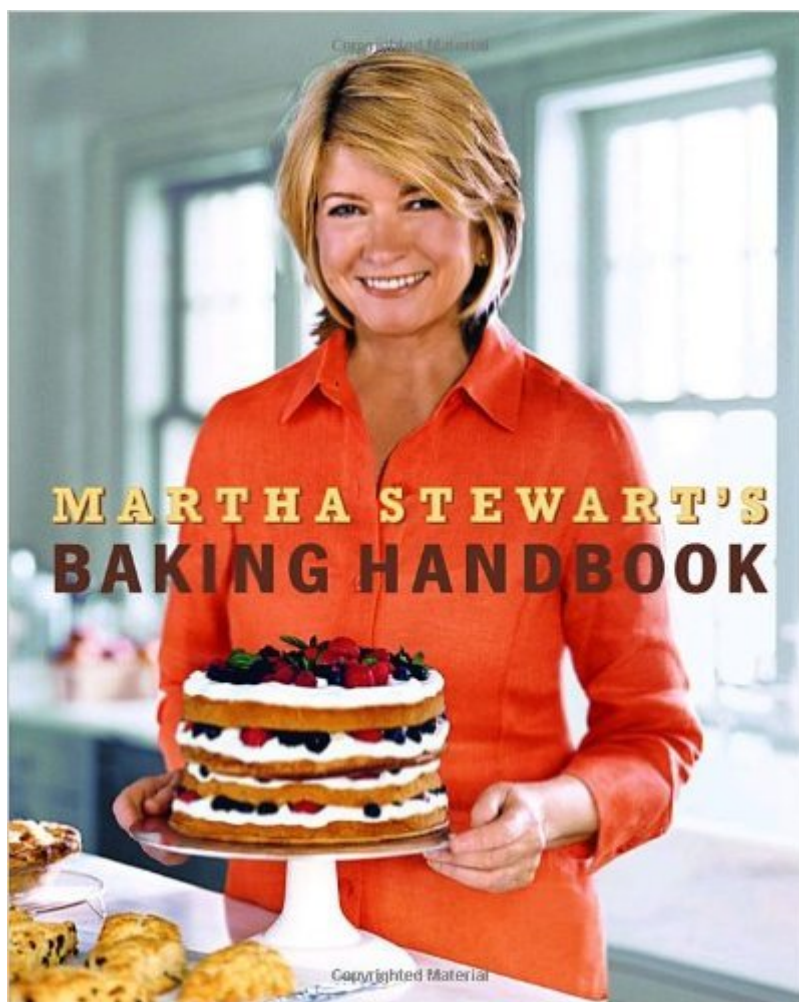


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Martha Stewart's Baking Handbook



Synopsis

Every new book from Martha Stewart is cause for celebration, and with Martha Stewart's Baking Handbook, she returns to bring the pleasures of baking to readers at every level, from beginner to expert and beyond. A culinary compendium packed with more than 200 foolproof recipes for the best baked goods, Martha Stewart's Baking Handbook takes readers by the hand and guides them through the process of creating an irresistible variety of cakes, cookies, pies, tarts, breads, and much more. This essential addition to every cook's library is rich with tips, techniques, and the mouthwatering and stunning recipes for which Martha Stewart is so well known. Covering a delectable array of topics from simple to sophisticated, including biscuits, muffins, scones, cookies, layer cakes, specialty cakes, sweet and savory pies and tarts, and pastries and breads, she provides a dazzlingly delicious yet crystal-clear, vividly illustrated repertoire of recipes. There are cakes that are elegant enough for formal occasions, such as showers, weddings, and dinner parties, and basic favorites meant to be enjoyed every day and then passed down through the generations. Every chapter includes indispensable visual equipment glossaries and features vital make-ahead information and storage techniques. Organized for maximum clarity and practicality, the handbook also offers step-by-step how-to photographs that demystify even the most complex and nuanced techniques. These culinary building blocks will turn good bakers into great bakers, and make great bakers even better. Filled with time-honored classics, such as Marble Cake with White-Chocolate Glaze, Apple Pie, Challah, Baba au Rhum, and Croissants, as well as lots of new surprises, Martha Stewart's Baking Handbook will be reached for again and again, no matter the season or occasion. • Here, you will find the recipes and how-tos for the popovers you dream about, and for the simple crumb cake that you always want to whip up on Sunday morning, and for the double-chocolate brownie cookies that will make you a bigger hero with the after-school crowd, and for the citrus bars that you could only find in that little bakery that's no longer under the same management. . . . Baking offers comfort and joy and something tangible to taste and savor. We all hope that these recipes provide you with years of pleasure. • "Martha Stewart

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Customer Reviews

`Martha Stewart's Cooking Handbook' is Martha Stewart Omnimedia's first book since Miss Martha has been out of the slammer, and it is her first big book in several years. That, combined with the fact that it's name promises to be a serious manual on baking techniques gives me high expectations for this new title. I am really happy to say the book meets or even exceeds my expectations on almost all points. Like the famous `Boy Scout Handbook' which is exclusively a `how to' book on all the basics, this volume covers virtually all the essential baking techniques, without going into any long explanations on why these are the best techniques. Thus, unlike Sherry Yard's excellent `The Secrets of Baking' or Shirley Corriher's `Cookwise' or Alton Brown's `I'm Just Here for More Food', this book spends no time dwelling on how biscuit baking is very similar to pie crust baking or that cheesecake is not really cake, but a custard pie. Instead, Martha and her very large and expert staff of magazine and book writers, editors, and photographers have assembled an excellent tutorial on most of the basic baking skills. There is another way in which this book is different from most conventional books on baking. It is in the tone I first detected in Martha Stewart's flagship classic, `Entertaining' where she takes the stance of an amateur with good taste and good learning skills, rather than the role of a professional who is showing us amateurs how it's done. This is not to say that we amateurs can't learn a lot from all the baking professionals out there like Peter Reinhart, Rose Levy Beranbaum, Nick Malgieri, and Gayle Ortiz. It's just that Miss Martha sees things from our side of the kitchen counter. This may not explain all the good qualities of this book, but it helps. I think this attitude and the great skill in both describing and picturing techniques means this book is a superb introduction for the beginner, and even for the teen and preteen bakers among us. Lots of books use photographs or drawings to illustrate techniques, but the presence of the pictures is not an automatic path to clarity of presentation. The technique illustrating pictures in this book are simply superb. They seem to leave nothing to the imagination, as when they provide simple pictures illustrating what packed brown sugar looks like, how to measure across the top of a baking pan, and how to prepare the bottom of baking pans with butter, parchment round, followed

by more butter. All the photographic experience that has been acquired by doing a monthly magazine has been put to good use. While a purist may object to some elements of this book's organization, it is excellent for a beginner or even an intermediate amateur. Instead of giving us a chapter on quick breads, the book starts with a chapter entitled 'Simple Baked Goods' which cover biscuits (five different methods), muffins (four recipes), popovers, scones (four recipes), quick breads (five recipes, including cornbread and Irish soda bread), and cakes (seven recipes). Rather than putting all the tutorial material on techniques in the front of the book, the photo tutorials begin each relevant chapter. So, the first chapter includes lessons on cutting butter into biscuit dough, making and cutting scones, cutting biscuits, and preparing muffin tins. Other specifics appear as sidebars to individual recipes. Thus, the correct method for filling popover pans is shown together with the one popover recipe. The next chapter is on 'Cookies'. Just as with the 'simple' recipes, the chapter begins with an introduction on good techniques for making cookies, a photo gallery of cookie making tools and tutorials on cookie techniques. Also like the first section, the selection of recipes is very well done. The forty-two recipes certainly don't cover all the ground you will find in a full book on cookies, but a lot of very popular recipes are here. I was particularly interested in the recipe for nut crescents and I was very pleased to find a good representation of exactly how to form the crescents before baking so that the cookies would bake evenly. My favorite subject, yeast breads, is in the next to last chapter on 'Yeasted Baked Goods'. Here again, the choice of recipes is excellent, covering virtually all the major bases with at least one or two examples of each major type of European bread, except for naturally yeasted sourdoughs. All recipes use active dry yeast. A professional baker may prefer fresh yeast and some writers are particularly fond of instant yeast, but I first learned yeast baking with active dry yeast and both of the other types have their disadvantages for the amateur. One possible dissonance is the fact that pate brisee recipes (pies, tarts, galettes, etc) and other pastry recipes such as puff pastry and pate a choux are in two different chapters, separated by yeast breads. From a practical point of view, for a 'handbook' of techniques, I consider this entirely unobjectionable. One thing I really like about the individual recipes is that in addition to the fact that they seem to leave no important detail out, they also do not introduce a lot of tricks and gimmicks. While I have seen pate brisee recipes with all sorts of different additives to make them work better, Martha Stewart gives us the simplest recipe possible made with flour, salt, butter, and water, period, plus a really nice pictorial tutorial on how to put it all together. Aside from the generally friendly tone and the homey introduction from Martha, there is none of the chatter in headnotes and sidebars you will find in many books. This is all business. I strongly recommend this as a first book on baking techniques and reference for lots of common

baking recipes.

I have baked EVERY recipe cover-to-cover in Martha Stewart's Baking Handbook - sequentially, with documented photographs, with emailed commentary to Martha - and with periodic bake-through telephone & live appearances on "MARTHA" chronically my experiences with each of her recipes in this Baking Handbook. The following is my "Culinary Commentary" on this book:

The Positives [Many]* Just as any aspiring cook should start by cooking their way through Julia Child's "Mastering the Art of French Cooking" Volumes 1 and 2, in my opinion any aspiring baker should start by baking their way through Martha's "Baking Handbook".o For the aspiring baker Martha's Baking Handbook provides grounding, understanding, confidence and inspiration to find & fuel one's baking passion - & then enabling that aspiring baker to spring forward to more advanced creations.o Baking through the book cover-to-cover forces one to learn all the basics of baking because the cover-to-cover baking commitment forces you to bake what you might otherwise never choose to try [& hence learn from].o Baking every recipe requires that one gradually acquire all the "essential" baking equipment - from a heavy duty mixer to baking pans to pastry piping tools.* What you see is what you [sequentially learn to] bake!o Each recipe is accompanied by a color photograph of the finished product - & indeed, if you follow the recipe you will create a "picture perfect" rendition of the recipe.o Each chapter builds on development of culinary skills [e.g., chapter 3 "Cakes" provides an introduction over view to baking cakes, followed by a review of relevant "equipment" and "techniques" followed by recipes progressing from basic ["Yellow Butter Cake"] to advanced ["Mocha Pistachio Wedding Cake"].

The Negatives [Few yet Significant]* There are a relatively small number of errors [e.g., "Prune Filling" page 336 states "makes enough for 1 dozen (Danish) pinwheels" where as actual yield makes enough for at least 4 dozen pinwheels] & short comings in preparation details [e.g. "Panettones" page 308 fails to specify the size of Panettones molds to be used].* The book's binding is terrible. Clearly the binding is done with cheap glue. The consequence is that if this "Baking Handbook" is used as it should be [i.e., perpetually as a trusted and frequently used resource] the pages begin to fall out. I had to take my copy to a professional book-binder [at considerable expense] to have my copy rebound.* The page paper quality is not "annotation-friendly". In my opinion, any baker must annotate any recipe with notes specific to what they learned while baking a recipe. I found that any notes that I penned onto the pages of this Baking Handbook tended to smear illegibly unless I was extremely careful to (1) let the ink dry prior to closing the book & (2) never allowing moisture to contact my previously penned notes.

My Favorite Recipes:* From the chapter on Simple Baked Goods: "Cherry Streusel Coffee Cake" [pg

54-55] - easy, fool proof and fabulous* From the chapter on Cookies: "Graham Crackers" [pgs 90-92] - bake these and never again will you settle for store-bought.* From the chapter on Cakes: "Old-Fashioned Berry Layer Cake [pgs 154-155] - even a novice can successfully make these amazingly delectable and stunning cake.* From the chapter on Pies, Tarts, Cobblers & Crisps: "Slab Pie" [pgs 238-239] - simply stated, one of the best pies I have ever made.* From the chapter on Yeasted Baked Goods: "Chocolate Babkas" [pgs 352-353] - an unforgettable & blissful combination of chocolate and yeasted coffee cake most definitely worthy of the effort taken to prepare.* From the chapter on Pastries: "Gougères" [pgs 366-367] - based on the recipe for pâte à choux [pg 358], this is an easy and impressive savory pastry that anyone can make.

My least Favorite Recipes:*

From the chapter on Simple Baked Goods: "Pumpkin Bread" [pg 49] - amount of batter was too much for the specified loaf pan size.* From the chapter on Cookies: "Cheesecake Thumbprints" [pg 112] - cookie was bland and filling ran out of indentation and filling was not pristine white.* From the chapter on Cakes: both of the "Upside-Down" cakes [i.e., "Apricot-Cherry" [page 180] and Pineapple-Mango [page 183] - both reminded me of a Betty Crocker cake mix based recipe from the 1950s.* From the chapter on Pies, Tarts, Cobblers & Crisps: "Rum-Raisin Pie" [pgs 246-247] - the rum is over powering and the crust adhered to the plate.* From the chapter on Yeasted Baked Goods: "Cranberry-Pecan Rye Bread" [pgs 298-299] - barely rose and tasted like and had the texture of an unsweetened fruitcake.* From the chapter on Pastries: "Sfogliatelle" [pgs 380-382] - this is actually a pasta dough pretending to be a pastry ... I was not impressed.

My "Culinary Conclusions":*

To the prospective buyer of "Martha Stewart's Baking Handbook": YES. Absolutely purchase the book and use it and learn from it!

To Martha: Good Grief Martha, for the next edition of your "Martha Stewart's Baking Handbook" please "practice what you preach" i.e., quality! - and as such price in quality binding so that pages will not fall out of this fabulous resource by those that respect, repeatedly use, and treasure your "Baking Handbook".

Culinary Commentary by Anne Evans, MVP** MVP = Most Valuable Patisserie

After spending two hours curled up by the fire last night, and flipping through each exquisite page of this book, all I can say is that I'm clearing my calendar for the next six months of weekends so I can make each and every thing in this delightful book. Martha's -- and her staff's, for that matter -- attention to detail is unfailing and results in perfect finished products. The pages are sumptuous in the hands, the pictures are enticing and so realistic you can almost smell the baked goods and feel their fresh-from-the-oven warmth. I've tried a few of the recipes and can testify to their elegance: often times simple, always impressive, and absolutely delectable.

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