



## The Art of Gay Cooking: A Culinary Memoir

**Daniel Isengart**

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In his deliciously witty *The Art of Gay Cooking*, Daniel Isengart serves up a memoir with recipes from his youth in France and Germany and from his extensive travels with his husband, artist Filip Noterdaeme. The book is a contemporary homage to *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book*, with its groundbreaking blend of autobiography and cooking instruction, elevating the preparation of meals in the “safe harbor” of home to an art form.

The book is organized by themes from Isengart's bohemian life, from his days as a cabaret performer in 1990s and 2000s New York City to childhood memories of holiday sweets. Isengart's prose explores “the idea that gay men have a clandestinely particular approach to cooking,” and each chapter exuberantly relates memorable meals and adventures replete with eccentric characters and recipes from many cultural traditions.

The author dishes about working for fussy “allergic” socialites who won't eat, S&M dinner parties, and the noisy chaos that came ahead of perfect Hamptons weekends. Isengart's commentary on American food culture is especially irreverent, as are his opinions of competitive cooking for entertainment and “aggressive entrepreneurialism.”

In another nod to Toklas, Isengart always formally refers to Noterdaeme (whose delightful illustrations festoon the pages) by his full name. His story of their years together is full of affection, admiration, and humor. As final garnish, ranging recipes from the couple's wide circle of friends, from dancers Jock Soto and Tommy Tune to performance artist Penny Arcade, include home comfort classics, haute cuisine, and Butch Tea (fairies like it piping hot sipped daintily from espresso cups, the book says, while butch queens gulp it cold from mugs). Though Isengart and Noterdaeme may never be well heeled, this book describes their life together as one that is very rich indeed.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (LGBTQ+ 2018)

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