

How To Cook Like Your Grandmother

2nd Edition

Illustrated



by Drew Kime

HOW TO COOK
LIKE YOUR GRANDMOTHER
Second Edition

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[Π³]
Put It In Ink
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Everything I eat has been proved by some doctor or other to be a deadly poison, and everything I don't eat has been proved to be indispensable for life. But I go marching on.

~George Bernard Shaw



Foreword

This book isn't just a collection of recipes. It's a user manual for your kitchen. If I've done my job right, you'll be able to take what you learn here and apply it to your own recipes, making them even better. You'll be able to improvise.

It can be really hard, when you already know how to cook, to remember what it was like to be a beginner. But I've tried to remember not everyone knows the difference between dicing and mincing. Or how to grease a pan. And what the heck is a micro-plane, anyway? So I'll explain things that lots of cookbooks just assume you'll know.

Now if you want to see even a good cook scratch their head, you should check out cookbooks from a few generations back. That's where you see directions like, "Cook in a medium oven until done." *So how many degrees is "medium"? And how do I know what "done" looks like, anyway?* You know you've found a classic when it tells you to "bank the coals and place the pot on the opposite corner." *Coals? Are you kidding me?*

That's how I tried to keep myself grounded: Every now and then I'd read something from the 1700s and ask myself, "Is that how people will feel when they read my book?" I read every recipe and looked for anything that a complete novice wouldn't understand and explained it better.

In the end, I've come up with a bunch of recipes that would be completely familiar to your grandmother, and all made the way she would have – from scratch. At this point I better explain what "from scratch" means. Some people think it's a box of cake mix plus two eggs and a quartercup of oil. That's not what Grandma meant, and it's not what I mean. Ingredients don't have a list of other ingredients printed on the side.

If we want to, we can stock our pantries and our freezers with ready-to-heat "meal solutions" that have been carefully planned, thoroughly tested and rigorously quality-controlled by a team of food scientists. Right ... not cooks, "food scientists." Doesn't that just give you the warm fuzzies? Airline food has been so bad for so long it's a cliché, but now we can it to make at home.

Isn't there something wrong with that? Wouldn't you rather prepare meals that are *memorable*? That frozen stuff in a box definitely won't be. If you want to make real food you'll be proud to serve, you're going to have to do it yourself.

That's where *How To Cook Like Your Grandmother* comes in, with easy-to-follow recipes, basic ingredients, and two whole chapters dedicated to the kind of tips it would take years to pick up on your own. Skip ahead to page 93 for a crash course in basic kitchen skills. Or just start at the beginning and look up what you need as you need it. Either way, you'll start making the food that someday your grandkids are going to remember.



2.6 Crusty Italian Bread

Ingredients

1 package active dry yeast (1/4 ounce, 2-1/2 teaspoons)
 1-1/4 cups warm water (See "Working with yeast" pg. 94)
 3 cups unbleached flour (or all-purpose flour)
 2 tsp sugar
 1 tsp salt
 1 tbsp olive oil
 cornmeal for dusting



Directions

Dissolve the yeast in a quarter-cup of warm water. Give the yeast a few minutes, until it starts bubbling, then mix it in with the rest of the warm water.

Add the flour, sugar and salt and stir. When those ingredients are well mixed, add in the olive oil and mix again.¹¹ After mixing the oil in, turn the dough out onto a clean, floured surface and knead for several minutes (see pg. 94).

Once the dough is thoroughly kneaded, place it in a large bowl with a few tablespoons of olive oil in it. Toss the dough around so it is coated with oil all the way around. Cover the dough with plastic wrap or a wet towel to prevent a skin from forming, allowing it to rise more. Put the bowl someplace warm until the dough has doubled in size, about 1-1/2 to 2 hours.

Turn the dough out onto a floured surface and punch down to knock out most of the air out. Divide the dough in half and roll into two loaf shapes. Dust a smooth wooden cutting board with cornmeal to keep the dough from sticking. Place the two loaves on the board, cover them with plastic and allow to rise for another 40 minutes. They should roughly double in width.

While they are rising the second time, pre-heat the oven to 425°. Place a pizza stone or upside-down baking sheet on the bottom rack while the oven is heating.

When the oven is hot, and the loaves have doubled in size, slice the top of each loaf down the middle with an extremely sharp knife. A razor blade is better, if you have a clean one. The slice should be a quarter-inch deep, and made in a single quick motion from one end to the other without sawing back-and-forth. The slice will allow the bread to expand smoothly without exploding as it bakes.

Dust the stone with cornmeal, then slide the loaves onto it. Bake at 425° for 10 minutes, then turn the oven down to 400° and bake another 25-30 minutes. To check if they're done, pick one loaf up and thump on the bottom with your thumb. If it has a hollow sound, it's done.



For really crusty bread, great for dipping in olive oil or marinara sauce, place a pan of water in the bottom of the oven before pre-heating. The steam will keep a skin from forming too fast, giving the bread more time to rise. It will also make the crust crisper.

Notes

¹¹ Don't add the oil until after you've worked the water and flour together. The oil will coat the proteins and prevent gluten formation.

3.6 New England Boiled Dinner – aka Corned Beef and Cabbage

Ingredients

- 4 lb corned beef
- 2 lb white and/or sweet potatoes
- 4 beets
- 1 head cabbage, quartered
- 8 carrots
- 4 turnips
- 2 squash
- 4 parsnips



Directions

Amounts listed above will feed a family of four, plus leftovers. Boil these in one kettle, all together. Boil the meat four hours; the beets and potatoes three hours; the cabbage and carrots one and a half hours; turnips, squash and parsnips three-quarters of an hour. Beets, carrots and parsnips should be boiled with the skin on. Pare the potatoes, pare and slice the squash and turnip. When done, pare parsnips and carrots. Drop the cooked beets into cold water and slip the skin off with your hand.

Notes

10.4 Frozen Chocolate Truffle Pie

If you don't like chocolate, stop reading right now. If you like "a little chocolate now and then," go away. This recipe is for serious chocolate fiends only.

Ingredients

12 oz bittersweet or semi-sweet chocolate⁵⁵
 1-1/2 sticks butter
 6 large egg whites
 4 large egg yolks
 3 tbsp cocoa
 1/3 cup sugar
 pinch salt
 pinch cream of tartar
 pre-baked pie crust (See pg. 75)



Directions

Make a double boiler by bringing a half pan of water to a boil, turning the heat to low, and setting a large stainless bowl over it. Do it this way even if you already have a double boiler. You'll be able to mix everything in this one bowl and save on clean-up. Put the butter in the bowl, and once it's melted add the chocolate.

While the chocolate melts, separate the eggs. (See pg. 93) Start mixing the chocolate and butter together as soon as you see the chips start to melt. This can happen pretty quickly, depending on the chocolate you're using. If this is your first time doing this separate the eggs and set them aside before you start melting things.

When the chocolate is completely melted, add the cocoa, sugar and salt and mix well. Then remove it from the heat and mix the yolks in one at a time.

Set the chocolate mixture aside and let it cool to room temperature. While it's cooling, add the cream of tartar to the egg whites and beat until it forms stiff peaks. For the first minute the egg whites will just foam up a little. Then all at once they'll turn pure white and look like a whole different food. Congratulations, you just made meringue.

Add about a third of the meringue to the chocolate and mix it in. Then add the rest and fold it in gently. Try not to deflate the eggs while folding. Once the meringue is completely incorporated, pour the mixture into a pre-baked pie crust and spread it evenly.

Freeze for at least two hours, four would be better. Cut with a very sharp knife, not a pie spatula. Serve with fresh whipped cream, and maybe some dark chocolate shavings.

Oh, and a glass of milk.

You can see step-by-step pictures of the whole process at the How To Cook Like Your Grandmother blog <http://blog.cooklikeyourgrandmother.com/search/label/Dessert>.

Notes

⁵⁵ I use half bittersweet and half semi-sweet chips, both Ghirardelli. You can find them in the baking section at some grocery stores. They're the best domestic chocolate I've tried.



Cooking used to be all about making food that tasted good. But somewhere along the way, we seem to have decided the diet-of-the-week was more important. "How To Cook Like Your Grandmother" is a return to recipes and techniques that are based on what tastes good, not on junk science and fad diets. You won't find the words lite, low, lean, free or skim anywhere. This is all real food, cooked the way Grandma would have done it.

What readers are saying online:

"I learned everything I know about cooking from my Grandparents and my mom. They were a huge influence on what has become my cooking philosophy and style. So I love this blog because it gives a shout out to The Grandmothers of all cultures and walks of life. It is about respecting the older generation and what they taught us."

-- JennDZ, The Leftover Queen
<http://LeftoverQueen.com>

"This pie saved Thanksgiving. You are my hero ... I've made six of these puppies in the last three weeks, and out of six pies I think I've managed to snag maybe four slices for myself These are serious crowd pleaser pies.

Thanks for putting so much care into sharing these great recipes."
-- Skip