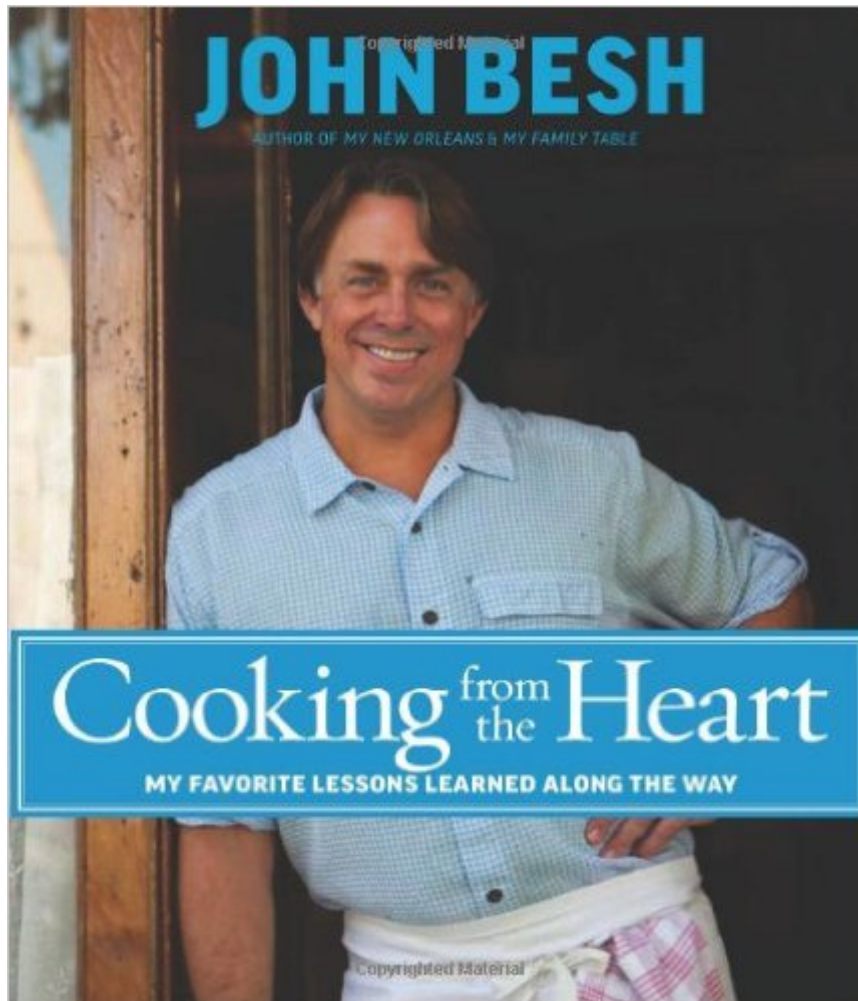


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Cooking From The Heart: My Favorite Lessons Learned Along The Way



Synopsis

James Beard Award-winning chef John Besh shares the lessons he learned from his mentors through 140 accessible recipes and cooking lessons. Featuring lush photography, inspiring personal stories, and a rich expanse of culinary knowledge, *Cooking from the Heart* is the next best thing to having an apprenticeship with Chef Besh. *Cooking from the Heart*, Chef John Besh's third cookbook, revisits the locations, lessons, and mentors that shaped his culinary journey. From Germany's Black Forest to the mountains of Provence, each chapter highlights heartfelt memories and delicious recipes—the framework for his love of food. The all-new, easy-to-follow recipes, complete with regional substitution suggestions, make creating upscale farm-to-table dishes accessible for any at-home chef. The rich production values and personal narrative make this cookbook an equally engaging read.

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Customer Reviews

I have been married a number of times. My wives have nothing in common. Except this: They all read cookbooks in bed. And not casually—they read cookbooks as if they had plots. My current and final wife can often be found, late of an evening, concentrating on a cookbook as if she had to take an exam on it in the morning. If she reads more avidly than her predecessors, she has a very good reason—cookbooks really do have plots now. John Besh, for example. He's a king in New Orleans, where he owns nine restaurants. He's won a James Beard Award for Best Chef in the Southeast. He's Owen Wilson handsome. He served with the Marines

in the first Gulf War. He's civic-minded. He and his wife "his first wife" have produced four children. And Besh has produced books that tell stories. My New Orleans, his first book, was published in 2009. Like a first novel, it's weighty: 5.2 pounds. The plot? A story of generations: A boy grows up in rural Louisiana, learns the lessons of his people and tries to keep them alive for his children. A year after Katrina, who could resist that? Not me. 2011 brought My Family Table: A Passionate Plea for Home Cooking. Provoked by a question from his wife "What about our kids?" he took readers into his home. The recipes were short on cooking time, shorter on preservatives and junk food substitutes. This was, I said, a book for the way we live now. Well, perhaps more for the way we wished we lived rather than the way we want to cook. And now we have Cooking from the Heart: My Favorite Lessons Learned Along the Way. As a storyteller, he's gone on a diet; this book is only 4.4 pounds. But if, like me, you're sufficiently appalled by the South's politicians that it becomes hard to care about its culture, Cooking from the Heart tells the best story in these pages, Besh goes back to Europe and the chefs who mentored him. As he explains: "I took this journey not just for the sake of nostalgia (though that was certainly part of it), but to clarify the meaning of cooking, for me and for you. I'm hoping that whether you're a home cook or a professional, you'll learn from the radiant recipes and cooking lessons on these pages. I certainly expect you to laugh at my follies and hope that they will keep you from making the same mistakes. Or at least that you'll have the good sense to make your own mistakes that are as memorable as mine." He starts in the Black Forest, with the chef of the Romantik Hotel Spielweg. When we meet Karl-Josef Fuchs, he's shooting a deer. With a large, efficient cartridge. An ethical kill. He slices a small branch from a fir tree and inserts it in the deer's mouth "he believes the evergreen will feed the soul of the animal in eternity." An interesting character, this Karl-Josef. The recipes in this chapter are not ones that most of us will be trying anytime soon. Venison liver. Pork head cheese. Wild boar. But we see the level of care he learned from Karl-Josef. Fishing follows. Brook trout. Sea bass poached in shrimp broth. Squid with spaghetti and bottarga. A story about the family meal for restaurant staffs. A chapter on lettuce? Yes, and a good one. Mache with pumpkin oil vinaigrette. Grilled endive and radicchio with blackberry vinaigrette. Ok, but potatoes? Yes, because they lead to the funniest story in the book: young Besh's struggle to find where Karl-Josef hides them. Followed by the raucous horror of the staff "Besh has put the peeled spuds in water and then, as Americans do, poured out the starchy water. He learns his lesson: Do not be that guy! In the Black Forest, Besh and his wife are four hours from Italy, four from Paris. On weekends, they travel in our

sputtering VW Jetta that had to be push-started. They score a great stew recipe, learn about tongue (no thanks!) and innards (ditto!), but more, they meet chefs. And then they get to Provence. Which means vegetables. Besh finds himself flirting with an eggplant. As I did with the photo of an eggplant, summer squash and tomato tian. I picked up a tricks: braise a lamb shoulder with a few minced anchovies and orange peel. Glommed a recipe for Ragout of Lamb Shoulder with Cavatelli that makes me want to invite friends to dinner. Mussels & Swiss Chard Soup might be a winter staple. And I was reminded, with Besh, that distinct and pure flavors trump the greatest kitchen fireworks. Bottom line: Many recipes of modest interest, but more than a few potential greatest hits. Brilliant photography and production. And, most of all, a damned good story.

I received my copy of "Cooking from the Heart" last week and after spending the weekend reading it and cooking from it I have to say this is the best cookbook I've seen in years. The stories are inspiring and entertaining... In each chapter Besh includes a blunder he made while working under some of the best chefs in the world which shows how humble he is for being such an accomplished chef and how mistakes are part of learning. I love the way he breaks down the chapters with some focusing on 1 ingredient like "A Leaf of Lettuce", "Mussel Madness in Marseille", and "Not Just a Potato"... Others chapters focus on themes of ingredients "Vegetable Love," "Lesson of the Hunt", "Leaving the Ocean to Fish" and "A Proper Bouillabaisse & More Soup Lessons". And the Dessert chapter is wonderful and includes a few recipes for "Pot de Creme"... one of my favorites! At first, some of the recipes seemed intimidating and I wasn't sure if I could make them but after trying the Duck Confit and Saffron Crab Stew recipes I realized that while they may sound like fancy dishes you would order at a restaurant they were actually pretty easy to make. On top of that, the book is filled with beautiful photos of food and Besh in the cities/towns where he learned to be a chef (some old, some new). Yes the book is filled with recipes and tips, but this is more than a just a cookbook, it's a book that teaches you life lessons. I know what I'm getting my foodie friends who love to cook and eat for Christmas!!!

As a fellow chef and cookbook lover I have to say this book rocks! Being a great chef is all about learning and never being satisfied. Chefs are both students and teachers, and this book really captures the essence of that. And the recipes are just awesome. I love that John doesn't water them down just to make them seem easy... He doesn't need to, because while these dishes may have "fancy" names, they are really simple to make. Amazing book by an amazing chef.

New Orleans celebrity chef, John Besh, has a stunning new book which celebrates the dishes and lessons he learned early in his career. Twenty years ago, already an established chef, Besh realized that he didn't know as much as he wanted to. So the newlywed Besh and his wife traveled and cooked through Europe in the early 90s, working with wonderful mentor chefs from Germany and France. For those of us also fortunate enough to realize that we don't know enough about cooking, either, Besh shares the lessons and dishes he learned along the way. Its 140 recipes cover everything from soup to desserts, including numerous recipes viewed as emblematic of fine, traditional European cooking, with rustic touches throughout. While many recipes aren't exactly simple, they are straightforward, and all look truly delicious. Note that some ingredients could be difficult to get in America (wild boar?), but there are plenty of recipes which are both quick and easy to buy and make, like the Concord Grape Clafoutis. The book itself is large, beautiful, and lavishly photographed, and in full-color throughout. The page layouts are clever and lovely. The index and table of contents are exceptionally clear and detailed, and the various writings about Besh's original journey, alongside his contemporary musings about those lessons, are interesting and well-written, as a personal history, travelogue, and well-informed commentary on foods prepared and presented with honesty and integrity. The book was produced and edited by the founding editor of Saveur magazine, and if you enjoy that, you'll love *Cooking from the Heart* a beautiful addition to any coffee table and kitchen.

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