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Clarion Review ★★★★☆ COOKING

Teens: A League of Their Own: A Perfect Culinary Blend: Cooking and Baking Recipes

Christine Burton
Raquel Rodriguez, Illustrator
Trafford (Oct 28, 2015)
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An experienced chef provides plenty of fuel for many hours of trial, error, and triumph in the kitchen.

Teens: A League of Their Own by Christine Burton is encyclopedic, the accumulation of a very skilled caterer's large repertoire in a cookbook that is aimed at teenagers. Traditional dishes from the author's native Wisconsin appear alongside at-home versions of fast food, luxurious party fare, and American-international fusion cuisine. A tome that will serve teenage cooks well beyond their teen years, this book promises a master's class in home cooking for any teenager willing or able to put in the time required to learn the many cooking techniques—or afford the ingredients required—in the book's most tempting dishes.

Recipes are organized into two general sections, baking and cooking, and are further subdivided in each section according to main ingredients or cooking techniques. For example, the baking section is subdivided into two sections—quick and yeast breads and desserts—while the cooking section comprises eleven subsections with categories ranging from appetizers and snacks to meats, pasta, and grains.

Each of the two main sections are prefaced with a table of contents that applies only to that section. At the end of each main section, recipes are indexed. This organization is nontraditional, but it's consistent and functional, especially since the book lacks a master table of contents or a comprehensive index. Other information includes a glossary of cooking terms and a measurement equivalency chart.

Drawing on the author's extensive experience, recipes often require a level of foundational knowledge and cooking skill. While some cooking terms are helpfully explained in the book's glossary, teenagers using the book to explore cooking for the first time may not be familiar enough with cooking techniques, methods, or equipment to prepare many of the recipes unassisted. Recipes such as PB and Apricot Spirals will appeal to teens of all skill levels, but dishes such as Garlic Curried Mussels are equally appetizing while significantly more difficult to prepare.

Some ingredients—such as caviar, beer, wine, duck, and truffles—seem out of reach for the average teenager, and helpful advice about meal planning, party preparation, and bulk cooking in order to freeze meals for times when cooks are "on the go" seem incongruous for a teen audience. Thankfully, the sheer volume of recipes and substitutions included in the book means that there's plenty of recipes to choose from if experience or ingredients are an obstacle.

Cartoon illustrations on the cover and scattered throughout infuse the book with a sense of fun, especially for any teens who may be intimidated by the book's size. Photographs supplement the cartoons and show everyday teens preparing many of the book's dishes together in a home kitchen. Close-up photographs of plated individual recipes are often provided, so users have a better idea of a recipe's end product. While the illustrations and photographs add to the cookbook, poor lighting sometimes impedes the images.

A comprehensive look into an accomplished cook's own recipe box, *Teens: A League of Their Own* is ambitious in

scope. For any teenager already bitten by the cooking bug, there's plenty of fuel here for many hours of trial, error, and triumph in the kitchen.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (November 8, 2016)

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