

Make eating an adventure

By Molly Glentzer

How do you get kids to like food that's good for them?

Gracie Cavnar's solution: employ the same marketing tactics junk-food makers use to entice us to consume snacks that aren't so good for us. In other words, make healthful eating fun.

"You make it so attractive and engaging you don't have to beg them to do it; they want to do it," Cavnar says.

In the 14 years since she founded the Recipe for Success Foundation, Cavnar and a cadre of volunteers have helped teach thousands of youngsters to appreciate food from the ground up through school vegetable-gardening programs and other initiatives. Aiming to instill a sense of adventure without preaching, she's always looking for ways to broaden the message, she said.

Cavnar will share thoughts on how to raise adventurous eaters at 12:15 p.m. Sunday, when she's interviewed by yours truly in the Chronicle's Style Lounge at the Houston MetroCooking Show. A book signing follows, with all book proceeds benefiting the Recipe for Success Foundation.

And she's launching a new book series this month, "Eat It! Adventures With Marco Polo" (\$19.99, S2P Press). The first installment introduces Tavi, a young 12th-century foodie, as he embarks on a culinary journey as a guest of the great adventurer. The expedition takes him for quite a ride along Asia's great Spice Route.

Tavi starts to cook onboard Polo's ship because he misses his Italian mother's refined meals, redolent of fresh garlic and mushrooms. Forays into foreign markets open his eyes to an ever-expanding, tasty world.

Along with the engaging story, the



Michael Paulsen / Houston Chronicle

Author Gracie Cavnar encourages families to raise adventurous eaters. She will answer the Chronicle's questions and sign copies of her new book Sunday in the Style Lounge at MetroCooking Houston.

book includes kid-friendly recipes families can make together — everything from pancakes to an inventive pasta made with radishes and greens.

Her top three tips:

1. Forget the kids menu and just-for-kids foods. Start them off eating real food, not a menu restricted to fries, nuggets and mac and cheese.

2. Sit down to eat together as a family at least once a day.

3. Get the kids involved in planning, shopping and cooking dinner.

molly.glentzer@chron.com