

Essential

Ollie Dabbous

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“The best food is always the simplest,” writes Chef Ollie Dabbous in his new cookbook, *Essential*. Dabbous—a Michelin starred chef with an impeccable résumé—contends that the simplest food is also the most sophisticated and aims to show that, even using modest ingredients, home cooks can produce amazing results.

The book’s ten chapters cover, among other topics, grains, leaves, meat and fish, and sweets. There’s a chapter on what a larder is and how to stock it, along with recipes showing how cooks can use their home larders to whip up dishes with what’s already on hand. And the chapters’ introductions concern how to treat the ingredients and recipes found within them. When it comes to grains: read the cooking instructions on the package, even if you think you know how to use them. On leaves: they “do need an assured touch from the cook.” With meat, there’s some basic advice to ensure that people properly cook and serve the protein in question.

Sophisticated does not mean “not accessible,” and Dabbous aims to make his recipes simple enough so that even novice home cooks will be able to cook them. Dishes like Braised Turbot with Lemon Verbena may sound difficult, but Dabbous’s straightforward recipe turns what could be an intimidating dish into one that an ambitious home cook can produce with pride. Other interesting dishes include the classic French Tartiflette; Baked Eggs with Tomato, Butter Beans, and Paprika; and Warm Gingerbread & Earl Grey Pudding.

The photography by Joakim Blockström elevates *Essential* to another level. Every dish has its own photograph, bringing Dabbous’s recipes to life. And the chef concludes this work with the observation that the best cooks are also the most frugal, and that those who love food also respect it the most.

Essential is a beautiful cookbook—perfect for anyone who wants to elevate their cooking to another level.

ERIC PATTERSON (November / December 2021)

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