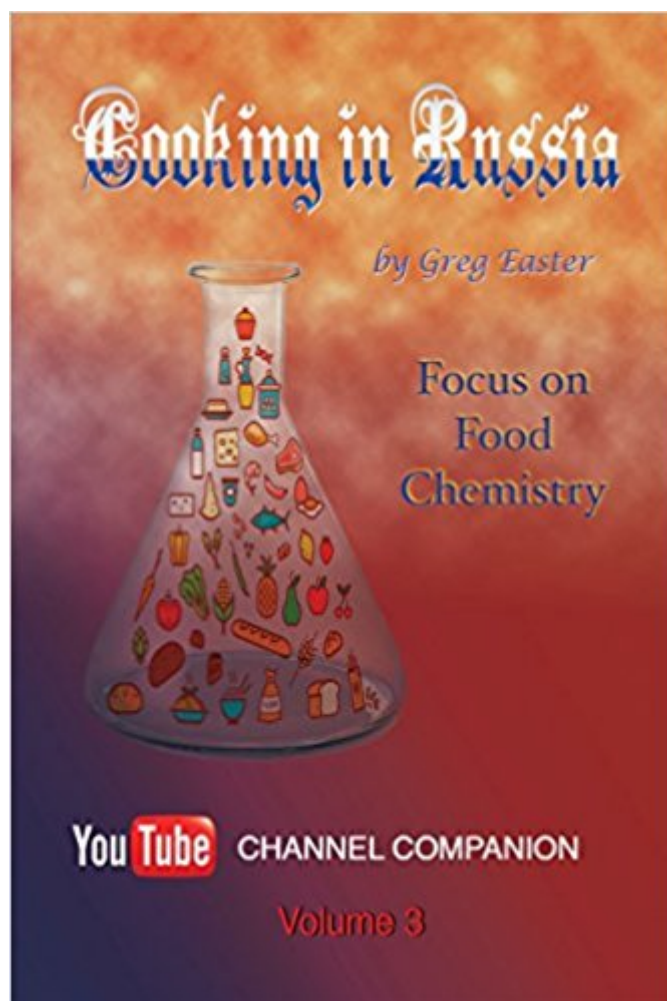


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Cooking In Russia - Volume 3: Focus On Food Chemistry



Synopsis

In this third installment the author expounds on the principles of organic chemistry as it relates to food science, interwoven with more than 50 detailed recipes, most of which have accompanying online videos. This unusual book fills a niche that is sorely missing in the literature. Namely, how specific flavors are produced by chemical reactions during cooking and how those reactions can be manipulated to improve results. There are diagrams, tables and explanations covering over 25 different topics. If you have ever wondered about such things as what the exact differences are between types of onions, or what bay leaves actually do at the chemical level, or what makes foods a certain color and what that color indicates, or why fresh tomatoes are sometimes combined with puréed tomatoes in sauces, or the science of how flambéing changes the flavor profile of a dish, or why stocks have to be simmered at a specific temperature for optimum results, and many other such questions, here are the scientifically accurate answers presented in clear language. The text is also sprinkled with tidbits of food history and a humorous take on life in restaurant kitchens. Perhaps even more valuable for chefs and serious cooks, the author introduces a never before seen method for producing your own tertiary flavorings, which are those psychologically tantalizing additives that are the trade secrets of commercial food manufacturers. Only instead of using bottles of chemicals, here this is accomplished using only natural foods, ordinary kitchen equipment and a brilliant novel technique. There is also an extensive glossary of terms relating to beers and wines at the back of the book. If you are an aspiring chef, you absolutely need this book. Understanding food chemistry has never been more important than in this age of molecular gastronomy. This isn't just dry theory. You will be able to make use of these methods in any commercial or home kitchen immediately.

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Customer Reviews

There is a question that has bedeviled home cooks for ages: Why does restaurant food taste so much better than what I make at home? Is it the ingredients? Years of TV cooking shows have left us with the idea that restaurants have access to a quality of fish, meat, & veg that are just not available to mere mortals. But, nowadays, supermarkets carry a pretty good selection of fresh foods, and farmer's markets and home gardens make fresh seasonal produce easily available to the home cook. And the truly exaotic stuff, like pickled tomatoes and the Khmeli Suneli spice blend Chef Easter used in the Russian variation on Ukrainian Tsatsebeli sauce, can be easily obtained via . Is it the equipment? Are home cooks handicapped because they don't have hand-forged, high-carbon steel knives, C-VAP ovens or a stove capable of volcanic heat output? Well, the favorite knife of the professional cooks at America's Test Kitchen is a stamped steel Victorinox. And pretty much anyone can improve the performance of an oven using an oven thermometer to map the hot spots and determine what the temperature of the oven actually is inside versus what the temperature controls says it should be. So if it's not the ingredients, and not the equipment, what is it that separates the professional from the amateur? I would say 3 things: Knowledge, Technique, and Time. When Greg Easter announced that the third volume of his "Cooking In Russia" series would focus on food chemistry, I thought "Great!" Even though I'm only a home cook, I have enjoyed experimenting with Modernist Cuisine kitchen chemistry techniques using chemicals like Agar Agar for gelling, calcium lactate and sodium alginate for Spherification, and Sodium Citrate for smoothing out a cheese sauce., so I figured I'd be picking up a few more tip, techniques, and recipes for using modernist chemicals to make unusual dishes. But I was wrong. When Easter said chemistry, he meant Chemistry. Starting with the fundamentals like atomic and molecular structure. In the introduction, Chef Easter draws a parallel between cooking and landing a Jumbo Jet in the fog. Well, I've never cooked in a commercial kitchen, but I have landed a Jumbo Jet in the fog and can say without fear of contradiction that the successful outcome of that maneuver begins long before you intercept the localizer. It begins way back in ground school when you study the aircraft's systems, how they work and, more important, how they relate to one another. The more systems knowledge you have, the better pilot you are. And that's what's unique about Greg Easter's books. They are not just collections of recipes scaled down for the home cook. They also give you the "systems knowledge" to build your understanding of what cooking is, and what is actually happening

when you mix ingredients and apply heat. For example: Many recipes call for the addition of water, or stock, or wine, or some other kind of alcohol. Most home cooks just assume that it's for their flavor but it's not just the flavor the liquor the cook is after. Some flavor chemicals are water soluble, some are oil soluble, and some are alcohol soluble, so the liquid is used to unlock flavors chemically bound within the other ingredients. And that's why if you substitute an extra measure of water in tomato sauce instead of vodka, or stock instead of wine in a gravy, the dish may still be good, but it is not as good as it could be. Volume 3 of this series covers in some depth the chemistry of flavors and how to unlock them. Anyone can grill a steak, or bake a chicken, or poach a piece of fish with a reasonable degree of success. What elevates a restaurant dish above a home cooked meal is often the sauce, or the sprinkled topping. But sauces and toppings take time to prepare and time is, in my opinion, what separates restaurant food from home cooked food. Restaurants take the time to prepare the sauces and other condiments in advance. So that's something a home cook can do to "up his game:" Learn how to "Time Shift" by preparing the difficult elements of a meal when you have time - like on the weekend - and then use the pre-made elements to raise your game during work week mealtimes. For Example: I live in the American South where barbecue is something of a religion and the devotees of St. Louis and Memphis style tomato-based barbecue sauces contra the partisans of North Carolina-style vinegar-based sauces are the Sunnis and Shiites of the barbeque world. In Volume 2 of his series, Chef Easter offers his recipe for "Port Wine Barbecue Sauce," and it does take some time and attention to make it (not to mention the Port Wine called for is kind of on the expensive side) but, regardless of which side of the barbecue sauce divide they fall on - Memphis or Carolina - I've never met anyone who didn't have the same reaction to the merest taste of this barbecue sauce: "Man, you gotta bottle this stuff! This sauce is just fantastic on pork ribs or pulled pork. For years I have tried to find a raw tomato I'd like to eat. Each year I grow a different variety trying to find one I like, but without success. Reading the section on Tomato Chemistry, I learned that my dislike of raw tomatoes is actually genetic and I am never going to find the right tomato. So then the question arises, what to do with all of the small, sweet, Grape and Cherry tomatoes I grew this year? Looking through Volume 3 I found a recipe for "Cherry Poppins Tomato Sauce." I love cooked tomatoes, so I followed the recipe exactly - including using a pressure cooker to make the sauce. When I was done I tasted it and thought, "Meh! It's a tomato sauce, but nothing special." Then, following Chef Easter's suggestion, I paired it with a piece of fish (salmon) and the combination was absolutely delicious! The sauce is more acidic than a pasta sauce and so wouldn't go well on macaroni but on a rich piece of fish like salmon it's brilliant! That sauce was the difference between an OK filet and a restaurant-quality meal at home. For years I have been a

practitioner of sous vide cooking. Cooking proteins low and slow in a tightly controlled water bath yields dishes you simply could not experience with any other cooking technique. In his book, Chef Easter offers a recipe using the sous vide technique: "Eye of Round Steak with improvised sous vide method." Now eye of Round roast is tasty, but it's lean and tough - exactly the cut of meat sous vide cooking excels at. Easter's technique is to use a Jacquard device to tenderize the meat, and then bag it together with some beef broth, for moistness, and herbs for flavor, then do the preliminary cooking for 2 hours in a 122 degree water bath before finishing it either in a rocket-hot pan or, in my case, on the grill. I was, at first, skeptical about the 122 degree temperature specified but, after following his directions exactly, the steak came out a perfect medium rare and was both tender and flavorful. Plus, this recipe gives you something to do with that FoodSaver vacuum sealer you got for Christmas and don't know what to do with because you can prepare the dish in advance, sous vide, refrigerate it, and then finish it just a few minutes before serving. Again, you're Time Shifting from when you do have time to cook to when you don't. So I would recommend any one or all 3 volumes of "Cooking in Russia" without hesitation. Any one of them can stand alone but, if you read all 3 - and I mean read them - you get a pretty comprehensive education in the rudiments of cooking. But more than that, I recommend, as you prepare a dish, that you use His YouTube videos as a guide while you work. Chef Easter gives you exact directions of how to prepare and cook the ingredients, even down to telling you the heat setting he is using on his stove - and he is using an electric stove just like in your home, not some restaurant range of a kind that you don't have access to. Follow his directions exactly as he tells you in the video and your results will come out exactly like his. I guarantee it. Oh, and one more thing that is unique with Chef Easter is that if you leave a comment below the video you will hear back from him, usually within a few hours. Up to this point I have been talking about home cooking, but there is something in this book for professionals as well. Greg Easter is unique in that he is not only a trained Chef, but also holds a Doctorate in Organic Chemistry. For professional chefs his explanations of the nuances of flavor chemistry may be most interesting. But even more interesting than that is his work using different types of flour as a catalyst to bring out different flavors using a method similar to the way a Cracking Plant distills out hydrocarbons into various useable products based on molecular weight. A bit advanced for us amateurs, but for those so inclined you might develop a whole new palette of flavors using his techniques.

If you are serious about cooking and want to learn about the chemistry of food, this is your book! It gets into the science of cooking, much more in depth than Alton Brown ever did. The author has a

degree in chemistry and over 40 years experience in the culinary world. He has combined science and art to give the reader an education on food on the molecular level. There is also several recipes from his you tube channel along with many spice mixtures he does not discuss on his channel. An all around great education for the serious home cook, as well as the professional chef who wants to further his knowledge of the culinary arts.

If you are a home cook who spends time searching Food Network looking to see what Sandra Lee made in 30 minutes, then this series is probably not for you. However, if you consider yourself a serious home cook who thought Alton Brown's Good Eats was revolutionary television, have a desire to learn what professionals know about making food taste great, and are weary of online cooking videos with high production values but suspect cooking techniques, then this series is for you. Chef Greg Easter makes improvements with each new volume of his Cooking in Russia YouTube Video Companion series, and Volume 3 is no exception. The books are designed to accompany the YouTube video series by providing printed ingredient lists and additional material not included in the videos. Volume 3 also includes the full recipe for each video. In some cases, the book provides advanced additions to a recipe not included in the YouTube video. Chef Easter, well aware of his fans' desire to expand their knowledge of what it takes to make food taste great, steps up his game and goes full monty on explaining how food really works. The Chef's scientist side comes out and he provides information on ingredients that one might find in a food science lab. This is detailed information that some may find more appropriate for a textbook, but the Chef's rationale is clear "that knowing how food works is important if you want to know how to make food taste great. I found the book to be full of information that was new to me. Probably the most important part of this cookbook is the section on spice blends and coatings. These flavor enhancements and tertiary seasonings are masterful science and culinary arts combined to create flavor combinations you can not buy in any store. These seasonings are powerful tools in creating extremely flavorful and delicious foods, and I assure you that you have never seen anything like these before. The educational content in this book provides detailed, technical facts about ingredients and methodology. It's both interesting and informative, and you will certainly learn something new about food and cooking. Chef Easter's extensive knowledge of world cuisines clearly presents itself because you just never know from what region he will pull a recipe from next as he continually adds to his video series. The title of the channel, Cooking In Russia, might make people believe that this is a collection of Russian recipes, which it is not. Even categorizes this book incorrectly by placing it in the Russian cookbook section. It's cooking

IN Russia because he's living in Russia and cooking a wide variety of food (yes, a few Russian-inspired recipes are included). I sure am glad I discovered Chef Easter's channel, and you will, too.

Incredibly talented and knowledgeable. Greg Easter has a Ph.D. in organic chemistry and applies this knowledge directly to cooking. I am a senior who has enjoyed great food for many years. Greg is a treasure trove of information, a good deal of which I have never heard before. Your typical TV cooks are rank amateurs compared to Greg. He explains everything he is doing and why he is doing it. Look at his French onion soup recipe on YouTube.com. Listen to his description of how and why he cuts his onions. I made this and the comments were "the best French onion soup I have ever had." The recipe is very easy, it just takes time to braise the onions. Then look at how other "professionals" make their version of French onion soup on YouTube.com. Their versions can't hold a candle to Greg's and violate a number of rules regarding the making of this soup. If I can make his French onion soup, so can you. Be sure to review all of his dishes/recipe on YouTube.com cooking In Russia. I purchased his first three books shortly after coming upon him, very worthwhile investment.

Frankly good

We want to marry this man and make omelettes with his sister. Tasty.

Awesome book...

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