

Dining at the White House

John Moeller

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White House chef John Moeller shares inside knowledge of presidential family life in this humble and enchanting must-read for event-planners.

My fellow Americans (and foodies everywhere), *Dining at the White House* not only tells the story of how a young student studying in France became a chef at the most famous house in the world, but it also provides a behind-the-scenes look at several of America's First Families. John Moeller writes with candor and dignity about each administration he served and reveals warm, grateful families living as American royalty. From remembering to cook up a family dinner for Chelsea Clinton while her parents hosted dignitaries at a State Dinner to the sudden cancellation of a Congressional Picnic on the afternoon of 9/11, Moeller's life in the White House kitchen has been anything but routine. He writes with the humility and star-struck wonder that a reader hopes for while led through the intimate details of such a high profile household.

For the White House enthusiast, *Dining at the White House* pulls the curtain back on events and receptions, shows readers around the facilities on Pennsylvania Avenue and at Camp David and introduces the nations leaders without politics, party, or publicity. Readers can't help but to like the men who have governed the nation while throwing horseshoes or listening to Aerosmith. Refreshingly, they are not treated as more or less successful leaders but as the heads of revered and valued families. Between the candid photos of guests like Paul Newman in the kitchen preparing a snack, a thank you note from the first lady to a pretzel shop in Pennsylvania, and the heartwarming farewell speeches from a departing president to his White House staff, this is a scrapbook of insightful details and a pleasure to read.

For anyone who enjoys cooking, serving, or event planning, this is a must-read. No banquet hall, restaurant, or private cheffing position could ever rival the challenges of the White House. A last minute change in guest-count from twelve to 200 or a luncheon for twenty-five which must be served in ten minutes is enough to send seasoned kitchens reeling. The mouthwatering photos of exquisite plating and simple, seasonal menus would be temptation enough without the inclusion of a delightfully easy "Recipes" section. While some recipes are organized by meal and others by course, making it difficult to navigate easily, they are well-chosen and thoughtfully adapted for the home cook who may not have access to some of the more region-specific or advanced ingredients like Great Lakes smoked whitefish or authentic poussin. A creative, intermediate-level cook could easily impress dinner guests with a meal fit for a president and might mention that the soup was once served at a luncheon in honor of Vladimir Putin.

SARA BUDZIK (Fall 2013)

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