



— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN

100 RECIPES

THE ABSOLUTE BEST
WAYS TO MAKE THE
TRUE ESSENTIALS



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100 RECIPES

THE ABSOLUTE BEST
WAYS TO MAKE THE
TRUE ESSENTIALS

THE EDITORS AT AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN

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BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS

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Welcome to America's Test Kitchen



This book has been tested, written, and edited by the folks at America's Test Kitchen, a very real 2,500-square-foot kitchen located just outside of Boston. It is the home of *Cook's Illustrated* magazine and *Cook's Country* magazine and is the Monday-through-Friday destination for more than four dozen test cooks, editors, food scientists, tasters, and cookware specialists. Our mission is to test recipes over and over again until we understand how and why they work and until we arrive at the "best" version.

We start the process of testing a recipe with a complete lack of preconceptions, which means that we accept no claim, no theory, no technique, and no recipe at face value. We simply assemble as many variations as possible, test a half-dozen of the most promising, and taste the results blind. We then construct our own hybrid recipe and continue to test it, varying ingredients, techniques, and cooking times until we reach a consensus. The result, we hope, is the best version of a particular recipe, but we realize that only you can be the final judge of our success (or failure). As we like to say in the test kitchen, "We make the mistakes, so you don't have to."

All of this would not be possible without a belief that good cooking, much like good music, is indeed based on a foundation of objective technique. Some people like spicy foods and others don't, but there is a right way to sauté, there is a best way to cook a pot roast, and there are measurable scientific principles involved in producing perfectly beaten, stable egg whites. This is our ultimate goal: to investigate the fundamental principles of cooking so that you become a better cook. It is as simple as that.

If you're curious to see what goes on behind the scenes at America's Test Kitchen, check out our daily

blog, The Feed, at AmericasTestKitchenFeed.com, which features kitchen snapshots, exclusive recipe video tips, and much more. You can watch us work (in our actual test kitchen) by tuning in to America's Test Kitchen (AmericasTestKitchen.com) or Cook's Country from America's Test Kitchen (CooksCountryTV.com) on public television. Tune in to America's Test Kitchen Radio (ATKradio.com) on public radio to listen to insightful tips, and techniques that illuminate the truth about real home cooking. Want to hone your cooking skills or finally learn how to bake—from an America's Test Kitchen test cook? Enroll in a cooking class at our online cooking school at OnlineCookingSchool.com. And find information about subscribing to Cook's Illustrated magazine at CooksIllustrated.com or Cook's Country magazine at CooksCountry.com. Both magazines are published every other month. However you choose to visit us, we welcome you into our kitchen, where you can stand by our side as we test our way to the best recipes in America.

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Preface

I grew up spending summers in Vermont and learned to cook from Marie Briggs, the town baker. She could make a roast, baked potatoes, gravy, a few vegetables, and a whole array of fabulous baked goods from anadama bread to molasses cookies, from apple pie to baking powder biscuits. After she passed, I was given her recipes. The surprising thing is that she didn't have that many—just 50 to 75 index cards.

After many decades of home cooking, I have come to the same conclusion that Marie did, that cooking is based on a handful of fundamental principles and building block recipes that teach you most of what you need to know: a stew, a braise, how to steam, a few quick breads, a sauté, a yellow cake, a simple soup, etc. Once you understand how to make a stew, you can make almost any stew.

The problem is that you want these building block recipes to represent the very best way of doing something. There are a thousand ways to roast a chicken, but only a few really good methods, the recipes that are foolproof and turn out the best results. And if you want to cook carrots or grill burgers, you want to know that someone has tested every possible method of cooking those foods so that you have the very best approach at your fingertips.

This is where America's Test Kitchen can be valuable. We really do test a recipe 30 times, 40 times, even 50 up to 100 times. This doesn't mean that we have the only way of preparing a particular recipe but we do have the most foolproof method, the one that you can count on the first time, every time. If we are a tiny bit lucky, we come across game changers, new techniques that make a particular recipe that much better or dependable than other approaches, whether it is to add grated apple to blueberry pie filling (the pectin acts as a natural thickener) or to start steaks and roasts in a low oven to turbo-age the meat using the action of enzymes that break down the protein for more flavor and better texture.

This list of 100 recipes not only covers the bases in terms of what skills and techniques ought to be at the fingertips of a good home cook, it's also a list of our greatest hits—recipes where we think that the test kitchen has added real value and has explored new territory. Put simply, these are the recipes that changed how each of us here at the test kitchen cook at home.

So we can argue about whether a Spanish beef stew should be on the list but the notion of not browning beef for a stew, cooking it with the top off in the oven, and then using a ground-almond thickener, a *pica* was revelatory for us. We became better cooks and learned techniques that we applied to other recipes.

Here's how I would use this book: Pick the 10 recipes that you are most likely to make time and time again. Make them until you don't need to look at the recipe instructions (nobody remembers ingredient lists!). Now you have become a real cook—you can cook without a recipe and you understand the core principles. Then take another 10 recipes...

If you can cook 20 of the recipes in this book without referring to the instructions then you are now a serious cook and more accomplished than 99 percent of your friends and neighbors. It's really that simple.

And that's all you need to know.

Enjoy!

CHRISTOPHER KIMBALL

Founder and Editor,

Cook's Illustrated and *Cook's Country*

Host, America's Test Kitchen and

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