



Erica Galvin/NEWS

LEFT: Chef Tim Hering mixes up ricotta and cream cheese in a bowl for a strawberry parfait as Daniel Nocera watches during a session of the Little Chefs program at the New Castle Community YMCA. **BELOW:** Mariah Bupp pounds graham crackers into crumbles for a strawberry parfait she and her classmates made.

Dishing out good stuff chef's style

Tim Hering has cooked up some wonderful experiences.

Preparing good meals can be magical. And starting at a young age can only mean good things on the plate and in the belly.

The Little Chefs program at the New Castle YMCA, under Chef Tim's guidance, is not just learning. Participants get to taste at the end. So what's not to love about getting your finger in the pie, so to speak?

On this particular week, though, the class was making oatmeal breakfast cookies and everybody had a part to play.

Daniel Nocera is an excellent egg cracker. I watched as he carefully smacked it against the bowl, making sure no shell dropped inside.

"I can break eggs in my sleep," Daniel, 13, announced to those around him.

And Mariah Bupp may be the new queen of grating — lemon peel, nutmeg — you name it, she's the girl to call.

Once the cookies were in the convection oven, the aromas almost prompted me to open



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the door early. But I'm filling the cookie jar too early.

So there's cracking eggs and cracking up during this delightful class geared toward kids but parents are included, too.

It's a refreshing casual approach on the part of Chef Tim, who is executive chef and owner of a personal chef service.

Dressed in a crisp white chef's jacket, Tim dished out tips and banter.

"The purpose of the class is to take recipes that families typically make and use healthier ingredients than what usually are used," he told me before everyone came in.

Every week it's something different. There's been vegetable soup, gingerbread muffins, tabbouleh, tacos and even sham-rock shakes.

It's not just demonstrations. It's doing, too. Interaction is key.

Dinners don't have to be complicated, Tim emphasized. And fresh ingredients are best.

Pizza making was a big hit.

"The first time I did pizza, the room filled up because the smell was wafting to other parts



of the building."

The week before, Tim taught the group how to cook quinoa, a grain that can be cooked like rice but is higher in protein and other nutrients.

He started teaching the class as a guest chef in 2009 and then became a regular instructor in the late fall/early winter of 2009. But Tim has been cooking since he was 13.

Daniel's twin sister, Rebecca, and their parents, Lynn and Shaun Nocera, and Mariah's

parents, Linton and Marcy Bupp, were a part of this session.

"I try to do things that interest the kids," Tim said. "If the kids like it, the parents are more likely to make it. I give a lot of options."

Mariah loves cooking with her parents and baking cupcakes is a favorite — especially strawberry with Cool Whip frosting.

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But this night, she was multi-tasking.

Mariah is zesty about zesting.

There was one concern.

"Are there raisins in the cookies?" someone asked.

"They are in the recipe but we're not putting them in," Tim responded, then turned to question, "Who is my measurer?"

Mariah sprinkled baking powder and salt into a bowl, and poured oil into a measuring cup while Daniel performed his famous egg cracking.

Then it was time for measuring the dark brown sugar and vanilla, and adding a surprise — apple-sauce — to substitute for some of the oil in the recipe. Once cinnamon and chocolate chips were in the bowl, Mariah stirred. And stirred. Her grated nutmeg was added, too.

My participation, besides later tasting, was to sepa-

rate stubborn baking sheets that were stuck together.

Using a smaller ice cream scoop, Mariah and Daniel dropped the batter onto the sheets.

At the end of class — which passes quickly, by the way — everyone got a printout of the recipe. And what's cooked is sampled on site or to go.

These are seven-week family-based courses but anyone may join in the middle of a session. The class meets from 5 to 6 p.m. each Wednesday except during the summer.

Cruisin' with Little Chefs is healthy and fun, just the way Tim likes it.

What's next on the plate? Maybe just an appetite to learn and try new things.

(To submit a Cruisin' idea, contact Lugene Hudson at (724) 654-6651, extension 620 or lhudson@ncnewsonline.com.)

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