

This year's new cookbooks: 27 of our favorites



Our favorite cookbooks from 2015.

By **the Food staff**

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This is the time of year when publishers have put out their new and notable cookbooks, kind of like how studios are now releasing their serious films in time for awards season. And while the cookbook awards season comes in the spring, the holidays are maybe a more practical version of it, when we check out our favorites or consider what local or noteworthy chefs have written, and finally go pick up some copies — and cook from them. We have more time to cook over the holidays, and reason to, or we give the books as gifts — to our friends, family or to ourselves. Because there's nothing like a new book to inspire dinner, especially when Jacques Pépin or Yotam Ottolenghi is providing the recipe. Here are 27 cookbooks, in alphabetical order by author, to inspire your December cooking or gifting.

"V Is for Vegetables" by Michael Anthony (Little, Brown, \$40)

Anthony is the chef at Gramercy Tavern, one of the great fine-dining restaurants in Manhattan. But don't go to his new cookbook expecting fanciful constructions and advanced techniques. Instead, "V Is for Vegetables" is intended as a solid introduction for home cooks who are just beginning or those who are

feeling the need to branch out beyond their usual staples (curiously, though, there's not a hint of which vegetables are best when). This is not to say there's nothing here for more experienced cooks. Roasted whole leeks with tangerine vinaigrette is an intriguing idea that would dress up any menu this winter, as would braised radishes with honey and black pepper.

"Mark Bittman's Kitchen Matrix" by Mark Bittman (Pam Krauss Books, \$35)

Bittman is a prolific author, from his "How to Cook Everything" cookbooks to his columns in the New York Times, the newspaper he recently left to join the start-up the Purple Carrot. His latest cookbook is a synthesis of his "Eat" column, in which he approaches dishes, or ingredients, rather like kids used to pick out their Garanimals outfits: mix and match, that is to say, with helpful visual aids. Thus Bittman provides a basic recipe for chicken wings and helpfully coordinates the various marinades (curry yogurt, jerk, teriyaki). The same procedure is applied to tiny pancakes, clams, grapefruit, etc. This approach is not for everyone, and it can get both repetitive and reductive, but it is a fun way to visualize your dinner. It also can be a good way to show myriad possibilities at a glance, which is helpful for beginners or those who are easily intimidated by the surfeit of riches in their kitchen.

"The Mission Chinese Food Cookbook" by Danny Bowien with Chris Ying (Anthony Bourdain/Ecco, \$25)

Mission Chinese Food, as its most ardent fans are quick to remind you, is not really a Chinese restaurant. It is, in both its New York incarnation and the San Francisco original, a rolling party that happens to serve more or less Chinese dishes. Bowien, its chef, has become a Famous Dude on the international chef's circuit, and people stand in line for hours for a crack at his kung pao pastrami, thrice-cooked bacon and salt-cod fried rice. And we mean Bowien no disrespect when we point out that this may read less like a culinary manual than a continuation of the party; a confession with recipes that reads like a great, super-long article in Lucky Peach, the home of his collaborator Chris Ying. Are you going to ferment your own *shio koji* for Bowien's version of Hainan chicken rice or smoke a bottle of Coca-Cola to make a sauce for his fried pigs' tails? Probably not. But that kung pao pastrami is awfully good.

"Olympia Provisions" by Elias Cairo and Meredith Erickson (Ten Speed Press, \$40)

It might be tempting to regard "Olympia Provisions" as a cookbook spinoff of "Portlandia" if only the food didn't look so inviting. The first cookbook from the celebrated Portland, Ore., butcher shop/charcuterie/restaurant is jam-packed with photos of burly folks in plaid shirts, distinctive facial hair and tattoos, doing outdoorsy things. But the food looks so good you almost don't notice that. The first half of the book progresses through the various stages of curing meat — slow-cooked rillettes, pâtés and fresh sausages giving way to more advanced smoked and dry-cured meats and fermented dry sausages. The second half is all about turning those ingredients into dishes, with recipes for hearty food such as braised

beef short ribs and octopus terrine with dill.

"The Pioneer Woman Cooks: Dinnertime" by Ree Drummond (William Morrow Cookbooks, \$16)

Fans of Food Network chef Drummond, also known as the Pioneer Woman, were waiting patiently for her newest cookbook, promising to help deliver us from dinnertime with easy recipes that make kids and cowboys equally happy. The book is brimming with quick-to-the table comfort classics. You won't find too many newfangled recipes, but rather basics that many self-proclaimed foodies probably never learned how to cook because they were too busy trying to work their *sous-vide* machine. Here, you'll find Salisbury steak, stuffed shells, chicken cacciatore and chicken soup. This is a good cookbook for the college freshman on your gift list or millennials heading off to their very first apartment: Drummond's trademark step-by-step photos will help guide the novice cook's hand.

"The Southerner's Cookbook" from the editors of Garden & Gun (Harper Wave, \$38)

In the South, food is more than mere sustenance. From pillowy Texas kolaches stuffed with sausage to the vinegar-based barbecue sauces of the Carolinas, generous Maryland crab cakes stuffed with lumps of freshly-picked crab to the tangy olive relish spread that is necessary to make a proper New Orleans muffuletta sandwich, food is celebrated and revered. The editors at Garden & Gun magazine have come out with "The Southerner's Cookbook," a collection of stories and more than 125 recipes celebrating Southern food culture. From well-loved classics to regional specialties and innovations shaping today's Southern cuisine, the book is organized into chapters covering party bites and appetizers, recipes for meats ranging from chicken to wild game, sauces and condiments, and even cocktails. You'll find dishes from acclaimed Southern chefs as well as recipes developed exclusively for Garden & Gun, with full-color photography and a handy glossary of culinary terms for those new to Southern cooking.

"Vegetarian India: A Journey Through the Best of Indian Home Cooking" by Madhur Jaffrey (Knopf, \$35)

Don't make the mistake of thinking this latest Madhur Jaffrey book is only for vegetarians. The author of seven James Beard Award-winning cookbooks, Jaffrey scoured the Indian subcontinent, keeping "my eyes wide open for vegetarian dishes that are both delicious and easy to make." Suspicious of written recipes, she insisted on seeing dishes cooked in front of her. Over the last several years Jaffrey drove from town to town and from home to home, stopping at roadside stands, chile auctions and local markets collecting recipes from weavers, jewelers, ashrams, restaurant kitchens and temples. Her recipe for mixed dal Delhi-style is an absolute treasure, along with a beautiful lemon rice with chiles, lemon rind and fresh curry leaves. You'll find a slew of recipes you'll want to make: roasted cauliflower with Punjabi seasonings, black-eyed peas with cilantro and green chile, wonderful chutneys and relishes. She delves into India's many flatbreads too and

has a fail-proof method of making chapatis. Get cooking.

"Fried Chicken" by Rebecca Lang (Ten Speed Press, \$16.99)

If you're a fried chicken fan — why else would you be reading this — "Fried Chicken" is about the raunchiest, most satisfying fried chicken food porn you'll find in book form. This is a book for someone who is serious about fried chicken and wants to appreciate it in all its various forms. "Fried Chicken" starts with a basic guide to frying chicken, including how to butcher a bird, the benefits of brining, which fat to fry in and the different types of flour. Then comes the real fun. Looking for a recipe for West African fried chicken with sauteed onions and peppers? Maybe Chinese lollipop wings are more your speed. And if you're a purist, there's a solid recipe for double-battered fried chicken, and chicken wings with ranch dipping sauce.

"Gjelina" by Travis Lett (Chronicle Books, \$40)

If you've spent any time at Gjelina, Lett's Venice restaurant, you'll probably have wanted to leave with one of the chef's recipes in addition to another pizza. Lett knows this, which is why his highly anticipated cookbook, which he wrote himself, is not only loaded with his market-driven, vegetable-centric dishes, but is as gorgeous as his restaurant. Shot by Michael Graydon and Nikole Herriott, the workmanlike, easily followed recipes are pretty much all paired with beautiful photos — yes, there's a condiment section — as well as additional shots (rabbits in a crate, black and white portraits, the beach at dusk) that help Lett tell his restaurant's remarkable story. The recipes mostly aren't for novices (lots of stocks, confits, pâtés), but if you want to do all that L.A. farmers market produce real justice, Lett is just the guy to teach you.

"In a French Kitchen" by Susan Herrmann Loomis (Gotham Books, \$26.95)

Francophiles and home cooks, and the many of us who are both, will love this new cookbook from Herrmann Loomis, an American expat who has lived and cooked and written cookbooks in France for two decades. She runs a cooking school, On Rue Tatin, and her book is both instruction and narrative. It's also a story about her food and her friends and the culinary traditions of her adopted country. The recipes are classic, more comfort than fussy (pot-au-feu, Normandy mussels with cider, lentils with sausages, pain perdu), and Herrmann Loomis has useful sides (the organization of French cheese, essential French kitchen tools) that explore the rest of the kitchen.

"Pasta by Hand" by Jenn Louis (Chronicle Books, \$20)

If you were neither raised nor trained within an hour or so of Parma, you are probably intimidated by hand-rolled pasta — the ideal of perfectly rolled tagliatelle is practically Olympian. But Louis, from the well-loved Portland, Ore., restaurant Lincoln, concentrates on the other stuff, the *trofie*, *pinci*, *canederli* and *spätzli* we can just about convince ourselves that we will be able to master — the rustic, dumplingy country cousins of Italy's happy homemade pasta universe. You may never be able to make tortellini in brodo as suave as

Modena's best, but after a run at Louis' Parmesan-rich priest-stranglers, wild-nettle gnocchi and royale Bolognese, you may not much care.

"Lima Cookbook: Peruvian Home Cooking" by Virgilio Martinez and Luciana Bianchi (Mitchell Beazley, \$29.99)

When one of the world's top chefs — and former Peruvian skateboard champion — decides to write a book about Peruvian home cooking, take note. "It's a book about traditional Peruvian flavors and heritage revisited from a contemporary perspective," says Martinez of Central restaurant. And for those of us who haven't had a chance to experience the hot culinary scene in Lima, we can re-create some of the excitement in our own kitchens with dishes like multicolored quinoa with mint and radishes, scallops and tomato ceviche, sea bass and cilantro *tiradito*, short rib *anticuchos*, and spicy, achiote-rubbed leg of lamb. Learn to make your own fierce *leche de tigre* and other chili pastes. The book also includes the definitive Pisco Sour recipe. Enough said. Get cooking.

"Lucky Peach Presents 101 Easy Asian Recipes" by Peter Meehan and the editors of Lucky Peach (Clarkson Potter, \$35)

This is not a book that claims to be easy, then asks you to deep fry a fish you filet yourself, then make a sauce from three subrecipes. Author Meehan, who wrote the "Momofuku" cookbook with David Chang and who founded Lucky Peach magazine, wanted to create a book called "101 Easy Asian Recipes" that was actually full of easy Asian recipes. So: No frying, no subrecipes, and the book separates readers' pantries into "basic," "intermediate" and "champion" based on what sauces, seasonings and spices you'll need to find at the market. If you're used to ordering a dish off of a take-out menu, chances are it's in this book. There are recipes for kung pao shrimp, Hainan chicken rice, *pad see ew*, dumplings, soy sauce eggs, miso soup and *okonomiyaki*.

"Donabe: Classic and Modern Japanese Clay Pot Cooking" by Naoko Takei Moore and Kyle Connaughton (Ten Speed Press, \$35)

"Donabe is the perfect expression of Japanese home cooking," writes Moore in this beautiful book that features cooking in six styles of earthenware donabe. Clay pots go back as far as the 8th century, and the technology has stood because these pots are so functional. The dishes are meant to be communal, often cooked over a gas fire in the middle of the table. You'll find recipes for Kyoto-style Saikyo miso hot pot, Niigata-style sake-rich hot pot inspired by a dinner with a sake brewery master or chicken meatballs in a spicy hot sesame broth. Try braised spicy kabocha squash with fermented chili bean paste and steamed yellowtail shabu-shabu with daikon and Japanese green onions, and a gorgeous medley of steamed vegetables with Moore's bright-tasting dipping sauces. There's even a recipe from L.A. chef Josef Centeno for brisket rubbed with coffee and chile rub before it's braised in a donabe with autumn vegetables. Lots to

explore, including steaming and smoking in specialized donabe.

"This Is Camino" by Russell Moore and Allison Hopelain with Chris Colin (10-Speed Press, \$35)

The late Zuni Cafe chef Judy Rodgers once jokingly described her cooking philosophy as "if there is a harder way to do something, we'll find it." Moore makes her look like a piker. The chef at Oakland's Camino restaurant, which is fueled by a huge wood-burning oven that he helped build, Moore is an instinctual cook with a rustic approach. He crushes spices with a mortar and pestle. He grills calamari with the openings facing the fire so the heat can circulate inside. He soaks polenta with fermented whey and simmers it for four hours. And you can't argue with the results: grilled sardines with fresh turmeric, chiles and radishes, lamb leg cooked à la ficelle, sheep's milk ricotta grilled in a fig leaf with herb salad and tarragon toast.

"Everyday Superfood" by Jamie Oliver (Harper Collins, \$34.99)

Oliver is one of the better-known chefs in TV chef land. He's that guy from "The Naked Chef" and a slew of other cooking shows, as well as a cookbook author. In his latest book, Oliver talks super food and, more specifically, how his personal lifestyle and diet changes translated to the healthful recipes on the book's pages. An Instagram-worthy shot of a "post-gym" super salad of chicken, quinoa and "loads a veg" is followed by a recipe for "healthy cheese and corn pancakes" with smoky bacon and caramelized banana. Because as much as these recipes are intended to be healthful, Oliver would like you to have some fun too, and snack. So there's a recipe for raw, vegan flapjack snacks with nuts, seeds, dates, oats and fruit.

"Mexico From the Inside Out" by Enrique Olvera (Phaidon Press, \$35)

Olvera is the most famous Mexican chef in the world. His Mexico City restaurant Pujol is often considered the best restaurant in Latin America. His long-aged mother mole is a touchstone of new Mexican cuisine. He serves his leeks with bone marrow and ant eggs, but he is obsessed with the architecture of the taco. "Mexico From the Inside Out" may be just another of the gorgeous, oversize chefs' books that Phaidon has been putting out lately, a volume more likely to grace the inspiration shelf of your favorite avant-garde restaurant than to work its way into your cooking, but it is a look into the methods of one of the planet's most interesting culinary minds. And if you can pick up the book and not be driven mad with the longing to taste Olvera's fried frog's leg tamal, chia seed *aguachile* or octopus tostada with peanuts, you have more willpower than we do.

"Nopi: The Cookbook" by Yotam Ottolenghi and Rameel Scully (Random House, \$40)

As if to signal that this is a serious cookbook, the edges of Ottolenghi's latest cookbook are shiny gold. Written with Malaysian-born chef Scully, who grew up in Australia and cooked all over the place, "Nopi" presents intricate, sophisticated recipes from Nopi in London in which the Mediterranean meets Asia head-

on. Think soft-shelled crabs with sweet black pepper sauce and okra or beef brisket croquettes with Asian coleslaw. The lineup includes not only terrific vegetable recipes, but also comfort food like fondant rutabaga gratin or pearl barley risotto with watercress and asparagus. Pistachio- and pine nut-crust ed halibut is presented on an emerald arugula and parsley vichyssoise. Pan-fried mackerel gets a side of fresh coconut and peanut salad. Chicken livers in red wine and smoky bacon are showered with fresh cherries. And for dessert? Popcorn ice cream with caramelized popcorn and black pepper. Definitely a keeper.

"Sourdough" by Sarah Owens (Roost Books, \$35)

If you love baking bread and are fascinated by the mysteries of sourdough, Owens' new book is a way in for novices and a fun read for those who already know their way around natural levain. It's also a lot less intimidating than, say, a Chad Robertson book on the subject. Owens, a baker who founded the Brooklyn bakery BK17 and is a horticulturist by training, gives an introduction to sourdoughs, then walks you through making breads and gives more user-friendly recipes as well —griddle cakes, cornbread, even cookies, all made with sourdough starter. This is also a great book for gardeners, as Owens gives primers on things like making your own lilac sugar and elder flower cordial.

"Jacques Pépin: Heart and Soul in the Kitchen" by Jacques Pépin (Rux Martin/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, \$35)

The most recent of the French cooking legend's 25 cookbooks, this is the companion to Pépin's latest (and, he says, last) [PBS](#) cooking show. Perhaps fittingly, Pépin, who turns 80 in December, has written a deeply personal cookbook, with photos of him at home and on vacation, and many of his own paintings. The recipes are very personal too, a collection of homey dishes (cheese and anchovy toasts, Parisian potage, radish stew) interspersed with practical tips and cooking techniques. Pépin talks about foraging and cooking with his granddaughter, gives wine advice and goes over basic techniques. All of this is classic Pépin, a man who famously cooked for [Charles de Gaulle](#) yet is first and foremost a teacher and a cook who believes in frugality and good sense. It's also a fun read — for the terrific recipes, the anecdotes and, not least, Pépin's cheerful paintings.

"The Violet Bakery Cookbook" by Claire Ptak (Ten Speed Press, \$20)

It is hard not to fall half in love with Ptak's baking. Because where other pastry masters try to stun you with odd fruits, sheer technique and impossible finesse, Ptak, a young Chez Panisse vet who conquered London with her buckwheat butter cookies and cinnamon buns, is a poet of the red-velvet muffin and a sorceress of the scone, re-imagining homey, utterly familiar pastries as things swirling with dark flavors, unrefined flours and textures that are never quite as dense as you'd think they might be. If you're trying to figure out what to do with the sacks of rye, kamut and spelt you picked up at Kenter Canyon or Grist & Toll, the Violet Bakery Cookbook is a good place to start.

"Ruth Reichl: My Kitchen Year" by Ruth Reichl (Random House, \$35)

Reichl's latest book is both a cookbook — the first she's written solo in 44 years — and a memoir, which shouldn't surprise anyone. Not the readers of the other books she's written since 1971, which include three memoirs, not the viewers of her PBS shows, and certainly not any of her 330,000-plus Twitter followers. It's a chatty chronicle of Reichl's post-Gourmet year, after the magazine closed and she went home and cooked what turned into the 136 recipes cataloged in the book. We see the former restaurant critic and magazine editor as she copes through cooking, and both the recipes and the narrative style are purposefully casual. The book spans a calendar year, and the recipes loosely follow the seasons — from comfort food to more elaborate dishes, although for Reichl, these are sometimes the same thing. There are recipes for sea urchin pasta, for example, a dish she learned from chef Eric Ripert, as well as the dumplings she makes every Thanksgiving for Calvin Trillin. It's that sort of book.

"Crossroads" by Tal Ronnen (Artisan, \$35)

Ronnen is the chef and owner of Crossroads vegan restaurant on Melrose Avenue; he has his own line of nut milk-based cheeses called Kite Hill; and fellow L.A. chef Roy Choi refers to him as a "plant-based food whisperer." In his latest cookbook, Ronnen shares recipes for most of the dishes he's known for at the restaurant, including the hearts of palm calamari with cocktail sauce and lemon-caper aioli. But the book can also be used as an introduction to vegan cooking. There are recipes for snacks and spreads, flatbreads, salads, pastas and desserts, but there's also a "basics" section that walks readers through making everything from almond Greek yogurt to vegetable stock and demi-glace.

"The Islands of Greece" by Rebecca Seal (Hardie Grant, \$39.95)

Unless you've spent time wandering the cliffs of Santorini or taken a dip in the turquoise waters off any one of the Greek Islands, your experience with Greek cuisine may be limited to tzatziki, gyro, cheese saganaki and that vaguely Greek fast food place down the street from your office. "The Islands of Greece" is an attempt to offer readers a taste of something authentic from each of the islands. Instead of a recipe of gyro, there's smoked pork in a creamy sauce from Crete, along with squid braised with rosemary and garlic from a restaurant in Rhodes; and rice with lentils and crispy onions from Cyprus. And in between recipes, pretty pictures of the turquoise water.

"Tacos: Recipes and Provocations" by Alex Stupak and Jordana Rothman (Clarkson Potter, \$32.50)

Everything you've always wanted to know about tacos — and more — from New York chef Stupak (Empellón Cocina, Empellón taqueria and Empellón al Pastor) with food writer Rothman. And, yes, he is an Anglo guy, onetime pastry chef at Alinea and wd-50, who considers eating a fresh tortilla at La Parrilla in L.A. one of his

three defining moments as a cook. He explains in detail how to make a most excellent tortilla, which he considers a great canvas. He even includes recipes for alternative grains such as buckwheat and rye. And the two were obsessed enough to test seven tortilla storing options to see which ones kept tortillas warm the longest. (You'll be surprised.) Fillings are both traditional and wildly inventive. And all are crazy delicious. Tempura-fried skate wing is fabulous. So is the blood sausage taco and a pastrami version with a sharp mustard seed salsa. And for dessert, he's got a taco filled with dark chocolate shards with pasilla chile, extra-virgin olive oil and Maldon salt.

"Hartwood: Bright, Wild Flavors From the Edge of the Yucatán" by Eric Werner and Mya Henry with Christine Muhlke and Oliver Strand (Artisan, \$40)

In the intro, Noma's René Redzepi writes, "When we go to Eric and Mya's place, you're right in the jungle. There's no roof, no walls, just a little bit of electricity ... the cooking is singular and addictive." Hartwood is a restaurant in Tulum, just south of Cancún. That's where Werner and Henry landed when they decided to pack up their New York restaurant lives and try something different. They bought a piece of land, built a restaurant practically by themselves and have been happily cooking over wood (only) ever since. Of course, there's a recipe for cochinita pibil, but also chilled watermelon soup with habanero, lime juice and epazote or ceviches with a splash of mezcal. The smoky spirit also goes into the chipotle sauce for Maya prawns. And you have to make the agave pork belly cooked over chiles and served with grilled pineapple. To finish, there's a magnificent cake with coconut cream in the batter and a cream cheese frosting covered in toasted coconut.

"Steeped: Recipes Infused With Tea" by Annelies Zijderveld (Andrews McMeel Publishing, \$21.99)

Think about all the coffee-infused foods out there (cakes, ice creams, liquors and BBQ spice rubs, to just name a few). Zijderveld makes a powerful argument that we're missing out when we fail to similarly incorporate tea as a spice into our everyday routines. The book is part tea primer but also intrepid tea explorer, with recipes such as strawberry camomile jam, Moroccan mint-flavored quiche, a spinach salad featuring pecans encrusted with a masala chai maple syrup, and hurricane popcorn with Dragon Well tea *furikake*. (It's like salty-sweet kettle corn, but with tea.) This book would make a great gift for both tea newcomers and those who can rhapsodize about the smoky complexities of a Lapsang souchong.

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