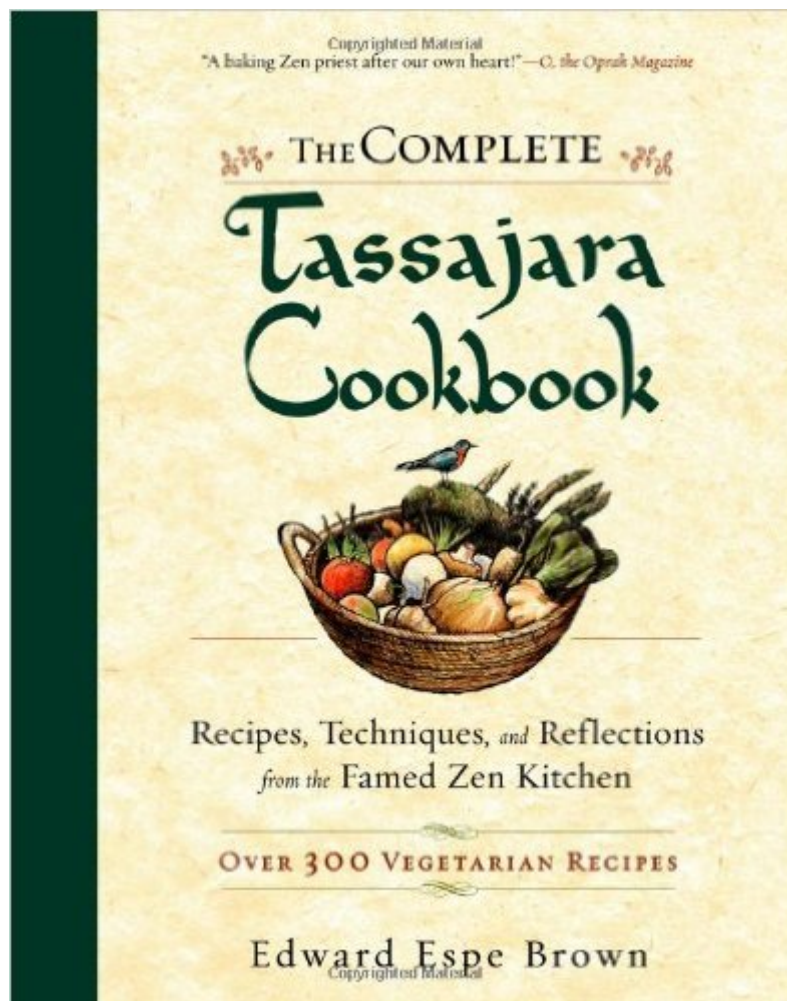


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# The Complete Tassajara Cookbook: Recipes, Techniques, And Reflections From The Famed Zen Kitchen



## Synopsis

California's Tassajara Zen Mountain Center has long been renowned for its gourmet vegetarian cuisine. In this comprehensive guide to the Tassajara way of cooking, the retreat center's most celebrated chef, Edward Espe Brown, presents hundreds of recipes using fresh, whole foods; detailed notes on preparing seasonal ingredients; and, perhaps most important, inspiration for cooking with joyful intention and attention. Presented with humor and warmth, this book is full of insights for living a life that celebrates simple food.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

the book is wonderful for those wanting to easy quick, healthy meals. It has a good mixture of recipes which range from very quick and easy to relatively complex. the book has two parts-1) basics- how to cook, working with your ingredients, entering the kitchen( basics such as what knives, what equipments to use etc.) 2) recipes- divided into sections on breads, salads, soups and stocks, sauces spreads butters relishes, tofu entrees, entrees with a crust, breakfast and vege grain potato dishes.the recipes are very 'zen', they use fresh healthy ingredients and they are pretty quick. Some recipes use approximate measures and often he mentions things like " use lentils" but dosen't specify which kind. So this ambivalence and be slightly confusing, but overall its great, very different and original.

This is not a traditional cookbook. No pictures, lots of essays, some poetry, and basic recipes. What

distinguishes it are Espe Brown's pontifications about cooking, zen, life. Like the movie, *How To Cook Your Life*, this book is an expression of Espe Brown's personality rather than his cooking expertise. The recipes are very basic - but I guess that's the point. He wants readers to cook by feel, by what they already know, rather than by measure and specific instructions. As I read many of the recipes, like the one for kidney bean chili, I thought, *Wow, I already know how to do that.* I was also surprised that this wasn't a vegan or a health cookbook. Lots of the recipes call for eggs, milk, cheese, and oil. Not very au courant (the Engine 2 folks would have a fit), but I kind of like that about EB - he's got an acerbic (but loving) sense of humor - he can throw jabs at macrobiotics, and I'm sure at veganism. He's community-conscious and compassionate, but no food purist. Lots of vegan cookbooks seem rather self-righteous and humorless. EB's cookbook is imperfect, but meandering and fun.

"My Zen teacher, Suzuki Roshi, would buy the worst-looking vegetables. 'Who would use them if I don't'". The cookbook is synthesized from several sources. Besides a thorough introduction to using a kitchen, the utensils, and a walkthrough many ingredients (cabbage, carrot, asf), the book contains over 300 recipes. Scattered through the pages are one or two page stories from EB's experience, "The Sincerity of Battered Teapots" for example. Insincerity can create a kind of paralysis, exhaustion from constantly hiding who one is. There are vegan recipes. EB likes dairy, however. It turns out EB also likes Rumi: "What was said to the rose that made it bloom is being spoken to my heart now." EB also composed a prayer for waiters to be said silently (he is one): "Here is your food, my heartfelt offering for your well-being. May your heart beat peace, and may you grow in compassion." Yes! I bought the book and it's a loved member of our household. I recommend it for a reference and for a beginning cook, since it has detailed guidance. [peacefuleasangha](#) has news of the latest EB happenings.

It's out of print, and only available through used book sellers who work through [.com](#). Vegetarian cooking at its comfortable best: many recipes don't list quantities or sometimes even which vegetables you should use. It does offer the regular type recipes, too, but it embraces the concept that cooking is a very personal thing, and your own way of cooking can be quite different from anyone else yet be very good. If you like to experiment with cooking, this book may be for you! Probably not for the fainthearted, though.

When I wanted to learn to bake bread someone pointed me at *The Tassajara Bread* book. It worked

out well for me, and I sought out all of Edward Espe Brown's other books as well. They were all written rather casually, and I love them all. This new book is a big step up in the series. It is mostly old content that has been worked over, but the additions are all quite impressive. He talks a lot about how to cook in a fresh voice that seems decidedly different than all the other instructional books I've looked at. He tries to describe, without resorting to formal cookbook-lingo, how you should know when you are cooking correctly. It is a refreshing approach to a modern problem. This doesn't replace the Tassajara Bread book (just rereleased in hardback), but if you don't have Tassajara Recipes and Tomato Blessings, then you might not need them anymore. One downside to this book is the lack of attention to detail. One pet peeve I have is that he seems to use the words yam and sweet potato interchangeably. It seems obvious in the text that he is only talking about sweet potatoes and not yams. Another is his tendency to measure celery by the stalk. A stalk of celery is huge, often 16 or more ribs, and probably weighs in at 2kg. Calling for two stalks of a celery to be put into a cup of bulgher is absurd. Two ribs of celery sounds much more appropriate.

As other reviewers have noted, this is not your typical cookbook. This cookbook focuses a lot of the act of cooking, and what cooks can learn from cooking other than techniques. I have enjoyed the stories and lessons taught about mindfulness, and simplicity. I have also greatly enjoyed the recipes! The nut and cheese loaf with accompanying nut loaf sauce is outstanding, as is the red pepper sauce. I've done a lot of baking from this book, and have been pleased with the results so far (soda bread and ginger muffins). The food you will make from these recipes are not "show stoppers" in the way that many recipes try to be these days - they don't focus on new and cutting edge techniques, and not all of the food is going to win a beauty contest. What you can rely on is simple and well-crafted flavor profiles that highlight good ingredients. If you enjoy the results from the Tassajara Bread Book, you will likely enjoy these recipes. Even my carnivore husband has really enjoyed the food from these recipes.

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