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**The Color-Coded Chef Cooking Kit Review by Renee Knoblauch**

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**The Color-Coded Chef Cooking Kit**As parents, we want to see our children be successful and independent adults. However, for parents with a child with a disability, independence is challenging in all areas of life. The Color-Coded Chef Cooking Kit from The Color-Coded Chef is a mom who understands the challenges associated with a child with disabilities. Being able to cook healthy meals helps achieve a sense of accomplishment and independence. The Color-Coded Chef can be used by children and adults who have disabilities from cognitive, reading struggles, fine motor skills, and many other disabilities and struggles.

The Color-Coded Chef Cooking Kit has several kit options available, starting from $149 to $194. You can also purchase additional tools, recipes, and a Teacher Worksheet Pack. All the kits come with Recipe Pak #1, which includes fifteen recipes. Depending on the kit you purchase the Recipe Pak #2 has a total of sixteen recipes.

We have been using the Combo 3-Kit with the Recipe Pack 2 and Oven Mitt. The kit comes with a heavy-duty 3-ring binder, non-skid cutting board, recipe cards, dry erase marker, liquid measuring cup, measuring spoons, measuring cups, silicone spatula stick, scoop, kitchen cutter, food prep mat, and two-handed oven mitt.

The Color-Coded Chef wanted to teach her son life skills in the kitchen. She noticed that her son struggled with the fractions needed to be successful with cooking. Her intention was never to start a business but to help her son have life skills, self-worth, and independence. The Color-Coded Chef uses colored-coded coordinated tools on the measuring tools and throughout the recipes. The colors correspond with fractions. The measuring tools are color-coded, and the same color is used on the recipe cards.

The measuring spoons and measuring cups are stainless steel. The handles have a color-coded rubber insert to indicate the fraction amount; for example, ½ cup throughout the tools, and the recipe cards will be pink. The measuring spoons do not have a 1/8 teaspoon measurement like a typical set would have. The liquid measuring cup has 1 ½ cup capacity heavy plastic with a thick handle and a rubber grip on the handle. The food prep mat is 11" x 17" foldable laminated heavy-duty paper. The two-handed oven mitt is unique with a 30 1/2" span. When you put your hand into the mitten, it covers both sides of your hands, forearms, and your stomach area. This will give extra protection if they try to stabilize the pan and accidentally touch their forearms or belly with the pan.

The kitchen cutter is a pizza cutter, but it does not have a long handle. As a result, the grip area has ample space for those who may not have a typical grip while holding. You do not have to worry about cutting yourself with the cutter either. The plastic wheel blade snaps in and out to clean. This will easily cut most vegetables and fruits, dough, cooked chicken, and other softer foods. Scoop is a basic scoop with a wide flat handle. The non-skid cutting board is a heavy-duty board 7 ½" x 11 ½" board. The silicone spatula stick has an ergonomic design for easy gripping. It is non-stick and easy to clean.

The recipes are set up in a way to assist a person with disabilities. Recipes are on an 8" x10" heavy-duty laminated paper. The pages are color-coded on the edges by categories to make it easy to find your intended meal, such as breakfast, side dishes, snacks, or dinner.

The recipes are laid out in an easy step-by-step format. The recipes have an ingredient and supply list page. You can take the page out of the binder and use it as your shopping list at the grocery store or home while gathering your food items and tools for the recipes. If the tool is in the kit, it has a chef's hat next to the tool. If the recipe has a suggested substitute for a recipe, it is indicated. A dry-erase marker is included to check off the boxes on your list.

The instructions for the recipe are laid out in individual boxes for each step. The steps are numbered in order and are easy to follow with a complete task in each box. The steps have enough details with large illustrations and words and are not overly busy. If you are using a tool from the kit that is a color-coded measuring tool, you will see the color, and it will also be written out. I love that this will assist visual learners regardless of their reading ability. Incorporating pictures into the recipes goes a long way towards helping them be successful. For example, if you need to put four green cups of zucchini in a bowl, the illustration shows the four green cups, and next to each cup is a box to mark off. Next, you will see a picture of the shredded zucchini and pouring the cup into a bowl. A few other examples are the scoop putting the dough on the cookie sheet, showing the spacing on the cookie sheets. Other examples are putting muffin cups in the muffin pan, peeling, stirring directions, and all applicable steps for them to succeed. Cross-contamination, budget, and sanitation are also thought of in the steps when needed.

There is a good assortment of recipes from banana nut muffins, pumpkin pancakes, zucchini bites, pizza muffins, carrot cakes, chocolate chip cookies, brown sugar spiced chicken, roasted vegetables, dips, sauces, and many more. All the recipes are budget-friendly and can be adjusted easily to your liking. In addition, several of the recipes use healthier ingredients, such as low-fat milk, coconut oil, sugar-free ingredients, or olive oil.

Other resources to assist, from helpful tips and suggestions, equipment substitutions, and ingredient substitutes, are included in your book. There are several useful pages like setting the table for dinner or creative ways to use a particular vegetable, to name just a few. In addition, recipe Pak #2 has a laminated blank grocery list broken down into different food categories and other helpful pages.

I have an eighteen-year-old daughter with disabilities who just graduated. My desire for her is to have self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment. I want her also to have the skills to be as independent as she is able. That includes being able to function in a kitchen and preparing herself meals.

She loves to help in the kitchen but gets easily frustrated. She struggles with the tools, reading recipes, and safety in the kitchen. She gets frustrated due to her vision locating the correct measuring tools quickly. Reading recipes, she loses her place and then gets distracted.

As we were going through the recipes, she quickly noticed the layout of the recipe instructions. My daughter said, "You can tell what the pictures are without guessing, and I can read the steps." I know that some words she could not read, but the illustration gave her the confidence to know what the terms are. Next, we went over the tools, and I showed her how each one works before we made a recipe. Again, she noticed the colors and how they corresponded to the recipes before I had a chance to explain them to her.

She is in love with cooking now and will jump at any opportunity to help or volunteer to make something. She can follow along with the recipe instructions without getting as distracted or losing her place. She quickly finds the measuring tools by color by herself. I just guide her and assist her when she needs it. She is more willing to try a food that she would not have otherwise when she makes the food. She has made several recipes already, and she has also taken some of her food to her food therapy session. She was thrilled to share about The Color-Coded Chef with several staff members at her therapy place, which brings in families, therapists, and professionals worldwide for training and its residential home.

I would love to have an option as an add-on or a substitute in the kits with the liquid measuring cup with a 4-cup capacity or a set. My daughter struggled with pouring into the smaller cup without making a mess. Some of it depended on what she was pouring and the size of the ingredient container. She did much better when I pulled out my larger cup. My daughter also liked that my measuring cups were angled, and she could see the numbers on top instead of getting eye level. However, she disliked my cups since they were not color-coded. Having the color-coded feature on an angled measuring cup would be highly beneficial, seeing the measurements from above. I realize that some of this is due to my daughter's vision and physical disabilities. I would imagine that others might struggle in the same capacity.

My daughter took ownership of The Color-Coded Chef Cooking Kit. These cooking tools are like a badge of honor to her. One thing that she noticed was that the cutting board was different from mine. I have the color boards for cross-contamination. I offered to buy her a set but, she was unsure as it was not a kit item. This might be another add-on or a substitute. I like getting everything at once and supporting a business.

The way the recipes are presented is impressive and genuinely makes everything flow better when preparing a recipe. I wish there were a way we could get recipes that are unique to our family printed out or even as a PDF as an option in the shop. This option would be great for your holiday recipes or a favorite meal to add to your recipe book. This would make it even more special for the individual, knowing they are making a family recipe or favorite familiar food.

The only tool that we were not fond of was the scoop. The scoop was a bit troublesome for my daughter. She had a challenging time grasping it with the shape and was afraid it would snap on her. As a result, she tends to push down harder unintentionally. Something more round or ergonomic design and a heftier scoop would be a better option.

Kitchen skills and cooking can be tricky to figure out how to teach them with an individual with disabilities because there can be so many different scenarios when cooking and the uniqueness of the individual. The tools provided in the kit are created for safety, functionality, and ease of use for someone with disabilities. The recipes are the heart of it all, with the layout and the ease of using the color-coded tools created from The Color-Coded Chef. This fantastic product will benefit all ages and types of disabilities and help them to develop lifelong cooking skills. I highly recommend The Color-Coded Chef Cooking Kits.

Product review by Renee Knoblauch, *The Old Schoolhouse*®, October 2021

***Reply****: If you have a special recipe you want to submit to The Color-Coded Chef for future recipe packs please do. Submit to: orders@thecolorcodedchef.com*

Bottom of Form