

Cookbooks for Beginners – More Than *The Joy of Cooking*



Learning to cook is not what it used to be. Most modern kids do not grow up in the kitchen, watching their mother or father cook. Their parents may not cook at all. Many of these take-out teens reach a point where they want to throw something together in the kitchen – they just do not know how. Thankfully, there are many great cookbooks available to teach the basics, and these books have evolved well past grandma’s favourite, *The Joy of Cooking*. While encyclopaedic culinary tomes have their place, they are very intimidating to the beginner chef, and not at all teen-friendly. Here are some better (and brighter) choices:

Teens Cook and *Teens Cook Dessert* by Megan and Jill Carle (ISBN 1580085849 and ISBN 1580087523)

Megan and Jill are sisters with very different culinary styles, who were curious about food, but clueless about cooking. With the help of

their mom, they have written two wonderful books to guide teens in the kitchen. The books are bright and magazine-like with tons of colour photos. The recipes in the first book range from super simple lunches (tuna melts) to more elaborate family meals (a tofu stir-fry). The dessert book was written as a sequel, and is equal to any baking book written for adults – but with a much funkier feel. Special tips are given for many recipes, along with sections on kitchen chemistry and kitchen history. These are exactly the kind of books that will encourage teens to expand their culinary knowledge, and go on to explore other, more “grown-up” cooking techniques.

My Turn to Cook by Miranda Shearer (ISBN 0304363235)

Miranda is the daughter of a food writer and

chef. When she hit university and realized that many of her peers did not know how to cook, she decided to write a book. Her cookbook is divided by food types (pasta, curries, comfort food, sandwiches...) and her recipes are accompanied by humorous colour illustrations. The only deterrent are the ingredient measurements; because Miranda is British, many of the dry ingredients are measured by weight, which is unfamiliar to most North Americans.

Help! My Apartment Has a Kitchen Cookbook by Kevin and Nancy Mills (ISBN 0618711759)

Many teens seek culinary guidance from their parents, and Kevin was no exception. He and his mother have written this stripped-to-basics introduction to cooking for college students who are starting out on their own, and have no clue when it comes to cooking. The book is printed in black and white, with illustrations only at the start of each chapter. The most useful features of the book are the tips and warnings from Mom, starting with how to boil water.

How to Boil Water from the Food Network Kitchens (ISBN 0696226863)

Like all Food Network cookbooks, this is a hardcover book with great illustrations and mouth-watering photography. The fun factor is upped by the addition of "hand-written" notes printed over most of the photos, giving tips and

tips and tricks or describing the method for the related recipe. The book is divided by dish type and main ingredients, such as snacks, soups, noodles, fish or desserts. Teens who watch cooking shows will find comfort in the style of book, as it fits well with most of the programmes now airing on the Food Network.

Cooking Up a Storm: The Teen Survival Cookbook by Sam Stern (ISBN 076362988X)

With an endorsement from Jamie Oliver, how could you go wrong? Sam has written a very rock'n'roll-type cookbook, one that is aimed more at young guys than young girls. His recipes run from peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to homemade gnocchi or cheesecake. The chapter headings are more thematic than divided by dish or food-type, with listings for how to eat during exams, or how to cook a meal to impress a girl. The photos and large font exude a feeling of fun, so this cookbook is sure to appeal to teens, especially those in the younger age range.

Cooking Outside the Pizza Box by Jean Patterson and Danae Campbell (ISBN 0764124951)

While this book is aimed at college or university students, it would also be suited to younger teens. The book is coil bound, making it easy to work with, and has simple colour illustrations. What sets it apart from the other college-themed cookbooks is the very first chapter, which covers necessary kitchen

equipment, measuring ingredients, the importance of hygiene, and the basics of kitchen safety. Recipes are divided by dish type, and the index is useful for looking up specific ingredients.

Clueless in the Kitchen by Evelyn Raab (ISBN 1552092240)

Raab wrote this slim and informal cookbook especially for teens. The writing style is very conversational, and while at times she tries a bit too hard to be cool, the recipes are strong, and definitely make up for it. She starts with the absolute basics (how to cook rice, how to cook frozen vegetables) and builds to special meals for specific people (boyfriends, girlfriends, vegetarians).

The Teen's Vegetarian Cookbook by Judy Krizmanic (ISBN 0670874264)

Vegetarianism is very popular with young adults, so this would be a useful book choice for any library. It includes important information on nutrition (including nutrient and vitamin charts) as well as tips on meal planning, substitutions, and basic cooking methods. The recipes are illustrated with black, white and green sketches, and are divided into logical categories (breakfast, lunch, main dishes, salads, soups, sweets). Krizmanic's earlier book, *A Teen's Guide to Going Vegetarian* (ISBN 0140365893) would be a good companion volume.

Everyday Oatmeal Cookies

These cookies use very little sugar or margarine, and are therefore suitable for everyday eating. The ingredients used are very similar to those in granola bars, so they will keep you charged up for an afternoon at work or at play.

2 cups flour
2 tsp baking soda
1 tsp salt
2 cups rolled oats
1/2 cup wheat germ
1 1/2 cups margarine
1/2 cup brown sugar
4 eggs
2 tsp vanilla
1 1/2 cups coconut
3/4 cup raisins
3/4 cup chocolate chips

1. Combine dry ingredients in a small bowl, stirring gently until thoroughly blended.
2. In a second, much larger bowl, cream together margarine, sugar, eggs and vanilla using an electric mixer. Beat these ingredients until they are smooth and slightly fluffy.
3. Blend the dry ingredients into the creamed mixture, keeping the electric mixer on a very low speed.
4. Remove the large bowl from the electric mixer, and stir in the remaining ingredients with a wooden spoon.
5. Drop tablespoonfuls of batter onto a cookie sheet, leaving at least an inch of empty space between each cookie.
6. Bake at 350°F for 10 minutes, or until the cookies are just lightly browned. Remove the cookies from the cookie sheet and place them on a wire rack to cool.

Notes:

A half cup of chopped walnuts or whole sunflower seeds can be added to the recipe if desired.