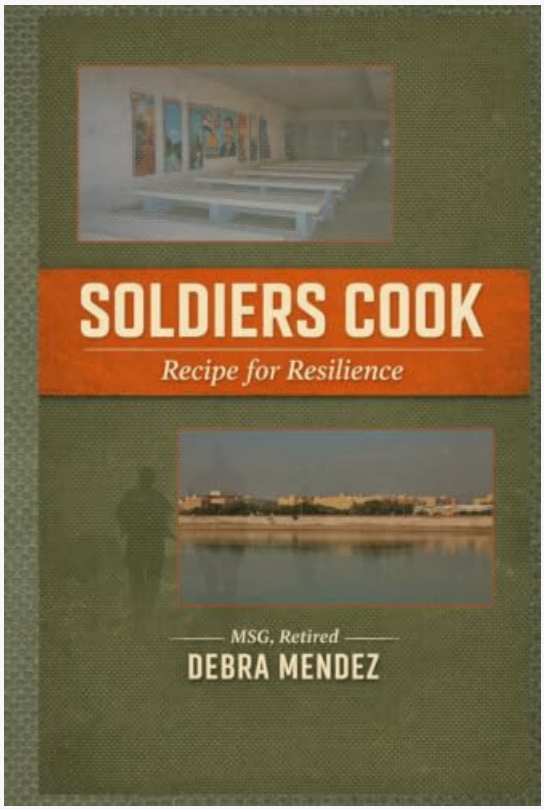
Soldiers Cook: Recipe for Resilience Reveals the Human Side of Service, Leadership, and War

Debra Mendez shares a deeply personal military memoir exploring resilience, leadership, family, and the enduring power of caring for soldiers.



Soldiers Cook by Debra Mendez

NEW YORK CITY, NY, UNITED STATES, September 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Retired Master Sergeant Debra Mendez brings nearly three decades of military experience to Soldiers Cook: Recipe for Resilience, a memoir examining service through the realities of leadership, war, personal struggle, and responsibility for others.

From her work as an artillery mechanic to feeding troops in Iraq, Mendez recounts a career shaped by demanding missions and an unwavering commitment to soldiers. Her story also explores living with a bipolar disorder diagnosis and how military structure provided stability during difficult periods of her life.

At the center of Soldiers Cook: Recipe for Resilience is Mendez's deployment to Iraq, including her service at Abu Ghraib Prison and in the Baghdad Green Zone. Rather than focusing solely on combat, she examines the everyday work that sustained soldiers amid uncertainty and danger.

Food becomes an important thread throughout the memoir, representing far more than nourishment. Behind a serving line, Mendez approached each person as an individual soldier whose morale, dignity, and well-being mattered, an outlook reflected intentionally in the book's title.

Mendez credits her daughter, Theresa, with encouraging her to tell her story. Their relationship became especially significant when they deployed to Iraq together in 2007. The experience required them to navigate overlapping identities as soldiers, colleagues, mother, and daughter while confronting the pressures of deployment.

Mendez writes openly about leadership challenges, mistakes, personal growth, and the realization that resilience is often developed through ordinary decisions rather than celebrated moments. Her purpose is not to portray a flawless military career, but to share what experience taught her.

The memoir also addresses Mendez's service at Abu Ghraib during a period that became synonymous with one of the Iraq War's most scrutinized scandals. She distinguishes her account from any attempt to excuse documented wrongdoing, instead preserving the perspective of service members who carried out their responsibilities professionally and were not involved in the abuse.

Through that lens, Soldiers Cook: Recipe for Resilience speaks to veterans, military families, active-duty personnel, food service professionals, mental health advocates, and readers interested in the human experiences behind war and military service.

Mendez served nearly 30 years in the Army and National Guard, building experience as both a mechanic and military cook while assuming increasing leadership responsibilities. Her journey reflects the challenges of serving as a woman in military environments, managing personal struggles, and learning from successes and failures alike.

She is also developing additional books about other stages of her military career and a cookbook inspired by Army recipes and her Puerto Rican and German heritage.

With Soldiers Cook: Recipe for Resilience, Mendez offers readers a personal account of perseverance, service, and the lasting importance of caring for the individual standing in front of you.

The book is available at:
https://a.co/d/0gThARpM

For review copies, interview requests, or additional information, please contact:

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