
How to Learn Cooking by Yourself

Posted by Adminww - 2008/10/07 03:45

In this day and age, it is assumed we need a teacher for everything and that we are innately useless at any basic requirement without having been taught by someone "expert". This is a sad reflection on our social hang-ups about "expertise" being the only source of knowledge but rest easy; you can empower yourself. Start with learning how to cook by yourself.

Steps

1. Listen to your gut instincts and trust them. This is the first important rule in cooking. You must listen to your inner knowledge of what foods work well for you, what foods combine well when cooked and what tastes good. All of this you should already know from having eaten other people's food all of your life; you just probably haven't taken the time to focus on these finer points. Get a pen and paper and write down your feelings about food in its cooked form and some of these food combinations and tastes will start to become clear to you.
2. Get some good quality cookbooks. Avoid the trap for young players to buy lots of cookbooks; that will only drive you nuts. Choose some that appeal to you and that have glorious photos of food to inspire you.
3. Sit down somewhere quiet and read through these books as you would look at a magazine or a book or artwork. Don't try to understand all the terminology just yet. Take time instead to ingest the feel, the aromas, the look etc. of the food as suggested by the cookbook. A good cookbook is often one that includes the author's personal experiences with cooking, including the disasters and stories on how he or she coped with learning to cook. This is the "pinch of inspiration" that is crucial to becoming a good cook.
4. Start learning the terminology. So now you have one pinch desire and one pinch inspiration. Now you need one pinch technical know-how. Learn the basic terms. You should know what it means to grill, to fry, to saute, to julienne, to baste etc. Your quality cookbooks should have these terms. If not, just search online. These terms are the keys to unlocking good cooking.
5. Try a simple recipe first. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the oven and hotplates before you get into the recipe too far. Make sure you are comfortable with using these items. Same for any appliances such as blenders and the like. Never, never, never attempt a Michelin star recipe when you are a novice or you will turn away from cooking for life. That is the stuff of chefs and you only want to be a cook. So select a basic, simple recipe and follow it step by step - absolutely. It is important to understand that "innate cooking" will come in time but for now, you need to rely on the cookbook's instructions a little more closely.
6. Keep trying out simple recipes. In the course of a week to a month, you should be starting to feel more confident about cooking by yourself, all without the aid of any classes and relying solely on your hand-picked cookbooks, your innate sense of taste and your built-up knowledge of cooking terms and appliances.
7. Vary your new recipes. It is time to start being creative and varying your recipes slightly once you feel confident with your first simple recipes. Spice it up with curry powder or add a different herb to begin with. As time goes on, you will become more and more confident at varying other people's recipes and creating your own. This is where you cease to copy and start to just cook from the heart and soul. And by this time, you should be hooked and loving it because you have beaten this path all by yourself.

=====