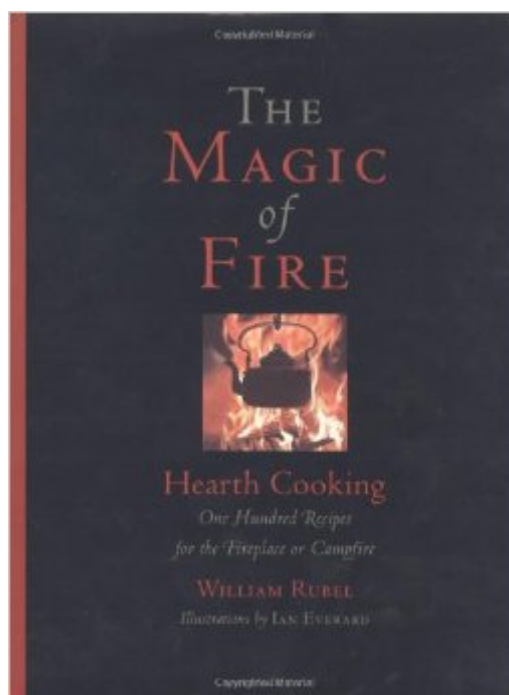


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# The Magic Of Fire: Hearth Cooking: One Hundred Recipes For The Fireplace Or Campfire



## Synopsis

2003 James Beard Award Nominee The open hearth is where American colonials baked their beans, English families took their tea, French country families prepared their pot au feu, and Italian mothers stirred their polenta. THE MAGIC OF FIRE explores both the techniques of hearth cooking and the poetry of hearth and flame through the ages. The recipe collection offers a fascinating glimpse into the past with authentic renditions of Brisket Baked under Ashes, Pot Roast, String-Roasted Turkey, Stockfish Stew, Chocolat Ancienne, and Tarte Tatin. With its evocative and erudite narrative and extraordinary paintings by master realist Ian Everard, THE MAGIC OF FIRE is the definitive work on open-hearth cooking.

• The first book to cover the complete range of open-hearth cooking techniques, including ash baking, ember roasting, hearthside grilling, string-and spit-roasting, and hearthside Dutch oven baking.

• Features 100 extraordinary illustrations of food and fire by master realist Ian Everard.

• Many of the recipes require no special equipment. Simply open the book, light a fire, and cook.

Reviews

"Definitive book on cooking." • Paula Wolfert, author of Mediterranean Grains and Greens, The Cooking of Southwest France

"THE MAGIC OF FIRE is the most thoughtful and thorough study of hearth cooking I know of. His book is full of practical information (the section All about the Fireplace is a masterpiece), unconventional recipes, and fascinating historical references that link his modern perspective to this primitive art. It will inspire professionals as well as serious home cooks to recover the taste that only hearth cooking can deliver. "

• Paul Bertolli, chef and owner, Oliveto Cafe & Restaurant, author of Chez Panisse Cooking

"There is something fundamental about cooking over an open fire. I love the flames, I love the smells, and of course, I love the taste. William Rubel's THE MAGIC OF FIRE, is an indispensable guide to this lost art."

• Alice Waters, chef and owner, Chez Panisse

"THE MAGIC OF FIRE is a fabulous book! It's about flames and ashes; tripods and spider pots; campfires, hearths, and fireplaces. It's about ember-roasted vegetables, flat breads, stews, steamed puddings, salt cod

• deeply fundamental foods that will make you see the possibilities of your fireplace in a new light. Passion, experience, and good writing have met in a book that's good reading, with instructions that are clear as a bell."

• Deborah Madison

"It's a fun read, particularly for those who have always been fascinated by early American history."

• The Baltimore Sun

"The bible of hearth cooking."

• House & Garden

"[An] enchanting, step-by-step, illustrated field guide."

• The Philadelphia Inquirer

"A seemingly romantic concept that the author insists is quite practical."

• Sarasota Herald Tribune

"If you're looking for something totally different, I'd dare say you probably won't find another book like this one."

• National Barbecue News

The best instruction of skillful

cooking on the hearth now in print. &#130;Ã &#130;Ã®The Journal of Antiques and Collectibles"

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Cooking in fire and coals wasn't important to me until I ate in a humble farmhouse kitchen in the mountains of the Veneto a few years ago. The flavors of woodsmoke in the roast squab and the wild-mushroom risotto were magical. They transformed simple, lean ingredients into something amazingly rich, complex, and soul-stirring. I was haunted for months after by the memory of those flavors. Then I had one of the greatest meals of my life at Chez Panisse, which featured flame-broiled rabbit sausages and coal-roasted lamb, which was finished in the kitchen fireplace in a puff of rosemary smoke. From my vantage in the dining room I watched the utterly simple preparation, an immemorial process, and vowed to learn whatever I could about hearth cooking. In lieu of a grandmother with traditional hearth-cooking skills, I had books, and *The Magic of Fire* continues to stand out above the others. This book teaches almost everything I've needed to know to cook with fire. It starts with a lucid little essay [TOO little: I would have loved something deeper] on hearth cooking, aptly weaving the poetics of the practice into the pragmatics. It introduces the tools of the craft and provides a quick peek at various hearth-cooking methods. Again, much more detail would have been welcome, but this is a tantalizing glimpse into a craft that can absorb years of practice. There are a couple of pages on the fire itself, and a few coy words on the complications of preparing multicourse meals. Then to the food. The food: 100 recipes of heartbreaking simplicity

and flavor. Have you ever eaten a sweet red pepper roasted to blackness in wood coals? One ingredient, simply transformed, may be the most delicious vegetable you'll ever eat. Unless you've had the great fortune to have eaten a young eggplant prepared the same way. Roasted garlic-sage duck will scent the neighborhood like no lighter-fluid-marinated hamburger patty ever will. And, if you crave an instant return trip to the north Veneto, try the grilled polenta with porcini. It is unaccountably good. You are unlikely to find such pleasures from such simple preparations anywhere else. A warning: complications, both financial and conjugal, may arise if your dedication to these hearthside pleasures leads you to tearing out the patio in preparation for building a dedicated outdoor fireplace and bread oven. But great pleasures are a path of no return.

I purchased this book from .com last month, and am I glad I did! It is fantastic. I have spent years cooking over fires while camping, backpacking, backyard barbecuing and more recently, demonstrating cooking over the fire in historic sites. This book contains what none of the other books on hearth cooking do--how to work with the fire. I have shelves of cookbooks that talk about recipes from colonial times, but not one of them tells you how to actually use the fire to prepare the meal. To begin, it is a BEAUTIFUL book. The illustrations are worthy of their own frames for hanging. The book is well organized, and you can choose to read first about food and then about fire, or the reverse. The author instructs us in the proper use of equipment, but makes it clear that the average kitchen contains the necessary implements to get started. Mr. Rubel has obviously done a lot of traveling, because he brings us delicious food from all over the world. The recipes are clearly described and easy to follow. You feel you know the author personally after reading the book, because he tells you when he first encountered the food, and why he loves it. The range of recipes is wonderful. You can start with flat unleavened bread cooked directly on the coals (yes! you can do this in your living room!) and progress to Pot au-feu. There are menus for every taste and palate. I have made quite a few of the recipes, and they have all been resounding successes. What is so deceptive about this book is its elegant simplicity. You might think a mere onion, thrown onto the coals is just a cooked onion. But it is not! ROASTED food tastes very different from baked, and this is true for all vegetables and meats. The caramelization that takes place over the fire cannot be duplicated by any other heat source, and that is literally the MAGIC of fire.

"The Magic of Fire" reveals the secrets of successful and delicious cooking with fire. It is a beautiful book, illustrated with absolutely lovely drawings. But it is so much more than just a coffee table cookbook. It offers the novice hearth cook practical advice about how to get started and how to

succeed. It offers the experienced hearth cook an opportunity to both refine and expand techniques and repertoire. The title, "The Magic of Fire", clues the reader to the other dimension of this book: the spiritual aspect of cooking over an open fire. Open fire cooking links us with cooks through tens of thousands of years. "The Magic of Fire" manages well the delicate balance of being both pragmatic and inspiring. Recipes range from the traditional, such as skillet corn bread and chicken roasted on a string, to the more unusual, such as grilled porcini mushrooms and ember-roasted brisket, fish, and vegetables. Each recipe usefully indicates which open-fire methods are suitable. And best of all, the recipes, when used, yield delicious results! "The Magic of Fire" is a book that informs the mind, refreshes the spirit, and takes the palate on an adventure.

This is \*THE\* most beautiful and romantic book I have ever read. I am in process of reading it cover to cover currently, and am relishing every moment. The author is well educated on his subject and adds his own personal touch to each recipe. His stories bring each dish to life and add an unimaginable depth to what might have turned out to be "just a cookbook." This book is the best and cruelest tool for would-be hearth cooks. It sweeps us away to a time that we modern day folk still feel in our blood. It's a perfect combination of practicality and base information, and romanticism in cooking. You'll never look at Ramen the same again!

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