

OVER 100
RECIPES

THE BACHELOR'S
GRUB GUIDE



*Easy Cooking
For Men*

ALASTAIR WILLIAMS

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Start Here . . .

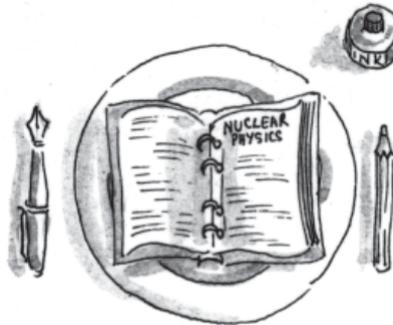
If this book has been bought for you in the hope of encouraging you towards the kitchen, other than to retrieve a cool beer or ice for a gin and tonic, I trust that you will take the time to read it. You might be pleasantly surprised to discover a world beyond microwave meals and fish and chips. There is a chance that you have bought this book for yourself because you have a desire to learn how to cook. Or maybe you've got a hot date with the most beautiful girl in town and all you can cook is fish fingers with chilli sauce. Perhaps your wife has given you an ultimatum - either you start to help with the cooking or you do your own washing. The book won't guarantee that you get your girl or manage to hold onto the one you've got, but it will teach you how to cook!

There are an awful lot of men out there who are struggling to get through the burger and baked bean barrier. Fear not, help is at hand. Although this book will not turn you into the next 'super chef', it will teach you how to cook a variety of meals ranging from simple dishes, such as scrambled eggs, to others that are more elaborate.

Cooking is regarded by many as a chore, its purpose being purely to sustain life with as little effort as possible. Perhaps you rarely cook for yourself, preferring to rely on others or on take-aways or ready-to-cook meals. If you are one such person then it's time to change. Being able to cook is not solely a useful social skill. It should provide enjoyment and entertainment. Not only is it nice to cook for a partner, it is something that can be enjoyed together. Another benefit from being able to cook is that it might get you out of the washing-up if you have prepared a meal.

As you learn more about cooking you will begin to learn more about food. Most chefs are as passionate about the ingredients as they are about cooking, inferior ingredients will normally result in an inferior meal. Cooking combines creativity, skill, timing and knowledge - plus at the end of it you can eat what you have created, which is one up on an oil painting! You might not give a stuff about how it looks provided it tastes good and there is plenty of it; each to their own. The intent of this book is simply to get you cooking, not to preach about etiquette and cuisine politics.

After a little use, you will notice the heavy influence of French Cuisine upon this book. There is a particular bias of cooking from the Provençal region, where I have spent a great deal of time over the last 13 years. I have been fortunate enough to meet people who share my passion for food and who have taken the trouble to impart knowledge, enthusiasm and guidance on many of the famous dishes from the region. There is always something new to learn, and I continue my quest with an open mind and an open mouth prepared for my next culinary adventure.



The Rudiments

Being a good cook does not mean that you have to be able to create dazzling masterpieces every time you enter a kitchen. Learning how to cook is a gradual process that takes time and patience. Even the most experienced chefs have disasters. Remember that cooking is an art not a science. You will find that even when you follow a recipe word for word it does not always turn out the way it should. I am not trying to shift the blame from any of the recipes that are in this book, but there are many factors that affect the final result and you have to be aware of this. If you repeat a recipe several times over it is unlikely that it will ever taste or look exactly the same. With experience you will learn how to adapt recipes to your own tastes and skills.

One of the best ways of improving your cooking is to watch other cooks. This is where you pick up the little tricks and secrets that will enable you to increase your knowledge and skill. Half the fun of cooking is in experimenting, using old skills and recipes and combining them with new ideas.

Kitchen Equipment

Any craftsman will have a set of tools that is essential to his trade. The same principle applies to the cook. There is a plethora of gadgets and gizmos on the market for cooks. It is very easy to believe that they are all essential, it is only when you see your cupboards bursting with juicers, sandwich makers, blenders, steamers, yoghurt makers etc that you realise you have little room left for the food. Although some gadgets can aid the chef - speeding up laborious tasks such as grating cheese - others are dispensable and will soon find their way to the back of the cupboard after the novelty has worn off. As a rule, it is far better to buy a few quality items than a number of inferior products. A frying pan that bends under the weight of a couple of sausages is going to be useless. Quality in cooking

equipment often equates to weight, a pan should have a thick bottom and a sturdy handle. However this does not mean that if you find a saucepan that is so heavy that you need to start body-building before you can pick it up, it is necessarily going to be the best.

Kitchen Knives

Investing in a quality set of knives is essential. Very few people have adequate kitchen knives, often relying on blunt flimsy instruments that are potentially dangerous. When choosing knives bear in mind for which job they are intended. It is sensible to have a selection of different sizes; it being difficult to use a 10 inch blade for peeling fruit. I generally use just two sizes, a small cook's knife with a 3 inch blade, and a large 7 inch knife. It is also useful to have a serrated knife for cutting fruit. If you have the choice between buying a cheap set of knives and a couple of high quality knives, go for the latter.

Freezer

If you are low on food or have an unexpected guest then there should hopefully be something in the freezer that you can use. This is where the problem begins: do you know what is in your freezer and, perhaps more importantly, how long it has been there? It amazes me how many people's freezer contents lack any type of a labelling. It is either a case of lucky dip or trying to feel what is wrapped up, which is no easy task when the items are frozen. I have heard these mystery items referred to as UFO's (unidentified frozen objects).

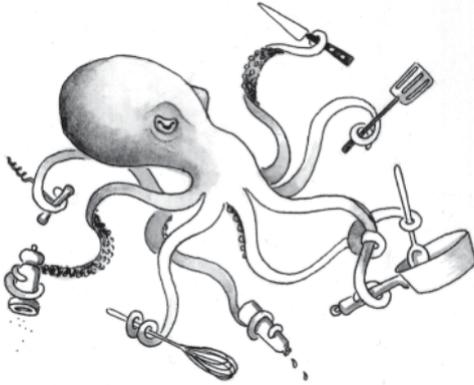
So it is essential that your freezer is organised: this will save you time and money.

- Label and date all the items in your freezer. It is also a good idea to keep a separate list on the outside of the freezer door which you can update every time you add or remove something.

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- Freezers run more efficiently when they are full, so try to keep your freezer well stocked even if it is half full of bread.

If you are going to make full use of your freezer then it is worth investing in a specific book that provides information on the different methods of preparing food for the freezer as well as telling you what can be frozen and for how long. Don't think that just because it is frozen you can retrieve a steak and kidney pie that your mother made for you in 1979.



Sensibility

Cooking combines a number of senses, with influences from both artistic and scientific domains. There is also the element of common sense. The recipes in this book are created with simplicity in mind, both in terms of implements and cooking skills required. However an element of common sense enters into the equation - I don't want to be held responsible for a person who ends up in the hospital burns department for having misunderstood the instruction "stand in boiling water for 20 minutes".

Another important point to remember is that all cooking times and temperatures are approximate. Not all ovens will take the same amount of time to cook a meal. If, for example, it is fan assisted you will have to allow for the extra efficiency. Cooking is ultimately intuitive and no amount of instructions can replace this. Before you try any recipe read through it first to make sure you have the ingredients and the time to prepare it.

The Kitchen

Just as a well organised garage has a wide selection of high quality tools and adequate working space, the same applies to the kitchen. The purpose of a kitchen is to prepare food, therefore the element of hygiene must not be ignored. If you are a bachelor then it is perfectly understandable to want to show your independence by being as messy as possible. However once you reach the stage of the overflowing bin surrounded by empty take-away boxes you know it is time to consider clearing up.

Although we usually have better things to do than worry about such trivialities as cleaning, I had better try to advocate virtuous behaviour, lest I become a target for irate girlfriends, wives and mothers. So to keep everyone happy good kitchen practice is to be recommended.

The three main areas are organisation, safety, and hygiene.

Organisation and Safety:

- **Keep heavy items in the lower cupboards.**
- **Never use a stool to stand on whilst trying to reach an object. Even a chair can be unstable. So ideally you should have a small kitchen step ladder.**
- **The kitchen should be well ventilated so that fumes and heat are removed quickly.**
- **There should be plenty of light, natural or artificial.**
- **Fire blanket and extinguisher should be kept handy.**
- **Keep cupboards tidy.**
- **Take care with the positioning of pans on your cooker. Remember to keep the handles from protruding over the edge of the cooker.**
- **Make sure that handles on pots and pans are not loose.**
- **Keep an eye out for damaged flexes on electrical appliances such as toasters and kettles.**
- **Use caution when using electrical gadgets such as blenders and food processors.**
- **Keep matches and sharp knives out of the reach of children.**
- **Knives should be kept sharp, as a blunt knife can slip when cutting and cause an accident.**

- **Kitchen knives should be kept in a knife block. Keeping them in a drawer not only causes the knives to lose their sharpness, it also makes it too easy to cut oneself.**
- **Never learn to juggle using kitchen knives. Old socks filled with rice make a safer alternative. Any type of rice will do, except egg-fried rice.**

Fat Fires:

If you should experience a pan of fat igniting then remain calm and follow these rules.

- **Never throw water on top of the oil - this will make it worse.**
- **Turn off the gas or electric hob if you can safely do so, otherwise wait until the fire has been extinguished.**
- **The most effective way to put out a fat fire is to get a dampened tea towel and place it over the top of the pan. Do not remove it for at least five minutes after the flames have subsided.**
- **If the fire is out of control, call the fire brigade and leave the house.**

If you have children make sure they understand the kitchen is not an extension of the playground.



Hygiene:

Not wishing to get into the gory details, being violently sick is usually a consequence of bad hygiene. Harmful bacteria can spread quickly in the right conditions, so here are a few guide-lines.

- All surfaces such as worktops, floors and cookers should be cleaned regularly, preferably every day.
- Never let your kitchen surfaces get cluttered. Clean up as you go along. This makes food preparation easier as well as reducing the burden of cleaning at the end of the process.
- Clean the door seals on fridges and freezers on a regular basis.
- Keep cooking utensils clean.
- Don't leave meat or fish out of the fridge for any lengthy period, especially if it has been cooked.
- Throw away food that passed its 'use by' date.
- Wash all fruit and vegetables.
- Make sure meat is sufficiently cooked. If you are having your meat rare, it must be as fresh as possible.
- Allow large pieces of frozen meat to defrost completely before cooking.



Weights And Measures



There are certain things that indicate our age. Comments such as ‘during the war’ and ‘I remember when you could get a couple of lamb chops for a shilling’, are a real giveaway as to our age. You might be asking what a couple of lamb chops and ‘The War’ have to do with food? Well not a lot, but somewhere in the mists of time the country went metric. Those Imperial days are now long gone, but many people still prefer to think in Imperial weights and measures, as I do myself. Hence the need to be able to convert Metric to Imperial and vice versa. Other amounts are referred to in spoons or cups which are self-explanatory.

The following abbreviations are used:

Tbs = Tablespoon

Tsp = Teaspoon

If you don’t possess a set of kitchen weighing scales then it is possible to convert certain ingredients into spoon measures. Obviously the weights of all ingredients will vary, but here are some rough measures...

1 Tbs = 1 oz (25g) of...syrup, jam, honey etc

2 Tbs = 1 oz (25g) of...butter, margarine, lard, sugar

3 Tbs = 1 oz (25g) of...cornflour, cocoa, flour

4 Tbs = 1 oz (25g) of...grated cheese, porridge oats

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All spoon measures refer to level spoons, not heaped.

1 tsp (teaspoon) = 5ml

1 tbs (tablespoon) = 15 ml

1 mug of rice weighs roughly 8 oz (225g)

The approximations used for conversion between Metric and Imperial in this book are as follows...

1 oz = 25g

3 oz = 75g

6 oz = 150g

1 lb = 500g

2 oz = 50g

4 oz = 100g

8 oz = 225g

1/4 pint = 150ml

1 pint = 600ml

1/2 pint = 300ml

2 pints = 1 litre

Gas Mark	Deg C	Deg F
1	140	275
2	150	300
3	170	325
4	180	350
5	200	400
6	225	425
7	230	450
8	240	475
9	250	500

Healthy Eating

Healthy eating has been in vogue for a while now. Fads change almost as frequently as the boffins change their minds as to what we should and should not be eating. There is increasing pressure to adopt a healthier lifestyle, take regular exercise and cut down on fatty foods (sounds like torture). Healthy eating is something that many of us pay little thought to - decadence is more fun, after all. But if your idea of a balanced diet means equal amounts of food to alcohol, you should read this section.

As the old saying goes 'we are what we eat': if you eat a lot of lard, you tend to look like it. Aside from the aesthetics; heart disease, high blood pressure and numerous other illnesses are linked to poor eating habits.

In general a diet should be low in fat, cholesterol and salt, with a regular intake of the necessary vitamins.

If you want to stay healthy you must have a balanced diet. There are certain elements that are essential to achieve this.

Carbohydrates

These are the providers of energy and can be found predominantly in fruits, vegetables and grains.

Fats

We are constantly being reminded that we shouldn't be fat, for both health and aesthetic reasons. However it is not easy to do anything about it.

If you are confused by all the talk about different types of fats I will enlighten you. There are two basic types; saturated and unsaturated. The saturated fats are divided into polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats. The term 'fat' as we know it, usually refers to a substance of both poly and monounsaturated fats. It is the saturated fats that are detrimental to our health. Too much saturated