Clarion Review

Cooking

The Cookbook for Men Who Must (Or Just Want to): Simple Recipes, Few Ingredients (Mostly)

Richard Chamberlain
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Three Stars (out of Five)

Let's face it: a man's idea of cooking a meal is heating up left-over Chinese take-out or zapping yesterday's pizza slice in the microwave oven for breakfast. Sure the top chefs in the world are men but when it comes to the majority of us we can barely be bothered to wash our hands let alone remember that there is an expiration date on milk. The idea of the average everyday man using a cookbook—let alone drinking out a glass—is preposterous especially when no female is there to scrutinize.

Richard Chamberlain's *The Cookbook for Men Who Must* is testosterone user-friendly. His mature understanding of the human male comedy blows away the dry dull and work-oriented that induces the frustration and narcoleptic tendencies in men. Chamberlain arms the reader with a list of necessary tools and ingredients then prompts them with simple vocabulary terms and techniques. He expects the reader to make some mistakes and emphasizes that there is nothing wrong with trial and error. He includes an easy to follow table of contents that is divided up into simple categories then further sub-divided to increase comprehension. For example *Introduction* branches into *Seasoning and Taste Peppers and Spices Sauces Variations* and *Heat*. The chapter entitled *Getting Started—Read Me First* is divided into: *Tools and the Proper Equipment Stocking the Pantry Folding Kneading* and *Melting Chocolate*. He includes a blank section at the end of each chapter for notes and provides conversion charts and an index at the end of the book. His recipes are divided into *Breakfast Lunch Dinner Parties Appetizers/Snacks Salads Side Dishes Main Courses* and *Desserts*. All together there are over forty recipes and variations ranging from grilled beef with vinegar marinade to chocolate chip cookies.

Chamberlain makes attempts throughout his book to suggest healthy eating—the cutting

back of sugar by using honey trimming fat from meat etc. He mentions that ‘everything should be in moderation including moderation.’ Yet an ominous and tantalizing warning surfaces again and again in the text warning the budding male cook not to read the last chapter especially if he is watching his weight. Finally he writes in giant green letters “Don’t even go here” then smaller “How many times did I tell you not to read this? Ok so you’re a guy. There are some recipes that should not be used except in emergencies. For the most part they are from you four major food groups—*butter eggs sugar and cream*—plus some *chocolate*.”

Chamberlain’s sense of humor disarms and charms while he goes about the task of removing the cobwebs of mystification from the kitchen. *The Cookbook for Men Who Must* puts the novice at ease while amusing the more advanced. This a good starter cookbook for anyone—not just men.