



Cook This Now: 120 Easy and Delectable Dishes You Can't Wait to Make

Melissa Clark

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"This collection of brilliantly conceived, seasonally driven recipes has quickly become one of my favorites. Easy to prepare and incredibly satisfying, this is inventive comfort food at its best. A must for any passionate home cook."

-Gwyneth Paltrow, author of *My Father's Daughter*

"Fig Snacking Cake Stupendous Hummus Whatever Greens You've Got Salad I want all of it! Melissa's smart, welcoming style and love of food infuse this wonderful cookbook. It's an extremely personal collection of recipes, each with its own subtle twists and original flavors, and on every page you hear Melissa's voice reassuringly guiding you around the kitchen."

-Amanda Hesser, author of *The Essential New York Times Cookbook* and co-founder of food52.com

Melissa Clark, *New York Times* Dining Section columnist, offers a calendar year's worth of brand-new recipes for cooking with fresh, local ingredients-replete with lively and entertaining stories of feeding her own family and friends.

Many people want to eat well, organically and locally, but don't know where or even when to begin, since the offerings at their local farmers' market change with the season. In *Cook This Now*, Melissa Clark shares all her market savvy, including what she decides to cook after a chilly visit to the produce section in the dead of winter; what to bring to a potluck dinner that's guaranteed to be a hit; and how she feeds her marathon-running husband and finicky toddler. In addition, she regales us with personal stories about good times with family and friends, and cooking adventures such as her obsessive cherry pie experimentation and the day she threw out her husband's last preserved Meyer lemon.

In her welcoming, friendly voice, Melissa takes you inside her life while providing the dishes that will become your go-to meals for your own busy days. Recipes include Crisp Roasted Chicken with Chickpeas, Lemons, and Carrots with Parsley Gremolata; Baked Apples with Fig and Cardamom Crumble; Honey-Roasted Carrot Salad with Arugula and Almonds; Quick-Braised Pork Chops with Spring Greens and Anchovies; Coconut Fudge Brownies-and much more.

Melissa delivers easy, delicious meals featuring organic, fresh ingredients that can be uniquely obtained during each particular month. It can be a real challenge to feed families these days, but Melissa's recipes and inviting writing encourage home cooks to venture outside of the familiar, yet please everyone at the table.

Cook This Now: 120 Easy and Delectable Dishes You Can't Wait to Make Details

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A. S. says

In "Cook This Now: 120 Easy and Delectable Dishes You Can't Wait to Make," Melissa Clark, best known as a New York Times dining section columnist, shares some of her favorite seasonal recipes. The recipes are divided by months and seasons, with a separate section dedicated to Bonus Recipes. Each section starts with the author's re-collection of her cooking habits for this particular season, and then continues on with the actual recipes.

After each recipe, Clark includes a section titled "What else" where she shares her cooking techniques (possible substitutions, additional information about the ingredients, tips on cooking) pertinent to the recipe described. I thought the inclusion of this section following each recipe particularly lets this cookbook stand out, as each recipe is not just listed but discussed in depth.

The recipes themselves are mixed in terms of the difficulty level: both sophisticated recipes (for well experienced cooks) and more basic recipes (for beginning cooks) are included. Pictures of some of the recipes are included in the two centerfolds of the book; below each picture is the page number of the corresponding recipe.

Here is a sample of some of the seasonal recipes that I bookmarked: Winter: Whatever Greens You've Got Salad, Mallobars, Double Coconut Granola, and Fragrant Lentil Soup With Spinach and Crispy Onions. Spring: Pasta With Garlic Scapes Pesto, Sugar Snap Peas, and Ricotta; Whole Wheat Pizza with The Very First Cherry Tomatoes, Olives, And Tuna (my personal favorite recipe so far), and Buckwheat Pancakes With Sliced Peaches And Cardamom Cream Syrup. Summer: Maple Blueberry Tea Cake With Maple Glaze, Fresh Buttermilk Peach Ice Cream, and Creamed Caramelized Corn. Autumn: Cinnamon Roasted Sweet Potatoes And Garlic, Cornmeal Blini With Salmon Caviar, and Spicy coconut Eggnog. I can already tell that this will likely be one of my favorite cookbooks. Highly recommended for all the cooking enthusiasts.

Megan says

This cookbook is just as intoxicating, if not more so, than *In the Kitchen with A Good Appetite: 150 Recipes and Stories About the Food You Love*. I kept a stack of bookmarks handy, and went through all of them before reaching the end of the book.

I'm in love with her bulgur "pilaf" with Swiss chard and dried apricots; easy, healthy, tasty.

Kristen Lo says

Every home cook needs this book. Clark's stories are great and her recipes are easy and yummy. I first learned about it in *Food & Wine's Best of the Best* (they featured 5 recipes from it), and I had to go out and buy it-- I've been cooking from it all year, and it is organized by season so eating seasonally is easy.

Naomi says

I was not impressed with this cookbook, AT ALL. When I am evaluating a cookbook I look for three things. First, how appealing are the recipes to my family? Second, how available are the ingredients needed to prepare the foods? Third, how involved are the recipes? I found with this recipe book, the greater majority of the recipes were pretty exotic from a "family" perspective. Although some of them looked good, I know that they would not fly in the "normal" kitchen, esp. one which had children floating around it! Second, most of the ingredients were pretty standard and could be found at your local neighborhood market, but there were ingredients, that even myself as a more experienced cook had never heard of. On that note, the author offered no substitutions for these ingredients in case they could not be located. Third, for having it targeted as easy, which to me, means novice chefs, I found the recipes to be above that. One last point, when I see a cookbook which is targeted towards the "novice" chef, I like to see pictures, preferably step by step, so that the person can see what the recipe should look like to ensure they are on a correct course. This book had none of that. Instead, the pages were taken up with "author's notes" which I found to be irrelevant and pretty bloviating in context. Lucky for me, I didn't purchase this cookbook, but was able to review it from a library copy, otherwise, I would have been paying for return shipping charges.

Michele says

I'm reviewing cookbooks because I have to get one as a gift for somebody next month. I'm judging this one purely on aesthetics since I didn't try any of the recipes. the pictures and layout weren't great. I like a lot of very high quality pictures in my cookbooks. I basically want them to be food porn. especially since I don't see the point of buying cookbooks. just rent them (from the library), copy the ones you want for personal use, and return them. or look up recipes online where you can see individual reviews for the dish and experimentation tips people offer. this was not food porn.

Maryka Kowal says

I loved the idea. A cookbook from a famous chef, arranged by season, with recipes chosen for irresistibility.

Um. I guess irresistible means different things to different people. I'd label this one frou-frou...and mama don't do frou-frou.

Most of the recipes call for unusual ingredients...and I cook lots of different ethnic foods, so I was surprised to see that these recipes would have sent me to store after store. Not the kind of cooking I look forward to. There were almost no photos. Who does that? Drooling over the photos might have persuaded me to travel to all those stores, LOL! I'm not kidding...it's worked on me before. That's why they're a popular feature.

While some of the recipes looked interesting, those were the ones (mac and cheese with vegetables, hummus, kale soup) that I already make...and with simpler, delicious recipes from elsewhere. I didn't need ANOTHER recipe for mac and cheese, no matter how much her toddler loved it. And hiding the veg from your kid? Really? Mine know they're in there and like the mac that way. How else do you get them to be curious and flexible eaters?

If you adore cookbooks that send you to the ends of the earth, or the internet, for ingredients, and moan over recipes that make more work than needed just because restaurant chefs do it extra complicated...this is the cookbook for you. Wallow in the complexity, brag to your friends, and enjoy.

Me? I'm going back to drool-worthy photos and real mama-in-the-kitchen cooking.

Ashley Tirey says

The recipes I've made from this have all turned out well, although I find the ones in her earlier cookbook a little easier to follow. However, I enjoyed this book as a reading experience, too. Her "sustainable" focus in this book could have easily been too preachy, but for the most part, I found the explanations for each recipe's inclusion to be engaging and fun to contemplate. I can't wait to move back to the US and have some of her ingredients more easily found, though.

Robin says

My mother-in-law and I joke about how we are "the type of person" who can take a cookbook to bed and read it like a novel. This is exactly the right type of book for that sort of thing. Melissa Clark writes about food the way I dream about it, or maybe it's the way I dream about a different type of life. It's a reminder that people live their lives in all kinds of ways. Reading Clark's cookbooks is like reading a novel because her approach is so far from my reality. I think I want to cook and eat the way she does, but then, again, I don't have that kind of time. Having followed Clark's career for many years, I've decided that her whole way of doing things is an inefficient use of precious minutes for a busy suburban Mom of two older children. I remind myself as I roll my eyes past the ingredient "orange blossom water" that she is, after all, a food writer, and sourcing fussy ingredients or keeping them on hand is actually Clark's life's work. Guess I won't be making that recipe.

One trip to the farmer's market per week that takes an entire morning must, absolutely, be complemented by daily trips to the bodega for this New Yorker, or at least 2-3x per week. What a waste of time. Well, it would be a waste of time for me. I love to cook, eat, and even write about food, but the cooking and eating part is a necessity of having a family, and the writing part is a simple hobby and nothing more. In other words, I gots stuff ta do.

I'm reminded of the summer that my husband and I decided to take a farm share. It was a wonderful experience in some ways -- never knowing what we'd be getting (a lot of beets, as it turned out), taking it all home, figuring out what to do with it, and then, of course, a trip to the grocery store to get the rest of what I needed to flesh out the meals with the week's bounty. The really tricky part was that the pickup was on a Thursday, or some other day I consider to be 'off' from the pace of my life. If I spent a morning hitting the farmer's market and then more hours at the grocery store I would be doubling the time it takes me to get the week's food into the house.

Not to make this review of a cookbook all about me or a political statement, but I'd venture to guess that Clark's way of approaching food and the kitchen is about as close a food analogy of the liberal elite to the rest of the country's approaches to politics. It's not reality for the people in the middle. She is an elite cook. There's probably a specific audience for Clark's writing that worships at the altar of the farmer's market and

alters their cooking week after week around what is there. It's just not my style, and my family actually prefers church to the farmer's market as a Sunday morning activity. Buying groceries is a necessary chore and not a past time for me, even though I truly love to cook.

I did find about ten recipes that I will copy down and try that don't require orange blossom water or something called ramps, which this foodie has never, ever seen at the farmer's market or any other place, but my biggest issue with this book is that the poetic introductions to each season and recipe are so repetitive. Dozens of people collaborated on this book, editing lines and proofreading. These short essays were, as far as I know, written specifically for the book and not as stand-alone pieces. Knowing that it would be organized by season makes me wonder why I am reading the same thing over and over again. As a Mom of two beloved children - "I am the sun and they are my planets," (Beverly Beckham) honestly, if I read one more time about Dahlia and what she likes, I thought I might yelp out loud. Dahlia is to Melissa Clark as Jeffery is to Ina Garten, only mentioned about a hundred times more often.

It's high summer in New England, and after reading this book, I'm craving fresh tomatoes. I know they're in the stores right now, so I'm off to make a list. That's how I roll.

Karen says

Fruits and vegetables are naturally seasonal, so it's refreshing to have a cookbook that reminds of this and gives a month-by-month selection of recipes to try. I enjoy the personal anecdotes on family and farmers markets, as well as the suggested variations and substitutions. It's an entertaining read that makes me feel like I'm preparing to cook with a friend.

I've started making my own notes on recipes I've tried so that I might try them in a different way when I flip through next year. For example, Thai-style ground turkey with chiles and basil might make a good pot-sticker filling. I'm looking forward to making my second round through these healthy and fresh recipes next year.

Gretchen says

I don't know why I can't warm up to this book. I usually love reading cookbooks and was excited when I received this as a gift. I feel a bit misled by the title--I thought it would be full of dishes to make for dinner tonight, but it is arranged by season. I have to wait to make most of them. I understand the set-up, but the title could have been more clear. This book also suffers from my greatest pet peeve about cookbooks--a disappointing lack of photos. 120 recipes, but maybe 20 photos.

I also can't figure out the audience for this book. Labor intensive recipes like braised oxtail seem out of place among recipes for tomato sandwiches (butter toast, put sliced tomatoes on top, eat). It seems home cooks willing to attempt risotto would probably know that putting oil and vinegar on whatever greens are in the fridge makes a salad. The difference between beginning and advanced recipes is quite large.

The What Else? sections were a nice addition, and produce is always tastier in season. But as someone who does not live particularly close to a farmers' market or specialty food store, I do feel a bit left out from some of the recipes. This book is not for those with aversions to coconut or anchovies, because those ingredients

show up a lot.

Rhea Marie says

Every single recipe I have made from this book has been delicious! The berry pudding with rose custard made me want to cry it was so good. All the recipes have been easy and accessible. Roasted cauliflower with cumin and yogurt converted me into a cauliflower fan - I ate the whole head of cauli right then and there. The chapters are per month of the year so it's easy to find a seasonally appropriate dish. The only recipe I didn't like too much was the pecan pie, the star anise was a bit disconcerting, but it could easily be left out.

This is a great cookbook for spicing up your every day staples, especially in the vegetable department. For example, a cucumber salad sounds pretty boring to me, but try it with toasted almonds, lime juice, and soy sauce! I've memorized this recipe and many others, they're simple and healthy, but also creative enough to impress your friends.

Jenn says

I thought this book would be full of easier, faster recipes for those of us "on the go". It had a lot of great recipes in it, but most were all big on time and ingredients I don't usually use in my recipes. If you're looking for something gourmet and new, this is the book for you. I didn't care for it because I need a different type of recipe. I must say, though, the author did provide a lot of insight on her life and how and why these recipes work for her family. That made this book more interesting than the average cook book.

Laura says

I love her writing style, and thought these recipes were very well-organized and good. My problem with this book is that most of the recipes require lots of ingredients, and many that I don't have handy in my kitchen. So, if you're picking up this book to use during the week, you may not be able to use it with what you have in the kitchen. Also, some of the recipes were a little sophisticated for my audience;)

If you have daily access to a greenmarket, and your family is used to eating out at fairly sophisticated restaurants regularly, and you keep some fairly exotic ingredients handy (like lemongrass, oxtails, etc) this may be a good book for you. The recipes are well-written, easy to use and tasty, but this isn't practical for me.

Ashley says

I heard Melissa Clark on NPR about a month ago, and all the recipes she discussed sounded amazing. Her book was a little less inspiring. Many of the recipes had ingredients I was unfamiliar with and that are too expensive for me to buy a whole bottle or package of, only to find out I don't like it or won't use it again. She is a huge advocate for farmers' markets, which is great, but there aren't any of the sort she describes near me. I like that she organized the book by season, as buying in season is better for you and cheaper, but I wish

there had been more pictures, particularly for the dishes with unfamiliar ingredients. I've been spoiled by cookbooks like *Everyday Food: Great Food Fast*, which is probably a better choice for seasonal cooking with more familiar ingredients.

Robin says

This is a terrific book. The recipes are fantastic. They're sophisticated and straightforward and delicious and several are already in my arsenal (Hello roast chicken with Moroccan chickpeas and carrots, and the homemade mallomars? worth every second.) Melissa's writing is, as usual, warm and approachable and immediate. And after each recipe there are variations and twists and ways to adjust the recipe to meet your needs/wishes. Plus, it's all seasonal, so you know what to cook now! By any measure it's a great book.
