



I'm Just Here for More Food: Food x Mixing + Heat = Baking

Alton Brown

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Alton Brown explores the science behind breads, cakes, cookies, pies, and custards, explaining it in his own inimitable style. Recipes cover all the basics, from pie crust to funnel cake to cheese souffle. The book also contains appendices and equipment lists.

I'm Just Here for More Food: Food x Mixing + Heat = Baking Details

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From Reader Review I'm Just Here for More Food: Food x Mixing + Heat = Baking for online ebook

Jamie says

Read my review of A.B.'s original cookbook, since I don't want to repeat myself about his style or philosophy on teaching folks how to cook.

Baking is largely defined by the "method," the process by which the ingredients are mixed prior to baking. Things like the Muffin Method (wet ingredients mixed, dry ingredients mixed separately, then combined) or the Biscuit Method (cold fat cut into flour) are taught before they are applied to specific recipes. It even has these page flaps that allow you to fold over the "method" instructions for specific recipes ... though if you're paying attention you don't need to worry about that.

And the recipes themselves are just plain ol' nummy. I'm a fan!

Just - The romance reader says

A really great book if you're a baker and have a scientific mind. Me, not so much. I know baking is a science and I definitely consider myself a baker, but the book was a little much for me. I didn't get out of it what I was hoping to in terms of grasping how one ingredient reacts to another, or this causes that, etc.

The book has lots of diagrams and when something is explained there is a visual to go along with the explanation when possible. One thing I really liked about the book was that the ingredient list gives you the amounts in weight and volume.

Don Gillette says

If you're into baking, this is probably one of the better cookbooks you're going to find out there, but that's just a guess--I'm not really into baking. But it was enjoyable even though I knew I'd never even attempt 90% of the recipes in the book.

Emily says

Reads more like a science text book than your standard cookbook. I'm hoping the tips learned here will help me with my baking technique.

The only thing that I didn't like about Mr. Brown's style is that it isn't geared towards quick or fool-proof baking at all. This is book is for those who want to master a difficult (but tasty) craft. I'm some where in between those who want to do it quick and do it perfectly, so I might to follow all of Mr. Brown's instructions, but I'm definitely learning from his process.

I loved the book structure and the way the techniques and methods were described. The illustrations are

good, but photographs would be helpful too. I don't there there's a single photo in the book.

Olivia Ambrose says

Really informative! As a beginner baker, some really good information about the mechanics behind baking and why I'm doing the things I do while baking. I could hear Alton's voice in this book. Makes me want to binge some Good Eats. :)

Melissa says

Good Eats is an amazingly nerdy and informative cooking show, so I turned to this book to check out Alton Brown's bread making tips before I try my hand at it. I ended up flipping through the entire book in one sitting. Really good information that's laid out so clearly and scientifically. Probably going to binge watch some Good Eats reruns on Youtube.

Sara says

I loved this book. It was a bit pricey, but I got it cheap at a store closing. If I had \$30+ a pop to blow, I'd get every single one of his books. I have never sat down and read a cookbook as if it were a real book before. But I started yesterday thinking I'd have a glance here and there and learn a few things in between reading my other book.

Instead I stayed up reading until 3 in the morning, went to bed, and woke up to start reading again. Of course I didn't read the recipes too thoroughly as I was not baking at the time, but the science behind how those recipes work and what to do to improve your techniques overall is amazing. I love this book. I wish I had more of his stuff.

Of course, you'll have to like cooking to appreciate this book. You might be interested in the chemistry and science alone, but seeing as it's applied to cooking, it might have to be something you're at least curious about.

And if you like science as well as cooking, and you like gritty little technical details, and you always nitpick every little project of yours to find out why and how and even when, you're going to love love love this book.

Darren says

In many ways this book is a little difficult to describe so that it receives the credit it deserves. It is more than a recipe book even though it isn't a classical recipe book - it is more than a textbook too.

This fairly massive tome from Alton Brown is a relatively informal "workshop guide" to basic food preparation in the shape of baked goods. Here Alton focusses on ensuring that the reader really understands the nitty-gritty or the nuts and bolts as to what really happens from when you mix together ingredients right up to the point of serving. If you only care about making recipe X with the shortest amount of work, hassle and time this book is not for you. If you want to understand how things work with a view of improving them then you may find this a gem, particularly if you are not a food scientist or advanced chef.

Brown starts with a good introduction and a bit of an explanation to as to what to expect, before it is onto the "parts department" where elements such as proteins and carbohydrates are explored and their interaction whilst baking is explained. No, do read on, it is not as dull as you might think. Even if you don't fully understand what Brown is writing, if you can pick up some basic understanding and practical tips you may find a real, noticeable difference in your baking. The importance of core ingredients such as eggs and flour also comes under the proverbial magnifying glass, helping remove any misapprehension that, for example, different types of flour are essentially the same and do roughly the same job. Indeed they may, just as a bicycle and an aircraft can propel you from New York to London (eventually).

After all of this, recipes and their underlying work processes are concentrated within a number of standard methodologies and thus many recipes appear here. Each standard methodology - muffins, biscuits, pie variants, creaming, straight dough, egg foam, custards and a few other bits and bobs are similarly heavy on the science and plain-language explanation of the whats and whys and, naturally, then many recipes are provided that draw on this knowledge.

As long as you remove any preconceptions about this book and if you are interested in how things actually go together and want to hopefully make a better "product" then this book might be an interesting, innovative diversion for you. A hybrid that carefully curates and moulds both high-level academic theory and common sense practical information to a fairly light-hearted, engaging and informative stream to be piped en masse into your brain. Just like Alton Brown's (American) television shows you can sense the energy, constantly changing focus as you read through the book yet, surprisingly, there is an almost serene, controlled manner to this as well. A concept that is harder to explain than it is to understand through reading it.

The book ends with, as you would hope for, a good detailed index since it is a fair bet you will be referencing hither and thither as time goes on. Some little errors and some abrupt endings made this reviewer scratch his head metaphorically a few times, but these little black marks rapidly pale into insignificance when you consider the overall picture.

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This is a RETROspective review of a previously-published book that, whilst not new on the market, is still available and the review has been made of the book as it stands today.

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Sherpa says

Sherpa the Baker, who'd think that? Anyways, If you're looking for a cookbook, this is NOT the book for you. However, if you are looking for a book that begins with a 60 or so page explanation of the science behind baking, you're in luck. The entire book which includes a good number of recipes looks to instruct the reader in how to consistently make excellent baked goods of all kinds; yeast breads, muffins, cookies, etc, by taking a unique approach to the categorization of these items, the mixing method. Alton Brown believes that if you master his five basic mixing methods you can create any type of baked good with a combination of these techniques. It really is a great book if you actually want to LEARN and not just follow directions. Think of it as a class in a nutshell. You start out with the basics, move on to the techniques, and lastly to the

applications. Excellent Book, highly recommended.

Lindsey Duncan says

Mad kitchen scientist Alton Brown is back for another installment, this time looking at the process of baking and the chemical compositions that make it work. He divides his recipes into mixing method because it determines the consistency and texture of the final product. This makes a lot of sense for this book and also for anyone anxious to pick out the patterns in a wide variety of recipes. Every section provides examples of the type.

For my money, I thought this book was a little better than the first, though some of the metaphors / illustrations are stretched a mite too thin. Maybe it's because baking is more precise and scientific, so Alton's exacting methodology has less tendency to seem like overkill; maybe it's purely personal, because baking is my favored arena. Regardless, I also found the recipes in this book less basic and more generally interesting - this is a book that lends itself to being used as a recipe book.

However, the way the recipes are laid out and printed significantly hampers this. I always photocopy recipes so I can hang them up in my kitchen and not damage the book - well, several of the recipes are 4-5 pages with illustrations and wide spacing. Even if this isn't your habit and you prefer to have the book on hand, that's a lot of flipping, propping, etc to refresh yourself of the steps. I would have preferred the detailed explanation and then a separate page with the compact recipe. (I can't really complain about the flaps with the Mixing Methods rather than repeating it in every recipe, since Brown's intention is for you to memorize them instead of continuously referring back. It's a good idea ... though I pulled the flaps forward for my photocopies anyhow. I'll get there.)

But the rest of the book is entertaining and clever. It starts with the building blocks of baking and examines their composition and their purpose in baking - whether they strengthen, leaven, weaken, etc. It's a delicate balance ... but one gets the feeling that by deeper review and perhaps some additional information (for instance, what ratio of X to Y would balance out?), you could alter recipes in a more complicated manner than simple 1:1 substitution - and that's invaluable.

Bruce says

Not certain how much useful perspective I can offer to other potential readers.

I freely admit to a strong bias in favour of anything by Alton Brown's as his approach to cooking education, writing and video composition style and for that matter, general world view seem to work very well for me. Brown's organization by baking method is very logical and easy to learn and will give you a solid structure in which to organize your knowledge as you move forward in your baking education/practice.

As with all things food, the usefulness of this and any other book will depend on how well (and quickly) you apply it to your own baking (or cooking). For me, the immediate value has been in helping connect the dots between what I've already learned along the way, and creating the necessary mental "buckets" to organize and retain whatever I pick up moving forward.

All in all, I highly recommend this book. In fact, "I'm Just Here for More Food", along with Alton Brown's first book "I'm Just Here for the Food" and Julia Child's "The Way To Cook" are the three books I would

currently recommend to anyone starting cooking, or looking to solidify their basic cooking skills.

Rosita Chiquita Juanita Chihuahua says

Tons of factual baking education going on here, which is great! Serve me up a plate, I'm hungerin'! And clear, with humor that fits in nicely. But: I only tried four recipes, but they weren't home-runs, and there were tricky bits to them that you think Mr.Technique would have given you the heads-up about (Frustrating doughs, laughing so I will not cry). There's a bunch of scientific details in here that don't seem so need-to-know, and thus I dozed off some times. Also, I have heard from several sources (Internet hearsay, which I believe completely) that Alton Brown bears an unhealthy hostility towards fat Americans-- therefore, I can't entirely let down my guard and enjoy the man or his book.

Beli_grrl says

I was waiting to review this until I had tried a recipe and tonight I did. I made the peanut butter cookies. I have made many batches of peanut butter cookies over the years and have never had a bad batch. Alton's are very good cookies, but not my favorite. They're kind of crunchy, and I like a chewier cookie, but that's just me. Don't get me wrong; AB's are excellent, too.

The real reason I'm giving this book 5 stars is that it's just such an interesting read for someone who loves baking. I had a lot of "Ah ha" moments reading about the chemistry and physics of baking. Actually, I knew I had a touch for it, and now I understand more clearly what I have been doing right. And I definitely have picked up some valuable pointers for improving.

The writing is light and amusing and easy to read but gives some really solid information. It's almost a "dummies" kind of read, only you're not pretending to be stupid because there happens to be an area in which you're not expert, which I think is the problem of the concept behind the dummies books. You're not a dummy just because you don't know Photoshop or antique coin collecting. You're a dummy if you are interested in one of those things but won't read up on it. So anyone reading a dummies book has proven, ironically, that they are not. Wow, what a digression. What I'm saying is that Alton uses a similar light touch with humor and helpful diagrams but without insulting you for not already knowing it.

Some people might not like his insistence on unusual methods, like weighing ingredients by volume. There are little things to pick at in this book like that. He also insists that you have a stand mixer if you're going to bake cookies. He says handhelds don't cut it and neither does manual mixing. But I mixed manually on cookies for years when I was young and poor and they always came out great. Then I used hand mixers for many more years and my cookies were, of course, fine. So he's kind of unrealistic in his expectations for the equipment of the average Joe's kitchen. But it's fun to dream of one day having all that stuff and knowing you would have this book to help you know how to use it.

To recap: only made one recipe and liked it. But the book (and there's quite a lot of text, this is far more than a cookbook), is a pleasure to read.

Kim says

Brown's catchy, educational style makes the book about more than just recipes - but the recipes are also quite good.

Katie says

Not as good as the first book. In "I'm Just Here for the Food", AB had a very casual, minimalist attitude towards tools and techniques: keep it cheap but heavy; you don't need a thousand pans to be a good cook; good cooking is really only variations on a very few common themes, so learn to trust your instincts and play around a little, and people will think you're fabulous.

Now, baking is a more fastidious endeavor so you can't be quite as hippie about it, and he seems to have compensated by injecting the leftover handwaveyness into his explanations, flaunting hunches instead of using actual science to combat the conventional wisdom.

He also spends a lot of time talking about specific brands of tools, and has a crappy attitude about it -- where in IJHfF he would've said "Don't bother getting X if you're not going to cook Y every day of your life -- while X is useful, it's probably not worth it," in IJHfMF he says "If you're going to do Y a lot, you really need to get an X. Do it for the children." Maybe it's a subtle difference, but it's one I find unbelievably snooty, as if I can't be a *real* baker without some special kind of stand mixer. Pah!

At the same time, this is still a very different book from most cookbooks, and it still focuses on basic techniques and variations rather than just listing gobs of recipes. And that's why I will probably keep buying AB's books until he tires of writing them. I just liked him better when he was a Revolutionary Telling Us the Secrets! instead of an Authority Figure Telling Us the Answers... maybe he changed editors?
