



Michael Symon's Live to Cook: Recipes and Techniques to Rock Your Kitchen

Michael Symon , Michael Ruhlman , Bobby Flay (Foreword)

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Hometown boy turned superstar, Michael Symon is one of the hottest food personalities in America. Hailing from Cleveland, Ohio, he is counted among the nation's greatest chefs, having joined the ranks of Mario Batali, Bobby Flay, and Masaharu Morimoto as one of America's Iron Chefs. At his core, though, he's a midwestern guy with family roots in old-world traditions. In *Michael Symon's Live to Cook*, Michael tells the amazing story of his whirlwind rise to fame by sharing the food and incredible recipes that have marked his route.

Michael is known for his easy, fresh food. He means it when he says that if a dish requires more than two pans to finish, he's not going to make it. Cooking what he calls "heritage" food—based on the recipes beloved by his Greek—Italian—Eastern European—American parents and the community in Cleveland—Michael draws on the flavors of traditional recipes to create sophisticated dishes, such as his Beef Cheek Pierogies with Wild Mushrooms and Horseradish, which came out of the pierogies that his grandpa made. Michael translates the influences of the diverse working-class neighborhood in which he grew up into dishes with Mediterranean ingredients, such as those in Olive Oil Poached Halibut with Fennel, Rosemary, and Garlic; Italian-style handmade pastas, like Linguini with Heirloom Tomato, Capers, Anchovies, and Chilies; and re-imagined Cleveland favorites, such as Mac and Cheese with Roasted Chicken, Goat Cheese, and Rosemary.

Part of Michael's irresistible allure on the Food Network comes from how much fun he has in the kitchen. To help readers gain confidence and have a good time, *Michael Symon's Live to Cook* has advice for cooking like a pro, starting with basic instructions for how to correctly use techniques such as braising, poaching, and pickling. There's also information on how caramelizing vegetables and toasting spices can give dishes a greater depth of flavor—instead of a heavy, time-consuming stock-based sauce—and why the perfect finishing touch to most meat or fish dishes can be a savory hot vinaigrette instead.

With fantastic four-color photography throughout and tons of helpful "Symon Says" tips, *Michael Symon's Live to Cook* is bound to get anyone fired up about getting into the kitchen and cooking up something downright delicious.

From the Hardcover edition.

Michael Symon's Live to Cook: Recipes and Techniques to Rock Your Kitchen Details

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From Reader Review Michael Symon's Live to Cook: Recipes and Techniques to Rock Your Kitchen for online ebook

Nikki says

This is a terrific and interesting cookbook from one of my favorite chefs. What's best in here are the recipes certainly but the stories and tips that Symon offers as well. I don't know how many things out of this cookbook I will actually make, some of the food is a little fussy for my tastes. I get that his food is more accessible say than his hero Thomas Keller but I don't actually see it as food that you can create easily at home. That's what kept it from five stars to me. I love this guys personality and his passion as a chef, the fact that he is full of love and kindness to the people who work for him goes a long way with me. I loved reading this cookbook but unfortunately cooking with it seems like it's not going to happen for me.

I will buy his next cookbook though - hell I may buy all his cookbooks because they are great reads on their own (credit must be given to his ghostwriter whom he acknowledges immediately).

I didn't like the black & white photos intermingled with color. Black & white photos have no business in food or cooking photography - ever. Even though they were mostly black & whites of Chef Symon, I still didn't like them.

I enjoy his shows on the Cooking Channel and Food Network and look forward to many more years of his passionate advice and thoughts on cooking. Yay for a Cleveland boy made good (one of my old hometowns)!

Lbaker says

Great book, lots of pork recipes.

Another cook book of complex recipes - what do you expect from an iron chef?

He's a great character on the series, and it comes through in the book, you can almost hear his giggle as you read this.

There are many recipes in here that I will never try, but there are some that I will.

If you read cookbooks for entertainment and inspiration as well as to figure out what to make for dinner, this is a very good book.

Paige says

I was given this book as a gift by a male friend. This is important because it's not the kind of book 1) that I would ever buy for myself or 2) that a woman would buy for another woman. It has lots of meat. It is not interested in healthy food in the least. It has recipes for things like pig's ears and deep-fried brussels sprouts. It is by a Food Network personality of dubious likability (that laugh -- uuuuuurrrrggghh). It has not one dessert recipe!

BUT, I have to say, it has actually improved my skills. I'm not sure if my kitchen is rocking yet, but I can now make a pretty great red sauce. My ability to infuse soups and sauces with big vegetable flavors has

probably doubled. And he has a very nice technique for saucing meat things with warm vinaigrettes that is very well suited for the home cook.

My advice is: if you want a book to wake up your dinner routine a bit, check this one out from the library. Look at the pictures. And then read the green and red "technique pages." To me, it's not really worth buying, but is worth extracting a little juice from.

Beth says

It's not often anymore that I read a cookbook and actually learn something. But that's just what happened in Live to Cook.

For example, I learned quite a bit about balancing flavors and that "when a dish fails, it's usually not because the flavors are bad, but rather because the flavors and textures are not balanced." You need to have a variety of flavors and textures in order to make a dish work. Ever since I learned this, I've been working on trying to make this happen more often in my own cooking.

Another tidbit of info I learned from this book that I've been using ever since I read it is that if you soak a sliced onion in water for a few minutes, "it takes away the raw bite out of the onion and keeps it light and crunchy." Sure enough, Symon is absolutely correct.

Oh, and Symon and I are in total agreement about vinaigrettes. The typical ratio of a vinaigrette is 3 parts oil to one part vinegar. I have always found that to be WAY too much oil, but every cooking show seems to proselytize about the 3 to 1 ratio. Symon says (ha! ha!) that 3 to 1 is way too much oil - just like me. Sweet! I do know what I'm talking about sometimes.

I have already made a few recipes from this book and each one has come out delicious. So not only is this a great book to learn something new, but it also has recipes worth making. I highly recommend the Lola Burger. I made it for dinner recently and it was so good I literally woke up the next morning thinking about that burger. My mouth is watering just thinking about it right now.

Suzanne says

Chef Symon is a hometown guy. I enjoyed his take on growing up & living in this area. While I don't think most of his recipes are my cup of tea exactly, I understand his approach to expanding the palate of such a culturally diverse city, as Cleveland (and the Midwest for that matter). I did enjoy his technique tips & can say I learned a few things.

MaryCarol says

quite disappointing. I enjoy watching The Chew on tv and Symon is a favorite on the show. this was his first published cookbook. meat, fat, salt are abundant. a few simple recipes but most are much more involved. I did enjoy his memories of his family and of his rise to being a rekmown chef.

Justin says

Not too many tips, not very healthy

Beth Jusino says

I'm not a celebrity chef follower, but I came to this book via an online recipe for macaroni and cheese with chicken, rosemary, and goat cheese. And it doesn't disappoint. Symon's full of ways to "fancy up" the hearty food that dieters fear and the rest of us love. Making my own sausages is beyond me, and I found most of his meat to be too complicated for what I'm willing to take on. But from the recipes I did pick up, nothing has failed me yet. Try the zucchini fritters, the spicy tomato soup with blue cheese (probably the best tomato soup I've ever had), and of course, the mac 'n cheese.

Delilah says

This is a pretty cool book in that it's half cook book, half autobiography. Michael Symon is Cleveland's own local hero and Iron Chef. We grew up in the same area and are about the same age. It's amazing that he was just a little wrestler guy growing up in North Olmstead, going to St. Ed's. Worked at Gepetto's in high school then later at Player's in Lakewood when he was fresh out of culinary school in NYC. He is Greek, Italian and Hungarian. I attended the book signing at Borders and bought two copies, one for myself and one that will be a gift to someone. I made the first recipe in the book and was extremely impressed. It was slow-roasted halibut with caramelized lemon-butter sauce but I substituted walleye.

Linda says

I wrote just after starting it that I loved it was more than a cookbook of recipes, it was a slice of Michael Symon's life in the most real sense. There are family pictures and family recipes along with tales of his life along the way of reaching national fame. Some amazing and interesting recipes that reflect his ethnic heritage and the proud tradition of the Midwest. Read it and rock on....

Robert Beveridge says

Michael Symon and Michael Ruhlman, Michael Symon's Live to Cook: Recipes and Techniques to Rock Your Kitchen (Clarkson Potter, 2009)

If you follow Michael Symon online at any of the various social networking sites, you know he can be kind of abrasive. I can rationalize it all I want, but in the end, "it's all about the passion for the food" and "well, he DID grow up in Cleveland" are just excuses. Hell, I grew up in Pittsburgh, and if you want somewhere less tactful than Cleveland...

Michael Ruhlman, on the other hand, in many of his books embodies both passion and tact. Where I'm a big fan of Symon's cooking (if you've been to Cleveland and not noshed at Lolita, you need to come back for the sole purpose of doing so), I'm an even bigger fan of Ruhlman's writing, both in his exquisite cookbooks (Charcuterie barely missed my best-I-read list last year) and when he's off on some entirely different obsession (Wooden Boats: In Pursuit of the Perfect Craft at an American Boatyard). Which makes it doubly depressing that Ruhlman, despite having a co-writing credit, seems to have done nothing but penned an introduction.

The good part about the book should be obvious, and it's where most cookbooks begin and end: the recipes. My god, the recipes. Symon's reputation was built on taking blue-collar food and making it haute cuisine, and there are more examples in here than you could probably make in a year. Confited pigs' ears with shaved fennel salad. I mean, man, that's genius, and I am not being sarcastic in the least. (This is the guy who got my wife, a picky eater extraordinaire, to try—and love—gnocchi with pork belly ragout.) More than that, while I'm sure many chefs understand that salt is less a seasoning than it is some sort of magic, Symon is the first chef I've read who explicitly spells it out. Devotes a whole page to the process of salting one's food while cooking, in fact. (Unfortunately, he also continues the trend in chefs for prejudice against one of life's finest spices, plain old yellow mustard. What's up with that, guys?)

The bad part about the book is that if you find Symon's demeanor abrasive in tweets, you get two hundred-odd pages of it concentrated here. You'll probably find the book a little tough to take. And thus, I can't give it a straight-out recommendation for everyone; check it out in the bookstore, sample a few non-recipe pages, and see what you think. You may end up passing on it, but I warn you that if you do, you'll be missing out on some fabulous recipes. Pick this up and you might even manage to get your family to eat shaved fennel salad. (Everyone should. Shaved fennel salad is one of life's true pleasures.) ***

Cathy says

A great cookbook that's also fun to read. Symon shares a lot of his personal story, professional tips and cooking advice along with the recipes. Some recipes would be easy enough for beginners. Others only vets would probably tackle, but tips or ideas could be derived from even the most exotic. My only criticism is some design elements. The font used for the recipe list at the beginning of each chapter is cool-looking, kind of tattoo-like, but nearly impossible to read. Some of the stories are also white text on darker backgrounds, which a lot of people enjoy for blogs but I have a hard time seeing. But the pictures are terrific, and the rest of the book is bright and lovely.

Lee says

o.k., sorry, but I don't cook with these ingredients!!!

crispy pig's ears, beef cheek pierogies, pigs-head ragu, foie gras bratwurst, and more...

pickled lambs tongue, and pork cheek chili. Not only would I not cook with them, I wouldn't buy them and have them in the house or even order them in a restaurant. Call me boring, but I guess there are more food I won't eat than I realized!

Christy says

I didn't think the tips were all that useful, but maybe they would be if I ate meat. Only a few of the recipes intrigued me but I'll have to try them. And I didn't like the book design - some of the font choices didn't jive to my eye and one of the recipes didn't start at the top of the page, which I think is ridiculous. But that's a designer for you - you can't turn it off.

April says

This was a great book with easy, tasty-sounding recipes. It also provided insight into Mr. Symon's life and explained how important he thinks food is to socializing, spending time with family, and bringing together friends. I recommend this book not only if you love to cook, but if you are looking for a heartfelt read, as well.
