

The French Laundry Cookbook (The Thomas Keller Library)

By Thomas Keller

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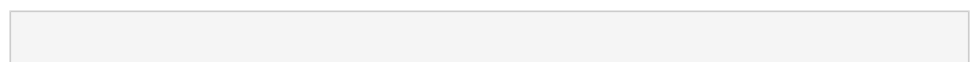
The French Laundry Cookbook (The Thomas Keller Library) By Thomas Keller

2014 marks the twentieth anniversary of the acclaimed French Laundry restaurant in the Napa Valley—“the most exciting place to eat in the United States” (*The New York Times*). The most transformative cookbook of the century celebrates this milestone by showcasing the genius of chef/proprietor Thomas Keller himself. Keller is a wizard, a purist, a man obsessed with getting it right. And this, his first cookbook, is every bit as satisfying as a French Laundry meal itself: a series of small, impeccable, highly refined, intensely focused courses.

Most dazzling is how simple Keller's methods are: squeegeeing the moisture from the skin on fish so it sautées beautifully; poaching eggs in a deep pot of water for perfect shape; the initial steeping in the shell that makes cooking raw lobster out of the shell a cinch; using vinegar as a flavor enhancer; the repeated washing of bones for stock for the cleanest, clearest tastes.

From innovative soup techniques, to the proper way to cook green vegetables, to secrets of great fish cookery, to the creation of breathtaking desserts; from beurre monté to foie gras au torchon, to a wild and thoroughly unexpected take on coffee and doughnuts, *The French Laundry Cookbook* captures, through recipes, essays, profiles, and extraordinary photography, one of America's great restaurants, its great chef, and the food that makes both unique.

One hundred and fifty superlative recipes are exact recipes from the French Laundry kitchen—no shortcuts have been taken, no critical steps ignored, all have been thoroughly tested in home kitchens. If you can't get to the French Laundry, you can now re-create at home the very experience *Wine Spectator* described as “as close to dining perfection as it gets.”



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

To eat at Thomas Keller's Napa Valley restaurant, The French Laundry, is to experience a peak culinary experience. In *The French Laundry Cookbook*, Keller articulates his passions and offers home cooks a means to duplicate the level of perfection that makes him one of the best chefs in the U.S. and, arguably, the world.

This cookbook provides 150 recipes exactly as they are used at Keller's restaurant. It is also his culinary manifesto, in which he shares the unique creative processes that led him to invent Peas and Carrots--a succulent pillow of a lobster paired with pea shoots and creamy ginger-carrot sauce--and other high-wire culinary acts. It offers unimagined experiences, from extracting chlorophyll to use in coloring sauces to a recipe for chocolate cake accompanied by red beet ice cream and a walnut sauce. You are urged to follow Keller's recipes precisely and also to view them as blueprints. To keep them alive, they must be infused with your own commitment to perfection and pleasure, as you define those terms.

Keller's story, shared through the writing of Michael Ruhlman, shows how this chef was both born and made. After winning rave reviews when he was still in his 20s, it took a more experienced chef throwing a knife at him because he did not know how to truss a chicken to open his eyes to the importance of the discipline and techniques of classical French cooking. To acquire these fundamental skills, he apprenticed at eight of the finest restaurants in France.

Grounded in classic technique, Keller's cooking is characterized by traditional marriages of ingredients, assembled in breathtakingly daring new ways, such as Pearls and Oyster, glistening caviar and oysters served on a bed of creamy pearl tapioca. Continually piquing the palate, his meals are a procession of 5 to 10 dishes, all small portions vibrantly composed. For example, Pan Roasted Breast of Squab with Swiss Chard, Seared Foie Gras, and Oven-Dried Black Figs require just three birds to serve six. The result: you are never sated, always stimulated.

The 200 photographs by Deborah Jones include more than just beauty shots: they show how to prepare various dishes; how Keller, shown stroking a whole salmon, respects his ingredients; and how the perfection of baby fava beans still nestled in the downy lining of their succulent pod, or the seduction of an abundance of fresh caviar, calls out the best from the chef. --*Dana Jacobi*

From Publishers Weekly

"Cooking is not about convenience, and it's not about shortcuts. Take your time. Move slowly and deliberately, and with great attention," writes Keller, the owner of the French Laundry in Napa Valley who was named 1997's best chef in America by the James Beard Foundation. At a decidedly unhurried pace, Keller delivers 150 recipes that reflect the perfectionism that catapulted him to national acclaim. With few exceptions (e.g., Gazpacho, Eric's Staff Lasagne), recipes are haute, labor-intensive preparations: Lobster Consommé en Gelée, Warm Fruitwood-Smoked Salmon with Potato Gnocchi and Balsamic Glaze, or Braised Stuffed Pig's Head. Tongue-in-cheek recipe names like "Macaroni and Cheese" (aka Butter-Poached Maine Lobster with Creamy Lobster Broth and Mascarpone-Enriched Orzo) and "Banana Split" (actually, Poached Banana Ice Cream with White Chocolate-Banana Crepes and Chocolate Sauce) belie the complexity of the dishes. Throughout, Keller conveys his vision as a culinary artist in spare, meticulous prose, emphasizing form over expedience: "the great challenge [of cooking] is... to derive deep satisfaction from the mundane." (Nov..

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From Library Journal

Although this stunning work is structured in chapters ranging from canapés to desserts, to consider it merely a "cookbook" would be to trivialize its content and impact. The French Laundry (in Yountville, CA) is one of the most important restaurants in the United States, and owner Keller is an articulate chef with culinary principles. His philosophy: the palate gets weary, so small and often exotic courses should be designed to maximize the experience of each flavor and texture. He defends tradition, e.g., chickens must be trussed, and yet each recipe is startlingly original. Although this is a complex book for the average busy person--Keller advises: "Take your time. Take a long time"--there are also fairly simple dishes. Epitomizing a love of ingredients (there is a resource guide to esoterica) and an almost magical approach to food, this is required for any real "cookbook" collection.

-Wendy Miller, *Lexington P.L., KY*

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Corey Mason:

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