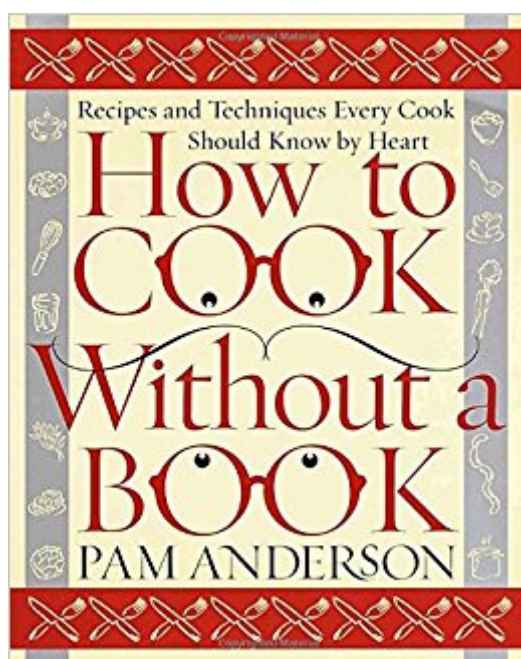


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How To Cook Without A Book: Recipes And Techniques Every Cook Should Know By Heart



Synopsis

Pam Anderson grew up watching her parents and grandparents make dinner every night by simply taking the ingredients on hand and cooking them with the techniques they knew. Times have changed. Today we have an overwhelming array of ingredients and a fraction of the cooking time, but Anderson believes the secret to getting dinner on the table lies in the past. After a long day, who has the energy to look up a recipe and search for the right ingredients before ever starting to cook? To make dinner night after night, Anderson believes the first two steps--looking for a recipe, then scrambling for the exact ingredients--must be eliminated. Understanding that most recipes are simply "variations on a theme," she innovatively teaches technique, ultimately eliminating the need for recipes. Once the technique or formula is mastered, Anderson encourages inexperienced as well as veteran cooks to spread their culinary wings. For example, after learning to sear a steak, it's understood that the same method works for scallops, tuna, hamburger, swordfish, salmon, pork tenderloin, and more. You never need to look at a recipe again. Vary the look and flavor of these dishes with interchangeable pan sauces, salsas, relishes, and butters. Best of all, these recipes rise above the mundane Monday-through-Friday fare. Imagine homemade ravioli and lasagna for weeknight supper, or from-scratch tomato sauce before the pasta water has even boiled. Last-minute guests? Dress up simple tomato sauce with capers and olives or shrimp and red pepper flakes. Drizzle sautéed chicken breasts with a balsamic vinegar pan sauce. Anderson teaches you how to do it--without a recipe. Don't buy exotic ingredients and follow tedious instructions for making hors d'oeuvres. Forage through the pantry and refrigerator for quick appetizers. The ingredients are all there; the method is in your head. Master four simple potato dishes--a bake, a cake, a mash, and a roast--compatible with many meals. Learn how to make the five-minute dinner salad, easily changing its look and flavor depending on the season and occasion. Tuck a few dessert techniques in your back pocket and effortlessly turn any meal into a special occasion. There's real rhyme and reason to Pam's method at the beginning of every chapter: To dress greens, "Drizzle salad with oil, salt, and pepper, then toss until just slick. Sprinkle in some vinegar to give it a little kick." To make a frittata, "Cook eggs without stirring until set around the edges. Bake until puffy, then cut it into wedges." Each chapter also contains a helpful at-a-glance chart that highlights the key points of every technique, and a master recipe with enough variations to keep you going until you've learned how to cook without a book.

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Customer Reviews

Learn what makes a recipe tick, says How to Cook Without a Book author Pam Anderson, and you'll serve great food fast. Recognizing that most cooks feel challenged in the face of daily meal making, Anderson provides a game plan: prepare dishes based on available ingredients and simple cooking techniques you've mastered--not on recipes you've got to look up and ingredients you'll need to shop for--and you maximize the potential of kitchen ease. Cooks looking for a way to address the what-will-we-have-tonight quandary definitively, or those who feel they lack the energy or know-how to tackle cooking every night, should find the book essential. In chapters such as "Simple Stir-Frys" or "Weeknight Ravioli and Lasagna," Anderson presents a particular cooking procedure, provides a recipe that embodies it in its basic form (the protein-adaptable Weeknight Stir-Fry, for example), then offers simple variations (such as Stir-Fried Chicken with Asparagus and Mushrooms or Stir-Fried Shrimp with Pepper and Scallions). Chapters conclude with an at-a-glance review of key technique points. Following Anderson's tips and innovations, lasagna, for example, becomes a weeknight option (use egg-roll wrappers for the pasta, Anderson advises, and forgo the baking); she also shows how, once mastered, her Big Fat Omelet, which serves four, can become the basis for a wide range of lunch and dinner entrées. With a comprehensive pantry section and a dessert chapter that puts frozen puff pastry to work in imaginative ways, the book is a trove of information that cooks can use and depend on. --Arthur Boehm

Former executive editor of Cook's magazine and author of The Perfect Recipe, Anderson wants to teach Americans a new way to cook without relying on recipes. It's somewhat surprising, then, to

discover that this book is full of recipes. However, readers may cotton to Anderson's method: each chapter consists of a simple technique, basic recipe, variations, key points and a little mnemonic device used to recall the technique. The techniques are, for the most part, terrific time-savers, such as cutting out the back before roasting a whole chicken or making one giant omelet to serve four people so that everyone can eat together. Variations are good, too, although many are so similar to one another that it seems a little repetitious to include a recipe for each (in turn, many of the recipes refer back to the original, resulting in a lot of page-flipping). A chapter on tomato sauces, for example, includes the basic Simple Tomato Sauce, as well as Tomato Sauce with Dried Porcini, Tomato Sauce with Sweet Onions and Thyme, Tomato Sauce with Shrimp and Red Pepper Flakes and many others. A chapter on pan sauces is a winner, encompassing Red Wine-Dijon Pan Sauce, Port Wine Pan Sauce with Dried Cranberries and Balsamic Pan Sauce with Pine Nuts and Raisins. In the end, this cookbook is a solid collection of simple, quick recipes, but with its sometimes scattered format, it is unlikely to free everyday cooks from the tyranny of recipes. (Mar.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I found this book disappointing. First, for you vegetarians, nearly everything is either a meat dish or has meat in it (though I'm sure you could substitute for chicken broth). I don't eat much meat. Second, I was expecting a few basic dishes to which you could add whatever vegetables you had on hand, and a few easy sauces which would go with nearly any main ingredient. While there is some of that, and there were a few items of interest, a lot of it was either more trouble than I feel like going to, or things I already knew and was doing. And I believe the ingredients she routinely keeps on hand are not the same as what I keep on hand - I'd have to make a special effort to acquire a lot of the items. This book is not going to be very useful to me - I may donate it to the library or something. I'm just glad I didn't buy it new and pay that price for it.

This will change how you cook and think about cooking. With some easy to remember patterns and formulas, you'll be more flexible in what you cook. I've given away multiple copies of this to friends and family.

Just a bunch of recipes like any other book. I didn't see any real helpful hints. Learned more on the Cooking Channel.

This book has completely changed the way I cook. It was exactly what I was looking for in a cooking

book. This is a book that basically teaches Method. This is Not a recipe book. It does include a few recipes to complement the method outlined before it. But, instead of a traditional cookbook with pages and pages of recipes, this book teaches you how to do all the basics of cooking. It's funny, but I have been cooking for a few years and I had no idea that I didn't know the basics until I read this book. It's not a complete volume of all the fancy techniques out there, these you can pick up later. Instead, it is a great crash course of essential basic techniques you need to learn before advancing. This book simplified and evolved the way I cook.

Most cookbooks give a recipe with very specific ingredients and amounts required. A cook can spend all day trying to find a recipe that fits the ingredients on hand or may have to rush out and buy something in order to make anything--which leads some people to simply go out to eat instead. This book teaches general techniques and recipes, with a wide range of possible ingredients to use. The idea is that a cook will learn basic techniques and then be able to throw together a meal, quickly and easily, with whatever ingredients are on hand. (And there are a handful of more specific recipes for those who want some of those, too.) Upon first reading it, I realized that I have learned a lot of similar techniques and tips already, but I bought this book to help teach such techniques to my preteens. So far, they've done well working from it and have each made some meals.

This coupled with *The Flavor Bible: The Essential Guide to Culinary Creativity, Based on the Wisdom of America's Most Imaginative Chefs* is a great combo for someone learning how to cook and wants to keep things interesting.

I have bought so many copies of this book over the years to give as gifts. This is the very best cookbook. I love the concept. Mrs. Anderson teaches cooking techniques that every cook should know. Then she follows each technique with several recipes. Once you understand the cooking techniques you are ready to cook for a lifetime. I learned these techniques years ago and have used them daily. It is true, I no longer need a book.

This book is just as it says - a primer on American home cooking theory, and the hows and whys of different methods. The little rhymes are easy to remember and intuitive, and the recipe variations fun. I've found it incredibly useful over the years, and have given it away as gifts multiple times. If you've got someone who's mastered the basics of cooking/baking and is ready to tackle intermediate projects, this is the book for them! My one caveat is that I wouldn't follow Ms.

Anderson's pantry advice. Plan out a menu by week, buy what you know you like to eat, and go from there. (If you like planning, make three or four weekly menus with shopping lists, and rotate through them. This book has enough recipes you'll never be bored by repetition.) That pantry list is intimidating, especially when you're just starting out. If you're helping a new cook, or looking to stock your kitchen, you might find this article very useful. (If the link doesn't work, Google 'Mark Bittman No-Frills Kitchen') [...]

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