

Favorite cookbooks for 2021

By **JOSEPH HERNANDEZ**

The Philadelphia Inquirer

As the night continues to encroach on the light of day, we begin to look forward to cozy nights at home. We crank on the oven or stove, finding comfort (and ease) in casseroles, baked goods and soups, while at the market, even the produce seems heartier: bushels of sweet potatoes, beets, mushrooms.

These darker days are also an invitation to curl up to this year's batch of new cookbooks, whether to find nourishment in exciting global flavors or find joy in the form of cakes and cookies. Whether you're cooking for you and your family, or seeking out books to gift to your kitchen-curious loved ones, these are this season's books we're obsessing over, already well-loved with stained fingerprints and rainbow-leafed with Post-Its.

"Life is What You Bake It: Recipes, Stories, and Inspiration to Bake Your Way to the Top"

• Vallery Lomas, Clarkson Potter, \$29, bookshop.org
From growing up in Louisiana to practicing law in Manhattan,

Vallery Lomas found home in her kitchen. Over time, she nurtured her passion and love of baking and eventually won the first season of "The Great American Baking Show." But in the wake of #MeToo, her season was canceled when one of the judges was accused of sexual misconduct. Her win, it seemed at the time, would be overshadowed and forgotten, but Lomas changed that narrative, eventually presenting an award at the James Beard Foundation Awards ("the highest awards in food") and being featured in publications like Food & Wine and People. In her debut cookbook, Lomas shares her hard-won wisdom (in baking and life) during that time and beyond. In chapters that recall her budding Francophilia by way of Guadeloupe in the Caribbean, to pages celebrating the cobblers and pies of her Southern upbringing, Lomas balances the technical baking for which she is known with charming stories filled with heart.

"The Korean Vegan Cookbook: Reflections and Recipes from Omma's Kitchen"

• Joanne Lee Molinaro,

Avery Books, \$35, bookshop.org

Poetic and personal, Joanne Lee Molinaro's "Korean Vegan Cookbook" is a wonderful exploration of popular Korean dishes and flavors, but through a plant-based lens. Molinaro has been blogging about food for a while now, but her lyrical stories about her immigrant upbringing and life — paired with gorgeous, mood-inflected visuals — gained her 2.7 million TikTok followers over the last year, her adapted vegan recipes a bridge to her heritage. A whole chapter on ban chans, the bevy of Korean side dishes that are the delightful workhorses of any meal, is stacked with varied, flavorful dishes like dooboo jeon (tofu cakes), braised Lion's Mane, and simply roasted-and-glazed onions. Meanwhile, bulgogi, famously made with marinated beef, gets the vegan treatment thanks to chewy Soy Curls. Molinaro also offers clever variations on fusion, like her Korean-inspired takes on lasagna or her tteokbokki arrabiata, favoring delightfully chewy rice cakes over pasta.



Recipes, stories & inspiration to bake your way to the top

Clarkson Potter-TNS

"Life Is What You Bake It," by Vallery Lomas.

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