

Notes on Cooking: A Short Guide to an Essential Craft

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Kitchen Craft. A handful of high-quality, petite non-fiction books seek to deliver content in short, pithy, declarative statements believing the technique lends authoritative credibility; the best example being Strunk and Whites *The Elements of Style*. One wonders why book reviews cant effectively play this game, especially now that we have another excellent example of the genre in *Notes on Cooking: A Short Guide to an Essential Craft* (RCR Creative Press, 978-0-9724255-1-3), by chef Lauren Braun Costello and acclaimed writer Russell Reich.

1. Beware the book cloaked in numerous glowing testimonials unless the blurbers have unimpeachable reputations like Daniel Boulud, Jacques Pepin, James Peterson, Lidia Matticchio Bastianich and the other heavyweights as is the case in *Notes on Cooking*. 2. Cooking wisdom must be timeless and applicable to cooks of all levels. A veteran of professional kitchens, Costello chides her peers to always be “open to considering new perspectives and ways of working,” and counsels humility by encouraging cooks not to “bemoan the pedestrian tasks. Find pleasure in peeling a carrot, steaming rice, searing a steak, prepping, cleaning.” 3. Useful books offer nuggets on every page without requiring readers to start from the beginning. *Notes on Cooking* is expertly organized into 19 chapters, from Understanding the Recipe through to Presentation and Last Thought where readers are lectured: “Always be cooking. Hone your craft by doing it. Stop reading. Start cooking.” 4. That said, readers who hang on until the very end will find in the Appendices superb lists of food adjectives and 80+ flavor combinations, e.g., beets and lemon, leeks and chestnuts, sweet peas and pancetta, to name only three.

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