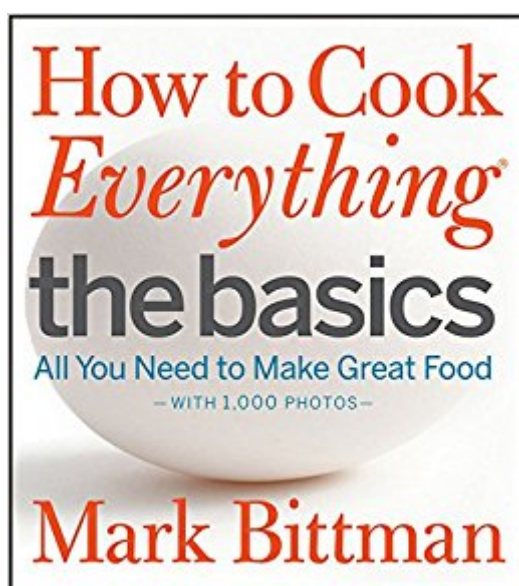


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# How To Cook Everything The Basics: All You Need To Make Great Food--With 1,000 Photos



## Synopsis

The next best thing to having Mark Bittman in the kitchen with you Mark Bittman's highly acclaimed, bestselling book *How to Cook Everything* is an indispensable guide for any modern cook. With *How to Cook Everything The Basics* he reveals how truly easy it is to learn fundamental techniques and recipes. From dicing vegetables and roasting meat, to cooking building-block meals that include salads, soups, poultry, meats, fish, sides, and desserts, Bittman explains what every home cook, particularly novices, should know. 1,000 beautiful and instructive photographs throughout the book reveal key preparation details that make every dish inviting and accessible. With clear and straightforward directions, Bittman's practical tips and variation ideas, and visual cues that accompany each of the 185 recipes, cooking with *How to Cook Everything The Basics* is like having Bittman in the kitchen with you. This is the essential teaching cookbook, with 1,000 photos illustrating every technique and recipe; the result is a comprehensive reference that's both visually stunning and utterly practical. *Special Basics* features scattered throughout simplify broad subjects with sections like "Think of Vegetables in Groups," "How to Cook Any Grain," and "5 Rules for Buying and Storing Seafood." 600 demonstration photos each build on a step from the recipe to teach a core lesson, like "Cracking an Egg," "Using Pasta Water," "Recognizing Doneness," and "Crimping the Pie Shut." Detailed notes appear in blue type near selected images. Here Mark highlights what to look for during a particular step and offers handy advice and other helpful asides. Tips and variations let cooks hone their skills and be creative.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 496 pages

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; 1 edition (February 24, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0470528060

ISBN-13: 978-0470528068

Product Dimensions: 7.5 x 1.4 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 419 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #5,622 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #21 in Books > Reference >

Encyclopedias & Subject Guides > Cooking #23 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Cooking

Education & Reference > Reference #118 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Cooking

Methods

## Customer Reviews

In *How to Cook Everything The Basics*, best-selling author Mark Bittman offers another essential collection of delicious recipes, from fried egg to steamed mussels. With clear and straightforward directions, practical tips and variation ideas, and helpful photos for each of the recipes, Bittman breaks down the basics to help all home cooks. Recipe Excerpts from *How to Cook Everything The Basics*    [Brownies\(Click for recipe\)](#)    [Curried Chickpea Salad\(Click for recipe\)](#)    [Steamed Fish with Ratatouille\(Click for recipe\)](#)

'A gem for the inexperienced and experienced...this is a most useful book to add to any cookery shelf.' (Yorkshire Gazette & Herald, 30th May 2012)

*How to Cook Everything: The Basics* is a "cookbook" designed to teach new cooks the fundamentals to ingredients, cookware, and food preparation. It is a variation on Mark Bittman's original classic *How to Cook Everything, Completely Revised 10th Anniversary Edition: 2,000 Simple Recipes for Great Food* (which I'll refer to as *HtCE*). I have not read Bittman's 2003 book of the same name, *How to Cook Everything: The Basics*, but as far as I can tell, this book is not an update to that one (which received a lot of criticism for not being original enough from *HtCE*). The publication date is 2012, and there is no reference to the 2003 book in the publication notes. While this does use a lot of information from *HtCE*, it seems to be a completely separate book.

Although it is filled with recipes, *The Basics* is not really a cookbook. It is presented in a very straightforward way that is designed to not only give you starter recipes, but to provide recipes that teach the fundamentals of cooking. For a "basics" cookbook, one thing I look for is whether it truly is targeted to teaching the basics. When I was first learning to cook, I would be thoroughly confused every time a recipe called for "onion," and went to the store only to discover four different types of onions. And what does "salt to taste" mean? Fortunately, Bittman's book takes these things into account and is very good at not making assumptions on the cooking level of the reader. For example, when discussing olive oil, Bittman states "every time I refer to olive oil in this book, I mean extra virgin." These tips are placed in the beginning and scattered throughout the book and are just the types of explanations I think should accompany a cookbook on the basics. Where the original *HtCE* just gives a list of essential ingredients you should have, *The Basics* provides more guidance, with tips such as "buy unsalted butter," and "use firm tofu packed in water," instead of just telling you what ingredients to buy. It is ordered in the traditional Breakfast, appetizers, salads, soups, pasta, entree, etc. formula, but the recipes are also ordered by technique - designed

to teach the fundamentals early in the book and progressing to more difficult skills by the end. You don't have to go in order however, and if there is a specific lesson you want to learn (eg, blanching), you can turn to the back and view a "Techniques" glossary which has a list of all the techniques presented in the book so you can go directly to what interests you. Each technique has a basic lesson, followed by several recipes that incorporate it and allow you to practice the technique. With most cookbooks you'll maybe see 2-3 recipes for every one picture. At over 1,000 photos and 185 recipes, you can see that in addition to the main dish, the recipes each have several smaller pictures showing different stages of the food production to give you a better idea of what you should be doing. The very first recipe is how to boil water, only it's not called that, it's a recipe for oatmeal. But the purpose is to show new cooks how water temperature affects food consistency and give them experience with the different levels of water heat.

#### DIFFERENCES VERSUS ORIGINAL

**HtCE** The original How to Cook Everything is the first cookbook I bought and one of the best primers for anyone interested in learning to cook. At over 1000 pages, it truly does tell you "how to cook everything," from slicing an onion to making your own sauces, to rolling sushi. It is one of the best "beginner" resources I have in my kitchen, but at times can be a bit overwhelming due to the amount of information. The Basics takes the same premise of HtCE, simplifies it a bit more, and adds pictures. There are some small noticeable differences in theory between the two books. HtCE has a list of 12 "Must-Have Kitchen Tools," 14 "Tools You'll Probably Want," and 8 "Nice-to-Have" tools. The Basics has a list of 16 "Absolute-Minimum" tools, followed by 17 "Other Handy" tools. A salad spinner is on HtCE's "must-have" list, but on The Basics' "Other" list. Which of these lists is "correct?" It's hard to say. I definitely agree with HtCE that you must have a timer (even if it's your microwave). The Basics lists it as "other." How is a beginner cook going to learn without a timer? If you are trying to decide between which book to get, I would say that if you have absolutely no idea which end of a spatula is the business end, you should start with "The Basics." If you can cook a decent plate of eggs and know what a "simmer" looks like, you will get much more for your money with the Original "How to Cook Everything." The Basics won't have ten different way to make braised potatoes or a diagram showing you how to prepare lemongrass, but it will give you a recipe for mashed potatoes and show you a few different variations to it. HtCE is designed to give you as much information as possible about everything. The Basics is designed to give you as much information as needed to do everything right.

#### RECIPES

I have completely read through about half of the recipes in this book, and tested about two dozen of them. As mentioned, none of these recipes are going to be featured on your favorite cooking shows anytime soon. They use minimal common ingredients. You won't have to ask someone where the star anise is or worry about finding sherry

vinegar in a store near you. The recipes are not bland, but they're not difficult or fancy either. Even though they're basic recipes, they seem very tasteful and I think they will appeal to a large audience. The "Warm Spinach Salad with Bacon" is only made up of olive oil, bacon, shallot/onion, spinach, vinegar, and mustard, yet it is a very respectable salad. You'd probably be disappointed in it if you ordered it at a restaurant, but served alongside a simple steak and potatoes meal it can go a long way to a nice dinner. I can easily see a beginning cook getting excited producing a lot of the foods in the book.

**CONCLUSION**In additional to the original HtCE, the other "basic cooking" books I've read are Betty Crocker Cooking Basics: Recipes and Tips to Cook with Confidence (Betty Crocker Books), Cooking Basics For Dummies, and How to Boil Water. This book currently ranks well at the top of my list for complete beginners, with "How to Boil" coming in second. Unless you have been cooking for a year or two, I think "How to Cook Everything: The Basics" will be an invaluable resource for the new cook. It is very well put together with a lot of thought put into it. The full color photographs go a long way to expressing ideas in the book more so than the drawings in the original version, and just about every major technique is covered. You won't be creating blue-cheese infused butter with it, but by the time you're done, you should have a very respectable grasp of making the perfect Sunday dinner to share with some family and friends.

**UPDATE** April 2013: I've been using The Basics for a year now and I've now cooked about 75% of the recipes in the book. I still come back to it often and get tips from it. Definitely worth the price.

I'm giving this book my highest rating for a cookbook 5 stars based on its practicality and organization. The book is an excellent resource guide to have for the basics of cooking which I think everyone could benefit from understanding. I find myself constantly referring to it because I know an answer to the question I have will likely be in there. Those who enjoy Bittman's quirky, direct style will also appreciate this book. When I'm rating a cookbook practical functionality is paramount to me above all else and this book is just that. I think those who appreciate this book will also appreciate another one of my favorite all around cook books by Mitchell Davis's Kitchen Sense: More than 600 Recipes to Make You a Great Home Cook. Davis is less well known and a professor at NYU and also on the staff of the James Beard Foundation. Other similar books I'd recommend highly are: Twelve Recipes to Cook Something: Simple Recipes and Sound Advice to Bring Good Food into Your Fabulous Lifestyle

I just turned 25, and my lack of cooking skills was beginning to be embarrassing and unhealthy, so I began searching for a cookbook to help me out. I usually got recipes online, but they tended to be

either too complicated or too expensive for someone who's not that well off. I eventually settled on this book, after already having bought Bittman's other cookbook and finding it too difficult to wade through. I am not exaggerating when I say that this book has turned my culinary life around. I cook pretty frequently now, and I basically exclusively cook out of this book. I'm going to list several things about this book that I like: \* TONS of great tutorials for things like cutting up veggies, how to boil pasta the right way, etc. Along with these great helpers, every recipe includes page numbers to the relevant stuff, so you can easily flip back and forth to figure out how to do all of the mechanical stuff. \* The recipes are arranged in each chapter from easiest to most difficult, so it's perfect for new cooks to build up their confidence. \* The recipes are simple, and simple generally means cheap. It does NOT, however, mean flavorless. Everything I've made out of this book has been fantastic, even the super-simple Chopped Salad and homemade dressing. \* The section on what tools/equipment needed in a kitchen has also helped me furnish my kitchen better. I would say that if you are a beginner cook, this book is absolutely the one to buy. It's affordable, well written, and will help you make fantastic food. Seriously. Look no further.

Looks pretty classy inside. Appears a little bit intimidating for the beginning cook--everything's got foreign names and beautiful pictures, even if all you're making is like, granola, or whatever. Also, I would say this is more of a cookbook for a beginning aspiring chef. A lot of recipes call for some strange/exotic ingredients, rather than most other 'beginning' cookbooks that teach you how to make cheddar mac and cheese.

My 10 year old said he wanted to learn how to cook. He's a reader, so I got him this to get him started. So far he has enjoyed reading about and making the recipes. The book really is about 'the basics,' which is good because it is a nice place to start to build a foundation of simple recipes, techniques and how ingredients interact. I have since given this to a couple other kids in the family who also are interested in cooking. (Thanks, Food Network!) I believe everyone should learn enough about cooking to be self-sufficient. This is a good place to start.

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