



From *Poor Girl Gourmet*.
Photo by Amy McCoy.

The Skinny on New Cookbooks:

Frugality in the Kitchen by Matt Sutherland

When James Carville said, “It’s the economy, stupid,” he wasn’t referring to trends in cookbook publishing—but he could have been. And neither was Marie Antoinette when she purportedly made her “Let them eat cake” remark about a million hungry Parisians unable to afford bread. (Historians generally agree it was said 100 years earlier by Marie-Therese, wife of Louis XIV.) The fact that troubled economic periods make it harder to put food on the table, if not to stay alive, is one of history’s oldest lessons. In trying times, cooks suddenly need to stretch, innovate, apologize, and make do with less. Thankfully, cookbook publishers have lent a hand over the past 100 years or so, enabling cooks with limited means to show love at the table. The best of these books teach cooks how to plan meals, shop efficiently, buy in bulk, buy in season, buy local, keep a garden, can fruit and vegetables, replace expensive animal proteins with vegetable alternatives, and so on.



It is the rare project that provides the means to prepare near-Michelin-quality restaurant meals at very reasonable cost. The difference is technique; instead of boiling softball-size beets to be served with melted margarine, one could roast baby beet roots and serve them with their own caramelized greens and an effortless orange-walnut pesto.

Both preparations cost less than \$6. Which would you rather eat? *Poor Girl Gourmet: Eat in Style on a Bare-Bones Budget* (Andrews McMeel, 978-0-7407-8990-8) by Amy McCoy provides an extensive number of superb cost-cutting tips, as well as sophisticated yet unpretentious recipes (including the aforementioned baby beet dish), and may just be the best eat-well-for-less cookbook to date.

“When I’m creating something out of nothing, or turning the old into new, I really feel I am cooking.”

Beyond the economic reasons, there are soul-satisfying benefits to cooking well with frugal efficiency. In the introduction to *Supper for a Song: Creative Comfort Food for the Resourceful Cook* (Rizzoli, 978-0-8478-3423-5), Tamasin Day-Lewis writes, “When I’m creating something out of nothing, or turning the old into new, I really feel I am cooking. You could say it’s hard-times cookery, ‘willful waste makes woeful want,’ and all that, but it is so satisfying that ultimately it is less about the scrimping and saving and putting a secondhand rose on the plate than it is about showing you are a creative cook and can work with whatever you’ve got on hand.” A regular contributor to *Vogue*, *Saveur*, *Stella*, and *Reader’s Digest*, and the author of several cookbooks, Day-Lewis offers a slew of hearty and healthy recipes that avoid wastefulness (at all costs) and lead to spin-off dishes and delightful leftover makeovers, including wonderful ideas on how to make something delicious when you swear there’s nothing in the cupboard.



Lest we forget, vegetarian cuisine is based on vegetables—the healthiest, cheapest, extensive, eco-friendly, and inexhaustible category of food available.



Once upon a time, the word “cellar” implied dirt floors and root vegetables and not, as is the case now, \$25,000 humidity-controlled wine storage units stuffed full of vintage Bordeaux. *Recipes from the Root Cellar: 250 Fresh Ways to Enjoy Winter Vegetables* (Storey Publishing, 978-1-60342-545-2) by the eminently respected food writer Andrea Chesman, offers a stiff forearm to the oenophiles and reminds local, sustainable food artisans and penny-pinchers that nothing beats canning and preserving the bounty of your own garden. This is the path to eating seasonal and local produce year-round. Chesman offers 250 creative recipes grounded in staple dishes of Europe, Asia, and the Americas. From her Spicy Turnip Stir-Fry to Chicken in Red Wine with Root Vegetables, a trip down to the root cellar has never led to such delectable meals.



Lest we forget, vegetarian cuisine is based on vegetables—the healthiest, cheapest, extensive, eco-friendly, and inexhaustible category of food available. While some meat-minded diners continue to allocate just a small wedge of their dinner plate to plants, a burgeoning number are prioritizing their use of beans, greens, and grains with creative flair. Most American cooks, both professional and amateur, now realize there’s more than one way to skin a Catawba grape, and that boiling is almost always the worst way to prepare, well, just about any vegetable. *The Vegetarian Option* (Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 978-1-58479-847-7) addresses forty different vegetables, providing extensive combinations of ingredients that naturally complement each other. Authored by one of Britain’s most acclaimed food writers, Simon Hopkinson, this project will instantly expand your buddy list of favorite vegetables, herbs, legumes, and grains. In essay form, Hopkinson weaves a lifetime of food and culinary knowledge into each vegetable’s profile. In no way does “cookbook” adequately serve to describe this gem.



Another compelling culinary read, packaged in cookbook clothing, is *Flavors of Friuli: A Culinary Journey through Northeastern Italy* (Equilibrio, 978-0-9703716-1-4) by Elisabeth Antoine Crawford, a San Francisco writer and former professional dancer. Friuli-Venezia Giulia cuisine boasts a potpourri of influences including Roman, Venetian, Slavic, and Austro-Hungarian, and even hints of the Far East due to its proximity to trade routes. *Flavors of Friuli* includes 450 photos, eighty recipes, and wonderful side trips to quaint villages, food festivals, restaurants, cheesemakers, and pasticcerias. Wine lovers entranced by Friuli’s food should seek out the region’s clean, fresh, fruity white wines.

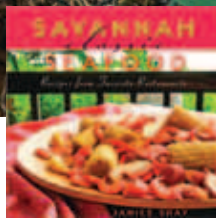


Another terroir-rich region with a surprisingly vibrant culinary scene is located in that stretch of picturesque mountains between the southern edge of North Carolina and central Virginia. Therein, organizations like Slow Food and Farm to Table are thriving, and dozens, if not hundreds, of small farms and specialty food artisans do brisk business. *The New Blue Ridge Cookbook: Authentic Recipes from Virginia’s Highlands to North Carolina’s Mountains* (Globe Pequot Press, 978-0-7627-5547-9) captures the region’s food vibe through numerous profiles of farms, regional ingredients (sweet potatoes, chanterelle mushrooms, Asian pears, etc.), farmers markets, and more. Author Elizabeth Wiegand has written for the *Washington Post*, *Southern Living*, and *Our State* magazine. She’s a member of the Southern Food Alliance and the author of *The Outer Banks Cookbook*.



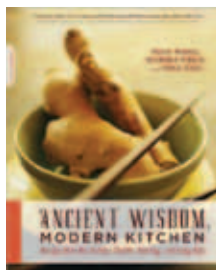


From Savannah Classic Seafood by Janice Shay, © 2010. Used with permission of the publisher, Pelican Publishing Company, Inc.



Savannah is the culinary heart of Low Country America and the region nearby is riddled with creeks, rivers, and marshes that placidly drain toward the Atlantic where they enrich the waters for the benefit of oysters, shrimp, crab and other delicacies. For a complete primer on how Savannah's best chefs prepare the seafood, we now can turn to *Savannah Classic Seafood: Recipes from Favorite Restaurants* (Pelican Publishing Company, 978-1-58980-744-0) by award-winning writer Janice Shay. Aside from the recipes, travel-loving epicureans can source this finely photographed project as a restaurant guide that puts Zagat and Michelin to shame.

In a narrow though important sense, cooking styles—Italian, Mexican, and Thai, for example—can rightfully serve a health-giving, spiritually nourishing role, much the same as specific foods, like quinoa, organic kale, or blueberries, for example. The idea is that combinations of ingredients cooked or prepared using specific techniques offer greater health benefits than the individual ingredients eaten on their own. Asian cooks versed in Chinese medicine have developed this approach into an art form. In fact, as we learn in *Ancient Wisdom, Modern Kitchen: Recipes from the East for Health, Healing, and Long Life* (Da Capo Lifelong, 978-0-7382-1325-5), Chinese medicine is wholly dependent on the premise of food as medicine. The book offers a brief overview of traditional medicine in China, compelling detail



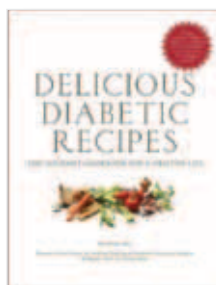
on life-giving Asian ingredients, and 150 recipes. Authored by two faculty members of the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine, Dr. Yuan Wang and Warren Sheir, and award-winning writer Mika Ono, *Ancient Wisdom, Modern Kitchen* will cause many a Western-minded cook to think anew about food and cooking.

As individual ingredients go, very few foodstuffs come close to quinoa when ranking the world's healthiest food. Containing all the essential amino acids, this grain-like fruit of a broadleaf plant is in the same family as spinach and beets. It is rich in vitamins E, B2, and B6, and numerous minerals, and has a higher calcium and iron content than oats, barley, wheat, rice, or corn.

Quinoa 365: The Everyday Superfood (Whitecap Books, 978-1-55285-994-0) offers 170 straightforward quinoa recipes, from Chocolate Quinoa Crepes with Bananas to Chili (beef-based) fortified with quinoa, and even a Spanakopita Frittata. Patricia Green and Carolyn Hemming, a healthy-food-loving pair of sisters, are to be commended for this high-quality project.



The Western world is late to the food-as-medicine movement, and certainly doesn't approach it with the same level of subtle, intuitive grace as the East, but with near epidemic levels of food-related health concerns—high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes—a concerted effort is afoot to change eating habits in the US, where a shocking 250,000 people die each year from diabetes-related complications alone. *Delicious Diabetic Recipes: The Gourmet Cookbook for a Healthy Life* (Imagine Publishing, 978-0-9822939-7-3), authored by Dr. Rani Polak, a Le Cordon Bleu-trained chef, offers epicurean-minded diners a splendid collection of healthy recipes. Without a hectoring, lecturing tone, Polak includes detailed nutritional information, smart substitutions, tips for lowering fat without losing flavor, and other helpful advice alongside nearly all the recipes.



For a frighteningly large percentage of society, anything put on a plate comes loaded with conflicting emotions—too expensive, ecologically destructive, raised inhumanely, fattening, decadent, unhealthy, or otherwise. To their immense credit, all of the aforementioned books encourage a slower and healthier approach to cooking and eating. With their help, cooks can find new ways to make food that is satisfying in multiple ways. **F**

VIN-SPIRED CHEFS & RECIPES

The main calling of a sommelier is to pour something in your glass to compliment what's on your plate. The fact that fermented grape juice is the most compelling companion to food necessitates that sommeliers concentrate foremost on becoming experts in thousands of different grape-growing regions, grape varietals, and styles of wine, as well as an equally large or larger number of sweet, sour, spicy, fatty (and so on) foods. Butter-laden foods, for example, need acidic wines to cut through the fat mouth-feel.

As the wine industry matures and exotic grape varietals became available in just about any wine shop, a growing number of epicureans have started to prioritize the wine element of food and wine pairing. They think: *I'd like a little more Aglianico in my life, so what should I eat to best showcase the character of the wine?*

In response to these trends, Master Sommelier Evan Goldstein has written *Daring Pairings: A Master Sommelier Matches Distinctive Wines with Recipes from His Favorite Chefs* (University of California, 978-0-520-25478-7) in which he focuses on thirty-six different grape varieties along with ideal food pairings. He calls upon thirty-six internationally acclaimed chefs to create dishes to pair with lesser known varieties like Mourvedre, Dolcetto, Roussanne, and Albarino, and the result is extraordinary. The son of legendary California chef Joyce Goldstein, Evan's culinary sensibility separates him from all other wine writers.

Matt Sutherland



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Handmade for simpler living

Feeding Your Inner Life in Outward Ways

by J. G. Stinson



Transitioning to a simpler, more self-sufficient life shows concern and compassion for the planet.

Current trends in this vein are increasing interest in the fiber arts (knitting, sewing, and weaving) and in simplified, green living, exemplified in such projects as growing a vegetable garden or buying used items instead of new.



Felting for Baby: 25 Warm and Woolly Projects for the Little Ones in Your Life (Trumpeter, 978-1-59030-716-8) by Saori Yamazaki features whimsical designs for the very young. The book's layout, finished-item photos, and project instructions in the back all are easy on the eyes. Yamazaki also includes how-to pages for new felters. While newborns quickly outgrow their clothes, anything made from this book would be a keepsake.

Originally published in Japanese, **Densho Origami: Traditional Japanese Figures for Everyone** (Kodansha International, 978-4-7700-3135-8), was translated by Derek Wilcox for this English edition. Origami is the Japanese art of folding paper into shapes representing objects. In this book, the figures are organized by fold type, which allows the learner to master foundation shapes, and then go on to add more complicated folds. Clear instructions and simple photos make this book a pleasant visual experience. For practical use, a spiral binding would be an improvement, but a good old-fashioned paperweight will work to hold the pages in place while trying out these projects.

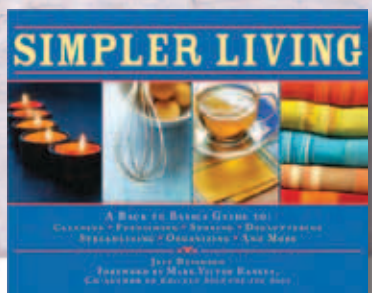
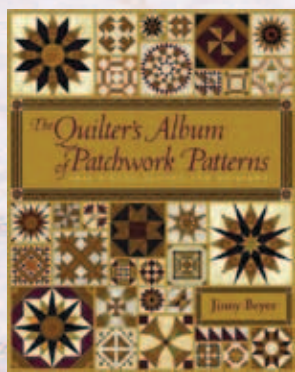
Considering all the socks lost every year to clothes dryers, books about making and re-using socks will never go out of style. In **Socks Appeal: 16 Fun and Funky Friends Sewn from Socks** (Stash, 978-1-60705-194-7), Brenna Maloney makes a convincing argument that socks are for more than just feet. The featured items are all animal figures that will appeal to children and adults alike—the kind with which kids will snuggle and adults will decorate their office spaces. The projects range in difficulty from beginning to intermediate, and Maloney's easy-to-follow text is often humorous. This is the perfect project book for crafters ready for something besides amigurumi.

When the yarn is spun and the socks and quilts are made, what next?





Current economic troubles have forced many families to tighten their purse strings...



Quilts are a time-honored method of using old clothes in new ways. Jinny Beyer follows her blocks and borders book from 1980 with **The Quilter's Album of Patchwork Patterns: 4044 Pieced Blocks for Quilters** (Breckling Press, 978-1-933308-08-1), a hefty tome of pieced blocks. Historical notes and design schematics are included, making this the ultimate quilt designer's resource. **Hop To It! Appliqued Blocks & Projects** (Landauer Books, 978-0-9818040-1-9) runs the gamut of this quilting form in well-organized fashion, providing tutorials on color choice and techniques, and easily-traced drawings of the designs. The instructions are clear and the photographs rich in color. This book is a deserving winner of the Midwest Independent Publishers Association's Midwest Book Award.

Yvonne R. Lockwood's **Finnish American Rag Rugs: Art, Tradition, and Ethnic Continuity** (Michigan State University Press, 978-0-87013-864-5) traces the connections between Finnish American experiences in the United States and their ancestral country. Rag rug weaving isn't limited to Finnish Americans, but Lockwood argues that their Finnish design styles and quality requirements place these rugs in a class of their own. The photographs throughout the book give credence to her position. Anyone who's ever contemplated making a rag rug would find useful information and inspiration in this book.

When the yarn is spun and the socks and quilts are made, what next? Jenna Woginrich answers these questions with **Made from Scratch: Discovering the Pleasures of a Handmade Life** (Storey Books, 978-1-60342-532-2). The memoir traces her journey toward becoming a homesteader, taking the reader to Tennessee, Idaho, and Vermont with stops along the way that record the trials and joys of a life reinvented. From friendly neighbors, Woginrich learns how to buy and raise chickens, keep bees, play fiddle, and plan a garden. Haunting antique stores, at first glance an indulgence, turns out to be a practical way to replace existing housewares. Most chapters end with the author's practical advice on what she's learned from living off the land. Her central premise—getting away from obsolescence and embracing quality instead of quantity—offers an option to contemporary urban and suburban life. Woginrich's comfy writing style and gentle humor make this book a must-read for anyone who dreams of a simpler, handmade life.

Simpler Living: A Back to Basics Guide to Cleaning, Furnishing, Storing, Decluttering, Streamlining, Organizing, and More (Skyhorse Publishing, 978-1-60239-976-1), by Jeff Davidson, is packed with common-sense advice on how to take care of both ourselves and material possessions in a less stressful way. This book answers those nagging questions such as "What does all that stuff on my shirt label mean?" or "How do I prioritize my work at the office?" It is, simply put, a manual for life. It isn't a book to read from beginning to end, but a manual to keep handy. It's an excellent resource for young adults beginning life away from their parents and should be handed out to every newlywed couple. As an experienced life coach, Davidson provides an expert perspective on modern life and its tendency to take over our lives, and the means by which we can slow down, take a deep breath and just enjoy the moment.

Current economic troubles have forced many families to tighten their purse strings or, in the least, take a hard look at *how* they're living their lives. Simple, handmade living can be adopted by those who enjoy crafting or for those who have a deeper commitment to reducing their dependence on commercially-produced goods. 🌱