

# Kid's KOrner

## Girl Uses Food To Show Artistic Flair

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Mandy Brown became an artist when she participated in the county 4-H demonstration program last summer. But Mandy didn't use paints or brushes in her artistic demonstration. She used food.

In Mandy's award-winning demonstration, she showed how to make attractive food decorations with ordinary fruits and vegetables that most people have in their refrigerators. Her grandmother, Ruthann Keeney, sometimes prepares decorated foods for her customers at a York farmers' market. She helped Mandy with her ideas and shared some of the special tools that make it easier to create attractive food garnishes.

Now, Mandy, who is 11 years old and a sixth-grader at Dalls-town Middle School, is planning to help with the family's special Christmas holiday meals. She will use some of the food garnishes she learned to make and demonstrated, plus a few new ones she has been trying since then.

Some food garnishes can be made with a regular paring knife or a vegetable peeler. Mandy often gets smiles from her demonstration audiences when she makes a carrot "dumbbell." The dumbbell is made by cutting a thin carrot stick and sticking an olive on each end.

A celery fan can also be made with a paring knife. Mandy cuts

sections of celery about two inches long. She makes several cuts in one end of the section, each cut about an inch into the celery. When the cut celery slices are refrigerated in ice water for an hour or two, the small cuts spread apart into a fan shape.

Certain special tools are designed just for decorating with foods. One of the tools Mandy uses for her demonstration makes crinkle cuts. The crinkle cutter has a wavy blade of metal and can be pushed through raw vegetables like potatoes or apples. The wavy-edged blade gives the sliced vegetables or fruits a prettier finish than slicing with a plain, flat knife.

"Any time you cut apples and are not going to serve them right away, you must dip the cut edge in lemon juice to keep them from turning brown," Mandy explains. Mandy had plenty of apples to practice with for her demonstration. Her parents, Scott and Brenda Brown, are part of the family's Brown's Orchard and Retail Market business.

Another tool for food decorating looks like a V-shaped knife with sharp, jagged edges. By repeatedly pushing the blade into an apple or orange, making V-shaped cuts side-by-side completely around the fruit, Mandy cuts the fruit in half. Each half then has a pretty, scalloped finish. Mandy inserts a toothpick into the center of each half and sticks grapes or cherries on the toothpicks.



Mandy offers a selection of her food garnishes for her mother, Brenda, to sample.

This tool is also handy for cutting a pepper or tomato in half. Mandy then uses a spoon to scoop out the seeds and flesh in the middle. The scalloped outside shell that remains is a colorful container for serving cold foods like chicken salad. And, you can eat the decorative container.

For a birthday party, Mandy used the tool to make a watermelon basket with scalloped edges. The melon fruit can be scooped from the center and mixed with other fruits to serve in the basket.

A spiral tool is what Mandy uses to make an unusual food garnish that resembles a Slinky toy. The tool has a plastic, screw-like center which she pushes into a radish or cucumber. Mandy then turns the handle of the tool, which has a knife-edge that cuts around and around as the spiral part turns in the middle. A radish makes a small spiral garnish, but a whole

cucumber can make a very long one.

Even a glass of fruit juice or iced tea can be made more attractive, Mandy tells her audience, by putting a lemon wheel on the edge of the glass. A lemon wheel is made by cutting a cross-section from a lemon, leaving the thick skin on the fruit. By making a cut halfway across the round section, the lemon wheel can be slipped partway down over the edge of the glass.

"Be careful, because the tools you use to prepare these foods are sharp," Mandy always reminds her audiences.

For her demonstration, Mandy made posters that help explain her decorating ideas. In addition to competing at county and regional level, Mandy did her demonstration for the Loganville Community Club and York County 4-H Achievement Night program. She has also done other food and sewing demonstrations during her 4-H club activities.



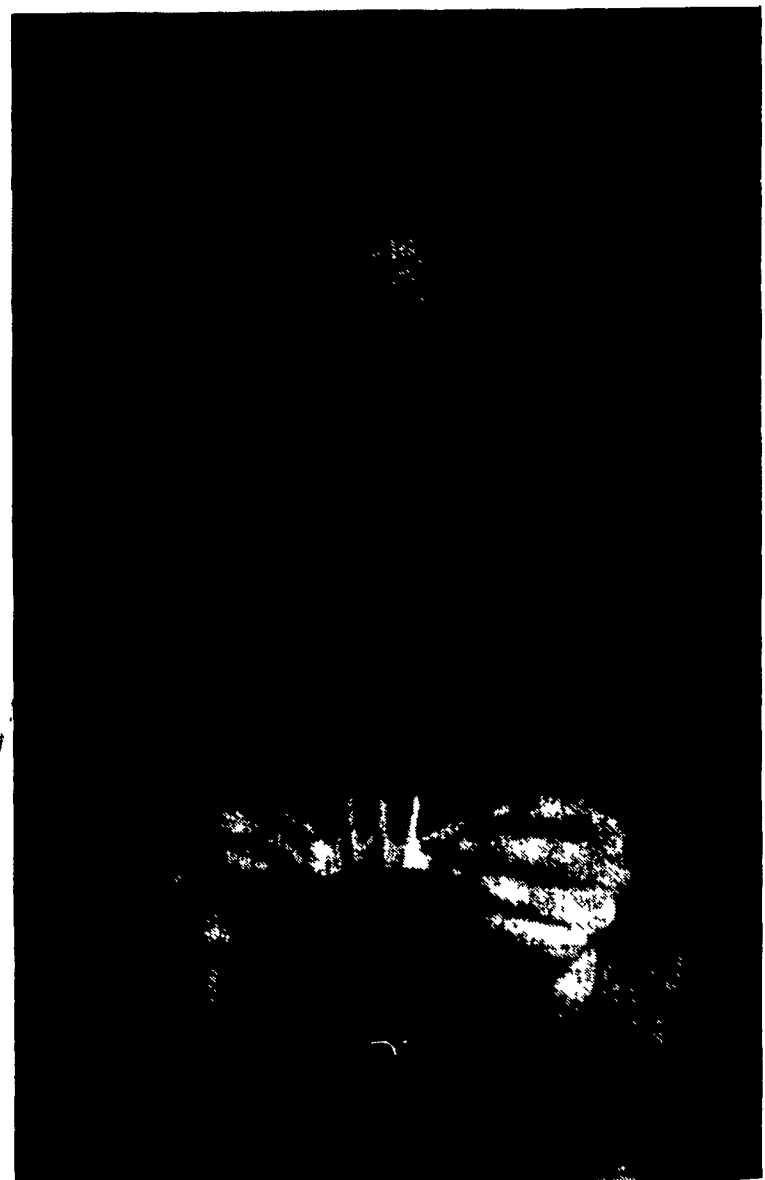
After halving a pepper with a garnishing tool that cuts scalloped edges, Mandy scoops out the seeds and pulp to make an edible container for holding salads.



Scalloped orange halves add a pretty touch to meals.



The wavy-edged blade of a garnish tool makes it easy to form crinkle-cut French fries.



A spiral cutting tool used by Mandy carves a potato into garnish that looks like a wire spring.