



# The Flavor Bible: The Essential Guide to Culinary Creativity, Based on the Wisdom of America's Most Imaginative Chefs

*Karen Page , Andrew Dornenburg*

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**Winner of the 2009 James Beard Book Award for Best Book: Reference and Scholarship**

Great cooking goes beyond following a recipe--it's knowing how to season ingredients to coax the greatest possible flavor from them. Drawing on dozens of leading chefs' combined experience in top restaurants across the country, Karen Page and Andrew Dornenburg present the definitive guide to creating "deliciousness" in any dish. Thousands of ingredient entries, organized alphabetically and cross-referenced, provide a treasure trove of spectacular flavor combinations. Readers will learn to work more intuitively and effectively with ingredients; experiment with temperature and texture; excite the nose and palate with herbs, spices, and other seasonings; and balance the sensual, emotional, and spiritual elements of an extraordinary meal. Seasoned with tips, anecdotes, and signature dishes from America's most imaginative chefs, THE FLAVOR BIBLE is an essential reference for every kitchen.

## The Flavor Bible: The Essential Guide to Culinary Creativity, Based on the Wisdom of America's Most Imaginative Chefs Details

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## **From Reader Review The Flavor Bible: The Essential Guide to Culinary Creativity, Based on the Wisdom of America's Most Imaginative Chefs for online ebook**

### **Matthew Gatheringwater says**

This is not a cookbook, and that's a good thing.

There are no recipes, only lists and descriptions of compatible flavors, along with reflections from a handful of well-known and trendy chefs. Apparently geared to the professional cook (unless sous-vide has become a home cooking technique), it can still offer inspiration to the adventurous home cook. It has, in any case, inspired me to put fresh thyme and honey on my grapefruit.

The lists are not consistent. What is listed as a classic pairing under one ingredient may not, for example, be listed the same way for the other half of the pair.

I would have liked to hear from a greater number of chefs, and have had some historical perspective on how the idea of what tastes good together has changed over time. (Flavor combinations are judged more or less happy by the number of contemporary chefs who consider them classic, not whether they have been thought to taste well together for time out of mind. As a result, unlikely and challenging or outright faddish combinations get higher scores than a history of taste would allow.) Nevertheless, this is a great book for helping plan complementary flavors or figuring out what to do with whatever is on hand. You can learn a lot from a good list.

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### **Samantha says**

One of the most useful books in my kitchen!

A book for the culinary tinkerer: Perfect for anyone who loves to cook and experiment in the kitchen without having to rely on recipes or cookbooks.

The flavor bible is organized so you can look up any ingredients, say, for example "asparagus" and find complimentary ingredients, cooking techniques, and flavor combinations. This is both great for cooking seasonally such as when you have a turnip from your farm box and you don't know what to do with it, or if you just want to get into the kitchen and COOK, and want to be really creative.

It's also just great to read and learn from - great if you are trying to make yourself a better cook, or even a better diner.

(If you are looking for a great gift combo, the Flavor Bible and Michael Ruhlman's Ratio complement each other well.)

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### **Lauri says**

This is not a recipe book, so don't buy or read it looking for that. Instead, this is a book for upping your game

as a home chef. If you want to make up your own creations (or riff off of recipes or improve old favorites) this book will teach you how to do that without having your food turning out like butt.

I saw this book in the bookstore the year that it came out. I remember being glued to it for about an hour in the store. Between the beautiful pictures and the genius design, I was obsessed. But I wouldn't justify spending the money at the time so I quietly and occasionally pined for it over the years. I recently checked out the digital version from the library and read it on my iPad. I just loved it, but as a vegan thought "well, this is going to be a challenge" with combinations referring to so many animal products. Imagine my surprise (amazement! Excitement!) when I discovered the Vegetarian Flavor Bible (by the same authors who have now converted to a plant-based diet). I bought both the hardcover and Kindle versions on the spot. Now I can have all of the great ingredient pairings but through a plant-eaters lens.

Regardless of your diet, if you dream of being a more creative home cook this book can help you understand ingredients (approximately every one on earth, from the look of the A-Z section) and how to combine them to get creative, great-tasting meals every time.

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### **Mattie says**

Terrifically comprehensive reference work! Organized by ingredient, each entry provides a long list of complementary foods and flavors, with the most traditional or typical pairings highlighted. So, say you've had a trip to the farmer's market and bought some veggie or herb you're not familiar with - you can consult the book to get ideas of complementary flavor profiles to help you figure out how to use it. Or, if you have a couple of items you are familiar with, but haven't ever had a dish with both of them. The guide can help you figure out if there's a reason for that! LOL Fun for the cook who is less interested in working with recipes and more interested in informed experimentation in the kitchen.

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### **Rachel says**

This book is one of the most helpful tools in my kitchen. It lists food alphabetically and each entry has a number of flavor suggestions. For instance: FRENCH TOAST. Maple syrup. Bananas. Sausage. Some flavor combinations are so out-there that I'd never have thought of trying them, while others are obvious. There are also little sidebars full of advice, descriptions of chef's dishes, and more. I love this book and I recommend it to any cook who likes to create recipes from scratch!

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### **Sorenconard says**

After checking this book out multiple times at the library I finally own it. A must have for anyone that wants to take their cooking to the next level. No recipes, very little on technique, just page after page after page of flavor listing charts and brief ideas from chefs that like to use the ingredient.

If you are a home cook who is tired of "line cooking" recipes from cook books, or started changing/tweaking recipes to reflect your style but want to do more this will be a priceless book for you. I think it is impossible to have this book in your lap and not start to be creative.

If cooking was music, this would be the Scale Exercises of the cooking world. Sometimes tedious to think of,

but always helpful knowledge to have under your belt.

Pro: Exhaustive book for flavor listings mixed in with quotes from chefs on how they like to handle the listed ingredient.

Cons: Not exhaustive enough. While it does have tons of flavors it misses some less used but important ones like quinoa, other seeds, agave nectar, some fruits, and a few other foods. It also has a few "missed" ingredient connections under the listings. What I mean is, one ingredient will list another ingredient but that ingredient won't have the other one listed. The third flaw is that most of these pairings are fairly traditional. Going back to the music analogy, a good Jazz musician can play any note over any chord, they just know when and how to play that note so it fits in. Flavors and cooking can be the same way. This book is flavor by the book, so no be-bop or free jazz here. These flaws are minor since this book is still must have.

Great book which has led to my personal recipe book doubling in size.

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### **Shelby \*trains flying monkeys\* says**

Let me start off by giving you the bad:

You are going to want this book for your collection so don't bother with borrowing it from the library.

The library wants their copies back-I know! The nerve!

This is not really a book for beginner's. It doesn't tell you step by step what to do with food.

The Good:

It does tell you flavors and tastes that pair with other tastes and I like that.

If you have a bunch of asparagus about to go bad in the fridge just pick up this book and it will tell you flavours that meld well with it. It is very broad in foods included also.

Sometimes my mind is blank and I have no clue what to do for dinner. Looking through this book could very well inspire me. (I don't eat processed foods so my little foodie heart loves this)

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### **Dasha says**

skvelá príručka chutí, klasifikácia prísad a ich kombinácie, ?asto na základe svetových kuchý?, rady a tipy. akú radosť vie spraviť abecedné radenie :)

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### **Erica says**

I don't understand why so many people like this book. I found it to be both confusing and unnecessary.

Anyone with a nose and a set of tastebuds can figure out that asparagus tastes nice with butter or that maple syrup goes with French toast or that LETTUCE works well with BACON, BREAD, and TOMATOES (this is blatantly obvious to anyone who has ever eaten a SALAD). And any person who has encountered horseradish can tell you that its flavor is quite strong (or, as the Flavor Bible calls it, "very loud"). Using this

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book made me want to bang my head against my desk, because the combinations are just all so darned obvious, even to a novice cook.

A book like this feels like a crutch or a pretension. I can't fathom what sort of cook refers to this book and says, "Oh-ho! I see that mozzarella and basil match up together according to this chart in my Flavor Bible. Then yes, I shall put those two things together!"

If you have eaten food, you already understand everything this book has to offer, or you can at least figure it out simply by smelling, tasting, and touching things - which is basically the most fun and interesting aspect of cooking, for most folks. You don't need charts and lists of "flavor affinities" to tell you what tastes good. Period.

The only aspect of this book that might be at all helpful are the seasons listed for each ingredient, although this information is available in more convenient formats elsewhere.

I am glad I only checked this book out from the library, rather than going out and spending money on it.

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### ♥Xeni♥ says

June 24, 2015:

I was given this book in a gift exchange. It is so much more than I ever imagined. It is incredible!

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Feb 23, 2012:

This is a pretty awesome "cookbook". I say cookbook in quotes, because it's not really that. It's more like a how-to book on becoming a great chef (from level good). Detailed information on which herbs and spices and ingredients and all what you need for cooking go well together (or super excellent together or not at all!)

Based on both experience from some of America's top chef's as well as molecular biology research, this book is definitely a first of the sort that I've ever found. As someone who is frustrated with most cookbooks out there, since they really only detail recipe's which need to be followed in detail (with very specific ingredients!) this book is really something awesome.

I read all the introduction bits, but I feel that I'll be referencing the detailed lists very often in all my future experiments! I really feel like gifting this book to my siblings (and anyone who also adores cooking) but perhaps the first book written by this author is a better starting point? I will try and find a copy and see if I can't just spice up my life a bit more!

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### Bruce says

A curious culinary compendium for cooks keen to cop comely combinations of comestibles, the book is basically a big alphabetized list of ingredients, with everything from achiote seeds (p. 37) to zucchini blossoms (p. 374). A typical entry (p. 199) looks like this:

## LEMONS, PRESERVED

**Taste:** sour

**Weight:** light-medium

**Volume:** moderate-loud

cinnamon

cloves

lamb

## MOROCCAN CUISINE

nigella seeds

saffron

Oh, and featured chef Brad Farmerie (Public, NYC) is quoted enthusiastically as favoring their use. Readers are supposed to use the book like a thesaurus, only words shown in ALL-CAPS or boldfaced (or boldfaced and all-caps) are those cited more frequently by those chefs the authors interviewed. There's no attempt to be rigorously consistent. For example, skip back a couple of pages to the entry on LEMONS, and you get an entry for "Season" (year-round) in addition to taste, weight, and volume, along with a list of associations that goes on for three full columns.

There are no recipes here; the compilers are merely trying to inspire already-competent cooks to new creativity. A recipe would only cramp their audience's style. So the lists themselves are far from definitive and in any case leave plenty of room for debate. We're told in no uncertain terms to avoid mixing cranberries in eggs (which otherwise would seem to combine well with very nearly everything). I suppose if ever I should happen to find myself hosting the authors, I really must remember not to serve them anything quite so gauche as a cranberry nog. Not even in autumn.

Now I'm a guy who likes to read cookbooks occasionally (I found Sauces, The Nero Wolfe Cookbook, and The Cookery of England to all be terrific cover-to-cover and for different reasons), but this one is really designed for browsing. It's beautifully designed, from the standpoint of rich color photography (albeit with heavy repetition), but cries out for a strong editor.

Few of the selected chefs' comments came across as all that insightful. Some representative selections:

We wanted to trick the customer into thinking that they were going to eat a hot pancake topped with... syrup.... We bring out a metal plate that looks hot [but is frozen and steaming from being immersed in nitrogen].... Ninety-nine percent of the people who were served this dish swore they were getting a hot flapjack, and it was only when they tasted it that they learned it was cold. – Homaru Cantu (Moto, Chicago) (p. 15)

To make our "Philly Cheesesteak," we start with the bread. We put pita dough through a pasta machine so that it gets really thin, but puffs way up when you cook it.... So you have bread, cheese, beef, and onion, just like a Philly cheesesteak. We add the truffles just to push it over the top. – Katsuya Fukushima (minibar, Washington, DC) (p. 16)

I like very little **lavender** with quail for its savory aroma, but the key phrase is "very little" – or else it's like eating a piece of soap! – Sharon Hage, York Street (Dallas) (p. 196)

The authors themselves are no better. There's the unnecessary use of air quotes at page x:

We believe cooking will continue to evolve, and not only as a means of "doing" (i.e., putting dinner on the table, or "problem-solving" by "following a recipe").

This is immediately followed by a cringe-inducing summation on the following page, "We hope this book makes you happy – literally." At page 217, the entry on "MENU" offers up a musical metaphor using improperly-grouped, inelegantly drawn sets of notes with wrongward-facing stems that better communicates the musical illiteracy of its authors than anything meaningful about food preparation or service. The volume is liberally seasoned with banal gems such as this one from p. 21:

When you are working with fresh fruit, the fruit has to be the guide. If you eat a piece of fresh fruit by itself, it is a dessert. So you want the dessert, in the end, to taste better than the fruit itself.

All of which is to say that this reference work would probably come off better as a searchable online database than a shelf-stacker. It's a conversation piece at best; a poor read, overdressed with superfluous prose, and too unwieldy to prop open for real-time cooking consultation.

While you won't find common molecular flavor fantasias like "cola" (cinnamon & vanilla) here, what can I say? The sweet-potato/maple syrup/crushed pecan combo was nice, the banana rolled in dried parsley, not so much. This book is – at least theoretically – inspirational. It got me talking with my daughter about unusual, fun flavor combinations, and she suggested serving up a slice of plain cheesecake accented with dark-chocolate-dipped rosemary needles. I looked it up. Rosemary and chocolate aren't paired here. In fact, at p. 125 illustrious pastry chef Emily Lucchetti (Farallon, San Francisco) actually wags a finger, "I'm not a fan of herbs with dessert," but my daughter's combo sounds just dynamite to me. With no offense intended to the purveyors of haute cuisine, I think I'm better off trusting to the sensibilities of a 12 year old.

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## Keith says

I have longed for just this book for years! You wouldn't believe how excited I was when I saw it. If I could only keep one book in my kitchen, this would be the one.

This is not a cookbook. Not really. It's more like a flavor encyclopedia: Look up a spice, herb, vegetable, or even season or type of ethnic cuisine, and you will find a list of complimentary flavors, plus a few cooking techniques. Look up black beans, and it will suggest a lengthy list of pairings, with emphasis on the stronger options, like cumin, cilantro, and garlic. Want to whip together a dessert using pineapple? Try one of 30 or 40 suggestions, including bananas, brandy, coconut, or vanilla.

The opening chapters give a good introduction to the basic flavors, how they work on the tongue, and building a dish or menu.

This book is for anyone who likes to tinker in the kitchen. Incredibly useful for tweaking recipes, or even better, creating some of your own.

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## Ifa Inziati says

Bagus, sih... tapi rasanya bukan untuk pemula, ya. Haha. Soalnya bagian pembukanya cuma sedikit dan sisanya seperti kamus saja--nama-nama bahan sesuai abjad dan bahan lain yang kompatibel dengannya. Yang ultimate combo ditandai dengan huruf kapital dan simbol. Yang paling nggak nyambung hurufnya kecil.

Beberapa memang cukup dikenal tanpa harus menilik 'injil' ini, seperti apel dengan kayumanis, tomat dengan oregano, dsb. Mungkin ini akan lebih berguna bagi saya setelah saya sudah lebih sering berlatih memasak.

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### **Andrea says**

This is an incredible reference, especially for cooks who enjoy 'winging-it' instead of always following closely to recipes. This gives great guidance for flavor combinations that work, and allows for 'safe' creativity in the kitchen. I turn to this book almost weekly, and far more than any cookbook I've ever owned. Highly recommended.

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### **Jessica says**

In these days of high food and gas prices, I do not part with my dollars easily. Every time I pull out my wallet, it is only after much thought and some time spent foraging for cheaper alternatives, or else a realization that the coveted item is just that -a want instead of a need.

Books are high on that list on 'wants'. It took me many years to come to this conclusion, but after re-discovering the joys of my public library, I have now firmly placed owned books on my luxury list.

Here's a confession:

I paid 35 dollars for this book.

Understand: this is huge. I could just stop my review there. That, along with the grimacing pain it takes for me to give a whole fifth star attests to just how I feel about this book. Understand that 5 stars, to me, consists of books that changed my life; it is a category of books with the likes of Grapes of Wrath and Watership Down.

Yup.

Just so you know - this is not a cookbook. This is a reference book for people who know what tastes good, but have trouble articulating why. This book explains what makes a balanced taste (between acid, fat, salt, and sweetness), the importance of mouthfeel (temperature, texture, piquancy, and astringency), the role of smell, and the interplay of all these things with the visual, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of a meal.

It explains why basil tastes good with tomatoes, why corn is good with butter (is \*anything\* not improved by butter??), why ham goes with cheese.

After the explanations, the bulk of the book is indeed a dictionary of flavor affinities. It provides an alphabetized list of hundreds of ingredients along with the other ingredients that complement them best (it sometimes also lists those ingredients that are most awful to combine). It also classifies the ingredients to the 4 tastes (sweet, salty, sour, bitter).

How did this book change my life? Well, I've donated all (ok, most) of my cookbooks. Now I just look in my pantry, pick the item I want to base my meal on, and use this book to help me bring out that ingredient. I no longer trust recipes, but trust my tongue instead. I think about the flavors I am tasting and combining, and I understand the science and techniques that make me think something tastes good. I now can verbalize why coriander goes so well with fish when there's no lemon in the fridge (coriander is perceived by the sour

tastebuds), and why cloves can replace allspice in pumpkin pie (they're both sweet and loud enough to be heard over the pumkin).

So, yeah. Good book to have in the kitchen. Probably will be the last 'cookbook' I get rid of.

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