

Formulating recipes, cooking for new age

She always had an interest in cooking, starting with preparing Turkish coffee for her elders after meals when she was only as tall as the oven, and helping out her mother and grandmother, but she became a doctor just like the rest of her family.

Having her degree in physiology after studying at Koç University and London Business School, Refika Birgül worked with her family for five years, which she reminiscence saying too much stress, work, control and perfectionism. "I was close to having a heart attack, my body was giving up and I had no more patience to continue working in a hospital," she said. That's when she decided to listen to her friends because they were telling her that she has a great talent in cooking and she should spare some time to write a book about the recipes she created by mixing, testing and experimenting.

"I am a mathematic freak. I used to solve my brother's fifth grade problems when I was in the first grade being taught the alphabet in class. That's why I like formulating recipes. I take notes on my wall, which I painted green, and now I use it like a blackboard. I use glasses to take notes as well," she said, adding that physiology education also helped her out learning the food culture, preparation, serving and what's important about it.

The decision came after a Halloween night celebrated with friends at her apartment. Not surprisingly she was the cook and she only had a few hours to prepare food. But this situation got tougher after she received a call from one of her friends. 'You know it is Halloween tonight? I am sure you are preparing a themed dinner,' her friend told her.

"Within four hours I went shopping and prepared eight different courses. Even my friends were not expecting to see such a table," she said, adding that she even prepared a cemetery-looking desert. "That was when my friends convinced me to sit down and collect all the information I had and recipes I prepared together for a book.

Birgül, who likes managing, planting, writing and sketching, always is creative. So the idea of creating a book was accepted by her. "Refika'nın Mutfağı (Refika's Kitchen) / Cooking New Istanbul Style" was released on April 29. The first edition of the book, which is nearly 400 pages, is nearly out. "It saw a great interest, I am surprised," she said.

She always wanted to share the joy and simplicity of cooking with people. Taking off from this idea she presents easily prepared recipes. Getting away from the life's stress when cooking, Birgül also suggests

A graduate of Koç University and London Business School, physiologist Refika Birgül, who was bored and under too much pressure while working at a hospital, wrote a detailed book on food and its culture. 'Refika'nın Mutfağı (Refika's Kitchen) / Cooking New Istanbul Style' is published both in English and Turkish



RECIPES: The book of Refika Birgül features easy-to-prepare recipes. She even rates the toughness and gives additional information to make it even more simple.

people to do the same thing.

The book is printed in two languages. When asked how this idea came out, she said it wasn't even discussed. "Most of the English and Turkish texts in the book are not exactly the same. I did not want it to be a direct translation. I wrote them all myself and I wanted it to be ingenious." The book is dedicated to her mother for showing Birgül the beauty of nature and the value of decency and consists of four parts. The Main Ingredients section includes information about local markets, how to shop and planting trees. Backstage: The Kitchen includes information on cooking pots, techniques for using kitchen tools and how to organize the kitchen. The other two sections are called Recipes and Presentation.

The book not only displays detailed information on cooking, food and the kitchen, but it also displays refreshing photos, some of which are taken by her close friend and the rest belongs to her.

Beyond her many talents, it seems like she will continue developing herself and her knowledge in food culture after digesting the release of her book.

