



Emily and her mother Renee

Emily Israel Hoffman was lucky – she grew up in a household full of love AND great food. Her mother, Renee Israel, was a passionate cook who often invited family and friends over to enjoy her meals. Word spread on the North Shore – and Renee soon published two cookbooks entitled “Whp Me, Beat Me, Eat Me – Making Memories.

Emily went on to graduate from Lake Forest College and started work in the area of real estate. Her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2001. After a battle fought with dignity and grace, Renee passed away in 2006. Her family set up the Renee Israel Foundation.

Emily found solace in cooking. With the support of family and friends, Emily is whipping up her own cookbook “A Blending of Bittersweet Memories.”

“When I cook, I’m celebrating my mother’s legacy,” Emily explains. “A taste of one of her recipes brings the memories back.”

Emily will be gathering recipes from people all over the country that have lost a loved one. Through sharing stories and recipes of grandparents, parents, siblings and friends, those mourning a loss will be able to move forward.

A portion of the book’s sales will go to charity.

I interviewed Emily about the book and recipe gathering project:

Will there be certain recipe categories that the submissions will fit into (i.e. appetizers, chicken etc.)?

There will definitely be a division of recipes within the book, separated into different chapters and we’re working on the titles as we speak! I love the idea of hope, healing, and grieving, and am hoping the recipes will give me direction.

-Will selections be made as well by ethnic cuisine?

Yes! I am looking for submissions from every age, race, and religion so I truly hope I get ethnic cuisine recipes with strong family ties.

-What is the criteria by which you will make a selection to be included – is it more the powerful and emotional story, or the actual quality of the recipe?

I am more interested in the story and how the memory helps people deal with their mourning process.

-Will you be testing submissions?

Yes, I will personally test every recipe submission to make sure it’s user-friendly.

-How many recipes will be included? Can one person send more than one recipe?

In total, the book will have about 100 recipes. I would like to receive thousands of submissions though, because that's hopefully thousands of people that were able to heal through cooking. Of course people can submit as many recipes as they would like!

-Will all recipes selected be available on the website as well?

Not all recipes will be available online, but ultimately, I would love to highlight various recipes on www.Bittersweet-Memories.com.

Emily was also kind enough to share a recipe with us:

Non Pareils Cookies

My mother would make these cookies every year around the holidays and my sisters and I loved them so much because they had candy in them. Also, when the cookie is baked, the powdered sugar against the chocolate cookie makes the cookie look like the non pareil. Not only are these cookies fun to look at but they are delicious as well! Enjoy!

Store bought bulk non pereils
¼ c. margarine, melted or softened
1 ½ c. sugar
3 squares (1 ounce each) unsweetened chocolate, melted
1 tsp. vanilla
3 eggs
2 c. flour
2 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salt
Powdered sugar

Mix margarine, sugar, unsweetened chocolate and vanilla. Blend well; beat in eggs. Lightly spoon in flour and stir in baking powder and salt. Put in the refrigerator and chill for about an hour. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Lay waxed paper down on counter top and pour powdered sugar on top. Roll dough into 1-inch balls and then roll balls in powdered sugar. Place 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 12-15 minutes. As soon as they are taken out of the oven, put 1 non pareil in middle and cool. Serves 2 cookie sheets.