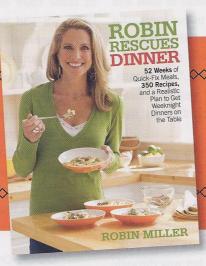


Don't even talk to Robin Miller about being busy. The Scottsdale-based celebrity chef, Food Network star and author is, just weeks before Thanksgiving, juggling a book tour, overseeing Robin Miller product endorsements, and maneuvering the hectic

ROBIN ROCKS
THANKSGIVING



BY DENISE JOHNSON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALONSO MURILLO

production schedule of her cable television show—an agenda that, even without the pending holiday and its various time sucks, would annihilate the average mortal.

Which isn't to say, without the chore of publicizing Robin Rescues Dinner, her ninth and latest cookbook, or the rigors of shooting her TV program on one coast while living on another, that Miller would instead be lounging around eating chocolates from the box and watching other people's cooking shows. Nor does it mean that this mind-boggling schedule is keeping Miller from the joys of cooking for her family or tucking her two sons into bed at night. It isn't. And that's because Robin Miller is, well, Robin Miller: Queen of quick and easy meal planning; high priestess of healthy food prep for busy families; leader of a movement that says you can do it all and still have time to provide a home-cooked meal for your family-and without any stress, either.

It's more than a schtick used to sell cookbooks and garner cable network ratings, this quick-fix, rescued meals routine. Miller, a food writer and nutritionist for nearly two decades, has turned her skill at making healthy food without a lot of freak-outs into a goldmine that she's applied to her own life.

Robin Rescues Thanksgiving

Miller says a successful Thanksqiving dinner is all about planning ahead.

SATURDAY

Shop for all necessary ingredients.

Pre-chop vegetables.

MONDAY

Make the stuffing.

Make the mashed and sweet potatoes.

WEDNESDAY

Make the pie and season the turkey.

Stuff and bake the turkey and reheat the rest, using the microwave and stove.



She grew up in a Pennsylvania suburb and credits her mother with the deep interest in food and nutrition that led to her successful career as a nationally renowned TV cook. "Mom was a health nut and an avid gardener," she recalls, "and our family enjoyed meals made from scratch straight from the garden."

With a health-minded palate already in place and an abiding love of fitness-Miller was a dedicated Lacrosse player throughout childhood and on into early adulthood-she headed to New York, where she worked her way through college by writing recipes for Family Circle magazine. Her eventual Master's Degree in food and nutrition came in handy when she-who'd never appeared on television before and had no thoughts of pursuing a broadcast career-was asked to create a Thanksgiving-themed segment for a New York news show. Miller's spot, during which she whipped up a cranberry sauce,

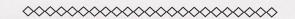


was caught by a Today show producer, who invited her to come bake cookies on camera with Al Roker. Miller's quick wit and camera-friendly smile landed her a gig doing commercials for the then-new Food Network in 1993. Producers and people who like to watch other people cook responded favorably, and before you could say "whip until stiff peaks form," Miller had her own show, Quick Fix Meals, which bowed in 2005.

The whole quick-fix theme was born when Miller and her husband were first dating. They lived in separate states and she, wanting to make the most of their time together, began preparing romantic meals ahead of time. It fast became a private foodie religion that today provides Miller's fans with strategies for making home-cooked meals despite hectic



THIS RESCUED MEALS ROUTINE IS MORE THAN A SCHTICK USED TO SELL COOKBOOKS.



schedules. On her cooking show, she shares tips on making "meal kits" ahead of time and how to morph leftovers into a whole new dinner; on her website, www.robinrescuesdinner.com, she offers strategies for "endlessly versatile home-cooked meals." ready in minutes."

Which suggests the mutterings of a Stepford wife or perhaps the slogan on a box of instant dinner, but Miller is in fact the real deal: a working mom who's managed to accommodate her family. Still, she stresses out. After her sons were born, she had to rethink the whole quick-fix meal thing in order to make time for a family, another of her priorities. She did it by integrating her boys, now 5 and 7, into the process of cooking healthy food.

"My favorite moments are in the kitchen with my boys," she says, noting that it's time that's been well spent because the boys both now have a thing for healthy food. "My kids actually fight over broccoli," she says, a hint of pride in her voice. No kidding: The healthy lunches Miller packs for her 7-year-old resulted in a note home from his teacher, requesting that Miller pack the teacher's lunch, as well.

Miller isn't a nutritional Nazi, though. She thinks candy has as much right being in her pantry as granola. "I'm confident in my boys' food selections," she says, "because once kids learn the importance of protein and fiber and what energizes them, they'll make the right choices."

Aware that not everyone can make a home-cooked meal every night, Robin recommends "reading labels and choosing products that are made with natural ingredients and no preservatives. Keep a watchful eye on sodium, saturated fats, and trans fat when buying pre-made, pre-packaged meals."

Great. But what about the national, weeklong trauma that often accompanies preparing Thanksgiving dinner, a notoriously tough meal for even the most seasoned chef? "Plan ahead," Miller says. "There's very little you can't do ahead for a Thanksgiving meal."

Thanksgiving dinner is among the 52 weeks' worth of meals in *Robin Rescues Dinner*, mapped out so that families can reduce holiday stress and increase family time. "If you don't plan ahead, you're setting yourself up to be stressed out," Miller says, "and that negative energy will transfer to those around you." Her mantra for the holiday season—"Value the time you spend with family, while enjoying a great meal"—sounds like a cheeseball maxim from a Red Lobster ad, until one reads one of the several simple, plan-ahead menus in Miller's new book, or casts a holiday-leery eye on her you-can-do-it cooking show. Miller's warm smile and friendly phrasing carry a gracious subtext: "Busy" is just an excuse.

Denise Johnson is a freelance writer whose work has been published in digital and print media. A native Midwesterner, she currently lives in Scottsdale.



Turkey Tenderloin with Hearts of Palm Stuffing

This simple-to-prepare stuffing blends salty hearts of palm with sweet cranberries, nutty Parmesan cheese, and fresh parsley. If you're using it to stuff a whole bird, rather than a tenderloin, Miller suggests stretching the recipe by adding two cups of bread cubes and enough broth to make a moist stuffing for a 14- to 18-pound bird.

Cooking spray

- 2 cups cubed white or whole wheat bread, day-old or slightly stale
- 14.5-ounce can hearts of palm, drained and chopped
- 1/3 cup sweetened dried cranberries
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth, or more as necessary
- 1 turkey tenderloin (about 1 1/4 pounds)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 400° F. Coat a shallow roasting pan with cooking spray.

In a large bowl, combine bread, hearts of palm, cranberries, Parmesan cheese, parsley, thyme, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon black pepper. Mix well. Add chicken broth and mix until stuffing sticks together, adding more broth as necessary to create a moist stuffing. Set aside.

Cut turkey tenderloin in half crosswise, as if butter flying, almost through to the other side, but not completely through. Open up turkey, as if opening a book. Spoon stuffing on bottom half of turkey. Close the tenderloin and secure with wooden picks.

Transfer turkey to prepared pan and season the top with salt and pepper. Roast 30 to 40 minutes, until turkey reaches 160°F. Let stand five minutes before slicing crosswise into two-inch thick slices.