standard flour, and butter the standard fat. These ingredients provide a certain taste, appearance, and texture we have all come to expect in our baked goods. When a different ingredient is substituted, the outcome is altered and generally deemed inferior. Diabetics are told to severely limit sugar, white flour, and fats—the basis for most baked goods. This does not leave us with the best of options, and it proves to be a major challenge in devising quality recipes. I took all of these factors into consideration when I began to develop diabetic-friendly dessert recipes. I feel that my formula, when experimented with, will produce the finest diabetic-friendly pastries possible. And these are recipes the whole family can enjoy!

Here's the Gist of What I Do

We are all dealing with our diets differently. Some diabetics like high-fat, low-carb diets. Others like low-fat, low-carb diets. Some follow the exchange diet or one of the many other diabetic diets. There are diabetics who won't touch Splenda®, others who avoid gluten, etc. I'm sure you get the point.

The recipes I share are my own personal recipes. These recipes work well for my health and glucose readings. My body may produce more or less insulin than yours. My cholesterol levels may differ from yours, as well as my taste buds. When you're dealing with diabetes, one recipe does not fit all. You have to be able to tailor a recipe to your specific health preferences and taste buds. You have to be able to take a recipe and make it your own.

I've provided a formula and many tips to help you accomplish this. I pray you never look at a recipe again and think, "I can't make that. It has too much sugar, too many carbs, or too much fat, or it contains white flour or wheat," etc. My formula should enable you to pick up any cookbook or go to any baking site and convert almost any dessert recipe to a diabetic-friendly version you are able to eat and enjoy without worry.

My formula consists of 4 parts: (1) change or mix the flours, (2) reduce the sugar, (3) dilute whole milk with half water, and (4) use

a healthier fat such as canola oil. These 4 steps should be enough to adequately convert most of the dessert recipes you come across, but if not, I provide a host of additional tips that can be utilized to lower the carbs and/or fat even further. The results are pretty much the same as the traditional recipe—and sometimes even better! Trust me, you don't have to limit the desserts you can eat and enjoy, as long as you successfully make the recipe your own.

I make my own low-carb flours, which I use to prepare pancakes, waffles, and muffins. I keep the following on hand at all times: white flour, white whole-wheat flour, whole-wheat flour, soy flour, whole almonds, and old-fashioned oats. I am continually adding new flours to my arsenal.

If I'm making muffins, I follow a traditional recipe that, for example, calls for 3 cups flour. I look at my flours and might decide to mix 1 cup white flour, 1 cup whole-wheat flour, and 1 cup soy flour together. Occasionally, I use all whole-wheat flour or any other mixture I prefer. I sometimes grind almonds to make almond flour or oats to make oat flour.

I am not a big fan of baking with artificial sweeteners, as they alter the texture and flavors too much and make things stick to the pan. When baking cakes or muffins, I prefer to *reduce* the amount of sugar rather than use all artificial sweetener or even a combination of sweetener and sugar. For instance, I recently baked a large batch of Amish Raisin Bran Muffins that called for 3 cups sugar. I reduced the sugar to 1 cup with very satisfactory results.

I've discovered that a combination of half sugar and half Splenda® works well in sweet potato and pumpkin pies, baked breads, rice puddings (I use brown rice), and custards. I also use half sugar and half Splenda® when I bake pies such as apple, pineapple, peach, or berry. These pies taste pretty much the same as if I had used all sugar.

If a recipe calls for oil, I use canola oil. If a recipe calls for butter, I will generally use canola butter or Smart Balance® regular spread.

I purchase whole milk, and when cooking, I mix it with half water to make an approximate 2 percent milk. This cuts the carbs (as well as the price of the milk!) in half. There is no noticeable difference in taste from 2 percent milk.

These recipes are not the final word. They are here to get you to experiment with the dessert recipes you come across until you obtain a level of control that is comfortable to you, your health, and your taste buds. This can be achieved by monitoring portions, reducing the recipe ingredients that adversely affect your health, and adding or substituting those that help. Use your own discretion, and seek the advice of your licensed healthcare provider.

Carb and other nutritional counts are included with these recipes. When a choice of ingredients is offered, the first listed was used in the nutritional counts. Please note that the percentages that make up the calorie counts will vary between 99 and 101, due to rounding individual values up or down. Should you choose to substitute different ingredients, a carb counter is also included at the end of the book.

Diabetic Pastry Chef