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Well

Tara Parker-Pope on Health

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## When Picky Eaters Grow Up

As a child, Jill Bloomfield remembers pouting at meals until her mother would reheat pizza or give her peanut butter and jelly. So what happened when she grew up?

Jill Bloomfield.

“I became an adult who sought out peanut butter and jelly,” said Ms. Bloomfield, 33, a former middle school and high school teacher in St. Paul, Minn. “I was a picky adult. I wanted things like grilled cheese.”

But Ms. Bloomfield quickly learned that colleagues look askance if you order a grilled cheese sandwich at lunch. Realizing that fussiness about foods is a handicap in a grownup world, Ms. Bloomfield began looking for ways to retrain her taste buds.

“I had to train myself to branch out and like more foods, and with that came learning how to cook,” she said. “It’s not impossible to retrain yourself, but it’s difficult.”

What’s unusual about Ms. Bloomfield’s journey is how far she has come. Today, she is a food educator and cookbook author. Her personal struggles as a picky eater have fueled her interest in helping children learn to cook and to avoid the social and health problems associated with picky eating. (Just two years ago, Ms. Bloomfield was diagnosed with high cholesterol.) After creating a popular cooking course for her high school students, she began offering kids cooking classes and birthday parties.

In the spring, she edited DK Publishing’s “Grow It, Cook It,” which teaches children how to cook with vegetables they grow in a pot or garden. And this fall, she co-authored the “Jewish Holidays Cookbook,” aimed at kids and families. Some of the dishes make it hard to believe Ms. Bloomfield was ever picky about food. She offers simple recipes for harvest rice with pomegranate seeds, pumpkin soup, and chickpea and couscous salad.

Now she’s working on a new book that teaches basic cooking techniques — including seemingly obvious methods like boiling water. “Why do you start potatoes in the water, but you add pasta to water that is already boiling?” she said. “It breaks down a cookbook in the way you don’t normally see and offers recipes to help you practice that skill.”

Healthy Holidays [30 Days of Holiday Eating](#).

This series will include a daily tip, tidbit or insight about holiday food.

[Serving Up That Old Chestnut](#)  
[You vs. the Pomegranate](#)

Ms. Bloomfield hopes that by teaching kids to cook, she can help them avoid the pitfalls of picky eating.

“In my household growing up, a cookie and soda before bedtime was normal,” she said. “Unlearning that as an adult has been an extreme challenge. My journey in food has been about overcoming my childhood.”

Here is the recipe from “Jewish Holidays Cookbook” for chickpea and couscous salad.

### *Chickpea and Couscous Salad*

#### *Ingredients:*

*1 cup vegetable broth*  
*1 cup uncooked, instant couscous*  
*3 tablespoons vegetable oil*  
*2 tablespoons white vinegar*  
*2 tablespoons lemon juice*  
*1 teaspoon garlic powder*  
*¼ cup fresh parsley, minced*  
*¼ cup fresh basil, minced*  
*1 (15 ounce) can chickpeas*  
*4 plum tomatoes, diced*  
*1 medium cucumber, diced*

*1. In a small saucepan, bring vegetable broth to a boil. While on the heat, stir in couscous. Immediately cover pot, turn off stove and remove saucepan from heat so liquid is absorbed into couscous. When all liquid is absorbed, fluff up couscous using a fork so grains are separated and light and fluffy. Be careful because the saucepan is hot. Set couscous aside and allow it to cool.*

*2. Combine oil, vinegar, lemon juice, and garlic powder in a mixing bowl. Gently fold in the parsley and basil.*

*3. Add chickpeas, tomatoes, and cucumber to the cooled couscous. Mix in oil and vinegar mixture.*

*4. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate. Serve cold.*