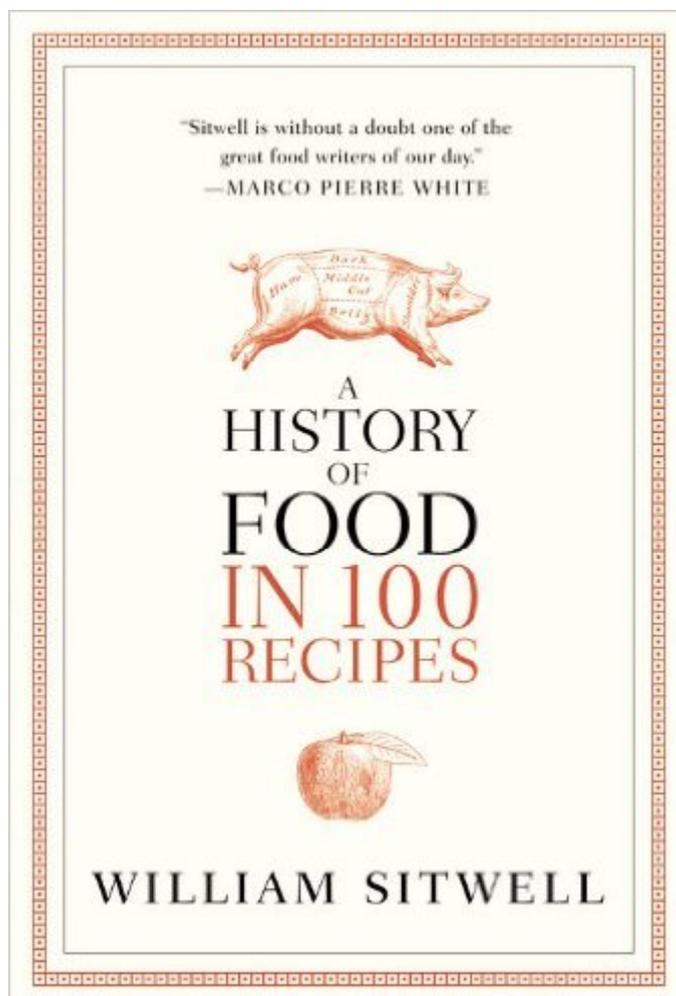


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# A History Of Food In 100 Recipes



## Synopsis

A riveting narrative history of food as seen through 100 recipes, from ancient Egyptian bread to modernist cuisine. We all love to eat, and most people have a favorite ingredient or dish. But how many of us know where our much-loved recipes come from, who invented them, and how they were originally cooked? In *A HISTORY OF FOOD IN 100 RECIPES*, culinary expert and BBC television personality William Sitwell explores the fascinating history of cuisine from the first cookbook to the first cupcake, from the invention of the sandwich to the rise of food television. A book you can read straight through and also use in the kitchen, *A HISTORY OF FOOD IN 100 RECIPES* is a perfect gift for any food lover who has ever wondered about the origins of the methods and recipes we now take for granted.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is clearly a product of love, much research and thought and hopefully the reader will cherish it with similar affection. Despite its title, there are not 100 recipes and neither are many of the recipes something you will probably try for a family meal, but don't let that put you off! Here the author delves back through time and a myriad of recipe books and food books that have been published, wryly noting that many contain similar boastful, self-indulgent claims about their breadth, uniqueness or completeness as those that often appear today. The fruits of the author's labour are presented as a celebratory, knowledgeable, information and yet concise look at 100 dishes, many of which are still popular today (albeit with some modification at times) and many that may have fell by the culinary

wayside. Starting from Ancient Egyptian bread and working in a chronological order the reader is treated to such items as Roast Goat (30 BC), Pasta (1154), tips on party planning (1420), Hot Chocolate (1568) and even a revelation as to how the Englishman discovered the fork (1611). Time and food development marches on and in the past century featured dishes include Strawberry ice-cream soda, Toad-in-the-Hole, Omelette, Cheese Fondue, Fairy Cakes and Sweet and Sour Pork. For one reason or another, which will become clearer to the reader, the author has selected each recipe and pinned it to a specific place in the chronology for a reason. It might be due to an historical event, a "new" cook book or other writing, a new development or even due to a craze. Truly a quirky, interesting, innovative and thought-provoking series of friendly, informative mini essays. Not every recipe from earlier times had been committed to paper, instead being often passed word-of-mouth or depicted in other forms such as tapestries. As such, the author has been forced to recreate and salvage these recipes and much information from many disparate sources. For the curious gastronome, this shall be no problem. It is clear that you are not going to use this book as a centre for your family meal planning, yet the curious may use this as a base for recreating meals from the past and maybe even be encouraged to undertake similar culinary detective work. Not every recipe has necessarily been found under a layer of metaphorical dust, as there are some contributions and takes on older food from many modern-day top chefs and cooks such as Jamie Oliver, Nigella Lawson, Marco Pierre White, Delia Smith and Heston Blumenthal. It is hoped that the author nor publisher are being done a disservice by saying that this is a book that the casual browser may pass by. The book (based on viewing a digital version rather than receiving a physical copy) gives the impression of being a little subdued. Not quite a dry academic text book but one of those "hard to categorise, hard to promote" books. Yet those with an interest of food (or a general curiosity) will miss out on a treat if they pass this one by. Even if you read one mini-essay per day you will have many months of a "daily boggle" to keep you and your friends and family amused and amazed. A fairly extensive "select bibliography" (running to several pages) and a great index complete this book. As stated, if you are a curious sort of person, perhaps love food more than just the taste of it and wish to broaden your horizon this is the sort of book for you. For reading at home and for reference purposes the physical book will probably be best, but its size might make it less desirable as a travel companion. Fortunately, there is a eBook available - but with current pricing and market conditions you will be buying the same thing twice. That is a decision for you and a thought for the publishing industry at-large...

I have not yet finished this book, but I'm up to #40 and am really adoring it. The recipes are not

necessarily recipes that one could set out to make. They are historical, and sometimes obscure or almost impossible for us moderns. Also, much of the time the "recipe" is used merely as an introduction to an area of cooking that has not generally been documented. The tone of the book is gossipy, in the best way. While I am not fond of the partial sentences- I do like the chatty tone; it's like inviting the author to a dinner party where he goes off on tangents that are interesting and may or may not address the food! This does make it a lot of fun to read, and it's great for reading piecemeal. There are some recipes that I would really love to make... but that's not the reason to read this; it's definitely more about the history of food and cooking. I find this fascinating, and the author is very entertaining in his writing. Recommended for food nerds, especially, or for dedicated cooks. I just learned when the pressure cooker was invented! I will add more notes to this as I proceed through the book.

Addendum 1: I am personally VERY intrigued that the first published recipe for puff pastry dough is actually a recipe for the "quick-and-dirty" version! It makes sense, because the baker's roots were in making pies, and the q&d puff paste is sort of a cross between modern laminated puff pastry and piecrust. The recipe cited is pretty much identical to the ones I've used myself.

Addendum 2: The hollandaise sauce recipe here does not include egg yolks! It's just butter and lemon juice and seasoning. I will have to try it.

Addendum 3: I have now made the no-yolk hollandaise. Proportions and amounts were lacking in the recipe, so I used 1 stick- 4 oz.- of salted butter, melted in a double boiler. I then removed it from the heat to cool, and when it was room temp whisked in 3 tablespoons of lemon juice. I may add a fourth, and it could also use more salt. Still! it did emulsify (which I'd have bet it would not), and makes a tasty, albeit fairly runny, sauce if put on anything hot. I expect the yolks make it more viscous, and also less fussy about the emulsifying. At this point, mine is rather a cross between a hollandaise and a beurre blanc. It was excellent with steamed lobster, and would be wonderful with artichokes or grilled asparagus. I do not think it is thick enough for eggs benedict, unless one replaces the canadian bacon with smoked salmon.

Addendum 4: At some point I really have to make the steamed brioche with the rose mozz. This is fascinating, and I don't need extra equipment to do it. Also, the carbonara recipe looks really fantastic. I'm really happy with the proto-hollandaise- it's SO EASY, and has a lot of potential uses, especially when one considers variations on it (like lime...).

Summing up: It's really not a cookbook to cook from- these recipes are the exception. It is, though, a fascinating look at the history of food tastes and techniques over several millennia. The tone is very chatty, though I would have appreciated some copy-editing to reduce the number of incomplete sentences! I suppose these did add to the gossipy feel, though I found them distracting. It's not a substitute for an in-depth look at a cooking era- Like Laura Shapiro's books- but it's a great and entertaining overview, and some of the

recipes are actually cook-able and enticing. And I figure I'll be making the proto-hollandaise a LOT.

I'm a sucker for any book on the history of food since I love to cook and the origin of the recipes fascinates me. The recipes in this book range from ancient ones for bread to more modern offerings like Asian salads, Steamed salmon with couscous and Fairy cakes. The earlier recipes are not recipes as we know them, and I wouldn't recommend trying them even if you could source the ingredients, but they're interesting none the less. Mr. Sitwell tells us stories of the past and the people who influenced food and wrote recipe books. We learn of the first known use of the recipes, the available equipment, and the interesting social details that give us a clear picture of the past. The book is written in a chatty manner with dry humor. It's a book meant to be taken in small bites rather than read in one or two long gulps. I enjoyed reading *A History of Food* very much and know I will refer to it often. The more modern recipes are ones I will make--in fact I've tried a couple already. I found this book interesting and learned lots of things I hadn't previously known. *A History of Food* is the perfect book to give to a keen foodie as a birthday, Christmas or surprise gift. Highly recommended. I received an ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

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