

The Pollan Family Table

What better way to preserve a family's beloved recipes than to write them down? And then why not publish those recipes for the rest of us to enjoy. That's just what sisters Tracy, Dana, and Lori Pollan did—together with mother, Corky—in *The Pollan Family Table*.



One family. Many food writers, including your brother, Michael Pollan. How did that happen?

Dana: Cooking was important to our mother, Corky. I'd say six nights a week we sat down for a family meal that she prepared. She was a very creative cook and had such an appreciation for good food that I think eventually it rubbed off on all of us. Corky was also working long hours, and she would often call us and say, "Can you put water on the stove? I'm going to make pasta." Or, "Can you start dinner for me?" That was great because it got us all in the kitchen at an early age.

We'd love some tips for getting dinner on the table quickly.

Lori: The planning part is so key, especially today. If you can plot out two to four days of the week and buy those items over the weekend, it's much easier. It's also great to have a couple of go-to recipes, which you feel comfortable making. Try to have the ingredients for those in the house.

What do teenagers like to eat?

Corky: Soup. And there is nothing wrong with having soup for dinner with a salad and a great bread on the side. Often people don't think of that, but a vegetable-loaded soup is so healthy. You can make that in quantities and have that for a couple of meals. You can always double a recipe to make it last for more than one meal. Teens love chicken dishes, chili, roasted vegetables. You can

do fun things, too, like serve breakfast for dinner.

What else?

Dana: What our teenagers and their friends love is pasta. There's a recipe in the book called "Creamy Spinach Pasta Alfredo." One reason they love it is that there is a little bit of cream in there, but it's not a lot. It's a light Alfredo sauce.

Tracy: It's an all-in-one dish and all you need is a salad to go with it. We also have an "Orecchiette with Broccoli and Sun Dried Tomatoes" (available at bit.ly/YTpollan-recipe). We love combining our vegetables with our pasta. It makes cooking so much easier.

How do you prevent your teens from ruining their dinner with snacks?

Lori: I try to have some cut up vegetables, like carrots and red peppers, or fruit when they walk in the door. Or hummus and you can crisp up pita bread (spray a little olive oil and salt on it and crisp it up in the oven). If I have something like that, they might hold off on eating the junk on the way home. They do get the message: Don't fill up on the junk because something good is waiting for you.

Tell us about *The Pollan Family Table*.

Lori: It started because my sisters and I would often ask, "What are you making for dinner tonight?" Or we'd call each other and say, "Oh, I made this great dinner." But often we'd forget all the things we'd made. It

would just disappear out of our minds. We thought, "Wouldn't it be great to have a book with our favorite dinner recipes?"

Dana: We really wanted to keep in mind that as a busy parent, you don't have a ton of time in the kitchen. So we were interested in using recipes that take an hour or less and that use ingredients you can buy at the grocery store. Simple and straightforward recipes that anyone can follow, whether you're starting out or an experienced cook.

What's been the value of family dinner for you?

Tracy: The kids are so busy and pulled in so many directions, so this is a time we get to be together as a family. You hear their stories. You hear about their friends. If we didn't sit down for dinner, there would be times

when we would barely even get to talk to them.

How do you recommend teaching teenagers to cook?

Corky: Get them involved in the planning. If you're making plans for the week say, "What should I make tomorrow night?" You can also get your kids started in doing some of the preparation for a meal. They can make a salad or peel something or start the water for pasta. Everyone can also have their own specialty.

Lori: We teach teenagers how to drive, how to open a bank account, and how to register to vote, but people don't often realize that you also need to teach them to cook. They love it. They feel very accomplished and very much like they are in control of their lives. ■

