

The Books that Cook Reading List

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A book that “cooks” is one that includes bona fide recipes in the text, which means it can be a literary cookbook but also a novel, a memoir, a collection of essays, a polemic, a book of poems, a graphic narrative, or a children’s book. Sometimes foodie films or television shows also depict visual recipes for a viewer.

The following list is by no means exhaustive, but I have read, viewed, or taught almost all of these texts as part of various iterations of upper-level classes I’ve developed in the literatures of food over the past 25 years. These include the class I’ve offered the most called “Books that Cook”—a seminar I’ve taught regularly at St. Mary’s College in Maryland but also in Alba, Italy and at Baylor University—and also one titled “Just Food: American Food Writing and Social Justice,” which I’ve also offered at St. Mary’s but have also taught at the University of Amsterdam when I was a Fulbright Scholar. This year, I also developed a new culinary writing workshop, called “Food Writing: A Tasting Menu.”

In addition, some of these texts appear in my co-edited anthology *Books that Cook: The Making of a Literary Meal* (NYU Press 2014); within the 10 lectures on various genres of food writing I recorded for Audible.com (2021), *Books that Cook: Food & Fiction*; or between the covers of my forthcoming anthology *Good Eats: 32 Writers on Eating Ethically* (NYU Press 2024).

May you enjoy consuming these texts with your eyes, your mouth, and your mind!

Children’s Books with Recipes

Everybody Cooks Rice by Nora Dooley (1995)

Everybody Bakes Bread by Nora Dooley (1995)

The Apple Cake by N. Van Hichtum (1996)

Thunder Cake by Patricia Polacco (1997)

The Day Piero Spilled the Soup by Dino Cortopassi (1998)

Pumpkin Soup by Helen Cooper (1998)

Wednesday is Spaghetti Day by Cocca-Leffler (1999)

Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride by Pam Munoz Ryan (1999)

Cackle Cook’s Monster Stew by Patricia Rae Wolff (2001)

Stone Soup by Jon J. Muth (2003)

Fannie in the Kitchen: The Whole Story from Soup to Nuts of How Fannie Farmer Invented Recipes with Precise Measurements by Deborah Hopkinson (2004)

Cook-a-Doodle-Do by Janet Stevens and Susan Stevens Crummel (2005)

Pop Pop and Me, and a Recipe by Irene Smalls (2014)

Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story by Kevin Noble Maillard (2019)

Freedom Soup by Tami Charles (2019)

Great Grub from the Meerkat Cafe: A Safari Cooking Adventure in your own Burrow by Pam Bennett-Wallberg (2020)

Follow the Recipe: Poems about Imagination, Celebration, and Cake by Marilyn Singer (2020)

Novels with Recipes

Little House in the Big Woods by Laura Ingalls Wilder (1931)

Sassafras, Cypress & Indigo by Ntozake Shange (1982)

Heartburn by Nora Ephron (1983)

Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café by Fannie Flagg (1987)

Like Water for Chocolate by Laura Esquivel (1995)

Olivia or the Weight of the Past by Judith Rossner (1995)

Big Night: A Novel with Recipes by Joseph Tropiano (1996)

The Priest Fainted: A Novel by Catherine Temma Davidson (1998)

Chocolat by Joanne Harris (1999)

My Year of Meats by Ruth Ozeki (1999)

Feeding Christine by Barbara Chepaitis (2001)

The Debt to Pleasure by John Lanchester (2001)

Secrets of the Tsil Café by Thomas Fox Averill (2002)

The Food Taster by Peter Elbing (2003)

Keeping House: A Novel in Recipes by Clara Sereni (2005)

Broccoli and Other Tales of Food and Love by Lara Vapnyar (2008)

Kitchen Chinese by Ann Mah (2010)

The Hundred-Foot Journey by Richard C. Morais (2010)

Edible Stories by Mark Kurlansky (2010)

Letters from Wishing Rock: A Novel with Recipes by Pam Stucky (2011)

A Table by the Window: A Novel by Hillary Manton Lodge (2014)

A Carol Dickens Christmas by Thomas Fox Averill (2015)

Delicious Foods by James Hannaham (2015)

Kitchens of the Great Midwest: A Novel by Ryan Stradal (2015)

Christmas Days: 12 Stories and 12 Feasts for 12 Days by Jeanette Winterson (2016)

Supper Club by Lara Williams (2019)

Search by Michelle Huneven (2022)

Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus (2022)

Memoirs / Polemics / Essay Collections with Recipes

The Art of Eating by M. F. K. Fisher (1949)

The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book by Alice B. Toklas (1954)

Vibration Cooking or the Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl by Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor (1992)

An Unspoken Hunger: Stories from the Field by Terry Tempest Williams (1994)

Under the Tuscan Sun by Frances Mayes (1997)

Through the Kitchen Window: Women Explore the Intimate Meanings of Food and Cooking edited by Arlene Voski Avakian (1997)

Never Eat Your Heart Out by Judith Moore (1997)

Home Cooking by Laurie Colwin (1988)

We Are What We Ate edited by Mark Winegardner (1998)

Pass the Polenta: And Other Writings from the Kitchen by Teresa Lust (1998)

Consuming Passions: A Food-Obsessed Life by Michael Lee West (1999)

If I Can Cook / You Know God Can by Ntozake Shange (1999)

The Kitchen Congregation by Nora Seton (2000)
My Story as Told by Water by David James Duncan (2001)
Monsoon Diary: A Memoir with Recipes by Shoba Narayan (2003)
Sustenance & Desire: A Food Lover's Anthology of Sensuality and Humor edited by David R. Godine (2004)
Hallelujah! The Welcome Table: A Lifetime of Memories with Recipes by Maya Angelou (2004)
Toast by Nigel Slater (2005)
Heat: An Amateur's Adventures as Kitchen Slave, Line Cook, Pasta-Maker, and Apprentice to a Dante-Quoting Butcher in Tuscany by Bill Buford (2007)
The Omnivore's Dilemma by Michael Pollan (2007)
Animal, Vegetable, Miracle by Barbara Kingsolver (2008)
Gumbo Tales by Sara Roahen (2008)
Eating Animals by Jonathan Safran Foer (2010)
The Chicken Chronicles by Alice Walker (2012)
Relish: My Life in the Kitchen by Lucy Knisley (2013)
Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking: A Memoir of Food and Longing by Anya Von Bremzen (2014)
My Soul Looks Back: A Memoir by Jessica B. Harris (2017)
Meaty: Essays by Samantha Irby (2018)
Notes from a Young Black Chef by Kwame Onwachi (2019)
Crying in H Mart by Michelle Zauner (2021)
Taste: My Life Through Food by Stanley Tucci (2021)

Culinary Poetry

The Back Country (specifically "How to Make Stew in the Pinacate Desert") by Gary Snyder (1968)
John Keat's Porridge: Favorite Recipes of American Poets edited by Victoria McCabe (1975)
Hunger's Table: Women, Food, & Politics by Margaret Randall (1997)
Paperwork (specifically "The Poet in the Kitchen" and "The Poem of Chicken Breast with Fettuccine") by David Citino (2003)
The Sound of Poets Cooking edited by Richard Krawiec (2010)
The Hungry Ear: Poems of Food and Drink edited by Kevin Young (2012)
O Taste and See: Food Poems edited by David Lee Garrison and Terry Hermsen (2023)

Food Films

Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory directed by Mel Stuart (1971)
Diner directed by Barry Levinson (1982)
Eating Raoul directed by Paul Bartel (1982)
Tampopo directed by Juzo Itami (1985)
Heartburn directed by Mike Nichols (1986)
Babette's Feast directed by Gabriel Axel (1987)
The Cook, the Thief, his Wife, and her Lover directed by Peter Greenaway (1989)
Fried Green Tomatoes directed by Jon Avnet (1991)
Like Water for Chocolate directed by Alfonso Arau (1992)
The Age of Innocence directed by Martin Scorsese (1993)
Food (or *Jidlo*) directed by Jan Svankmajer (1993)
Eat Drink Man Woman directed by Ang Lee (1994)
Chinese Feast directed by Tsui Hark (1995)
301/302 directed by Cheol-su Park (1995)

Big Night directed by Stanley Tucci and Campbell Scott (1996)
Chocolat directed by Lasse Hallström (2000)
A World of Food directed by Dane Archer (2000)
Mostly Martha directed by Sandra Nettelbeck (2001)
Tortilla Soup directed by Maria Ripoll (2001)
Sideways directed by Alexander Payne (2004)
Supersize Me directed by Morgan Spurlock (2004)
The Future of Food directed by Deborah Koons (2004)
Fast Food Nation directed by Richard Linklater (2006)
No Reservations directed by Scott Hicks (2007)
Ratatouille directed by Brad Bird & Jan Pinkava (2007)
Waitress directed by Adrienne Shelly (2007)
Lemon Tree directed by Eran Riklis (2008)
The Garden directed by Scott Hamilton Kennedy (2008)
Food, Inc. directed by Robert Kenner (2008)
Bottle Shock directed by Randall Miller (2008)
Julie & Julia directed by Nora Ephron (2009)
Fresh: New Thinking about What We're Eating directed by Ana Sofia Joanes (2009)
Ingredients directed by Robert Bates (2009)
Toast directed by S. J. Clarkson (2010)
Forks Over Knives directed by Lee Fulkerson (2011)
Butter directed by Jim Field Smith (2011)
Vedicated directed by Marisa Miller Wolfson (2012)
The Lunchbox directed by Ritesh Batra (2013)
Chef directed by Jon Favreau (2014)
Fed Up directed by Stephanie Soechtig (2014)
The Trip to Italy directed by Michael Winterbottom (2014)
The Hundred-Foot Journey directed by Lasse Hallström (2014)
Food Fight directed by Chris Taylor (2015)
The Pickle Recipe directed by Michael Manasseri (2016)
Food Choices directed by Michal Siewierski (2016)
The Founder directed by John Lee Hancock (2016)
Cook Up a Storm directed by Raymond Yip (2017)
Supersize Me 2: Holy Chicken directed by Morgan Spurlock (2017)
Eating Animals directed by Christopher Dillon Quinn (2017)
Wasted! The Story of Food Waste directed by Anna Chai & Nari Kye (2017)
Adam directed by Maryam Touzani (2019)
Délicieux directed by Éric Besnard (2021)
The Menu directed by Mark Mylod (2022)

