

THE COMPLETE

Recipe Writing Guide

*Mastering Recipe Development, Writing,
Testing, Nutrition Analysis, and Food Styling*

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The Complete Recipe Writing Guide

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Introduction

You are here because we share a connection: the desire to create and document recipes that work. Perhaps you're a food professional—a chef, nutritionist, editor, cookbook author, or marketing expert. Or maybe you want to turn your love of food into a career. No matter, you are in the right place.

Over the years I've come to appreciate different styles of recipe writing. Yet I'm a purist when it comes to the ultimate goal of the written recipe:

A written recipe must be accurate, readable, and reproducible—a set of instructions that translates the act of cooking into words.

My clarity-first approach reflects a career immersed in the science of nutrition and the culinary arts. I've worked as a clinical dietitian; recipe developer, writer, editor, and tester; professional chef; food stylist; and as a television and video host. I'm also an avid home cook and mother of three—two of whom have celiac disease.

I wrote *The Complete Recipe Writing Guide* because I wanted to pay it forward. I wished I'd had a book like this early in my career, a single source of truth for developing recipes—from kitchen to plate, and finally, to publication. Today, endless information on food, health, and nutrition is only a click away. Yet much of this information is overwhelming, contradictory, and confusing at best. Nowadays, it's easy to become an “expert” simply by creating a digital presence. No education or experience is needed thanks to easy-to-use platforms, nutrition analysis software, and smartphone cameras. Don't get me wrong, there are some great food and recipe sites out there. But there are many that contain misleading or just plain inaccurate food, nutrition, and recipe information.

Writing this book, I passionately approached every topic like an investigative journalist, interviewing top industry professionals, reading research studies and



books, and attending professional conferences and webinars. I wanted to curate and share not only what I've learned over the years but also share the expertise of others. And I wanted those in the field of recipe writing to have professional standards of practice that incorporate the science of nutrition. Inside these pages, you'll learn how to develop recipes for plant-based diets, diabetes management, celiac disease, food allergies, and everything in between.

I hope you'll use *The Complete Recipe Writing Guide* to build a foundation of knowledge and expand your skill set. Once you master the principles, I encourage you to add your own personal style and creativity to the mix.

Food Is My Passion and My Profession

Food is medicine. The array of nutrients in food supports good health and can help prevent, manage, or even reverse disease. Yet, food is so much more. Food is memory. Food is cultural identity. Food is community. And, of course, food is joy. People don't eat nutrients; they eat food.

For me, food has always been the lens through which I view and understand life. I am curious about everything as it relates to food—from how it grows to its meaning and place in history. What I love about food is that there's always more to know and to experience, which no doubt explains why I've taken so many different career paths in the food industry and have sought out culinary adventures around the world. My husband and children have come to accept (and even embrace) that we'll return from our travels with stories sure to regale our friends—fried scorpions in Beijing, testicle meatballs in Arizona, or the culinary and cultural discoveries from cooking alongside local home cooks (the true experts).

Most toddlers outgrow the *why* phase of development. I never did. Even at age seven, I wanted to know why the popcorn stuck together in the popcorn balls my friend Susan's mother made. I looked through my mom's few cookbooks and found nothing. Later, I was at another friend's house flipping the pages of one of her mother's cookbooks. There I discovered the answer: Karo syrup. *WOW!* Liquid sugar. How cool. I remember reading that popcorn balls were originally made with molasses. Even as a young girl, when it came to questions about food, I could go down a rabbit hole like nobody's business.

Growing up, my grandmother Sonia's kitchen was an endless source of fascination. There I discovered pickling salt, kosher salt, and sour salt (citric acid). We only had table salt at our house. She used pickling salt to preserve the cucumbers from her garden, sour salt to balance the sweetness of her meatballs rolled in cabbage, and kosher salt for everything else—veal brisket, *kneidlach* (matzo balls), beet borscht, and chicken soup. She also loved to bake. Stashed in her kitchen drawers were bags of semisweet chocolate chips and chips I'd never seen before—butterscotch, peanut butter, white chocolate, mini chocolate. There was not only vanilla extract but also almond and mint. What could I make with these?

The truth was that my grandmother was far more interested in cooking and baking for her family than teaching me how to do it. Most of the time, her goodies just appeared. They arrived in sturdy boxes mailed from Ottumwa, Iowa, to our home in Chicago, Illinois,

filled with chocolate chip cookies, rocky road bars, *mandelbrot* (an Eastern Europe cousin of biscotti), and *hamantaschen* (three-cornered pastries filled with poppy seeds or prunes). Why did the rocky road bars remain moist and tasty long after they arrived, but the other cookies dry out so quickly?

When we visited her in Ottumwa, these same treats emerged from a coffin-sized freezer in the basement. How long could you freeze cookies and bars? Why did the spaghetti she cooked, frozen and then defrosted, change in texture? What was the liquid inside the jars of dill pickles, tomatoes, and peaches that lined the cool walls of the basement?

The magic she performed in her kitchen was hard to replicate. She didn't use measuring cups or spoons. And I never saw her use a recipe. Yet I watched intently as she sprinkled sugar in her spaghetti sauce (that's why I must have liked it!) and smeared butter on bread so the tuna sandwiches, wet with pickle juice, didn't get soggy. Years later, with the help of my brother, a documentary filmmaker, I translated her pinch-of-this and handful-of-that creations into recipes, some of which I shared with my readers when working as the test kitchen director for the *Chicago Tribune*.

It wasn't until many years later, after she'd passed away, that I found she actually did have recipes—magazine and newspaper clippings taped to 3" × 5" notecards or hand copied from the back of food packaging—stored in a recipe box. I discovered that her recipes were not *hers*, per se, but ones she'd adapted to make her own.

When I look back, the genesis of this book began when I was a girl enthralled with the mysteries inside Grandma Sonia's kitchen. It was there that I first had the urge to pull back the curtain, to discover the *whys* and *hows* behind the magical dishes and treats she lovingly prepared for us. I believe that recipes (like my grandmother's) are meant to be shared. For recipes to live on, they must be accurately recorded.

How to Use This Book

Inside these pages you'll learn how to create professional recipes from development to publication with accuracy and confidence. I use the term "publication" loosely to encompass the many ways we consume content these days, whether flipping the pages of a cookbook, reading an online publication, or watching a recipe video.

While each chapter of this book stands on its own, to get the most out of this book, read (or reference) Chapters 1 through 6 together. They contain the building blocks of recipe development with a special focus on health and wellness. If you're more experienced, simply open to the section of the book where you're looking for guidance. Be sure to take in the Quick Tips throughout the book for advice and insights from top industry professionals. Here's a quick overview of the contents:

Chapters 1 through 6: Recipe Development

With the growing interest in eating for better health, as well as rising rates of diet-related diseases, food allergies, and food intolerances, recipe developers need reliable resources. These chapters show you how to develop recipes for health and wellness, while keeping the focus on flavor, including plant-based diets; food allergies and food sensitivities; fat, sodium, and sugar modifications; celiac disease (gluten-free); and FODMAP intolerance.

Chapter 7: Recipe Writing

Learn how to translate the act of cooking food into words with clarity, consistency, and original voice. You'll find answers to questions on grammar, spelling, punctuation, and recipe writing styles.

Chapter 8: Recipe Testing

Learn the recipe testing process and how professional testers ensure a recipe can be replicated with consistent results every time. Access recipe testing forms and tips on how to use home cook recipe testers for your cookbook projects.

Chapter 9: Nutrition Analysis

There are many types of analysis options. This chapter teaches you how to evaluate and use them. You'll learn the guidelines professionals use to analyze recipes with complex ingredients and preparation methods.

Chapter 10: Food Styling, Photography, and Videos

Food photos and videos take center stage when it comes to recipes. While there are entire books written on these topics, this guide wouldn't be complete without professional secrets and tips for improving your skills in food styling, photography, and videos.

Appendixes

Turn to these helpful go-to resources when you're developing, writing, and testing recipes:

- Common ingredient equivalencies and conversions
- Recipe writing style guides
- Food safety instructions in recipes
- Understanding meat cuts for recipe development

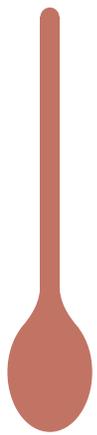
PLEASE PROVIDE FEEDBACK

Nutrition science is constantly evolving. So, too, are consumer preferences based on current values, beliefs, and culinary trends. If there is anything you believe is missing or needs further explanation or detail, please email your suggestions and feedback to me at raeanne@raeannesarazen.com. There is always the next edition!



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Chapter 1

Guidelines for Recipe Development

IN THIS CHAPTER, LEARN ABOUT:

- The key steps involved in the recipe development process
- The importance of celebrating and respecting global cuisines in recipe development
- How to develop an original recipe or adapt an existing one
- Recipe copyright and professional best practices for recipe attribution and recipe sharing

Recipe development is both an art and a science. Creativity, inspiration, and open-mindedness contribute to the art, a process that is unique to each recipe developer. The science is in the culinary techniques and strategies that are shown to be effective. While there is no one right way to develop a recipe, the objective is always the same—the final recipe should taste good and work consistently. To meet this goal, the ingredients, amounts, and instructions need to be communicated clearly. This process includes writing out the “bones” of the recipe, preparing it, making adjustments, preparing it again, and perhaps adjusting and preparing again as needed. This is true whether developing recipes for restaurants, hospitals, schools, senior living centers, cookbooks, websites, trade associations, food companies, or print or online newspapers or magazines.

Aspiring and seasoned recipe developers alike always have room to further develop their craft. Recipe developers should recognize, however, that it takes time to develop and hone recipe development skills. Through a process of constant experimenting and tasting in the kitchen combined with reading and researching about food and cooking, experienced food professionals and chefs continually improve their recipe development skills and increase the breadth and depth of their food and culinary knowledge.

The Recipe Development Process

The skill of recipe development is distinct from the ability to properly write and edit a recipe (see Chapter 7). This chapter is not intended to teach professional cooking principles and techniques; instead, it will show how to develop an original recipe or modify or adapt an existing one.

The recipe development process can be divided into three key steps, each of which will be discussed in more detail:

Step 1: Build Culinary Knowledge

Step 2: Create a Recipe Strategy

Step 3: Start the Creative Recipe Development Process

Recipe Development Step 1: Build Culinary Knowledge

Cooking, tasting, and learning about food will strengthen your culinary knowledge and expertise in flavor and technique, which are essential skills for recipe development. Build your culinary skills by spending time cooking, refining your tasting skills, and exploring culinary resources.

Cook: Master the Culinary Basics

Extensive cooking experience allows a recipe developer to know instinctively which recipe steps or culinary techniques can be shortened and changed. Cooking is based on a foundation of objective techniques we refer to as culinary rules. Culinary rules, once mastered, can be tweaked/tailored to create new recipes.

Following are some basic and essential culinary rules that every recipe developer must understand and apply.

Kitchen equipment Know which knives, pieces of cookware, appliances, or tools are appropriate for which kitchen tasks.

Heat and foods Understand what happens to different foods when they are heated in various ways—the relationship and effects of heat and heat transfer. For example, the various forms of heat (roasting, baking, grilling, frying, searing, conduction, convection, radiation, microwaving, and steaming) cause proteins to coagulate, starches to gelatinize, sugars to caramelize, water to evaporate, or fat to melt.

Cooking methods Recognize why different cooking methods are chosen for different types of foods and choosing the technique that will best capture a food's flavors. Methods include moist heat (poaching, simmering, blanching, boiling, steaming, or braising), dry heat (roasting, baking, broiling, grilling, cooking on a griddle, or air frying), dry heat using fat (sautéing, panfrying, or deep-frying), and microwaving.

Principles of seasoning and flavoring Understand when to season and add flavor to heighten the natural

flavors of the foods being cooked, and the common seasonings (salt, pepper, acids) and flavoring ingredients (fats, herbs and spices).

Sanitation and food safety Know the rules of proper food handling and storage as well as cleaning and sanitizing procedures.

Culinary knowledge for recipe development can be acquired in many ways: attending culinary school, working in professional kitchens or alongside other food professionals, or becoming self-taught with cookbooks and recipe trial and error. Various cookbooks or culinary textbooks can provide the why, the how, or the food science behind cooking, as well as information on fundamental techniques (see **Recipe Development Resources** on page 23). Major food publications invest in test kitchens, so their food information is quite reliable, and their recipes deliver consistent results. Reading and trying tested recipes allows a recipe developer to experience the expertise of other professionals, assess what works, and learn their own preferences for cooking styles.

A mix of curiosity, interest in experimentation, and a desire to perfect basic culinary techniques through repetition and refine skills over time will form the foundation needed for a career as a recipe developer. Keep in mind that recipes must align with the cooking skills of the target audience; this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 on recipe writing.

Taste: Develop Your Palate

You will become a better cook and recipe developer by experimenting with flavor combinations, learning how to season foods—especially with salt—and seizing every opportunity to taste foods. Over time, it will become clear when an ingredient can stand on its own and when to add some flavor to enhance the dish. Food that tastes “just okay” may be underseasoned or it may be the choice of ingredients or the cooking method.

Some recipe developers follow the rule of tasting at the start of cooking, again when halfway through, and then again at the end. Others taste and adjust each time an ingredient is added if it is appropriate

CULINARY KNOWLEDGE FOR RECIPE DEVELOPERS

Following are a few examples of the culinary knowledge recipe developers should acquire.

Stocks, sauces, and soups	Learn techniques for preparing their foundations (e.g., roux or gravy)
Meats*	Get familiar with the basic cuts, know which cooking methods to use for each, and how to determine doneness
Poultry	Understand how to cook light versus dark meat and determine doneness
Fish and shellfish	Recognize the common varieties and the few basic cuts for fish, select appropriate cooking methods, and determine doneness
Vegetables	Understand methods of preparation; how to control texture, flavor, and color
Beans, peas, lentils, and soy products	Identify the varieties and types and learn different techniques for preparation
Pasta, rice, and other grains**	Identify the types and characteristics of each when cooking
Salads and salad dressings	Identify the types of salad greens available (e.g., endive, butter, frisée) and the method and preparation of various types of salads and dressings (e.g., vinaigrette, emulsified, or mayonnaise based)
Breads, desserts, and other baked goods	Learn the principles of baking, including proper measurement or weighing of ingredients and the function of key ingredients, such as flour, fat, sugar, eggs, liquids, and leavening agents

* See the appendix **Understanding Meat Cuts for Recipe Development** on page 381 for more information.

** See **Guide to Cooking Whole Grains** on pages 78 and 79 for more information.

and safe. Determining seasoning, especially with salt, is a matter of personal taste. Seasoning can turn a dish that tastes bland and flat into something special.

Your palate will become more discerning and developed as you taste foods while cooking. By tasting, you learn when a dish needs more seasoning (e.g., salt to enhance the flavor, or herbs, spices, or pepper to add flavor) or how and when to balance flavors by adding an acidic ingredient (e.g., lemon juice, wine, vinegar, Parmesan cheese, tomato, or Dijon mustard) that contributes a sour flavor or puckery sharpness (the culinary description for which is brightness).

The creative process of recipe development should consider all factors that influence flavor: taste, aroma, mouthfeel, and the sensory stimulation of food. How food is experienced is a fusion of all these factors.

Aroma

Aroma is the odor perceived when inhaling through the nose. The senses of smell and taste work together to

influence perception of flavor. Olfactory cells located at the ends of the nasal passages detect the aromas of foods, and the information gathered by these cells is also relayed to the mouth via a process called olfactory referral. The sense of smell is believed to be responsible for 75% to 95% or more of the sense of taste. You can test this by plugging your nose while eating: an inability to detect the aroma of foods will directly influence your ability to taste them. Chefs often add fresh herbs, spices, citrus zest, or other aromatic ingredients to enhance the aroma of a dish because doing so also enhances the dish's flavor.

Mouthfeel

The temperature and texture perceived while eating—the mouthfeel of food—stimulates sensory cells located alongside taste cells and activates the perceived qualities of enjoyment, such as heat, spiciness, creaminess, crunchiness, and crispness.

FIVE TASTE SENSATIONS

Taste buds, located on the tongue and roof of the mouth, respond to the five basic taste sensations of sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and umami. When we eat, our taste buds become activated, and we perceive the flavors of these types of foods and ingredients.

Taste	Common foods	Culinary uses
Sweet	 sugar, honey, jams, jellies, syrups	mellows acidic or bitter tastes
Salty	 salt, soy sauce, miso	enhances flavor, counteracts bitterness, accentuates sweetness
Sour	 lemon, lime, and orange juices; tomatoes; yogurt; sour cream; vinegars	adds brightness, reduces saltiness, balances spiciness, counterbalances sweetness
Bitter	 cocoa, coffee, beer, and various greens, including kale, endive, radicchio, spinach	provides color, complexity, depth
Umami	 anchovies, Parmesan cheese, fish sauce, miso, seaweed, mushrooms, tomatoes, cured meats (bacon)	adds savory sensation

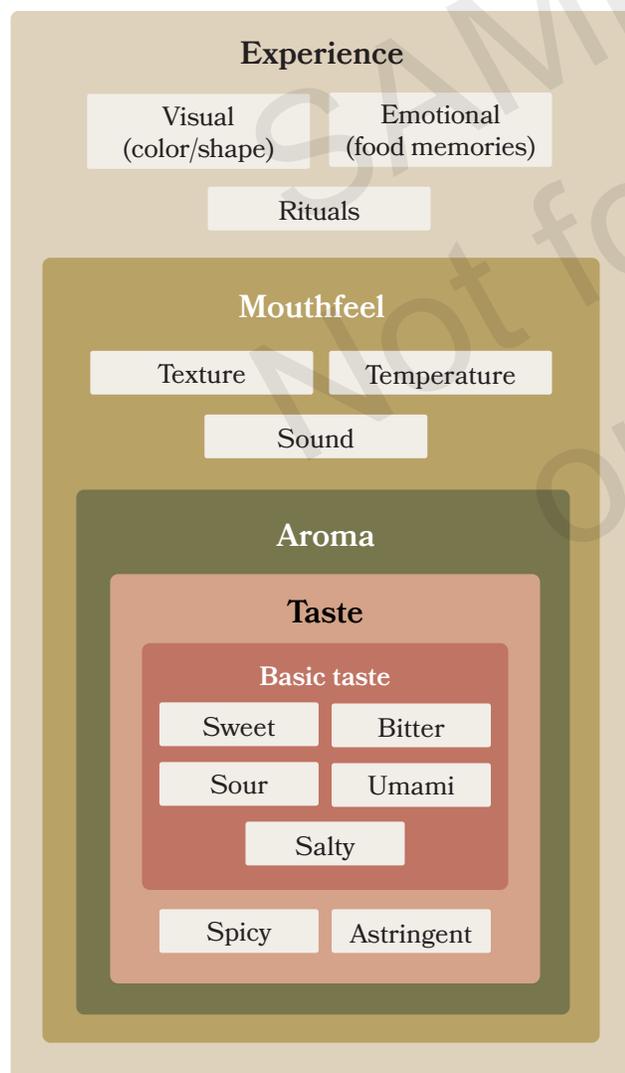
Experience

The experience of eating includes aspects of the visual (“eating with your eyes”) and emotional (evoking memories of food) as well as the rituals of eating. These characteristics enhance a food’s palatability and enjoyment.

Quick Tip

“When I develop recipes, I always look for ways to create what I call the Big Taste . . . food that is deeply satisfying, and that appeals to all the senses. I like dishes that leave their flavor with me, whose tastes and aromas I will never forget.” —Paula Wolfert, *Paula Wolfert’s World of Food*

Factors That Influence Flavor



Read: Expand Your Food Knowledge

Recipe developers can expand their culinary knowledge and improve their kitchen skills by reading books about food—cookbooks, food and ingredient reference books, food science books, cultural history books, and food memoirs—and by watching food media, including online cooking tutorials, cooking shows, and food-themed movies and documentaries. In addition to the obvious benefits of skill improvement, acquiring culinary knowledge through reading and visual media can inspire developers to push the traditional boundaries of their culinary knowledge base. These resources can teach you about food and cooking and can serve as a source of wisdom. Think of them as a starting point for gathering recipe ideas from other experts and gaining a better understanding of how successful recipe developers think. (See **Recipe Development Resources** on page 23 for examples of reference books.)

While reading about food and watching food media provides wonderful opportunities to learn, eating in restaurants and traveling to places with different culinary styles and traditions puts eating and food in the context of experiential learning about the flavors, ingredients, and techniques of a specific region. When traveling, try to learn about the local cuisine’s traditional preparation methods not only by eating at restaurants but also by cooking alongside the people who live there. Food-themed travel or tours led by chefs or local food experts offer a blend of cultural and culinary knowledge that can yield taste memories and inspiration for future recipe development.

Recipe Development Notes

To help generate ideas for future recipe development projects, create your own system of organizing your food and recipe notes. Some professionals, many of whom say they are always thinking about food, find it helpful to store future ideas for recipe development projects on their smartphones or in notebooks. Consider keeping notes about interesting ingredient combinations, flavors, techniques, and food presentations so you can reference them when brainstorming new recipe ideas.

Recipe ideas or general thoughts about food may arise after enjoying a great meal, visiting a market while on a trip, eating at a friend’s house or a new

restaurant, seeing something new at a trade show or conference, or even dreaming about a new recipe. Any experience might inspire a food idea or a memory, so always be prepared to write them down. Take and attach pictures, if possible, to complement your notes and help jog your memory.

A recipe development notebook can be maintained in various ways: for example, using a note-taking, task management, or organizational smartphone app (e.g., the Notes app), or recording in a spreadsheet or paper notebook. Regardless of how you keep food notes, they can be useful to reference when you need recipe development inspiration at a later time.

ORGANIZE RECIPE DEVELOPMENT IDEAS

Following are examples of ways to organize and document your food and recipe ideas to more easily reference them for future recipe development projects.

By Season

(Seasonal ingredients and dish ideas)

Fall: molasses, maple syrup, pecans, pumpkin, figs, apples, brisket, pork

Dish idea: grilled pork chops with maple butter and pickled apples

Spring: asparagus, peas, spinach, eggs, lamb

Dish idea: asparagus and pea frittata

Summer: raspberries, blueberries, watermelon, corn, broccoli

Dish idea: watermelon salad (watermelon, cucumber, corn, and feta cheese)

Winter: beans, butternut squash, celeriac, pomegranates, barley

Dish idea: Bean stew with barley and winter squash

By Culture or Region

(Ideas for ingredient combinations and cooking methods)

Spain/Mediterranean:

Squid, paprika, and olive oil

Asparagus, orange, and Ibérico ham

Sautéed breadcrumbs, garlic, chorizo, roasted pepper, and poached egg

North African or Moroccan:

Chickpea, eggplant, couscous, lentils, and mint (cold salad)

Chicken, harissa, almonds, and dates (braised)

Roasted lamb, coriander, lime, and mayonnaise

Vietnamese:

Tofu, pickled carrots, rock sugar, fish sauce, lemongrass, chili, and mint

Chicken, shrimp paste, red Thai chili, fried shallots, cinnamon, and lime

By Recipe Category

Appetizers or starters

Soups

Eggs

Main dish: vegetarian, fish, seafood, beef, pork, and poultry

Salads

Vegetables

Pastas

Sweets

Breads

Beverages

By Meal, Recipe Type, or Occasion

Breakfast

Lunch

Dinner

Snacks

Desserts

Fast/easy

Healthy

Special occasion/holiday



Recipe Development

Step 2: Create a Recipe Strategy

Mastering the culinary basics, developing your palate, and committing to lifelong culinary learning through reading and experimenting with food will enhance your recipe development skills. With this foundational culinary knowledge, you can move on to step two—the recipe strategy. The recipe strategy involves thinking through the objectives of the recipe and the profile of its intended audience: essentially, the who, what, when, where, and why of the recipe. Getting these questions answered first will help guide your recipe's content.

First, understand the audience and their needs—including their problems and frustrations, particularly the ones that a recipe developer can solve. Recipe success is more than just a summary of clicks, shares, and page views. **Rather, the end goal of a recipe, whether it's for a print or digital publication, social media platform, or food company, is that it must work as written, taste good, look appealing, and provide replicable results.** After preparing the recipe, the end user should feel successful as a cook.

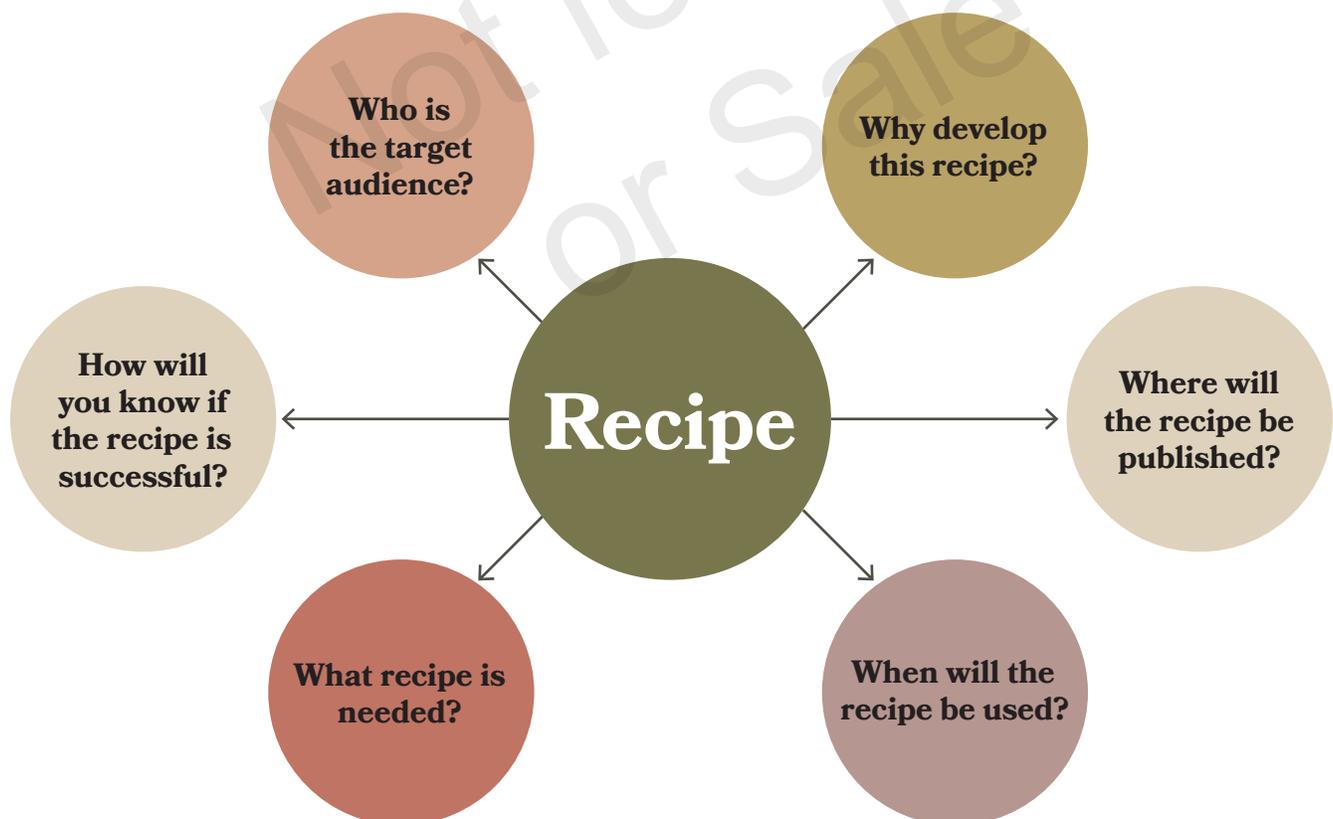
A professional recipe developer must strive to be a trusted resource whom cooks can count on.

A recipe strategy should answer the following questions:

- **Who** is the target audience?
- **What** recipe is needed?
- **When** will the recipe be used?
- **Where** will the recipe be published?
- **Why** develop this recipe?
- **How** will you know if the recipe is successful?

The Target Audience

Recipes are like formulas, with instructions that tell a story using the active voice. When creating a recipe strategy, it is best to start by identifying the people who will most likely prepare the recipe: its target audience. Clearly defining the target audience helps the recipe developer meet their interests and needs. Today, this step is more important than ever before, since consumers can access hundreds of recipes a day through a variety of platforms but may only choose to use one or two.



If a recipe is being developed for a food company or food association, it's likely that they will have their own research and data on the target audience. Brands are tightly bound to their understanding of their customers' needs, and any recipe developed for a brand must adhere to that understanding. A recipe developer should ask the client for as much audience data and product insights as they can provide. If audience data is unavailable, the recipe developer should personalize the ideal cook as much as possible by visualizing what the ideal cook will do with, think about, and want from the recipe.

Begin by identifying and exploring audience demographics and the various lifestyle and behavioral characteristics of the target group. Defining these demographics and behavioral traits is critical. Developing a recipe for a family with young children is very different from developing a recipe for a retired couple, just as developing a recipe for someone with good access to many quality ingredients is different from developing a recipe for someone on a strict budget or who lives in an area with limited food access. A clear understanding of the target audience is critical to the recipe strategy.

Demographics

Consider the following factors first when establishing the basic profile of the target audience:

- age
- gender
- cultural background
- where they live (country, region, whether they live in cities or rural areas)
- education level
- estimated income level
- household size
- age of household members

Lifestyle and Behavioral Characteristics

Next, answer the following questions to further narrow or segment the recipe's audience.

What is the ideal cook's culinary skill level? For example, do they understand more esoteric culinary terms (supreme an orange, julienne a vegetable)? How much detail should be included in the recipe's instructions?

Quick Tip

“Start with a focal ingredient—everything needs to go with every other ingredient/ flavor component. If it doesn't work with everything, it cannot be part of the flavor equation.”

—Grant Achatz, world-renowned chef and restaurateur, on “flavor bouncing” and food pairing (YouTube, 2015)

What type of equipment will the ideal cook have on hand? For example, are they likely to own a blender to puree a soup or make a frozen smoothie? Do they own specialized pans, such as a popover pan or a roasting pan with a rack?

What measurement system is used by your audience? Does your audience understand and use metric (kilograms, grams, milliliters) or US customary measures (pounds, ounces, cups, tablespoons, teaspoons) or both?

What are the ideal cook's shopping habits? Does the ideal cook have easy access to a well-stocked grocery store? Do they shop daily or biweekly, or do they make weekly visits to the grocery store?

When will the recipe be prepared? Is the recipe intended to be made on an average weeknight or is it a prep-heavy recipe intended for a weekend or a special occasion when the cook would have more time?

What is the availability or accessibility of the ingredients of the recipe? Are there cost considerations when choosing ingredients?

Is the recipe trying to solve a consumer challenge? For example, is it making dinner at the end of a workday in 20 minutes or less? Or creating a lunch item that can be eaten using one hand?

Does the audience have dietary restrictions? Does the recipe need to meet different dietary requirements for each family member?

RECIPE CONSIDERATIONS FOR AN AUDIENCE WITH LIMITED COOKING EXPERIENCE

Consider the following factors:

- Use basic cooking equipment and appliances.
- Make sure recipes are easy to read and follow.
- Limit the number of ingredients—for example, five or fewer.
- Limit the total preparation time to 20 or fewer minutes, with the finished dish ready and on the table within 30 to 40 minutes.
- Whenever possible, try to use the entire amount of an ingredient in the package specified in order to prevent waste, such as 1 (14.5-ounce) can chicken broth instead of 1¼ cups.
- Ensure that the recipe is flexible: it should be able to accommodate fresh, frozen, or canned versions of the ingredients and provide practical suggestions, including easy substitutions (e.g., bouillon cubes for canned broth).
- Include tips and additional educational information when appropriate.
- Include information on handwashing and food safety.
- Offer suggestions on what parts of the recipe can be made ahead of time or how leftovers can be used in a second meal.
- Provide general nutrition information in the recipe's headnote.



The Purpose of a Recipe

Just like other forms of communication, recipes convey a message by fulfilling a specific purpose for an audience, publisher, or company. A recipe's primary purpose might be to inspire action on the part of the audience—eating more vegetables, buying a specific product or appliance used in the recipe, or supporting marketing goals on social media. Secondary purposes or goals could include a desire on the part of a publisher or company to create a new audience or to encourage its existing audience to seek out other content on a website or on social media.

Before starting a recipe development project, consider the what, why, when, and where of the recipe. Finding the answers to these questions will help clarify the recipe's purpose. If the client is a food company or restaurant, many of these answers can be found on their media outlets or in their publications. Do your own research to ensure you are familiar with their goals.

What?

What features of the recipe may be most appealing to the target audience?

Should the number of ingredients in the recipe be limited?

Does the recipe need to meet certain nutrient criteria for a specific audience?

Should the cook use a specific piece of equipment (e.g., a handheld blender) or technique (e.g., a no-bake pie recipe)?

Should this recipe showcase a particular ingredient or product? If it's a brand recipe, what image, budget, and branding guidelines must be followed? How will the recipe showcase the brand's promise or message?

How visually appealing is the end product? Depending on how the recipe will be used, the accompanying photo of the dish may be just as important as the dish's flavor.

How will this recipe differentiate itself from others?

Why?

Should the recipe convey a feeling or emotion, such as love, comfort, warmth, fun, or joy?

Should the recipe solve a problem for its audience?

Will the recipe convey a message or educate its audience about a specific culture, ingredient, family tradition, cooking technique, or any other important factor?

Should the recipe tell a story?

Will the recipe highlight a new food trend, regional foodway, or seasonal ingredient?

When?

When will the audience use the recipe? Think through the consumer's entire experience with the recipe, from when and how the consumer finds the recipe on through to shopping, prepping, cooking, eating, and cleanup. Recipes can be brand ambassadors that help consumers experience, taste, and buy into a brand's message.

When will the finished recipe be served? Will it be served at a picnic, a potluck, an elegant or casual dinner party, or a holiday gathering? This may alter certain ingredient and cooking method choices.

Where?

Where will the recipe be available once it is complete? Will it exist digitally or in print to be used by employees in food service; on a food company's website; on a food product package; in a consumer brochure; in an online or print magazine or newspaper; or in a cookbook, an email newsletter, or on social media? The number of possible platforms for where a recipe can exist continues to grow, and different platforms have different space constraints and word count limits. If the platform includes food photography and video capabilities, the space devoted to the recipe may be affected as well.

MEASURING RECIPE SUCCESS

How will you know if a recipe is successful? A key “ingredient” often missing in recipe development is follow-up with the target audience to determine both whether the recipe ends up being used and if so, the audience's reactions to the recipe in terms of its taste, cost to prepare, and ease of preparation. Ask a publisher, food company, or foodservice establishment if they have data on their most popular and most-requested recipes. It may be nearly impossible to measure a recipe's impact on sales of a specific product featured, but recipe developers can assess a recipe's performance in a variety of ways, including consumer engagement with the recipe (including clicks, likes, and ratings), posts about the recipe, comments, or inquiries.



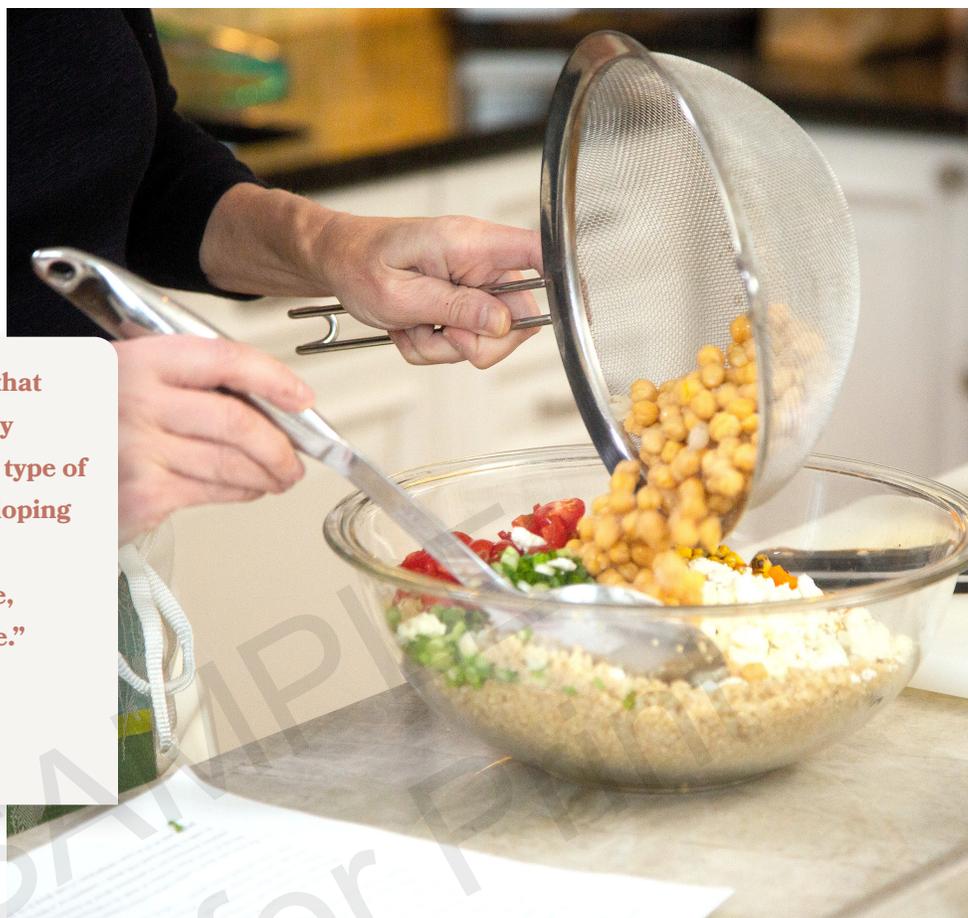
Quick Tip

“When I work on branded partnership recipes, I like to connect with the test kitchen professional to understand their product requirements before getting in the kitchen to avoid any misses. And when I present recipe concepts to the brand teams, my recommendation is to include trend insights, consumer research insights, the product's prominent role in the recipe, what consumer solutions it offers (such as lifestyle or convenience), and more. Marketing wants their budgets to go toward hardworking content.” —Mary Margaret Sinnema, food content and innovation consultant

Quick Tip

“I try to create a recipe that would be used frequently versus a once-in-a-while type of recipe. My goal for developing recipes: they should be appealing, approachable, accurate, and achievable.”

—Rosemary Mark, recipe developer and culinary consultant



STAYING ON TOP OF CONSUMER FOOD TRENDS

Following consumer food trends can help a recipe developer pitch ideas, gain a better understanding of a recipe's intended audience, or provide a rationale for a specific recipe.

- Monitor companies and associations that perform market research and gather industry insights, data analytics, and trend reports on food and beverage; restaurants and food service; food retail; and consumer eating and drinking behavior. (Examples include Circana, SPINS, Data Essentials, Hartman Group, Deloitte, McKinsey & Company, Food Genius, Mintel Food and Drink/Mintel Menu Insights, Food Navigator, Sterling Rice Group Culinary Trends, and the National Restaurant Association.)
- Read blogs and other online media outlets (e.g., Eater's Trends section, Food52, Kitchn, Allrecipes' Measuring Cup Consumer Trends Report).
- Scan online platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest trends, Pinterest100.com (annual report), Substack (for food e-newsletters), Google Analytics, or Google Trends.
- Customize social media feeds so they display trending topics. (Search trend hashtags like #foodtrends or #trendyfoods.)
- Read trade journals, trade newsletters, cookbooks, and consumer magazines.
- Eat out at local and out-of-town restaurants.
- Become a keen observer of other people and their eating habits.

Recipe Development Step 3: The Creative Process

From Vision to Revision to Final Recipe

The creative process of recipe development involves taking your vision on through to revision and ultimately to the creation of the final recipe. It can begin once the recipe's target audience and purpose have been clearly defined and the platform where the recipe will appear has been identified. As the recipe developer, you are what makes the next step in the recipe development process unique—your culinary skills and kitchen experience, the books you like to reference, your food notes on ingredients and flavor combinations, and your personal taste memories.

No recipe developer follows the exact same creative process every time, so documenting the “art” of a successful recipe developer's process is impossible. However, certain approaches and strategies commonly used by a variety of food professionals—from home economists and chefs to test kitchen professionals—can serve as a good start.

Brainstorm and Research

The brainstorming and research process of recipe development can start in a variety of ways. Here are some examples:

- Jot down recipe ideas while referencing your food notes or taste memories of a recent amazing dish. Start with a group of written ideas and choose one or two to focus on, including tweaking ingredients and cooking methods. Of course, there are endless flavor combinations to experiment with in the kitchen, but consider changing up the technique, presentation, temperature, texture, or any combination of these elements when brainstorming a new recipe.
- Turn to books for reference while researching or when generating new recipe ideas. Begin by researching what has already been published on the subject, using books as a jumping-off point.

Quick Tip

“I start brainstorming in my head, relying upon my experience cooking and tasting food. But I also refer back to and get ideas from my over 2,000 recipes that are stored on my computer. Why completely reinvent the wheel every time?” —Jill Silverman Hough, cookbook author and recipe developer

Just be sure that your own personal stamp goes into the final recipe. Read more about copyright law pertaining to recipes on page 20.

- Consider creating a chart of different existing versions of the same recipe so that you can compare them side by side. While this process is time-consuming, it can be especially helpful when learning about recipes from unfamiliar cultures. The process can help inform recipe development because it allows you to clearly see the different authentic ingredients and techniques used in each version. Taking the process a step further and testing and tasting each version is a good opportunity to note the strengths, weaknesses, similarities, and differences of each.
- Alternatively, make notes about the differences among recipes, including variations in ingredient amounts, techniques, and temperatures, in one version of the recipe, using different colors of text or ink to highlight the differences.
- Read about different cuisines and create a completely unique blend of your own. Consider merging different flavors, ingredients, and cooking techniques when creating a new recipe, and use its headnote to describe and acknowledge any cultural inspirations. Read more about avoiding cultural appropriation on page 15.
- Start with a main ingredient and pair it with three to four complementary flavor profiles. To avoid confusing the palate with too many competing flavors, think about flavor balance, color, and texture. Next, move on to the cooking technique and put your own spin on it.



Quick Tip

“For help when developing a recipe, read dozens of recipes, take careful notes, spend time comparing ratios, techniques, and temperatures. Then, write out your own recipe, test it, and retest it. If one particular recipe influenced you—give proper credit. If not, there is no need to credit anyone specifically.” —Kathryn Pauline, cardamomandtea.com recipe blogger and cookbook author

- When adapting an existing recipe, first understand how the recipe is traditionally prepared and where there may be opportunity to experiment and improvise. A methodical approach could involve using different ingredients, perhaps to avoid a food allergen, or an alternative cooking technique or serving method. Just be sure to rename the final recipe appropriately, since removing or substituting key or authentic ingredients in a traditional dish makes it no longer that dish.
- Finally, be sure to file away the recipe ideas that don't make the cut, as they may help inspire future recipes.



Write Down the Recipe

Regardless of which brainstorming and research approach you choose, all of your ideas, inspirations, and thoughts should be translated to a written form. Sit down in front of a blank computer screen or piece of paper and create a list of ingredients and general instructions. This step gives you a framework or outline to begin testing in the kitchen. Changes to this draft are likely once testing begins (see Chapter 8). For example, it might become clear that the recipe needs more vegetables, more acid, or a contrasting textural ingredient, but writing it down provides a record where you can add notes and ideas. It's a starting place.

Experiment With the Recipe

Don't be afraid to mess up. A recipe developer does not always know whether new flavor combinations will work together without tasting them or whether a different cooking method will turn out without testing it. Sometimes a new recipe will work fairly well as planned, and many times the draft recipe leads the recipe developer down a whole new creative path.

Quick Tip

“Be familiar with on-trend appliances, such as standard and electric pressure cookers, slow cookers, grills (both electric and gas), and air fryers. Many clients will ask for recipes specific to certain appliances.”

—Rick Rodgers, cookbook author and recipe developer

Quick Tip

“A food professional has a recipe base that can and should be repurposed because each use generates income. I try to use a recipe three times during the course of its life in various venues, changing the recipe up each time.”

—Rick Rodgers, cookbook author and recipe developer

Along the way, take time to taste for flavor, balance, and texture and document the steps during each stage of the recipe process. Be sure to write down your notes or take photos or record (on video or audio) observations at different stages of the cooking process. Always keep in mind the visual image of the recipe and how it will photograph.

Celebrate and Respect Global Cuisines

In recipe development, the lines between cultural appreciation and appropriation can become blurred. *Cultural appropriation* is the act of taking or using elements from another culture without showing an understanding of and respect for the culture, especially when it leads to personal gain or profit. Cultural appropriation may be evident anywhere that recipes and food are found.

Ken Albala, a food historian and professor of history at the University of the Pacific, advises that this does not imply that individuals should only cook or develop recipes from their own heritage, but it does mean that research, respect, and sensitivity should be evident along with providing cultural context and source attribution. See **Authenticity in Cooking: Avoiding Cultural Appropriation** for more on how to avoid cultural appropriation in recipe development.

Quick Tip

“When you’re creating in the kitchen, the starting point for a dish or a menu can be literally anything. It can begin with the seasonal availability of a particular ingredient—vegetable, fruit, meat, or seafood—or even a cooking style, such as grilling in the summer or braising in the winter. It can begin with a craving or the flavors of a particular country or region: garlic and herbs of Provence, or the garlic and ginger of Asia. Or it can begin with simple curiosity, the urge to experiment with a new ingredient or technique.”—Karen Page and Andrew Dornenburg, authors of *The Flavor Bible: The Essential Guide to Culinary Creativity and Culinary Genius, Based on the Wisdom of America’s Most Imaginative Chefs*

AUTHENTICITY IN COOKING: AVOIDING CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

When developing a recipe that features or stems from a different culture, be as honest and transparent as possible. Provide the audience with the recipe’s origin story, if possible, to authenticate your relationship to and understanding of its heritage. The more idiosyncratic the story is, the better. Descriptive language can quickly shift from archetypal to stereotypical, so be careful. There are bound to be many different versions of a recipe, so avoid making assertions about the one best way to do something. The best advice is to keep it professional and respectful. In most cases, recipes are in the public domain and do not belong to any one individual, but if you find a recipe or idea in a favorite cultural cookbook, tell the audience about it. Tell a story—was it fun, exciting, intimidating? If so, how and why? Invite an insider from the culture—what anthropologists refer to as a person with an emic view—to dialogue, offer advice, and consult with you on the recipe. The recipe headnote is the

perfect place to share how a classic recipe for a dish may have inspired your own version. Explain the choices you made with the recipe’s technique and ingredients and where your innovative recipe veers from traditional versions. This might include substitutions for ingredients that are not readily available in the US, thus making it different (but avoid language that suggests you “cleaned up,” “improved,” or “upscaled” the recipe). Recipe developers whose creations are inspired by lesser-known dishes should be straightforward about their origins and never claim that their versions are exact replicas.

—Krishnendu Ray, PhD, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Nutrition and Food Studies at New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development



RECIPE DEVELOPMENT: AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS

My Inspiration

After enjoying an incredibly simple side dish at an Italian restaurant—bagna cauda served with crusty bread—I write down the ingredients in the dish, according to the server: olive oil, anchovies, and garlic. I read more about bagna cauda and decide to create a pasta dish using the flavors from this traditional Italian dipping sauce as the base.

The idea starts in my head, first by thinking about a dish called aglio e olio that I make often for my family. It's convenient because the ingredients—olive oil, garlic, salt, pasta, and Parmesan cheese—are always in my pantry or refrigerator.

I think of how I've used anchovies before—maybe one or two, just to add some depth to a dish—but as I reference my taste memory of the dipping sauce, I recall how prominent the anchovy and lemon flavors were.

My Brainstorming Process

I start brainstorming ingredients and making food notes about the potential ingredients for my new pasta dish. Some ingredients (and notes about them) that come to mind based on my own preferences and consideration of a complementary flavor profile include:

- Olive oil, garlic, anchovies (traditional ingredients in bagna cauda)
- Unsalted butter (for some additional richness and a different fat source)
- Crushed red pepper (for heat—also used in aglio e olio)
- Capers or olives (might provide too much saltiness?)
- Lemon juice (for acid)
- Sherry vinegar (for mellow acid)
- Pasta types: spaghetti, bucatini
- Roasted cauliflower and roasted fennel (for a caramelized flavor)
- Cheeses: Parmesan, feta, burrata, Manchego
- Toasted slivered almonds or toasted breadcrumbs (for texture)
- Chopped parsley, mint, basil, rosemary (for color and flavor)

After this step, I might peruse some Italian cookbooks to get more inspiration about ingredients and techniques. Finally, I may again reference my taste memories and reread my brainstorming notes.

Instead of using just olive oil, as is traditional for bagna cauda, I decide to use a combination of butter and olive oil and also add some fresh lemon juice and crushed red pepper. I want to make it my own and add elements that I like—roasted vegetables and Parmesan cheese. Many other additions could be made, but I decide to keep my recipe fairly simple and limit the number of ingredients.

Following is the first draft of the new recipe, with approximate ingredient amounts, short recipe instructions, and some notes I made along the way.

Pasta with Garlic, Anchovies, and Roasted Cauliflower

Draft version #1

2 to 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 to 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 to 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
3 to 6 anchovies
½ to 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper
Juice from 1 to 2 fresh lemons
1 head cauliflower, cut into bite-sized pieces
(2 pounds?) (try other versions with fennel and/or escarole)
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
Salt
1 pound spaghetti
¼ to ⅓ cup chopped fresh herbs mint, basil, and parsley (or just use one?)
¼ to ¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese

1. Combine the anchovies, olive oil, butter, lemon juice, garlic, and red pepper flakes in saucepan; simmer mixture (or write recipe with bagna cauda left over to use for other dishes?).
2. Toss cauliflower with oil and salt. Roast at 425° F.
3. Cook pasta until al dente. Reserve some pasta cooking water.
4. Add cauliflower to the garlic and anchovy mixture. Add cooked pasta; pasta water as needed. Toss with fresh herbs and Parmesan cheese.

After testing this recipe several times, I make some small changes. I am precise and disciplined at this phase, making sure to translate changes to the written recipe. The recipe is finished once I know it's reproducible in anyone's kitchen. I finalize

recipe edits using specific ingredient amounts, and I write the recipe headnote and instructions in my own style and voice. Read more about headnote writing in Chapter 7.

Here is the finished recipe:

Pasta with Garlic, Anchovies, and Roasted Cauliflower

By Raeanne Sarazen, MA, RDN

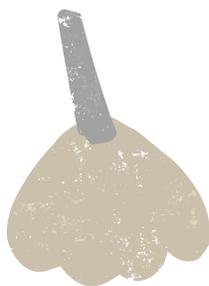
This pasta dish is inspired by bagna cauda, a hot dipping sauce made with anchovies and garlic and served with vegetables or crusty bread, often as part of a traditional appetizer in Italian American households who celebrate “The Feast of the Seven Fishes” on Christmas Eve. In my home, it inspires a quick weeknight meal tossed with pasta. This recipe won't take long to make, but if you want to get a future dinner on the table even faster, double or triple the sauce and store it in the refrigerator to use later. It's one less dish you'll need to wash on a busy weeknight!

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

1 head cauliflower (about 1½ pounds), trimmed and cut into bite-sized pieces (3 to 4 cups)
4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided use
½ teaspoon kosher salt, plus more for pasta cooking water
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
Juice of 1 fresh lemon (about 2 tablespoons)
5 anchovy fillets
3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1 pound spaghetti
½ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
⅓ cup chopped fresh basil
⅓ cup chopped fresh parsley



1. Heat the oven to 425° F. Line a baking sheet with nonstick aluminum foil (this prevents sticking, and also helps the cleanup).
2. On the baking sheet, toss the cauliflower with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and the salt. Roast, turning the florets once, until tender and caramelized a bit on the edges, about 30 minutes. Remove from the oven and set the cauliflower aside.
3. While the cauliflower is roasting, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil, the butter, lemon juice, anchovies, garlic, and red pepper flakes in a small saucepan over low heat; cook, stirring with a wooden spoon, until the anchovies dissolve, about 2 minutes. Reduce the heat to the lowest setting and let the mixture simmer for about 10 minutes while flavors meld.
4. While the sauce is cooking, bring a large pot of water to a boil. Salt the water generously—about 1 tablespoon or more (it's not too much salt!). Add the pasta and cook according to package directions until al dente. Remove 1 cup of the starchy pasta cooking water and set aside. Drain the pasta and return to the pot.
5. Stir the cauliflower and garlic sauce into the pasta and mix to combine. Add the Parmigiano-Reggiano and enough of the reserved pasta water to moisten the pasta slightly and toss to coat the pasta with sauce. Add the basil and parsley and toss to combine. Serve immediately.

Notes: *It's an extra step, but well worth it to warm your bowls or plates in the turned-off oven that is still warm from roasting the cauliflower. Just set them in the warm oven for 10 to 15 minutes before serving the pasta.*

Use anchovies straight from the can or jar—any brand works equally well in this recipe. Store opened anchovies in a tightly sealed container in the refrigerator for up to 2 months. Alternatively, in a pinch, you can use 1 to 1½ teaspoons anchovy paste, but I prefer the fresher, less salty, and more complex flavor of the whole, canned anchovies.

Nutrition per serving (based on 4 servings): 680 calories, 26 grams fat, 8 grams saturated fat, 1,010 milligrams sodium (analysis includes salt in pasta cooking water), 92 grams carbohydrate, 7 grams fiber, 4 grams total sugar, 22 grams protein

RECIPE YIELD CONVERSION

Using a conversion factor is a common method for adjusting recipes to increase or decrease the yield (or number of servings) or change the serving size. The conversion factor is calculated by dividing the recipe's desired yield by the original yield. Once the factor has been determined, the recipe developer multiplies the quantity of each ingredient in the original recipe by that number.

$$\frac{\text{desired yield (quantity of servings needed)}}{\text{original yield (original quantity of servings)}} = \text{conversion factor}$$

$$\text{conversion factor} \times \text{original ingredient quantity} = \text{new ingredient quantity}$$

Example 1: Calculate conversion factor to change recipe yield from 25 servings to 60 servings

First, obtain the conversion factor:

$$60 \text{ servings} \div 25 \text{ servings} = \text{a conversion factor of } 2.4$$

Next, multiply the quantity of each ingredient in the original recipe by the conversion factor.

Example 2: Calculate conversion factor to change yield and serving size from 10 (4-ounce) servings to 20 (5-ounce servings)

First, calculate the total yield for the original and desired amounts:

$$\text{Original: } 10 \times 4\text{-ounce serving} = 40 \text{ ounces}$$

$$\text{Desired: } 20 \times 5\text{-ounce serving} = 100 \text{ ounces}$$

Next, divide the desired yield by the original yield.

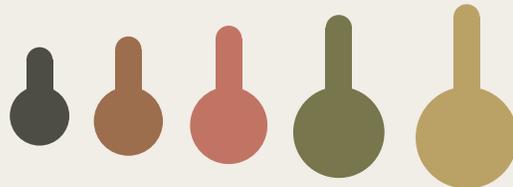
$$100 \text{ ounces} \div 40 \text{ ounces} = \text{a conversion factor of } 2.5$$

Last, multiply the quantity of each ingredient in the original recipe by the conversion factor.

Recipe Conversion Tips

- For more accuracy, convert original ingredient quantities from volume to weight measurements whenever possible.
- After multiplying an ingredient's quantity in the original recipe by the conversion factor, the total quantity's unit of measure may need to be adjusted (e.g., teaspoons to tablespoons or ounces to pounds).
- When scaling recipes—especially upward—use your best cooking judgment to compensate for differences in measurement, equipment, cooking time, and seasoning.
- Always retest a recipe after it has been converted.
- The baker's percentage is the method used to scale a recipe for a baked good up or down. The baker's percentage calculates each ingredient amount based on its relative percentage of the recipe's flour weight, with the flour weight remaining constant at 100%.

For quantity recipes, some foodservice operations use spreadsheets or their own proprietary software to scale yield up or down. In these cases, the ingredient quantities are typically expressed in metric measurements, and the software or spreadsheet automatically recalculates the ingredient quantities based on the desired yield.



STANDARDIZED RECIPES

Quantity recipes developed to meet the nutritional requirements of hospitals, schools, senior living centers, or other foodservice operations are often “standardized” so they produce consistent, high-quality, and specific yields every time. A recipe is considered to be standardized when the written set of ingredients and instructions have been tested and verified to consistently prepare a known quantity and quality of food. See Chapter 8 for detailed information on recipe testing and Chapter 9 for information on nutrition analysis of recipes.

The benefits of standardizing recipes include:

- **consistent food quality** to help ensure the best possible dish is produced every time
- **predictable yield** in an effort to avoid food waste and shortages
- **accurate nutrient content** to ensure the recipe’s nutritional requirements are met
- **food cost control** to keep the cost per serving consistent when the same ingredients and quantities are used each time
- **efficient purchasing** to calculate the quantity of ingredients needed for production based on the information provided in the recipe (this is useful for estimating food inventory as well)
- **labor cost control**, as having written procedures allows staff to make good use of their time, work more efficiently, and require less oversight
- **employee confidence**, as staff feel more independent and confident because a written set of ingredient amounts and instructions eliminates guesswork and decreases the likelihood of mistakes and poor food quality

Quick Tip

“We have a weekly creative meeting that includes recipe development. Sometimes an idea might be shaped by necessity: ‘what we need on our menu, what is going to sell to our clients.’ We brainstorm and talk about what we’d like to try—sometimes building off of existing recipes—and then experiment in the kitchen. Other times, we create recipes from our culinary travels. These trips are followed by extensive research on the region we visited. And sometimes, we start a creative meeting with a need to create a dish that evokes a specific emotion, such as nostalgia or comfort. We create and build from there.”—Zach Steen, Culinary Director of Topolobampo, Frontera Grill, XOCO, and Bar Sotano

Quick Tip

“In my bakery, we start with an idea, which may come from simply tasting something we like. We’ll gather several recipes—from books and online search[es]—and decide what we like best in each after making and comparing them side by side. We look at the ratios; get the base figured out; and then play with sugar, salt, spice, and fat, asking [ourselves], ‘do we want more whole grain, less sugar, more add-ins,’ and thinking about how this will affect our pricing. We always make notes on the recipe hard copy and then put in updates to recipes we store electronically.”—Sandra Holl, chef and owner, Floriole Bakery, Chicago

Understanding the Legal Attributes of Recipes

Copyright law protects original works and gives their owner the exclusive right to reproduce and profit from the works. It's important to understand the nuances of copyright law and how it can apply to original recipes.

According to the US Copyright Office:

*A mere listing of ingredients is not protected under copyright law. However, where a recipe or formula is accompanied by **substantial literary expression** in the form of an explanation or directions, or when there is a collection of recipes as in a cookbook, there may be a basis for copyright protection.*

The first sentence of this message is very clear: an ingredient list in a recipe cannot be copyrighted. For instance, the ingredient list on the back of any commercial food product can be used by anyone to create a similar version.

The second part indicates that the headnote and method of preparation or directions *can* be copyrighted, especially if they include original and expressive elements, such as suggestions on presentation, advice on accompaniments, and information about the origin of the dish. This means you should obtain permission from a copyright owner if you print a recipe that is identical or substantially similar to a copyright-protected recipe in your own cookbook or website.

While an individual recipe may not be protected by copyright, collections of recipes (e.g., an entire cookbook or the entire content of a food blog) are always copyright protected, as is any kind of food photography that is not otherwise labeled as being in the public domain. Cookbooks fall into the category of literary works.

According to the US Copyright Office:

A literary work is a work that explains, describes, or narrates a particular subject, theme, or idea through the use of narrative, descriptive, or explanatory text, rather than dialog or dramatic action. Generally, literary works are intended to be read; they are not intended to be performed before an audience.

Quick Tip

“Due to changes in copyright law over the years, different copyright durations apply depending on the date of publication or creation of the particular work. As a general rule, any work published more than 95 years ago is in the public domain for United States purposes. For works created on or after January 1, 1978, copyright duration is tied to the life of the author—lasting for the lifetime of the author plus 70 years.” —Joy R. Butler, attorney and author of *The Permission Seeker's Guide Through the Legal Jungle*

A self-published cookbook or other collection of recipes can be registered for protection under copyright law online via the Electronic Copyright Office (copyright.gov/registration).

Best Practices for Developing and Sharing Recipes

Regardless of copyright law protections, all food professionals—chefs, cookbook authors, food writers, food bloggers, and recipe developers alike—should adhere to ethical standards with respect to developing and sharing recipes.

Requesting Permission

Reprinting a recipe verbatim without citing the source and obtaining permission for use is considered plagiarism. If you are making reference to or including excerpts of someone else's recipe on a website, blog, or social media platform, provide a link to the original source giving appropriate attribution. Requesting special permission to link to another website is not required, but it is a professional courtesy.

Permission is necessary, however, if a complete recipe is to be posted verbatim on a social media platform, website, or email newsletter, magazine, or newspaper. Contact either the publisher or the author of the recipe and request permission to republish it, as well as the preferred method of citation. Many authors have a permissions section on their website.



Following is a typical example of citation instructions for a website:

© 2019–2023 [Site Name]. All rights reserved. All words & images by [Full Name]. Unauthorized use and/or duplication of this material without express and written permission from this site's author and/or owner is strictly prohibited. Excerpts and links may be used, provided that full and clear credit is given to [Full Name] and [Site Name] with appropriate and specific direction to the original content.

Be aware that obtaining permission for older recipes might be difficult. For example, publishing rights generally belong to the original publisher unless otherwise stated, but some publishing houses no longer exist or have been consolidated. Most publishers have a permissions department; be aware that a fee is often required to secure permission. Permission is also required to reproduce or republish a photo or illustration that accompanies a recipe. Obtain permission from the original creator or copyright owner. See Chapter 10 for more information.

Quick Tip

“I try three to five very different recipes and decide what works and what didn’t; I then create my own version by writing out a new recipe before entering the kitchen and then make further annotations on the recipe while cooking.” — Christine Gallary, Food Editor-at-Large, Kitchn (thekitchn.com)

Creating Original Recipes

A persistent urban myth claims that only three ingredients must be changed in an existing recipe to make it your own. However, changing three ingredients in the recipe *does not* make it original.

A recipe is original when it’s written in *your* own words, sharing details that reflect your personal experience, expertise on using specific ingredients, and recommendations for combining those ingredients. Simply adding a tablespoon of chopped fresh basil or changing pork to tofu is not enough to claim a recipe as your own. To make a recipe your own, you must start fresh, using your own language and voice, interpretations, measurements, and trial-and-error experimentation.

Attributing Reworked Recipes

“Adapted from” is to be used in the recipe headnote or in a note at the end of the recipe when modifying the structure of someone else’s recipe. Note that it can be a fine line between someone else’s original recipe and an acceptable “adapted from” recipe. There are different ways to adapt a recipe, including changing the title, headnote, ingredients, and method of preparation. If an adapted recipe is shared digitally, give proper attribution and link to the author’s original recipe or link to where to purchase their book. This, too, is a professional courtesy. Following are two examples of proper adaptation:

- **Modify the ingredient list:** Start by changing one ingredient. Test the recipe and then see if you can change others. An easy place to start is the dish’s main protein or vegetables. Can the ground beef be swapped for soft tofu? Could you use an entirely new type of vegetable, such as butternut squash instead of kale?
- **Change the cooking method:** For example, consider turning an oven-baked recipe into a slow-cooker dish, or make a recipe healthier by grilling the main protein instead of frying it.

“Inspired by” can be used when ideas originate from elsewhere. It’s important to give credit to others where it’s due, especially when taking ideas directly from a specific recipe. In the recipe headnote, mention that the idea was inspired by someone else’s creation; for example, a headnote could read, “I started with the Nestlé Toll House cookie recipe . . . ,” or “The wonderful Chicago-based Goddess and Grocer delicatessen inspired this seasonal version of chicken salad featuring dried fall fruits.” Giving credit can also help the reader connect with the recipe and gives context.

Quick Tip

“Legally, there is no difference between adapted and inspired by—it’s the level of tinkering. ‘Adapted from’ follows the structure of the (original) recipe ingredient list with small tweaks—maybe simplifying the ingredient list or changing the language in the directions. ‘Inspired by’ recipes have much bigger changes, such as significant ingredient changes and/or different cooking techniques and/or equipment. Either way, readers like to know where the ‘original’ recipe or ideas came from; it’s part of the recipe’s story.”

—Bonnie Benwick, former deputy food editor, *The Washington Post*

Quick Tip

“Keep a folder that includes documentation on your original recipe. This includes your recipe development process—recipes you were influenced by, books you used for research, your kitchen testing notes, and more. You are documenting the originality of your recipe and showing how it is unique.”

—Rosemary Mark, recipe developer and culinary consultant

Quick Tip

“It’s the way in which someone explains a technique—the way they construct and write their recipes—that is original. That is what people own and what distinguishes one recipe from another. A recipe becomes your own when you write the recipe as you would cook it, and it reflects your voice and experience. It’s about telling a story through ingredients and instructions.”

—Amanda Hesser, cofounder of Food52, interviewed by Dianne Jacob for her blog (diannej.com)

Recipe Development Resources

Following are just a few of the many resources that can help inspire recipe ideas; provide authenticity on history, ingredients, and techniques; and serve as reference guides for different types of foods, cuisines, and food writing.

General Cooking

The Food Substitutions Bible, 3rd Edition, by David Joachim. 2022. Robert Rose.

How to Cook Everything by Mark Bittman. 2013. Wiley.

The Joy of Cooking by Irma Rombauer. 2019. Scribner.

Kitchen Creativity: Unlocking Culinary Genius with Wisdom, Inspiration, and Ideas from the World's Most Creative Chefs by Karen Page. 2017. Little, Brown & Company.

Professional Cooking, 8th Edition, by Wayne Gisslen. 2014. Wiley.

Ratio: The Simple Codes Behind the Craft of Everyday Cooking, by Michael Ruhlman. 2010. Scribner.

The Smitten Kitchen Cookbook: Recipes and Wisdom from an Obsessive Home Cook by Deb Perelman. 2012. Knopf.

Flavor

The Complete Book of Herbs & Spices by Sarah Garland. 1986. Viking Press.

The Flavor Bible: The Essential Guide to Culinary Creativity, Based on the Wisdom of America's Most Imaginative Chefs by Karen Page and Andrew Dornenburg. 2008. Little, Brown & Co.

The Flavor Matrix: The Art and Science of Pairing Common Ingredients to Create Extraordinary Dishes by James Briscione and Brooke Parkhurst. 2018. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat: Mastering the Elements of Good Cooking by Samin Nosrat. 2017. Simon & Schuster.

Salted: A Manifesto on the World's Most Essential Mineral, with Recipes by Mark Bitterman. 2010. Ten Speed Press.

Food Science

CookWise: The Hows & Whys of Successful Cooking, The Secrets of Cooking Revealed by Shirley O. Corriher. 1997. William Morrow Cookbooks.

The Food Lab: Better Home Cooking Through Science by J. Kenji López-Alt. 2015. W. W. Norton & Company.

How Baking Works: Exploring the Fundamentals of Baking Science, 3rd Edition, by Paula Figoni. 2010. Wiley.

KitchenWise: Essential Food Science for Home Cooks by Shirley O. Corriher. 2020. Scribner.

On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen by Harold McGee. 2007. Scribner.

What Einstein Told His Cook: Kitchen Science Explained by Robert Wolke. 2008. W. W. Norton & Company.

Baking

Advanced Bread and Pastry by Michael Tuas. 2008. Cengage Learning.

The Baker's Appendix by Jessica Reed. 2017. Clarkson Potter.

The Baking Bible by Rose Levy Beranbaum. 2014. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

The Bread Baker's Apprentice: Mastering the Art of Extraordinary Bread, 15th Edition, by Peter Reinhart. 2016. Ten Speed Press.

Bread Revolution: World-Class Baking with Sprouted and Whole Grains, Heirloom Flours, and Fresh Techniques by Peter Reinhart. 2014. Ten Speed Press.

The Cake Bible by Rose Levy Beranbaum. 1988. William Morrow Cookbooks.

Maider Heatter's Book of Great Chocolate Desserts by Maida Heatter. 2006. Andrews McMeel Publishing.

Tartine All Day by Elisabeth Prueitt. 2017. Lorena Jones Books.

Tartine Bread by Chad Robertson and Eric Wolfinger. 2010. Chronicle Books.

Vegetarian/Vegan

The First Mess Cookbook: Vibrant Plant-Based Recipes to Eat Well Through the Seasons by Laura Wright. 2017. Avery.

How to Cook Everything Vegetarian, 2nd Edition by Mark Bittman. 2017. Harvest.

The New Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone by Debra Madison. 2014. Ten Speed Press.

Plenty: Vibrant Vegetable Recipes from London's Ottolenghi by Yotam Ottolenghi. 2011. Chronicle Books.

Veganomicon, 10th Anniversary Edition: The Ultimate Vegan Cookbook by Isa Chandra Moskowitz and Terry Romero. 2017. Da Capo Lifelong Books.

Seasonal Cooking

The Farm Cooking School: Techniques and Recipes that Celebrate the Seasons by Ian Knauer and Shelley Wiseman. 2017. Burgess Lea Press.

The Farmers Market Cookbook: The Ultimate Guide to Enjoying Fresh, Local, Seasonal Produce by Julia Shanks and Brett Grohsgal. 2016. New Society Publishers.

True Food: Seasonal, Sustainable, Simple, Pure by Andrew Weil, Sam Fox, and Michael Stebner. 2017. Little, Brown Spark.

Meat

How to Cook Meat by Chris Schlesinger and John Willoughby. 2000. William Morrow Cookbooks.

Meat: A Kitchen Education by James Peterson. 2010. Ten Speed Press.

Meat Illustrated: A Foolproof Guide to Understanding and Cooking with Cuts of All Kinds by America's Test Kitchen. 2020. Cook's Illustrated.

Regional/Cultural Cooking

Chinese

All Under Heaven: Recipes from the 35 Cuisines of China by Carolyn Phillips. 2016. Ten Speed Press.

Every Grain of Rice: Simple Chinese Home Cooking by Fuchsia Dunlop. 2013. W. W. Norton & Company.

Mastering the Art of Chinese Cooking by Eileen Yin-Fei Lo. 2009. Chronicle Books.

Philippine

Filipino Homestyle Dishes: Delicious Meals in Minutes by Norma Olizon-Chikiamco. 2003. Periplus Editions.

The Philippine Cookbook by Reynaldo Alejandro. 1985. Perigee Books.

French

La Varenne Pratique by Anne Wilan. 1989. Clarkson Potter.

Mastering the Art of French Cooking by Julia Child, Louisette Bertholle, and Simone Beck. 1970. Alfred A. Knopf.

Indian

50 Great Curries of India by Camellia Panjabi. 1994. Kyle Books.

Classic Indian Vegetarian and Grain Cooking by Julie Sahni. 1985. William Morrow and Company.

Tasting India: Heirloom Family Recipes by Christine Manfield. 2019. Simon & Schuster Australia.

Vegetarian India: A Journey Through the Best of Indian Home Cooking by Madhur Jaffrey. 2015. Alfred A. Knopf.

Italian

Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking by Marcella Hazan. 2012. Alfred A. Knopf.

La Cucina: The Regional Cooking of Italy by the Italian Academy of Cuisine. 2009. Rizzoli.

The Silver Spoon by the Silver Spoon Kitchen. 2011. Phaidon Press.

Japanese

Everyday Harumi: Simple Japanese Food for Family and Friends by Harumi Kurihara. 2019. Conran.

Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art by Shizuo Tsuji and Yoshiki Tsuji. 2012. Kodansha International.

Takashi's Noodle by Takashi Yagihashi. 2009. Ten Speed Press.

Jewish

Arthur Schwartz's Jewish Home Cooking: Yiddish Recipes Revisited by Arthur Schwartz. 2008. Ten Speed Press.

The Book of Jewish Food: An Odyssey from Samarkand to New York by Claudia Roden. 1996. Alfred A. Knopf.

Jewish Cooking in America by Joan Nathan. 1998. Alfred A. Knopf.

A Treasury of Jewish Holiday Baking by Marcy Goldman. 1998. Doubleday.

Korean

Dok Suni: Recipes From My Mother's Korean Kitchen by Jenny Kwak and Liz Fried. 1998. St. Martin's Press.

Growing Up in a Korean Kitchen: A Cookbook by Hi Soo Shin Hepinstall. 2001. Ten Speed Press.

A Korean Mother's Cooking Notes by Sun-Young Chang. 1997. Ewha Womans University Press.

Mexican

The Art of Mexican Cooking: Traditional Mexican Cooking for Aficionados: A Cookbook by Diana Kennedy. 2008. Clarkson Potter.

Authentic Mexican: Regional Cooking from the Heart of Mexico by Rick Bayless. 2007. William Morrow Cookbooks.

The Cuisines of Mexico by Diana Kennedy. 1972. Harper & Row.

Mexico: One Plate at a Time by Rick Bayless. 2000. Scribner.

Middle Eastern/Moroccan

Couscous and Other Good Food from Morocco by Paula Wolfert. 1973. Harper & Row.

The New Book of Middle Eastern Food by Claudia Roden. 2000. Knopf.

Palestinian

Falastin: A Cookbook by Sami Tamimi and Tara Wigley. 2020. Ten Speed Press.

Palestine on a Plate: Memories from My Mother's Kitchen by Joudie Kalla. 2016. Interlink Publishing Group, Inc.

Southeast Asia

Hot Sour Salty Sweet: A Culinary Journey Through Southeast Asia by Jeffrey Alford and Naomi Duguid. 2000. Artisan.

Southern United States

Heritage by Sean Brock. 2014. Artisan.

Mastering the Art of Southern Cooking by Nathalie Dupree and Cynthia Graubart. 2019. Gibbs Smith.

The Taste of Country Cooking: The 30th Anniversary Edition of a Great Southern Classic Cookbook by Edna Lewis. 2006. Knopf.

Spanish

Charcutería: The Soul of Spain by Jeffrey Weiss. 2021. Agate Surrey.

The Food of Spain by Claudia Roden. 2011. Ecco.

The Foods and Wines of Spain: A Cookbook by Penelope Casas. 1982. Knopf.

Taiwanese

The Food of Taiwan: Recipes from the Beautiful Island by Cathy Erway. 2015. Mariner Books.

Home-Style Taiwanese Cooking by Liv Wan. 2022. Marshall Cavendish Cuisine.

Thai

Real Thai: The Best of Thailand's Regional Cooking by Nancie McDermott. 1992. Chronicle Books.

Thai Food by David Thompson. 2002. Ten Speed Press.

Vietnamese

Into the Vietnamese Kitchen: Treasured Foodways Modern Flavors by Andrea Nguyen. 2010. Ten Speed Press.

Vietnamese Home Cooking: A Cookbook by Charles Phan. 2012. Ten Speed Press.

Food History and Memoirs

Food History

Consider the Fork: A History of How We Cook and Eat by Bee Wilson. 2013. Basic Books.

High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America by Jessica B. Harris. 2012. Bloomsbury.

Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century by Helen Zoe Veit. 2015. University of North Carolina Press.

The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan. 2007. Penguin Books.

Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century by Laura Shapiro. 2008. University of California Press.

The Rise: Black Cooks and the Soul of American Food by Marcus Samuelsson. 2020. Voracious.

Salt: A World History by Mark Kurlansky. 2003. Penguin Books.

Soul Food: The Surprising Story of an American Cuisine, One Plate at a Time by Adrian Miller. 2013. The University of North Carolina Press.

A Square Meal: A Culinary History of the Great Depression by Jane Ziegelman and Andrew Coe. 2016. Harper.

Sugar: A Global History by Andrew Smith. 2015. Reaktion Books.

Food Memoirs

The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African American Culinary History in the Old South by Michael W. Twitty. 2017. Amistad.

Eating My Words: An Appetite for Life by Mimi Sheraton. 2004. William Morrow.

My Kitchen Wars: A Memoir by Betty Fussell. 2009. Bison Books.

My Life in France by Julia Child and Alex Prud'homme. 2007. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

Tender at the Bone: Growing Up at the Table by Ruth Reichl. 2010. Random House Trade Paperback.

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