

Recipes from the President's Ranch: Food People like to Eat

Matthew Wendel

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Recipes from the President's Ranch is a warm gathering of the recipes that helped to nourish the Bush family during their years at the White House.

Matthew Wendel learned how to cook in his mother's kitchen, and his love of the craft later compelled him to leave a comfortable career, work hard, and end up at a high echelon of his craft: as the chef at the Texas governor's mansion and, later, at the White House.

This combination coffee table book and cookbook is split into two sections. The first half of the book covers Wendel's experiences as a hired hand in the governor's mansion and then as personal chef for the Bush family during the White House years, organizing menus at Camp David and Prairie Chapel Ranch, known as the Western White House.

The second half of the book includes the recipes that Wendel prepared for the first family. These recipes include comfort foods and Tex Mex favorites, like sweet and smoky cheeseburgers and pecan-smoked beef tenderloin, the go-to favorites for visiting foreign dignitaries; Matty's fried chicken; Wendel's mother's famous cinnamon rolls; and a spin on Laura Bush's irresistible peach cream pie.

The recipes are accessible for home cooks, making use of common supermarket ingredients. Color photographs provide ample ideas for entertaining tablescape, while also showing the warm relationship that Wendel shared with members of the Bush family. One photo stands apart: Prairie Chapel Ranch's grilling apparatus attracted the attention of German prime minister Angela Merkel, and the two embarked on a discussion about grilling.

Expert but approachable, *Recipes from the President's Ranch* is an intimate portrait of President Bush and his family, showing how their warmth and hospitality inspired a young cook to rise to the top of his profession.

NANCY POWELL (September / October 2020)

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