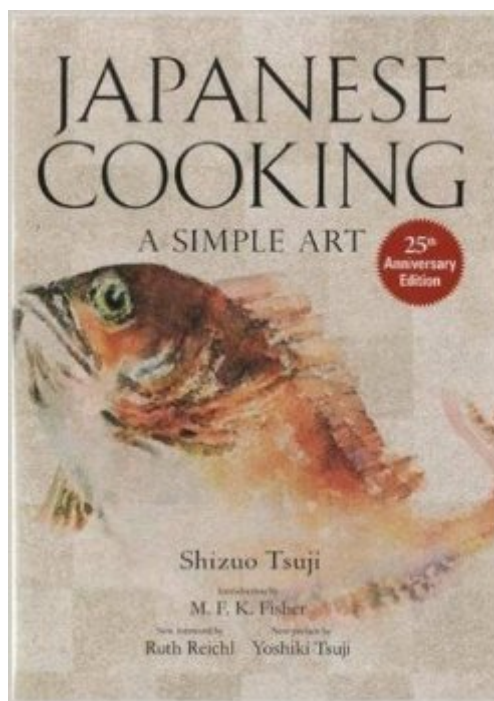


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Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art



Synopsis

When it was first published, *Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art* changed the way the culinary world viewed Japanese cooking, moving it from obscure ethnic food to haute cuisine. Twenty-five years later, much has changed. Japanese food is a favorite of diners around the world. Not only is sushi as much a part of the Western culinary scene as burgers, bagels, and burritos, but some Japanese chefs have become household names. Japanese flavors, ingredients, and textures have been fused into dishes from a wide variety of other cuisines. What hasn't changed over the years, however, are the foundations of Japanese cooking. When he originally wrote *Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art*, Shizuo Tsuji, a scholar who trained under famous European chefs, was so careful and precise in his descriptions of the cuisine and its vital philosophies, and so thoughtful in his choice of dishes and recipes, that his words--and the dishes they help produce--are as fresh today as when they were first written. The 25th Anniversary edition celebrates Tsuji's classic work. Building on M.F.K. Fisher's eloquent introduction, the volume now includes a thought-provoking new Foreword by Gourmet Editor-in-Chief Ruth Reichl and a new preface by the author's son and Tsuji Culinary Institute Director Yoshiki Tsuji. Beautifully illustrated with eight pages of new color photos and over 500 drawings, and containing 230 traditional recipes as well as detailed explanations of ingredients, kitchen utensils, techniques and cultural aspects of Japanese cuisine, this edition continues the Tsuji legacy of bringing the Japanese kitchen within the reach of Western cooks.

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Customer Reviews

Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art can be intimidating unless one invests a little time in reading the

introductory chapters. Recipes are arranged around cooking techniques, not ingredients. There are no chapters for "meat," "poultry" and "vegetables," but instead the recipes are organized by grilled foods, fried foods, steamed foods, sashimi, sushi, etc. In addition, it is helpful to have a basic knowledge of Japanese ingredients and Western substitutions, so recipes that call for burdock root, for example, do not have to be rejected if one has a carrot to substitute. Japanese meals can be complex and contain many small dishes, or can consist of a casserole served with rice and pickles. All of these items are in *Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art*. Start small with a single dish, and move up to a full meal. I'm not likely to cook a casserole that involves a whole fish head (not easy to come by in Colorado), but I make "Potato Tumble" quite often in the winter, and it is a simple comforting dish, alone worth the price of the book. The term "art" in the title tends to make the book sound demanding, but it is, in reality, full of straightforward recipes that celebrate good quality ingredients, as it the goal of modern cooking. UPDATE: Almost two years later, and this is still my favorite Japanese cookbook, despite the fact that I keep buying other cookbooks hoping to find a rival (for what reason, I do not know). I've read this book cover to cover several times and find it entertaining and relaxing every time.

I won't call Shizuo Tsuji's masterpiece a cookbook. Instead, I call it a "book on cooking". The distinction is esoteric perhaps, but important. If you think of cookbooks as paint-by-numbers manuals that merely show you the mechanics of recipe preparation with little in the way of actual food education, then by all standards, "*Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art*" is not a cookbook. It is a book on cooking, specifically, Japanese cooking. And not just any book on Japanese cooking. It is THE book on Japanese cooking, widely recognized and lauded as one of the best of its kind. It is a rare gem. As a testament to the instantly recognizable caliber of this text, I offer this anecdote: I discovered it several years ago while I was living in Japan. It belonged to an American ex-pat, a foodie who spent part of his time there apprenticing in a soba shop in Akita, so he really knew his stuff. With just a casual flip through the pages (being a foodie myself), I immediately saw the value of the book and made a mental note to buy it when I came back to the US. I had forgotten about it until now, but now that I have it, I am very happy with the purchase. True to Tsuji's pedagogical background as a culinary school founder, this book doesn't just teach recipe mechanics. It seeks to train you in the art and techniques of Japanese food preparation, with a healthy dose of etiquette, culture, philosophy, and history thrown into the mix. It is certainly ambitious in scope and perhaps not for the uninitiated. I would say a moderate/advanced beginner level of familiarity with Japanese cuisine (or general Asian ingredients, at least) and comfort level around the kitchen is a prerequisite.

Failing that, a willingness to learn and make a lot of failures.

This is the only Japanese cookbook you will ever need. As other reviewers have already mentioned, it is indeed "the Bible of Japanese cooking." A little bit about me, I first fell in love with Japanese cooking at the age of 8, when for my birthday, my parents took me to Joto's Japanese restaurant and I tried Sukiyaki. The sauce was to die for. The sauce won me over more than the ingredients inside the pot. I just had to know how to cook it so luckily for me there was a Japanese market nearby. I went inside and bought Japanese Cuisine for Everyone by Yukiko Moriyama. It was ok for the time. It does contain actual photographs of all the sauce bottles and packages of dried foods that you need to find. It can be hard to locate items at the market and the pictures helped in the beginning. Then, years later, I bought Japanese Women Don't Get Old or Fat by Naomi Moriyama. It does have some traditional recipes mixed in with fusion cooking. Recently I bought Japanese Homestyle Cooking by Tokiko Suzuki and Harumi's Japanese Cooking by Harumi Kurihaara. Someone let me borrow an old book from Time Life books in the Foods of the World series called The Cooking of Japan. I have looked through the Nobu cookbook and it is filled with wonderful pictures but the recipes are hard for the average cook. That said, Tsuji's Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art towers above all others in content, detailed descriptions, cutting techniques, meal planning, and how to put together lunches and dinners based on the seasons. Other books have the above mentioned information but not on the level of Tsuji. It's like comparing the novels of Jane Austen to those of Danielle Steel. Both are romantic writers but only one is a genius whose works stand the test of time.

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