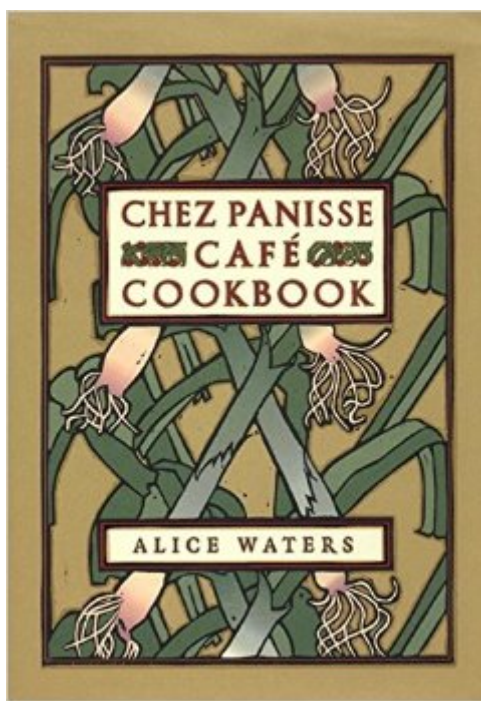


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Chez Panisse Café Cookbook



Synopsis

We hung the walls with old French movie posters advertising the films of Marcel Pagnol, films that had already provided us with both a name and an ideal: to create a community of friends, lovers, and relatives that span generations and is in tune with the seasons, the land, and human appetites. So writes Alice Waters of the opening of Berkeley's Chez Panisse Café on April Fool's Day, 1980. Located above the more formal Chez Panisse Restaurant, the Café is a bustling neighborhood bistro where guests needn't reserve far in advance and can choose from the ever-changing à la carte menu. It's the place where Alice Waters's inventive chefs cook in a more impromptu and earthy vein, drawing on the healthful, low-tech traditions of the cuisines of such Mediterranean regions as Catalonia, Campania, and Provence, while improvising and experimenting with the best products of Chez Panisse's own regional network of small farms and producers. In the Chez Panisse Café Cookbook, the follow-up to the award-winning Chez Panisse Vegetables, Alice Waters and her team of talented cooks offer more than 140 of the café's best-recipes--some that have been on the menu since the day café opened and others freshly reinvented with the honesty and ingenuity that have made Chez Panisse so famous. In addition to irresistible recipes, the Chez Panisse Café Cookbook is filled with chapter-opening essays on the relationships Alice has cultivated with the farmers, foragers and purveyors--most of them within an hour's drive of Berkeley--who make it possible for Chez Panisse to boast that nearly all food is locally grown, certifiably organic, and sustainably grown and harvested. Alice encourages her chefs and cookbook readers alike to decide what to cook only after visiting the farmer's market or produce stand. Then we can all fully appreciate the advantages of eating according to season--fresh spring lamb in late March, ripe tomato salads in late summer, Comice pear crisps in autumn. This book begins with a chapter of inspired vegetable recipes, from a vivid salad of avocados and beets to elegant Morel Mushroom Toasts to straightforward side dishes of Spicy Broccoli Raab and Garlicky Kale. The Chapter on eggs and cheese includes two of the café's most famous dishes, a garden lettuce salad with baked goat cheese and the Crostata di Perrella, the café's version of a calzone. Later chapters focus on fish and shellfish, beef, pork, lamb, and poultry, each offering its share of delightful dishes. You'll find recipes for curing your own pancetta, for simple grills and succulent braises, and for the definitive simple roast chicken--as well as sumptuous truffed chicken breasts. Finally the pastry cooks of Chez Panisse serve forth a chapter of uncomplicated sweets, including Apricot Bread Pudding, Chocolate Almond Cookies, and Wood Oven-baked Figs with Raspberries. Gorgeously designed and illustrated throughout with colored block prints by David Lance Goines, who has eaten at the café since the

day it opened, *Chez Panisse Café Cookbook* is destined to become an indispensable classic. Fans of Alice Waters's restaurant and café will be thrilled to discover the recipes that keep them coming back for more. Loyal readers of her earlier cookbooks will delight in this latest collection of time-tested, deceptively simple recipes. And anyone who loves pure, vibrant, delicious fare made from the finest ingredients will be honored to add these new recipes to his or her repertoire.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My foodie friends in Berkeley jokingly refer to Alice's books as "food porn". I have actually cooked a couple of the recipes and, while they are correct, they are exhausting. In Berkeley, CA, where the author's restaurant is thriving, it is easy to get the interesting and seasonal ingredients that are described in the book. However, the complexity of preparation of the recipes makes the book less accessible to most readers and home cooks. The illustrations are lovely, as are the narratives. It is fun to just read the book and fantasize about being a hemp-clad, kinder version of Martha Stewart. However, it is not the most practical cookbook to stick in the cookbook holder when putting the family's meal together. The real lesson behind this book is that foods that are in season taste better, are less expensive, and are fun to eat. Changing the menu as the seasons change keeps the experience of dining and cooking interesting and entertaining. Also, buying seasonal food is better for the environment than flying foods out of season from another hemisphere. Take that wisdom, go to your store and get seasonal fruits and vegetables and use an easier and more accessible

cookbook like, "The Joy of Cooking". But do keep this one on the coffeetable for those days you want to fantasize about being a world class hippie chef.

I was beyond excited to receive this cookbook after my wife and I had the intense pleasure of dining at Chez Panisse for our anniversary. However, while it contains fascinating background information on both the history of the Cafe and its purveyors, its recipes seem unduly impressed with themselves and somewhat precious. The esoteric nature of many of the ingredients provokes a cumulative eye-rolling effect, and to tell the truth, some recipes (Spaghetti with Herb Meatballs) that you would expect to elevate the mundane end up tasting... well, mundane. Great for reading, so-so for cooking. I love you Alice Waters, but I think I'll stick to eating your food.

I have a lot of respect for Alice Waters. She plays a positive, constructive role in promoting excellent, healthy food in this country. I wish, however, she had taken more care over the quality of the product that has her name on it, The Chez Panisse Cafe Cookbook. Obscure ingredients intrigue me and, because I live in northern California, I'm likely to find a lot of them. What annoys me is sloppy editing that can lead to their wastage. Too many of the recipes are unclear. My complaint has nothing to do with my experience as a cook. The flours in the pizza dough recipe could have been described more clearly. Where was the editor? Why didn't Ms Waters' read her galleys closely? I want to point out one more recipe to show how the small things matter. In the recipe that calls for bottarga (dried tuna or spelt roe that comes in small quantities, costs a fortune and can only be found at an Italian supermarket in Sacramento, as far as I know), saffron and lemon over spaghetti, the directions are to shave the bottarga over the spaghetti. Now that I've made bottarga with spaghetti and lemon (but not the saffron) several times, there is no way that shaving the bottarga (at \$40 for a couple of ounces!) helps melt it over the spaghetti. Why wasn't grating called for? It's a minor detail, but when expensive ingredients are involved, I'd like to have confidence in the cookbook writer when I try it. So, go back to Jean-George, Marcella, Lynn and even Jamie. Leave this one behind. Alice's food is best experienced in her restaurant.

I had made many things out of the book, and all have turned out delicious. The success of the dishes depends completely on having the highest quality, freshest ingredients available. If you can't get a hold of any pancetta or prosciutto, you're going to be really limited in what you can prepare from this book. The cookbook is definitely for a serious home cook, who's interested in spending time in the kitchen, making homemade sausages, experimenting with homemade pancetta, etc. If

that's you, you will love it!

Alice Waters is an amazing chef who's tastes buds are on the mark. If only my grocery store had all of the ingredients she calls for. I've made several recipes from this book, some simply, some with more flair. All with great success. There are many I'd love to try but not until I can find the ingredients she calls for. It's also one of the few in my collection that is simply gorgeous just to look at.

Previously bought the Chez Panisse Cookbook, was disappointed and then bought this one thinking it might be an improvement. Something about the recipes in these books leaves me cold. Either the recipes are unappealing, or they require exotic ingredients that are difficult to find in this part of the country. Also, not a lot of content for the price. I would not buy this until I had browsed it in a regular bookstore. Two mistakes are enough.

A wonderful book to cook with or just to read, but it may not be what you're looking for if you don't have access to the variety and quality of ingredients some Californians might take for granted. There is a great respect for the food and the land that comes through; it makes you feel like buying organic and planting a garden ... or moving to California.

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