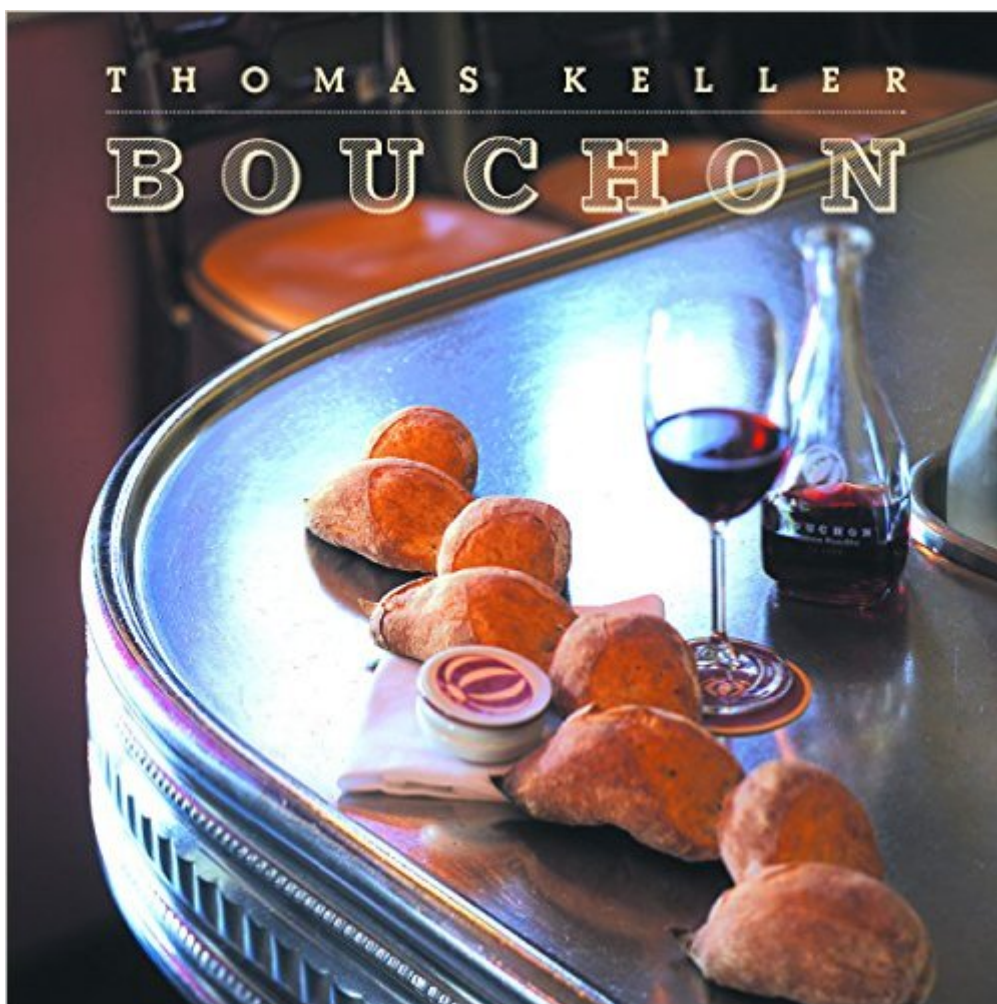


The book was found

Bouchon



Synopsis

Thomas Keller, chef/proprietor of Napa Valley's French Laundry, is passionate about bistro cooking. He believes fervently that the real art of cooking lies in elevating to excellence the simplest ingredients; that bistro cooking embodies at once a culinary ethos of generosity, economy, and simplicity; that the techniques at its foundation are profound, and the recipes at its heart have a powerful ability to nourish and please. So enamored is he of this older, more casual type of cooking that he opened the restaurant Bouchon, right next door to the French Laundry, so he could satisfy a craving for a perfectly made quiche, or a gratin'd onion soup, or a simple but irresistible roasted chicken. Now Bouchon, the cookbook, embodies this cuisine in all its sublime simplicity. But let's begin at the real beginning. For Keller, great cooking is all about the virtue of process and attention to detail. Even in the humblest dish, the extra thought is evident, which is why this food tastes so amazing: The onions for the onion soup are caramelized for five hours; lamb cheeks are used for the navarin; basic but essential refinements every step of the way make for the cleanest flavors, the brightest vegetables, the perfect balance—whether of fat to acid for a vinaigrette, of egg to liquid for a custard, of salt to meat for a duck confit. Because versatility as a cook is achieved through learning foundations, Keller and Bouchon executive chef Jeff Cerciello illuminate all the key points of technique along the way: how a two-inch ring makes for a perfect quiche; how to recognize the right hazelnut brown for a brown butter sauce; how far to caramelize sugar for different uses. But learning and refinement aside—oh those recipes! Steamed mussels with saffron, bourride, trout grenobloise with its parsley, lemon, and croutons; steak frites, beef bourguignon, chicken in the pot—all exquisitely crafted. And those immortal desserts: the tarte Tatin, the chocolate mousse, the lemon tart, the profiteroles with chocolate sauce. In Bouchon, you get to experience them in impeccably realized form. This is a book to cherish, with its alluring mix of recipes and the author's knowledge, warmth, and wit: "I find this a hopeful time for the pig," says Keller about our yearning for the flavor that has been bred out of pork. So let your imagination transport you back to the burnished warmth of an old-fashioned French bistro, pull up a stool to the zinc bar or slide into a banquette, and treat yourself to truly great preparations that have not just withstood the vagaries of fashion, but have improved with time. Welcome to Bouchon.

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Customer Reviews

Expectations for Thomas Keller's new book 'Bouchon' are very high, and I firmly believe he has exceeded them. The book sets new standards for the foodie coffee table fare as well as confirming Keller's reputation as one of the country's foremost culinary artists. The book is larger, heavier, and better than his first cookbook on the cuisine of his flagship French Laundry. There are several things that make this an excellent book for all people who love to cook. First, the book is a superior reference work of bistro dishes and how to prepare them. It is certainly not complete, but then I think no cookbook in the world will ever be a complete reference to any subject, as every culinary subject changes daily due to changes in provisions, historical research, and the enormous variety in how even one dish is made from place to place. For example, both 'Bouchon' and Tony Bourdain's recent book on bistro recipes from Les Halle has five (5) dishes containing mussels, yet no two are the same dish. For all of the virtues of Bourdain's book, Keller's book is superior as a reference to the overall style of cooking if only because he and his editors rigorously give both French and English names to all dishes. Second, as amazing as it is to say this, lots of dishes in 'Bouchon' are actually easy to make. The initial roast chicken recipe is literally not much more complicated than carefully prepping the carcass and sticking it into the oven. Keller does not even baste the beast and it is done within an hour (for a 3-pound bird). And, all this with the cachet of making a Thomas Keller recipe. Almost all the salads and 'openers' dishes are equally as simple, as long as you have high quality ingredients. Third, the pantry chapter of recipes is a more complete reference for making stocks and other sauce bases than I have seen anywhere else. My former gold standard for stockmaking recipes was in 'The Zuni Caf  Cookbook' by Judy Rodgers. This is better by giving recipes that are just as good, better written, and a more complete collection of stocks than I have seen anywhere else. The only thing I would possibly add to this chapter would be a recipe for a

court bouillon. But, the recipe does appear in the book as a part of the recipe for a shellfish platter. Other sauces such as a mignonette sauce and a cocktail sauce also appear 'in situ' along with appropriate dishes with which they are used. Fourth, the book is simply packed with important culinary techniques. Most of these are not the sort of thing which will find their way to the quick tips pages of 'Cooks Illustrated' or 'Gourmet' as they are not shortcuts, but more painstaking ways to improve what is probably already an excellent dish. One dramatic example is Keller's twist on braising where he segregates his flavoring vegetables at the bottom of the Dutch oven under a layer of cheesecloth before adding the meat and the broth. In this way, it becomes very easy to remove the finished meat from the veg and retrieve the broth with little or no odd floating bits of celery leaf or thyme branch. A more simple technique is the recommendation to transfer finished stock to the filtering device with a ladle rather than simply pouring the stuff into the chinois. The force of the uncontrolled flow will force some unwanted particles into the filtered stock. It is all about little details piled up upon one another, which separates good from great cooking. Fifth, Keller's interpretation of bistro cooking is uncompromising. One dramatic example of this is his claim that America has forgotten how to make a proper quiche, if it ever did know in the first place. The cardinal sin is to make a quiche in a pie pan. This is no surprise, as Julia Child in 'Mastering the Art of French Cooking' gives the same warning. What is more surprising is that while most Americans probably use a tart pan with sides of no more than an inch and Child recommends a flan or cake pan with sides up to 1 1/2 inches, Keller states that you need a 2 inch tall pan to make a proper quiche. A more subtle difference is in his technique for preparing his pate brisee. Virtually every pie crust recipes I have ever seen calls for cutting in butter to leave lentil-sized bits of butter in the mix. Keller insists this is a mistake for a quiche with a wet custard filling, as the pockets of butter create weaknesses in the dough that may break through before the custard filling has firmed up. Although the book contains many simple recipes, there are also many classic recipes such as boeuf bourguignon, which are literally essays in classic French cooking. Tony Bourdain's recipe for boeuf bourguignon requires 10 ingredients and two concise paragraphs to describe the method. Keller's recipe calls for 43 ingredients in 5 different component preparations, not including the veal stock preparation. This recipe is the poster boy for Keller's take on bistro cooking, which is technique and constant refinement by filtering, skimming, and straining. While the authors have been painstaking in translating the professional's practiced eye and nose into English, this cooking is still about constant attention to the state of the dish as it cooks, and of recognizing the right time to move from one stage to the other. It is this dish where if Bourdain did it at the French Laundry his way, he would be fired on the spot. This book is so large that it will probably be unwieldy to cook from in the

kitchen. Open, it is large than two of my cutting boards together. Still, I cannot overstate how valuable this book is to someone who loves to cook and to read about cooking. Very highly recommended.

Keller's homage to simple French bistro fare (after "The French Laundry Cookbook") wins the knock-your-chef's-hat-off prize for stunning presentation. For starters, you need to lift this oversized 6.5 pound book with both hands. Open it at random and you're likely to land on a two-page close-up of ingredients or finished presentation, or maybe Keller demonstrating technique. The recipes also spread across two pages. I used to joke that I opened Bouchon, styled after the bistros of Paris, so that I'd have a place to eat after cooking all night at the French Laundry." (his elegant white-tablecloth restaurant next door in the Napa Valley). In this book he emphasizes technique above all, and interspersed in each chapter (organized by course) are brief essays on "The importance of" the pig, brown butter, slow cooking, glazing and more. He also gives brand and tool recommendations and includes a list of sources. This may be "homey" fare, but most home cooks aren't going to caramelize the onions for their onion soup for five hours and frogs legs and stuffed duck neck aren't likely to appear at many New England tables. There is a tantalizing little section on potted foods, including a Foie Gras Terrine and Rabbit Pâté and recipes for Duck Confit and Rabbit Confit are simple, time-consuming dishes to warm up a gloomy weekend. Most of the fare is classic, traditional and inspiring. Like Boeuf Bourguignon (Braised Beef with Red Wine), or several versions of Roast Chicken, and Crepes with Chicken and Morels to use up the leftovers. Salads include Lentils Vinaigrette and Roasted Beet; among the side dishes are Macaroni Gratin and Gnocchi with Mushroom and Butternut Squash, and Desserts include Profiteroles and French Toast with Apricots. The final chapter, Basic Preparations and Techniques, is the most important, including the "building blocks" of confits, sauces, and stocks and the all-important, patient, techniques. This is a book for the home cook who enjoys spending weekends building the blocks for sumptuous weeknight fare. It also would look great on the coffee table.

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