

Silicone sure to take over chefs' kitchens

By Ruth Taber / Special to the Times

Paraphrasing career advice given to Dustin Hoffman's Benjamin Braddock by a family friend in "The Graduate": "I just want to say one word to you -- silicone!"

At this year's International Home and Housewares Show in Chicago, silicone ruled. Multi-use gadgets and cookware sporting rainbow colors have come a long way since my story about flexible silicone baking molds for the El Paso Times in the fall of 2001.

For me, the No. 1 silicone product at the show was Fiesta Products' Sil-Pin rolling pin. I've been rolling pastry dough on nonstick silicone mats -- but had trouble with stickiness on my wooden rolling pin. Dusting the pin with flour helped but changed the pastry's consistency. Four models cater to home cooks and professional chefs: metallic handled, soft-grip, baker's and French. The thinner barrels on the latter two are ideal for wrapping pie dough around the pin and transferring it to the pie dish with ease -- fearless pastry making! Tapered ends on the French barrel allow easier circular motions and dough shaping. After using, clean with a damp cloth and, voilà, ready for the next baking event.

Pins are available in more than 10 mouthwatering colors (including lavender, pastel green and pink). The company also makes a Sil-Pin Junior model, (four-inch-wide rolling surface is handy for tomorrow's chef) great for preparing small pastries, ravioli and other pasta for filling. Check www.fiestaproducts.com for information.

Other silicone goodies at the show:

- The Orka Silicone Oven Mitt does a whale of a job. Grab any hot utensil, adjust food on the grill, or even pull a lobster out of boiling water. The 11-inch long sleeve protects from hot-oil splatters, water, etc. Best of all, it comes in a petite size for smaller hands, retaining the 11-inch length. Colorful, ridged Orka silicone potholders double as trivets or even as grips for hard-to-open jars. Available at Linens-N-Things.
- An adjustable silicone basting brush from Progressive International Corp. bastes hard-to-reach places, and the silicone "hairs" don't shed. The brush is heat-resistant to 600 degrees. For roasting poultry or brushing pastry, the 13-inch-long brush has a swivel head. Angle the head up and keep your counter clean. It's a snap to clean -- a swish of soap and warm water does the job. Available at Bed Bath & Beyond and Linens-N-Things.

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