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The Culinary Institute of America



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introduction

BECOMING A CHEF is a career-long process. Cooking is a dynamic profession—one that provides some of the greatest challenges as well as some of the greatest rewards. There is always another level of perfection to achieve and another skill to master. It is our hope that this book will function both as a springboard into future growth and as a reference point to give ballast to the lessons still to be learned.

By the nature of its encyclopedic subject coverage, this text is suited to a variety of curricula, whether as part of an existing program or through independent study. An instructor may choose to use all or part of its contents; the student may use it to advance his or her learning by employing it as a broad, basic text or as a reference tool to answer specific questions about a particular technique. The techniques as explained in this book have all been tested in the Institute's kitchens. Each represents one of many possible variations. The fact that all variations are not included in this text does not imply that other methods are incorrect. Experience will teach the student many "tricks of the trade." The title of this work should not put it into the rarified category of books to be used only by those working in restaurant or hotel kitchens. The basic lessons of cooking are the same whether one prepares food for paying guests or for one's family and friends. Therefore, we hope that those who look to cooking for a creative outlet will come to regard this book as a valuable tool.

This book is suited to a variety of teaching situations because the material is arranged in a logical, progressive sequence. Chapter One covers the history of cooking as a profession and examines the skills and attributes of a professional chef and other members of the foodservice profession. (For more information about table service and dining room operations, consult *At Your Service* or *Remarkable Service*.)

Since foodservice is a business, some of the elementary aspects of food costing are discussed in Chapter Two, as is how to adapt recipes—from this book or any other—for use in a specific professional kitchen. Knowing how to adapt recipes is useful for scheduling, controlling costs, and improving quality. (For more details about culinary math, consult *Math for the Professional Kitchen*.) Nutrition and food science have become part of the everyday language of the professional kitchen, and Chapter Three reviews some basic concepts of nutrition and science, particularly as they relate to cooking. (For more information about nutritional cooking, consult *Techniques of Healthy Cooking*.) Food and kitchen safety are of increasing concern in all foodservice operations, and Chapter Four presents fundamental concepts and procedures for assuring that safe, wholesome food is prepared in a safe environment.

Counted among the basics in the kitchen is the ability to seek out and purchase the best possible ingredients. Part Two is a catalog of the tools and ingredients used in the professional kitchen, and includes information regarding product specifications, purchasing, and such processing concerns as trim loss. There are separate chapters devoted to meats, poultry, and game; fish and shellfish; fruits, vegetables, and fresh herbs; dairy products and eggs; and nonperishable goods such as oils, flours, grains, and dried pastas.

Cooking is not always a perfectly precise art, but a good grasp of the basics gives the chef or student the ability not only to apply the technique, but also to learn the standards of quality so that they begin to develop a sense of how cooking works. Part Three is devoted to stocks, sauces, and soups. The part opens with a chapter covering such