



Tastes Better from Scratch Cookbook: Easy Recipes for Everyday Life

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Tastes Better from Scratch is a solid, meat-and-potatoes cookbook that will inspire cooks at all levels.

Sometimes simple is best when it comes to food, as Lauren Allen's *Tastes Better from Scratch* demonstrates. Allen specializes in straightforward fare, and her collection of new and old favorites showcases an impressive range of dishes for all occasions.

To Allen, food is a means of connecting with family. She brings a similar homey, friendly approach to her book. Its informative introduction includes advice on how to win over picky eaters, while a section on meal plans features practical suggestions that can save home cooks time and money.

Focusing on dishes for everyday living, the book emphasizes simple ingredients, crisp directions, and scannable details on preparation times, cook times, and yields. The book also takes busy household schedules into account, with tips on essential tools and ingredients that save time, as well as storage directions that allow cooks to stretch dishes out over several meals.

Tastes Better from Scratch organizes its recipes into six major categories: breakfast, muffins and breads, dinners, soups, salads and sides, and dessert. Each category features plenty of perennial American favorites, including buttermilk pancakes and macaroni and cheese. But Allen also throws in yummy personal favorites, including family recipes for German pancakes and broccoli cheese soup.

Efficiency is key here. Readily available ingredients dominate in these substantial dishes that can be cooked within a short amount of time—the breakfast casserole alone is large enough to stuff even the most ravenous families. Some corners are cut in consideration of time, too: Allen's French dip sandwich recipe calls for store-bought rolls, rather than bread made from scratch. Elsewhere, recipes for chili and pie crusts are included, though.

Allen's eclectic talents stand out in the dinner section, which touches on multicultural cuisines, ranging from pad thai to classic Tex-Mex enchiladas, teriyaki bowls, and Indian butter chicken. The book also leaves room for experimentation, with frequent suggestions for substitutions and modifications in order to appeal to different palates. Plain fun also enters the equation: there's a take on rice krispie treats here that features salted caramel.

The book's recipes are buttressed by straightforward, elegant photographs, with each recipe featuring links to online step-by-step videos in order to ensure positive results every time. With its mix of healthy and hearty recipes, its unfussy approach to cooking, and its celebration of sensible yet delicious dishes, *Tastes Better from Scratch* is a solid meat-and-potatoes cookbook that should provide inspiration to cooks at all levels.

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