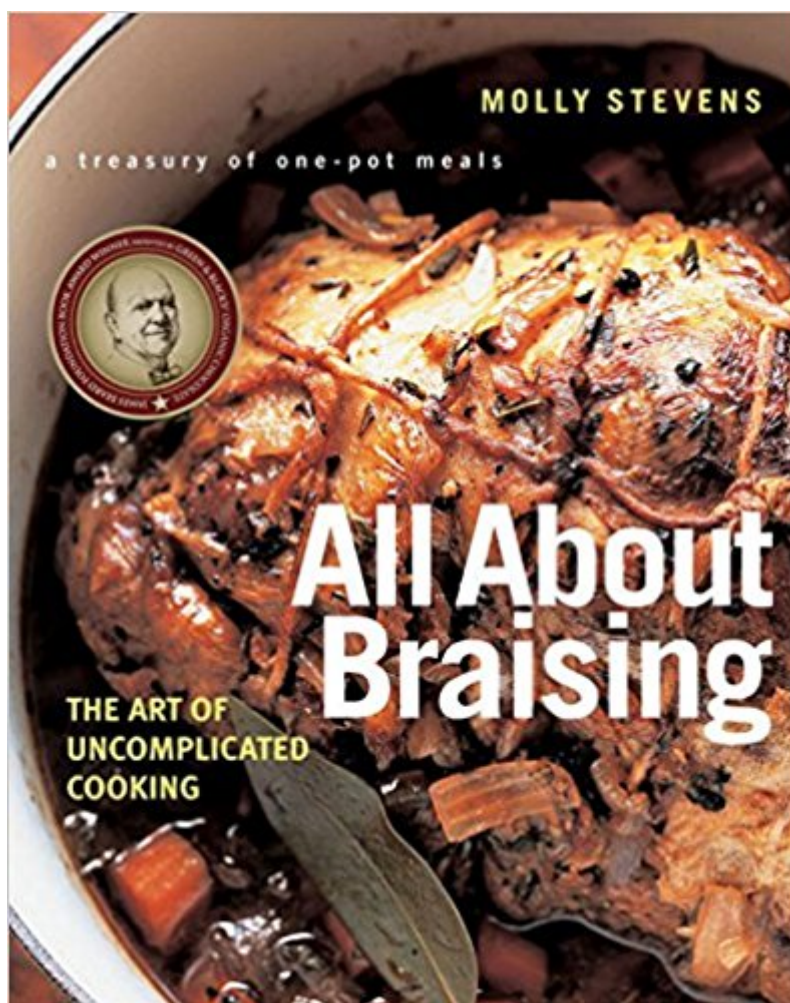


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All About Braising: The Art Of Uncomplicated Cooking



Synopsis

From the perfect pot roast to the fragrant complexity of braised endive, there's no food more satisfying than a well-braised dish. The art of braising comes down to us from the earliest days of cooking, when ingredients were enclosed in a heavy pot and buried in the hot embers of a dying fire until tender and bathed in a deliciously concentrated sauce. Today, braising remains as popular and as uncomplicated as ever. Molly Stevens's *All About Braising* is a comprehensive guide to this versatile way of cooking, written to instruct a cook at any level. Everything you need to know is here, including: a thorough explanation of the principles of good braising with helpful advice on the best cuts of meat, the right choice of fish and vegetables, and the right pots, 125 reliable, easy-to-follow recipes for meat, poultry, seafood, and vegetables, ranging from quick-braised weeknight dishes to slow-cooked weekend braises, planning tips to highlight the fact that braised foods taste just as good, if not even better, as leftovers, a variety of enlightened wine suggestions for any size pocketbook with each recipe. 16 color photographs, 50 line drawings

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Customer Reviews

Braising--cooking food slowly and at low temperatures in a closed pot with a little liquid--produces deeply flavorful food. Molly Stevens's *All About Braising* is a definitive exploration of this soul-satisfying approach to food. With 125 simple recipes for braises of all kinds--from meat and poultry through seafood and vegetables, plus a thorough anatomy of technique (Stevens explores oven versus stovetop braising, for example)--the book will please cooks at every skill level. Most importantly, perhaps, it will send them to the kitchen to prepare enticing dishes such as Braised

Endive with Prosciutto, Whole Chicken Braised with Pears and Rosemary, Duck Ragu with Pasta, and Veal Shoulder Braised with Figs & Sherry. Braises can also taste as good or better the next day, and Stevens supplies advice for second-day service. Included, too, is an "Opinionated Pantry" which, besides exploring relevant ingredients, expresses Stevens's ongoing commitment to using only the best and freshest available. Throughout, Stevens's offers sensible, rewarding counsel. "If it comes down to a matter of cooking or not cooking dinner for your family," she says, "I recommend buying commercially raised chicken [as opposed to locally produced or other naturally raised poultry]. Make a satisfying home cooked meal, and sit down and enjoy it with your family." In other words, Stevens is wise. "The act of cooking on a regular basis will make you a better cook," she concludes, "and will improve the quality of your life and of those around you." --Arthur Boehm

Cuisines as diverse as Vietnamese, Moroccan, Italian, British and American all use braising; the technique can be a means to cook everything from vegetables to pork belly. Stevens, a Fine Cooking contributing editor, says that braising is simply "tucking a few ingredients into a heavy pot with a bit of liquid, covering the pot tightly and letting everything simmer peacefully until tender and intensely flavored." With the help of appetite-inducing photos of Vietnamese Braised Scallops, and Braised Endive with Prosciutto, Stevens illustrates just how exciting a braise can be. "Braising," she clarifies, "is a building process. The cook adds layer upon layer of flavor, nuance, and character to a dish at each stage." Although braising is a relatively simple cooking method, Stevens takes her time explaining it, drawing on food science to explain not just how, but why (for example, "Give food plenty of space," because "If the pan is too crowded... the released moisture can't escape and will cause the meat to steam, not brown"). Aside from Stevens's sometimes superfluous prose and ho-hum anecdotes, the book contains interesting tasting notes and cultural information, and Stevens's lengthy instructions will be particularly valuable to beginners. Photos, line drawings.

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I received a set of enamel-coated cast iron pots for my anniversary two years ago and purchased this book to learn some great recipes to use with them. I spent the first afternoon browsing through the book, skimming the different sections, and reading some of the recipes. The next time I sat down and read the whole first section and was instantly enchanted. Her way of instructing readers on the history, equipment, and techniques of braising was fantastically easy to follow - like having a conversation instead of getting a lecture or lesson. I quickly made several items out of the book and they turned out to be very delicious and quite easy to make with the proper planning and

preparation. Then, because she teaches you a method and gives you guidelines about pairings, liquids, and herbs/seasonings to use I have often bought whatever lovely cut of meat was on sale that was suitable for braising and used a recipe for a similar cut as a guideline to making the dish. Those have also turned out amazing. I've served her recipes to just my husband and myself as dinner, but also turned them into entertainment dishes where I can prepare everything in advance then let it cook in the oven for hours while I finish cooking other dishes or getting everything else set up for guests. Although we have made many of the recipes and experiment with various cuts of meat and vegetables, there are two dishes that we make quite often and keep fairly true to her recipe. The first is Yankee Pot Roast Redux on pg. 252. We make it with JK Scrumpy's Hard Apple Cider, which is very sweet and has a strong apple flavor so it condenses down to a sort of lightly alcoholic apple syrup and is really good with pork cuts of any kind. If you like apple cider that tastes more like beer, I've heard that Crispin Cider's The Saint is really good. The second recipe we make quite often is Red Wine-Braised Short Ribs with Rosemary and Porcini on pg. 241. This is the hands-down favorite of my family and most of my guests. We always add various vegetables between the roast and the tomato-porcini ragu in the bottom of the pan to make it a one-pot meal. It has a very amazing depth of flavor and for once the veggies steeped in all that flavor are just as fought-over as the meat part of the dish! We've made this recipe with various full-bodied red wines (no sweet wine here, pick a dry or semi dry with a nice rich taste) and had it turn out well. Most recently we used a Bordeaux and it was delicious. There are a lot of steps to this recipe, but if you do most of your prep up front on the same day as you start marinading the ribs it cuts a lot of the active cooking time down. Also, as with so many braised dishes, this tastes even better a day or two after you cook it, so you can make it ahead and just heat it back through in the oven the day you wish to serve it. We have also made many of the braised vegetable side dishes and added quite a few to the regular list of meals as well. This book is one that deserves a spot near the kitchen because many of the recipes will be ones you make over and over. It is a wonderful instructional guide to the method of braising and is overflowing with great recipes that will become favorites. I have purchased it over and over again as gifts for family, friends, and most recently a coworker who loves cooking but is looking to learn methods and add versatile recipes to her repertoire. I've heard nothing but rave reviews back, whether people have tried many of these or just a few. It seems that this book is full of instant classics and family favorites.

If you only read the first 30 pages of this book, it's well worth the cost. I've been eating my wife's pot roast for 50 years and this book has now ended that ordeal. The author explains what happens

when meat is braised vs. conventional baking and the importance of the cooking vessel, time and temperature. We no longer have the dry, string meat (my daughter's comment); we now have a cooked meat with much better flavor and moisture, actually suitable for leftovers. Much more economical use of resources. Our daughter from Alaska made a home visit, found the book and presented a great meal using one of the recipes. Get the book, it'll perk up your enthusiasm to go cook something.

Simply put this book has changed my life. I'm a 40 year old single guy in New York who never cooked a thing. This book has me cooking and excited about it. I did make the investment of a Le Creuset 5.5qt and 3.5qt dutch oven along with a 3.5qt braiser but these are cookware pieces that I will have for the rest of my life. I finally feel like I can not only cook but entertain as well. The other great thing is that I sent Molly an email at the start. I was so confused about where to begin and how to cook economically. She answered within a week giving me suggestions of dishes to focus on. Funny enough a week or two later after Molly was having trouble with her email she emailed again to make sure she had responded! Great book and amazing author who cares about her readers!!!! BTW I don't follow the recipes exactly some times but, it has given me a great handle on cooking.

As a braising newbie, I researched a few braising books before buying All About Braising. It's very well written and organized as well as beautifully presented. The steps to follow for each recipe are clear, even for someone with limited experience in the kitchen. From her description of the general structure of how to braise food, I think I now have a fairly good sense of just what distinguishes braising from the other techniques in cooking. However, the recipes are overwhelming for someone new to braising. It's not that the number of ingredients in a typical recipe is too long, but that the number of steps required are quite often too numerous. So did I return the book? No, absolutely not. I'm keeping it for later use after I gain a little more experience. Something to aspire to.

I bought this book a few years ago and now, with most of the recipes under my belt (and prompted by last night's superb Sauerbraten), I wanted to go on record saying this is the best cookbook I own. Every dish I've made using this cookbook has been absolutely delicious. At some point, I stopped writing "double the sauce and buy extra bread for dipping" because it's pretty much understood. The book's tone is familiar and friendly, and the instructions are clear. My two teen sons memorized the potatoes and bay leaf dish as an easy but distinctive classic. This cookbook is my absolute go-to when I need something I'm 100% sure will turn out delicious, and after all this time I still use it at

least once a week.

This book is good, and she's a good writer - but I think it's a little overrated. The intro part is really good, although there were still some basic things about braising that I didn't find in there (e.g. how do you sear without turning your spice-rub black, or should you baste the meat during the process). My main complaint is with the recipes which are a little too fancy/weird for my tastes. I just want to cook simple, cheap, filling dishes - I'm not interested in elaborate prep or exotic ingredients - I'd go to a restaurant for that.

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