

LIFETASTE

Building teamwork, recipe by recipe

When does the time-honored tradition of gathering in the kitchen to create and share a meal become an innovative team-building concept?

In Portland, it's most Friday mornings on the 29th floor of the U.S. Bancorp Tower. That's the headquarters for Springbrook Software, and the place where employees, management and visiting guests come together in a large cheery kitchen for a home-style, home-made breakfast.



SARA PERRY

TASTE

behind the idea and a woman who believes teamwork and success take more than great employees and clients. It also takes a kitchen.

Over coffee and a freshly-frosted piece of cake, I learned I may want to change careers (just kidding):

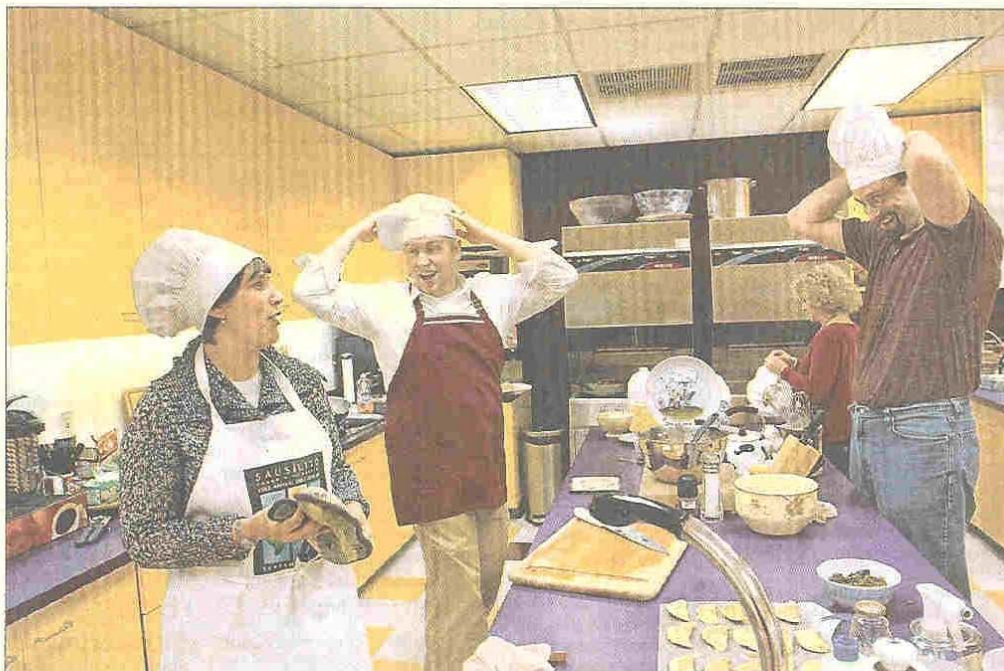
Q: How did this kitchen idea get started?

A: It really happened by accident and goes back to the Y2K incident. Our company develops and supports financial accounting and customer-information systems software for local governments and special districts, and all of us were working around the clock. There was no time to go out for a meal, especially breakfast. So everyone took turns bringing in food and heating things in the microwave. We learned we liked the sense of camaraderie and didn't want it to end, so when our company moved here, we had a commercial-grade kitchen built.

Q: How does it actually operate?

A: It's voluntary. We have a sign-up sheet, and people from the different departments get together and decide what they want to cook. We provide all the food — and as you can see, there are always snacks if someone gets hungry. The team does all the prep work, sometimes after work or during an afternoon break. Then they come in early Friday, and breakfast usually starts around 8.

"It's a way to enjoy ourselves, share a meal and solve problems," says Marily Rementeria, the managing partner be-



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL LLOYD/THE OREGONIAN

Most Fridays, employees at Springbrook Software bond while making breakfast. Preparing Migas this day are (from left) Erica Cade, Todd (it's his recipe) Ebert, company co-founder Marily Rementeria and Scott Bump.

Q: I gather it's not warmed-up coffee and day-old muffins?

A: Take a look at our staff cookbook and you'll know what to expect: brown-sugar bacon; blueberry coffeecake; cinnamon rolls; Dutch babies; Migas; soft-scrambled eggs with avocado... shall I go on?

Q: Any words to the wise for other companies thinking about doing something like this?

A: Start small, maybe the first Friday of every month. Bring food in or, if you have a small kitchen, bake some pull-apart biscuits and heat-and-serve sausage.

Q: How about a recipe from the cookbook?

A: I see you keep eyeing the Migas.

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Some company lunchrooms have a microwave and a pop machine. Springbrook Software has an oversized central kitchen where employees or a guest chef make a home-style breakfast.

Recipe

Migas
(Tex-Mex Egg and
Tortilla Scramble)

Makes 4 to 6 servings

1 poblano chile

• Vegetable oil for frying

Six 6-inch corn tortillas, cut into 1/2-inch-wide strips

1 medium onion, coarsely chopped

One 4-ounce can chopped green chiles, drained

1 medium tomato, seeded and chopped

1/2 pound chorizo sausage, cooked (optional)

6 eggs

1 tablespoon water

1/2 cup cotija cheese, crumbled

• Warm tortillas, pinto beans, salsa and hot sauce (accompaniments)

Adjust oven rack close to the broiler and turn on broiler. Place the chile on the oven rack and broil until the skin is blackened on all sides, turning as needed. Transfer chile to a paper bag, close the top and leave it on the counter to steam.

Add about 1/2 inch of vegetable oil to a heavy skillet and place over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add the tortilla strips and fry until somewhat stiff but not hard. Drain the fried tortillas on paper towels. Remove all but 2 tablespoons of the oil from the skillet (excess can be saved and reused for frying). Add the onion to the skillet and sauté over medium heat until translucent. Add the canned chiles, tomato and cooked chorizo, if desired, and sauté for 3 to 5 minutes more, or until heated through.

Meanwhile, take the poblano chile from the paper bag and peel off the charred skin (do not rinse). Split the chile and remove the stem and seeds; coarsely chop chile and add to the skillet.

In a bowl, lightly beat together the eggs and water. Pour the egg mixture into the skillet and cook, stirring often, until the eggs are set and no longer runny. Sprinkle with the cheese, stirring until combined. Serve immediately with warm tortillas, pinto beans, salsa and hot sauce.