

FOOD, HOME, AND ALL THINGS DELICIOUS

# Comfort Zone



**GREENSPAN**  
in her New York  
City kitchen.

## COOKING UP FRIENDSHIPS

A FAR-FLUNG COMMUNITY OF FOOD BLOGGERS  
CONNECTS THROUGH DORIE GREENSPAN'S COOKBOOKS—  
AND MAKES MUCH MORE THAN BROWNIES.

*By Howie Kahn*

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALAN RICHARDSON

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**WHEN LAURIE WOODWARD** received a copy of Dorie Greenspan's *Baking: From My Home to Yours* from her stepmother in 2007, she was looking for a way to ramp up her food blogging. "I decided to make one recipe from *Baking* each week to give me something to post," says Woodward, a 33-year-old mother of three in Pittsburgh. "I asked two friends to do it with me, on their own blogs, just to keep me accountable." The trio would bake a recipe, take a picture, and post their individual results every Tuesday. Woodward called the group *Tuesdays with Dorie*. "It rhymed with that Mitch Albom book," she explains. "I have a cheesy sense of humor. I didn't expect anybody would actually see it." Or that her quaint Internet baking circle would grow into a working community of 450 with members from 30 states and 11 countries, and spin off a cooking group with a couple thousand devoted followers of its own.

By the time Woodward started *Tuesdays*, food blogs were serious business. Julie Powell's *Julie & Julia*, a memoir about a young New Yorker blogging her way through Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, had already been optioned for film. Woodward herself had no such large ambitions. But she opened up the group to anyone interested, and as the *TWDe*s (as they call themselves) baked quintuple-chocolate brownies and



**A TWIST** on Greenspan's French yogurt cake by *French Fridays* member Joel Brown. *Below*: Brown with his culinary muse and friend, Greenspan.



Alabama, to lunch with a fellow *TWDe*, dining with another in the Netherlands, and traveling to Connecticut to eat at the home of Mary Dodd, 36, who hosted a dinner last fall for Greenspan and "a bunch of women I'd never met from all over the country," Dodd says. "My husband said, 'Aren't you scared to have strangers in our house?' And I said, 'No, we've been cooking together for years.'"

Greenspan's baking books, including volumes written with Child and the French dessert kingpin Pierre Hermé, have taught millions to turn butter, flour, and sugar into spectacular, smile-inducing treats. But it's her accessible recipes and warm, personal writing style that draws people in. "When Laurie first asked me about creating the group, I was thrilled," says Greenspan, who now regularly meets *TWDe*s from all over the country on her book tours. She also delights in the way group members have altered her recipes to better fit their needs. "I love when someone says, 'Raisins, no! Cinnamon, nope! Instead, I'll do ginger,'" she says. "For my family, for my friends, that will work better." She remembers her online kin making several adjustments to a traditional apple tartlet. "Somebody made them teeny-tiny. Somebody else made a long rectangle with caramel sauce" (see 29-year-old graphic designer Joel Brown's creative *(continued on page 138)*

*"I used to think, Online friendships? But it turns out they are real friends. Real people."*

Russian grandmother's apple pie-cake, relationships began to form; they became one another's teachers, support systems, travel advisers, and confidantes. These bonds weren't forged by a shared table but through an ongoing online dialogue on fellow bakers' blogs and the *TWD* message board. The conversation was about baking. But on a deeper level, it was about being present, helpful,

and generous with one's time.

"I used to think, *Online friendships?*" says Nancy Ewing, a 54-year-old former lawyer from Atlanta and *TWDe* since 2008. "*What's wrong? Do you not have real friends?* But it turns out that they are real friends. Real people." As Ewing bonded with the other members, she wanted to meet them wherever she could—day-tripping to Birmingham,



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## LIFE LEVEL 3

By Susan Hyatt, Life Coach

Now that you have a clear idea of what you want, let's get brewing with the specifics! Consider what you want for your career, relationships, spirituality, physical and emotional health, and more. After all, you are a multitasker and have many layers to your life. I suggest you make another list (yes, another list—bust me!) detailing what you want in each aspect of your life. By doing this, you'll start to design a Life Lesson Plan, which will help you achieve a smooth and balanced life blend.

Visit [oprah.com/coffee](http://oprah.com/coffee) to download Susan's Life Level 3 exercise! When you're ready to move to the next step, turn to page 182 to read Susan's Life Level 4 tip; it's color-coded teal.

(continued from page 136) adaptation of Greenspan's French yogurt cake with marmalade glaze, right).

With the release of Greenspan's latest volume, *Around My French Table*, last October, Woodward called Greenspan again. "One of the comments I'd seen on the TWD site was that people had too many baked goods around," says Woodward. "So I thought, *I'll start a new group. A cooking group.*" In three months, *French Fridays with Dorie* attracted 1,500 members, who choose the week's recipe by vote and post results to their blogs each Friday (TWDers take turns picking recipes; some members have waited two years). "When it was my week to pick the recipe," says Dodd, who belongs to both groups, "I went a little insane and wrote this whole manifesto. I said, 'It's not about Tuesdays and it's not about Dorie. It's about all of us, all around the world, baking for our families and friends and learning something new. Though if Dorie published *50 Ways to Read the Phone Book*, I'd join that group as well.' Brown, who cooks along with *French Fridays*, calls the group "much more meaningful" than Facebook.

The icing on the cake, of course, is that thousands of amateur bakers and cooks can now throw together complicated recipes in their sleep. "Before TWD, my baking level was box mix," Dodd says. "I can now make caramel sauce with my eyes closed in a snowstorm." And the payoff isn't limited to food. Tracey Wilhelmsen, a 32-year-old from Rhode Island, gets 15,000 hits a week on the blog she started to join TWD. "I make some money off ads," she says. "And I'm not the only one." Woodward is already thinking about debuting a third Dorie group in 2012.

Greenspan knows her groups have transcended baking and cooking. "The confidence people pick up in the kitchen changes the way they do other things," she says. "I know I didn't write *The Last Lecture* or a series of self-help books. But who would have predicted? Two cookbooks would build community like this on the Internet? Two cookbooks would change lives?" **Q**

Howie Kahn won a 2008 James Beard Award for magazine feature writing.



## BLUEBERRY YOGURT CUPCAKES

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup ground almonds (or, if you'd prefer, omit and use another ½ cup all-purpose flour)
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1¼ cups sugar, divided
- Grated zest of 2 lemons, divided
- 2½ cups plain Greek yogurt, divided
- 3 large eggs
- 1¼ cup pure vanilla extract, divided
- ½ cup canola oil
- 1 package unflavored gelatin, bloomed according to directions
- 1 (16-ounce) can blueberry pie filling

1. Center a rack in the oven and preheat the oven to 350°. Generously butter a cupcake tin and place it on a baking sheet.

2. Whisk together the flour, ground almonds (if using), baking powder, and salt.

3. Put 1 cup sugar and zest of 1 lemon in a medium bowl and, with your fingertips, rub the zest into the sugar. Add ½ cup yogurt, eggs, and ¼ tsp. vanilla and whisk until the mixture is well blended. Whisk in the dry ingredients. Fold in the oil. Pour batter into cupcake tin, filling cups about ⅔ of the way.

4. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, or until the cupcakes begin to come away from the sides of pan; they should be golden brown, and a thin knife inserted in the center should come out clean. Transfer the pan to a rack and cool for 5 minutes, then run a butter knife between the cupcakes and the sides of the pan. Turn out cupcakes and cool to room temperature.

5. To make the glaze: In a medium bowl, mix together ¼ cup sugar, zest of 1 lemon, 1 tsp. vanilla, 2 cups Greek yogurt, and gelatin. Spoon over cupcakes and chill. Top each with a spoonful of pie filling.

MAKES 12 SERVINGS.

Active time: 30 minutes

Total time: 45 minutes

Adapted by Joel Brown from *Baking: From My Home to Yours*, by Dorie Greenspan (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt). For more recipes from Dorie Greenspan, including adaptations, visit [oprah.com/omagextras](http://oprah.com/omagextras).