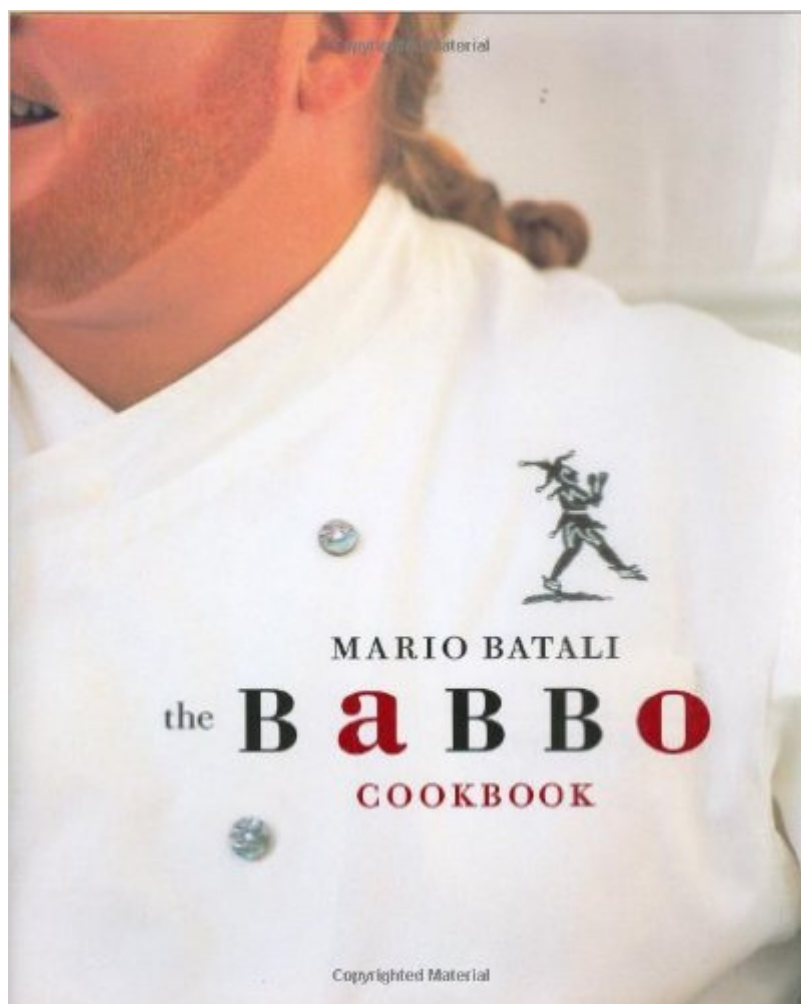


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The Babbo Cookbook



Synopsis

Some of the most inspired (and acclaimed) Italian food in the country is served at Babbo Ristorante e Enoteca, Mario Batali's flagship restaurant in the heart of New York City's Greenwich Village. Diners in this converted town house have come to expect innovative flavors and artful presentations that make the most of seasonal, local, and artisanal ingredients—all with a sensibility that is distinctly Italian. Now home cooks can re-create these showstopping dishes, just as they are served at the restaurant, to win raves of their own. The Babbo Cookbook is Mario's biggest yet, filled with 150 recipes that have redefined contemporary Italian cooking. Here for the first time he shares such signature dishes as Mint Love Letters with Spicy Lamb Sausage and Beef Cheek Ravioli, all showcasing his unparalleled ability to reinterpret the Italian culinary tradition in a completely original way. Recipes for dozens of Babbo's renowned antipasti, many based on fresh seasonal produce, are followed by an alluring collection of pastas; fish, fowl, and meat entrées; and a selection of Babbo's irresistible dessert offerings. From Grilled Pork Chops with Peaches and Balsamic Vinegar to Spicy Lamb Tartare with Mint Crostini and a Quail Egg and Wild Striped Bass with Charred Leeks and Squid Vinaigrette, The Babbo Cookbook is filled with vibrant, complex flavors that belie their straightforward preparations. Even classic recipes like Bollito Misto and Pappardelle Bolognese come alive again in bright new renditions that delight the palate. Also included are notes on the unique touches that make a meal at Babbo such a singular dining experience, from suggestions on wine service to recipes for aperitifs—that smooth the transition from savory to sweet—all representing the distinctive brand of Italian hospitality that has become the Batali trademark. The Babbo Cookbook is that rarity in the world of restaurant cookbooks: a collection of accessible, appetizing recipes that brings the spirit of a remarkable restaurant into the home kitchen without losing an iota of tantalizing flavor in the translation.

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Customer Reviews

My wife and I are huge fans of Mario Batali. We used to live in NY and ate regularly at his restaurants: mostly Lupa, Babbo for special occasions, and Esca when we were stuck in the theatre district. I love many of the dishes featured in this book (for example the "2 Minute Calamari, Sicilian Lifeguard Style," or his Bolognese sauce). We're also both experienced cooks and avid cookbook readers, and neither of us like this cookbook. It's a beautifully produced book, and does contain a large number of recipes corresponding to famous dishes from Babbo. Unfortunately, many of the recipes in this book have serious errors and don't work. Some recipes omit steps, others include incorrect descriptions of proportions, and others are vague about cooking techniques. For example, the recipe for the 2 minute calamari lists "1 cup couscous" as an ingredient, without telling you if it's supposed to be raw or cooked. (By trial and error, I figured out that it was cooked.) Or, there was the Bigeye Tuna recipe that asked you to prepare a half dozen ingredients, and doesn't tell you what to do with them. (For example, it tells you to sautee mushrooms, then doesn't tell you what to do with them. It also tells you to make parsley oil, then doesn't tell you what to do with it. We guessed that we should use it as a garnish.) Or take the Bolognese recipe, which produces a watery, smoky mess that tastes nothing like the sauce served in the restaurant. Much as we wanted to like this book, we didn't like it, and can't recommend it. If you want to learn how to cook Italian food, try some of Marcella Hazan's books. If you want to eat Mario Batali's food, go to his restaurants. If you want to learn how to make the dishes served in his restaurants, wait for a better book. (Despite our experience with this book, we bought Mario's new book "Molto Italiano : 327 Simple Italian Recipes to Cook at Home." I'm happy to say that this book is much, much better. This book shares a lot of recipes with the Babbo book, but so far it appears that all the directions are complete, and the recipes work correctly.)

This cookbook does an excellent job at capturing the magic of dining at Babbo. Both Batali and Bastianich offer interesting tidbits throughout the cookbook - one describes exactly why they clear crumbs off of diners' tables not with a crumber, but with a spoon. The book does a great job - stylistically - of condensing the experience of eating at Babbo into cookbook-form. Some of the recipes are transcendent. Batali's olive oil gelato is a winner, and the recipe in the cookbook creates

a smooth, creamy gelato very similar to the one that he serves at Otto. Other recipes - as other reviewers note - needed a test-kitchen before publication. I've made the saffron panna cotta twice, and it needs significantly more gelatin (about 50% more) than the recipe calls for to make the panna cotta set. The cookbook's recipes indicates that the "castagnaccio" (chestnut cake) should cook at 300 degrees for 20 minutes. After 50+ minutes of cooking at that temperature, my cake was still raw in the center. Maybe it was a typo? Maybe it needs a convection, rather than conventional oven? Disappointing, given the expense of the ingredients that go into the recipe. Overall - beautiful cookbook, but I've run into too many recipes that needed "tweaking" for them to turn out correctly. Maybe this is a problem with the baking section only.

Mario Batali's Babbo Cookbook is no mere cookbook. While delivering the recipes that have been developed and presented at his Village restaurant, it's through Mario's brief pre-chapter and pre-recipe writings where he lovingly conveys his passion for Italian food and cooking. His core passion is for fresh ingredients in simple (unlike the French) yet tasty preparations. He cannot stress enough how important it is to have relationships with the local baker, butcher, fishmonger, grocer, etc. to insure the delivery of the best quality ingredients. He stresses the use of ingredients that are in-season to maximize the taste and appeal to the senses. His passion extends to the presentation and delivery of food. Simple suggestions in the cookbook include priming the wine glass before serving fine wines. This book is a superb addition to any cook's collection.

For years I have watched him on the Food Channel and I have tried a few of his recipes from the show. He makes wonderful dishes. This was my first purchase of one of his cookbooks. I really enjoyed the way the book was laid out. Easy to read recipes, clear and concise directions, and lovely pictures to view. I am amazed at the variety of ingredients that he uses in his dishes. It's not that they are typically hard to find or anything, I simply didn't realize the variety of food in Italian cooking. Now if you are simply looking for pasta and sauces this isn't the book for you. This book does cover pasta, some delightful desserts, but there is a large variety in meats that this book uses. Like variety? Then this cookbook is for you if you want to cook something a bit out of the ordinary.

The Babbo cookbook is nicely done, not in a class of its own...but solid nonetheless. These recipes rely overwhelmingly on the quality of each and every ingredient in each dish and if unwilling to hunt for (and invest in) this caliber of ingredient, best look elsewhere. The pictures are superb and the sprinkling of culinary philosophy is good. I would purchase the book again just for the veal shank

recipe!

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