

Six Basic Cooking Techniques: Culinary Essentials for the Home Cook

Jennifer Clair

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Jennifer Clair distills years of teaching cooking classes into a useful manual for becoming a more rounded home cook.

Each technique receives one chapter, with numerous recipes and illustrative photographs as helpful aids.

What makes this book so useful is that Clair leaves no room for confusion. She clearly lays out important takeaway points and provides step-by-step visual instructions to impart understanding on essential topics, including blanching vegetables and making pan sauces.

Each chapter is consistent, beginning with what is needed to cook the recipes or learn the technique and proceeding with an overview. Tempting recipes punctuate these lessons, for dishes such as Roasted Ratatouille with Olives and Basil, or Pan Roasted Chicken with Sherry-Thyme Gravy.

Spread throughout the book are two features: “Chefs Say” and “Students Ask.” These features present helpful ideas and techniques that are well known and used by professional cooks but that are often unknown to the home cook. “Chefs Say” relays pro tips that make home cooking easier, more efficient, and safer. “Students Ask” usefully responds to common questions and misunderstood notions—presumably heard again and again in Clair’s courses.

The recipes are all sound and easily accessible to the intermediate cook. Each recipe is presented with the purpose of giving the reader an opportunity to put the main technique of the chapter into practice and includes a short introduction that offers helpful hints and informative tidbits that add to the learning process.

Clair packs a surprising amount of information into her pages, and her book will be a welcome addition to any home cook’s library. One can only hope that she will write follow-up books; it is easy to envision this format being expanded into a series of similar cooking manuals.

ERIC PATTERSON (March/April 2018)

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