

What Has Dr. Shook Been Reading?

Just Add Water.

By Lauren Chattman,
William Morrow and Company Inc., New York (1999)

“You are what you eat.” This old phrase may be tired but it is still true. The food you put in your body directly affects the quality of your health.

Generally speaking, the less processed the food the better the food is for you. Eating less “fast food” and taking charge of food preparation can greatly increase the quality of the food you eat.

Ms. Lauren Chattman has put together a cookbook intended to lead the novice cook into the world of nutritious, delicious and often-economical food preparation using a single cooking method: boiling.

Declaring that boiled food need not be bland food, “*Just Add Water*” starts out with simple instructions for how to boil water.

The next lesson is in simmering, followed by poaching and steaming. The chopping, mixing and the cooking of foods in bubbling liquid can result in some truly flavorful taste treats.

The equipment required for many of the recipes is no more complicated than a few pots and pans, a colander and a wooden spoon. In some cases, a food processor, blender or gravy skimmer may be useful and simplify what might otherwise be an intense and possibly overwhelming kitchen experience.

Many of the recipes in “*Just Add Water*” are for savory comfort type foods; foods that I found familiar and mouth watering. Other of the recipes were quite exotic.

Boil up some breakfast, lunch or dinner. Serve up some Oatmeal with Almonds and Grated Apples, Macaroni and Cheese or a Hearty Beef Stew. A more adventurous palate might try Pumpkin Polenta, Asian-Style Stewed Pork with Water Chestnuts and Snow Peas, or Squid with Saffron Couscous.

“*Just Add Water*” does a fine job of demonstrating that simple cooking can produce a variety of culinary delights. The seasoned cook will enjoy the variety of dishes prepared with little effort and a minimum dirty pots and pans. However, without explanation or glossary of terms, a true novice may find himself confused by the ingredient list. For instance, at one point I found myself fantasizing about a confused shopper seeking guidance at their local Dillons Market: “Where might I find *Lemon Zest**?” And the clerk’s cheerful response: “Cleaning products are on aisle 4.” A True Kitchen Novice may wish to consult a kitchen mentor or other cooking reference.

*(FYI: *Lemon Zest* is the outer yellow layer of a lemon rind finely grated.)

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