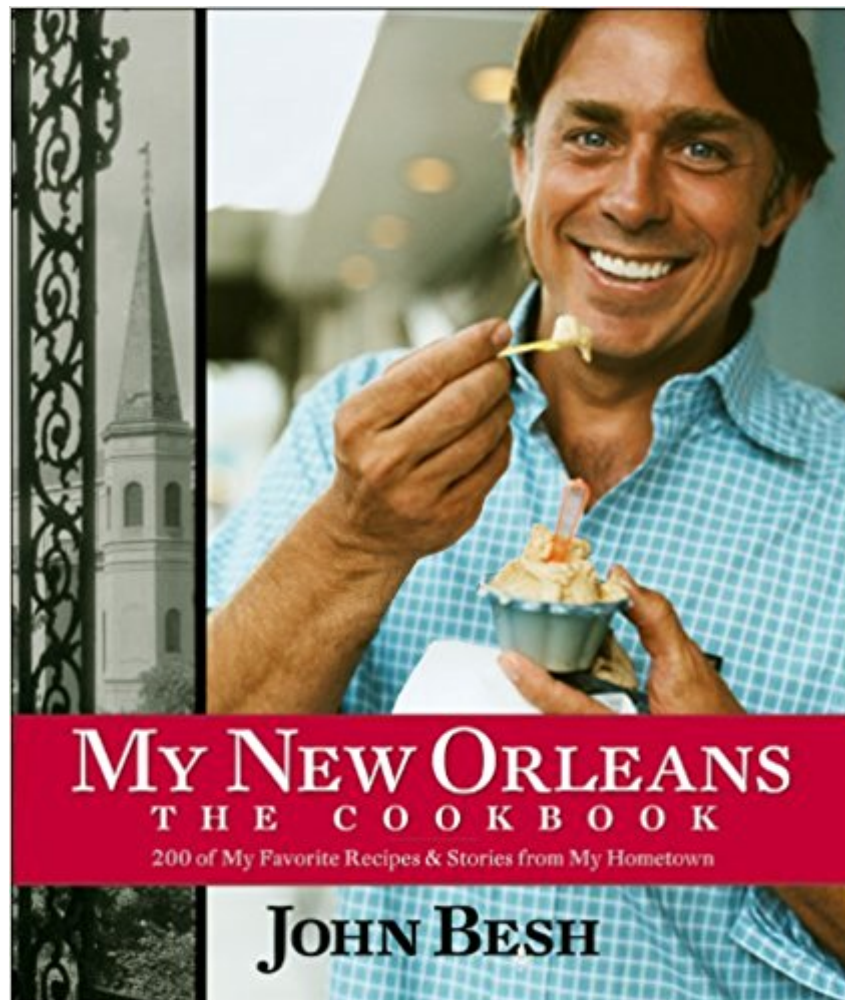




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My New Orleans: The Cookbook (John Besh)



Synopsis

My New Orleans will change the way you look at New Orleans cooking and the way you see World-famous chef John Besh. It's 16 chapters of culture, history, essay and insight, and pure goodness. Besh tells us the story of his New Orleans by the season and by the dish. Archival, four-color, location photography along with ingredient information make the Big Easy easy to tackle in home kitchens. Cooks will salivate over the 200 recipes that honor and celebrate everything New Orleans. Bite by bite John Besh brings us New Orleans cooking like we've never tasted before. It's the perfect blend of contemporary French techniques with indigenous Southern Louisiana products and know-how. His amazing new offering is exclusively brought to fans and foodies everywhere by Andrews McMeel. From Mardi Gras, to the shrimp season, to the urban garden, to gumbo weather, boucherie (the season of the pig), and everything tasty in between, Besh gives a sampling of New Orleans that will have us all craving for more. The boy from the Bayou isn't just an acclaimed chef with an exceptional pallet. Besh is a chef with a heart. The ex-marine's passion for the Crescent City, its people, and its livelihood are main courses making him a leader of the city's culinary recovery and resilience after the wrath of Hurricane Katrina.

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Introduction to My New Orleans from John Besh

Dear Friends,

This book is the story of a dreamy, starry-eyed boy brought up in the shadows of New Orleans, surrounded by cypress knees and tupelo trees, good dinners and great friends. My life has been dramatically shaped by our multicultural heritage. Everything that I cook and eat, see and smell, reminds me of where I come from and more or less dictates where I'm going. I grew up in Slidell, Louisiana, across Lake Pontchartrain from New Orleans. My childhood revolved around the lake, and I spent many hours shrimping in its waters and fishing along its shores. I learned to cook from my mom and my grandmother, and from the men I hunted with, who held that if you hunt it and kill it, a boy like me had better know how to clean it and cook it. Ours was a house of great food--we celebrated everything from births to deaths around great food. My ideas of New Orleans's cooking come directly from the New Orleans table. My cooking draws on decades of learning and mastering cooking techniques that I felt certain would help me years down the road. I restlessly search my mind's catalog of everything I've ever tasted or cooked, so that when I see a tomato at its ripest state, my mind runs through literally thousands of preparations that could work for this here tomato. Some people may look up in the sky and notice a mallard duck, but I see a slow-roasted duckling with lots of hearty herbs, cooked down in a gravy and served over rice. My goal in launching Restaurant August in 2001 was to have a world-class place that could compete with the great restaurants of New Orleans. But Katrina, of course, changed everything. When the aftermath of that devastating storm threatened our fishermen and farmers, our shrimpers and oystermen, it seemed urgent to help preserve and protect our unique culinary heritage, its local ingredients, and its authentic culture. After Katrina, being from New Orleans became the focus of my identity. The truth is I am from here and I cook from here--our ingredients and our traditions. I believe our city is a true

national treasure: We have one of the few native urban cultures--and cuisines--that still thrives in this country. I cook New Orleans food my way, revering each ingredient as it reaches the ripeness of its season, which is how *My New Orleans: The Cookbook* unfolds, from Crawfish to Reveillon. No other place on earth is like New Orleans. Welcome to the flavors of my home. John Besh

From *My New Orleans: Drew's Chicken and Smoked Sausage Gumbo*

Throughout this book, I've had a great deal to say about making the roux that's the base of our gumbo--and the other steps as well--but I'll recap it here so that it can be useful every time you start to make our signature dish. Yes, there are other thickeners besides flour that folks use for making their roux, but to my palate, only a flour-based roux yields that traditional flavor. As for the fats in a roux, just about anything works. I love rendered duck fat, chicken fat, or lard, but canola oil works nearly as well. I always heat the oil first and whisk the flour into the hot oil. Not only does this speed up the process; it yields that deep, dark chocolate-colored gumbo I love. I always add the onions first to the dark roux, holding back the rest of the vegetables until the onion caramelizes. Otherwise, the water in the vegetables will keep the onion from browning and releasing its sweet juices. I like to add file powder to the gumbo, then pass it at the table, too. Serve the gumbo hot with Louisiana rice; serve potato salad on the side, if you like. --John Besh

Ingredients (Serves 10-12)

Besh captures the Crescent City's food culture so passionately it's hard to resist. *Â* (Boston Globe)

My New Orleans is a beautiful book and certainly coffee-table-worthy, but it's also a wonderful read, chock-full of fascinating information about authentic Louisiana ingredients and traditional seasonal celebrations. *Â* *Â* *Â* (Austin Chronicle)

My New Orleans: The Cookbook is a must-own for anyone who loves the food and traditions of New Orleans and South Louisiana. *Â* *Â* *Â* (Judy Blaising, Dallas Morning News)

This vast and glossy book combines recipes, food history and civic pride. It's big, bright and richly detailed: the definitive New Orleans cookbook that's always been lacking. *Â* *Â* *Â* (Julia Moskin, The New York Times)

We came home from a New Orleans vacation with such an adoration for the food that my New Orleans and Louisiana cookbook collection expanded to seven titles. This is definitely one of my favorites. It contains all of the iconic dishes that you're thinking of, and then some. Pictured below:

- 1) Shrimp, Chicken, and Andouille Jambalaya *Â* *Â* *Â* p119. Fantastic Jambalaya! This recipe is huge, so I only made a quarter of the recipe and that was more than enough for our family of four.
- 2) Timmy's Brandy Milk Punch *Â* *Â* *Â* p59. Delicious.
- 3) Crawfish *Â* *Â* *Â* p32. This is

wonderful! Throughout the book, he gives the master recipe, then offers modifications to try out. This could be done with shrimp or crab, too, but if you haven't tried crawfish, they're fantastic, and can be found in the frozen seafood section if you're not on the coast.4) Sazerac - Yum.5) Bourbon Pecan Pie - Divine.6) Brendan's Bread Pudding with Brown Butter Sticky Rum Sauce - Awesome! My bread didn't even begin to absorb the custardy base. I think I'll halve that next time, because it took forever to set at all. Majorly yummy! I can't wait to try the rest of the book! Some others I have flagged are Red Beans and Rice, Beignets, Jalapeno Cheese Grits and Slow-Cooked Veal Grillades, King Cake, Grilled Watermelon Tomato and Goat Cheese Salad, Brown Butter Fig Tart, Peach Upside-Down Cake, Grilled Oysters with Spicy Garlic Butter, Drew's Chicken and Smoked Sausage Gumbo, and Fall Greens Salad with Blue Cheese and Pumpkin Seed Brittle.

Wonderful cookbook. Besh writes in a conversational style, which is very enjoyable. However, it also has some drawbacks. If you do not read some of the early core recipes, which include some helpful hints and techniques, you may find some of the later recipes mysterious. For example, in his recipe for roux (FIRST RECIPE) he tells the reader that roux is so ubiquitous for this style that the recipes do not include "make a roux" as a step. Later you will run into recipes with fat, flour and trinity as ingredients. The instructions have you combining same. But if you were not aware of it, you might not realize you are making a roux. I consider myself a fairly accomplished amateur, but I learned some great techniques from Besh. Specifically, Besh's technique for making a dark roux saves a half an hour off the regular amount of time it used to take me. And, the resulting roux has a better flavor than my old painstaking traditional technique. Overall, I believe that this a worthwhile cookbook to buy. The only reason I give it four stars instead of five is that you have to read it like a book in order to accomplish the recipes (the recipes are not necessarily complete in their own right).

Believe it or not, this is only my second cookbook -- the first being Jacques Pepin's Complete Techniques that I purchased ten years ago. I was inspired earlier this year by my first trip to New Orleans, where I had the most amazing grits I have ever tasted at a restaurant of his called L'Academy (the secret is mascarpone, as is revealed in this cookbook). I've cooked six or seven recipes out of this book since it arrived two weeks ago, and they are all tasty and easy to follow. Truthfully the details about making roux (I'm from California, we don't have roux here!) were quite useful, and I've now been able to incorporate roux into several of my own creations, with great

success. The anecdotes and stories are quite entertaining and fun to read: my only criticism being that they are too engaging and they distract me from actually cooking! You can tell that a lot of time went into preparing these recipes, as Chef John Besh always addresses substitutions for ingredients that may not be easily available locally; the recipes hold up well to making your own substitutions: substituted in stone ground whole wheat flour in many of the recipes I made, and when I cooked the corn bread recipe, instead of corn meal I used McEwen and Sons stone ground blue grits that I had soaked in half and half (I ran out of milk) to soften them up before baking (if you're like me, you'll be trying finding ways to finish up those 10 lbs of grits you had to purchase online in order to get free shipping...) in hindsight I probably should have ordered grits and corn meal rather than one bag of blue and one bag of yellow grits to see which ones taste better (!). The recipes are also quite varied, even including recipes for matzo crackers and matzo ball soup -- now I know what to make next time I am invited to a seder. I should note that if you are vegan, you will have a hard time with these recipes as 95% of them require some sort of meat or dairy, as I discovered when I ran out of meat, milk, cream and half and half in my refrigerator last week. The book itself is also gorgeously done with full color photos. This is a book that would look great on display on your coffee table -- it's actually so beautiful that I try and keep the book away from the kitchen. However for me, the most valuable part of this cookbook is the exposure to a whole new set of spices and flavors, unlike anything my (asian) palette has ever tasted (and there is quite a diversity of excellent food here in San Francisco). "My New Orleans" does not disappoint! Now off I go with my (newly acquired) file powder to make my first chicken and sausage gumbo. (I know it is probably considered blasphemy, as I will probably have to substitute in short grain rice... but I get the feeling John Besh would approve).

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