

Baby food gets a homemade twist from local cookbook author

AVON LAKE

By Rachel Holzaepfel

For one Avon Lake resident, babies, produce and cookbooks have turned into a recipe for success.

Julianne Hood recently published her first book "The Basic Baby Food Cookbook" with publishing company Author House. The book features a simple method to preparing, cooking and storing homemade baby food.

The cookbook developed out of Hood's desire to feed her children economically yet healthfully. Hood, who spent seven years as an attorney before becoming a stay-at-home mom, said it was her pediatrician, Dr. Brenda McGhee, who directed her toward making homemade baby food.

After hours of research, Hood came up with a simple process that consists of cooking fresh vegetables and fruits, "usually by steaming the produce in bulk, to prevent loss of nutrients," puréeing it to the right consistency and then freezing it in individual portions.

"You normally get 30-50 servings," Hood said. "The process takes less than 30 minutes."

Besides the nutritional value of the homemade baby food, the financial value has really added up for Hood and her family. The average 2½-ounce serving of commercial baby food costs 50 cents. Homemade baby food costs 3 to 5 cents per serving, if made in bulk, Hood said.

Her children, 6-year-old Paige, 4-year-old Phoebe and 1½-year-old William have all been her test subjects for different recipes. Hood said she began the book about seven years ago, when Paige was a baby.

"I wrote (recipes) down as I'd go on," Hood said.

Her friends were so impressed with the ease and benefits of the process that Hood was soon overwhelmed with requests for details about making baby food.

"I started writing and it became a full-fledged book," Hood said.

The book was published in December. Besides recipes, it also offers advice for parents to help their children eat well. For instance, one challenging aspect of making homemade baby food can be the children



Julianne Hood

because breast milk is sweet," Hood said.

The key to overcoming this tendency is to "offer them natural whole food consistently," Hood said.

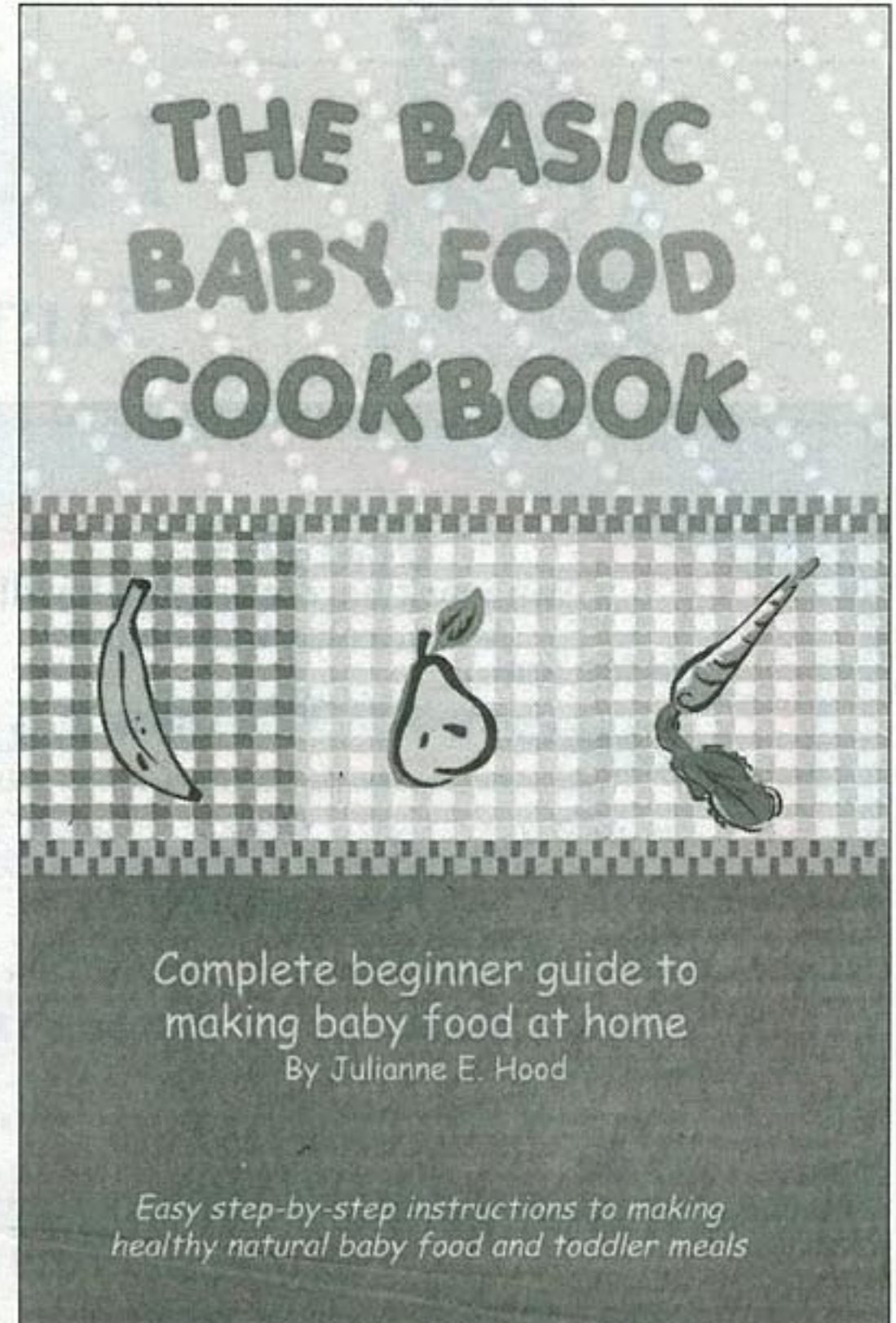
"After eight or nine times, the children tolerate and even like new foods," she said. "There's no greater gift than to give your child a foundation of healthy eating."

Another benefit of homemade baby food is that it "tastes exactly the way it's supposed to taste," while commercial baby food can have artificial flavoring at times.

"When the taste is identical, the transition (to table food) is much easier," Hood said. "They don't have to learn to like a new food."

Hood has spoken on children, nutrition and making baby food at several locations and will have other engagements lined up throughout the summer and fall. In September, she will have an article published in "ParentGuide," a New York-based magazine. The article will be titled "Homemade Baby Food Do's and Don'ts."

For more information on the book, visit www.thebasicbabyfoodcookbook.com. Hood said she "had fun developing the Web site," which includes a meal-planning guide, educational links and other helpful tips. Her book is available in local stores and online at sites like www.amazon.com and www.barnesandnoble.com.



The cover of Julianne Hood's first published book.