

Four cookbooks I didn't want to like, but do anyway

By J.M. Hirsch
AP Food Editor

Over the years, I've developed a simple system for processing the hundreds of cookbooks that cross my desk every year. It's the six-pile process.

Pile No. 1 is where the books get stacked as soon as they are delivered. There they await consideration. Pile No. 2 — by far the largest — is the ain't-gonna-happen pile. This is where the *5,000 Soup Recipes* and *Glorious Gluten-Free Sugar-Free Sprouted Vegan Raw Cooking* books (and so many, many less extreme others) land. From there, they are dispatched to a table at my son's school where anyone can help themselves.

Pile No. 3 is the gonna-do-something stack. These are the books that merit attention in some way. Gabrielle Hamilton's book inspired by her New York City restaurant, Prune, is a fine example. Ditto for Yotam Ottolenghi's new ode to vegetables, *Plenty More*. These books get stories assigned.

Pile No. 4 is a step up from that. These are the books that are in the running for my end-of-year list of the best cookbooks of the year. At the moment, there are 17 books in this pile. Once the herd is culled, probably only about 10 or 12 will make the cut. I'd give you some examples, but then I'd have to kill you.

Pile No. 5 is the interesting-but-probably-not-newsworthy-but-I'll-try-cooking-from-it-anyway stack. These are books that intrigue me, but unless they blow my mind when I get around to cooking from them probably won't amount to much. Books from this pile sometimes move into Pile No. 3. Charles Phan's *The Slanted Door* is a recent example, which made the move in part on the strength of the book's cocktail recipes.

But today, I want to share the contents of a little known, and frankly kind of embarrassing pile — Pile No. 6: the books I didn't want to like, but kind of did. These are books that either seemed too silly or too narrow or were created by a source with questionable credentials or just seemed to have too little mainstream appeal. And yet, the more I looked at them, the more I somehow liked them.

At the moment, Pile No. 6 has four residents. They are:

Will it Waffle?

By Daniel Shumski
Workman, 2014

The title kind of says it all. It's 53 recipes of strange things you can make in a waffle iron. I wanted to hate this book. Really. But I had to admit, I wanted to make the waffle iron crab cakes. And waffled tamale pie. And the waffled sweet-and-sour shrimp wontons. And the waffled onion rings. And the stuffing waffles (called stuffles). And the waffled chocolate-stuffed French toast. And the ... Well, you get the point.

This book clearly is all about the schtick, but amusingly so. I forgive it. And I'd also like to try the waffled sweet potato gnocchi ...

Cooking with Gochujang

By Naomi Imatome-Yun
Countryman Press, 2014

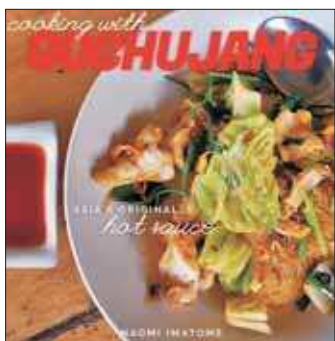
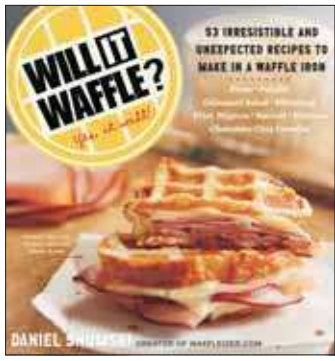
The only thing I hate more than books with 5,000 soup recipes is books dedicated to single ingredients. They just don't reflect the way people cook. But I let this one slip through because I love *gochujang*, an ingredient on the cusp of being discovered by the rest of America. And that's a good thing.

Gochujang is a Korean chili paste that tastes like a blend of savory Japanese miso and spicy Sriracha sauce. In other words, it's crazy delicious. And once people learn how to use it, they'll love it. Part of this book's redeeming quality is that it doesn't limit itself to Korean recipes. For example, it uses gochujang on a smoked salmon pizza, in a mayo for asparagus, and on grilled corn on the cob.

Bourbon and Bacon

By Morgan Murphy

Continued on page 16



Why make your own chicken stock? Because it rocks!

By Sara Moulton
The Associated Press

Why bother making chicken stock at home when there are so many respectable versions at the supermarket? Because the stock you pour out of a can or a box just can't touch the homemade variety.

The difference is in the flavor and the texture, both of which — but particularly the texture — come from the long, slow simmering of bones. Homemade has it. Store-bought doesn't.

You can see for yourself if you ever boil a sample of each side-by-side. A homemade stock thickens, becoming concentrated and jelly-like. A store-bought stock simply evaporates into thin air. Poof! Makes you wonder what the heck it's made from in the first place.

I make my chicken stock from chicken wings because each one boasts equal amounts of the three components you need to make a good stock — meat (which contributes flavor), bones (their gelatin provides body), and lots of skin (its fat amplifies the flavor). And you need to start the wings in cold water to get the most out of them.

Making a clear stock requires skimming off the scum that rises to the top of the liquid during the initial part of the cooking process. What is that stuff? As the wings boil, the protein solids and the fats coagulate,



SUCCULENT SOUP. Using this Asian Chicken Noodle Soup recipe, novice cooks can make a tasty soup that has the flavor and texture that only comes from the long, slow simmering of bones to make soup stock. (AP Photo/Matthew Mead)

get trapped by fat, and float to the surface. Do your skimming with a slotted spoon or, better yet, with a tool made just for the job. It's called — duh! — a skimmer. Once the scum is gone, you can add vegetables and aromatics.

Meanwhile, keep an eye on temperature so the stock doesn't boil. If it does boil, the protein solids and fat get mixed into the liquid and the stock becomes cloudy. And make sure the bones are always covered with liquid; if the liquid evaporates to below the level of the bones, add more water.

Wait a minute, you say. Making stock at home sure takes a lot of time! Indeed, it does — four hours of simmering! But it's not all hands-on time. I see it as a great weekend project. You make the stock one day and chill it overnight. The fat will rise

to the top and solidify, making it easy to scoop off the next day. (You'll then want to freeze the fat, which has great flavor, for special occasions, like making matzo balls).

After scooping off the fat, boil down the stock to concentrate its flavor. Then you can season it with salt and pepper, and divide it into 1- and 2-cup amounts and freeze it. Don't add any salt or pepper before this final stage or you might end up with a salty stock.

To me, homemade chicken stock is like liquid gold; it makes any soup (such as my quick Asian chicken noodle soup) or sauce that much tastier.

Editor's note: Sara Moulton was executive chef at Gourmet magazine for nearly 25 years, and spent a decade hosting several Food Network shows. She currently stars in public television's "Sara's Weeknight Meals" and has written three cookbooks, including Sara Moulton's Everyday Family Dinners.

Quick Asian Chicken Noodle Soup

Start to finish: 45 minutes • Servings: 6

- 1/2 ounce (about 1/2 cup) dried shiitake mushrooms or mixed dried mushrooms
- 6 cups chicken stock (recipe below), divided
- 4 ounces rice noodles
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon finely grated fresh ginger
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 8 scallions, separated into white and green parts, the white parts finely chopped, the green parts thinly sliced crosswise
- 1 pound bok choy, separated into white and green parts, the white parts halved lengthwise then sliced crosswise into 1-inch pieces, the green parts thinly sliced crosswise
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 3 cups chopped or shredded cooked chicken
- Salt and ground black pepper
- Chopped fresh cilantro, basil, or mint leaves, to garnish
- Chili-garlic sauce, to garnish
- Lime wedges, to serve

In a small saucepan, combine the mushrooms with three cups of the stock. Bring to a boil, then remove from the heat and let stand until the mushrooms are softened, about 30 minutes. Remove the mushrooms from the stock, then remove and discard any stems from the mushrooms. Chop the mushroom caps and set aside. Strain the soaking stock, discarding any solids, and set aside.

Meanwhile, cook the noodles according to package directions, then drain, rinse, and set aside.

In a large saucepan over medium, heat the oil. Add the ginger, garlic, and white parts of the scallions. Cook, stirring, for three minutes. Add the white parts of the bok choy and cook, stirring, for three minutes. Add the reserved mushroom soaking stock, mushroom caps, remaining three cups of unused chicken stock, bok choy greens, soy sauce, and chicken. Simmer just until the greens are wilted, about two minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Divide the noodles among six bowls and ladle the soup evenly over them. Garnish with the fresh herbs and scallion greens, then serve with chili-garlic sauce and lime wedges.

Nutrition information per serving: 400 calories (160 calories from fat, 40 percent of total calories); 18 g fat (3.5 g saturated, 0 g trans fats); 75 mg cholesterol; 32 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 6 g sugar; 27 g protein; 980 mg sodium.

Homemade Chicken Stock

Start to finish: 4 hours, 45 minutes (20 minutes active) • Makes about 8 cups

- 5 pounds chicken wings
- 2 medium yellow onions, quartered
- 2 small carrots, halved crosswise
- 2 medium celery stalks, halved crosswise
- Handful fresh parsley
- Handful fresh thyme
- 1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns
- 3 Turkish bay leaves

In a large stockpot, combine the wings and enough cold water to cover them by two inches. Bring the mixture just to a boil over high heat, skimming the surface with a slotted spoon. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer, skimming frequently, for 20 minutes.

Add the onions, carrots, celery, parsley, thyme, peppercorns, and bay leaves. Return to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook for four hours, adding water as necessary to keep the chicken covered.

Strain the stock through a colander into a bowl and discard the solids. Let rest, then skim off and discard any fat that rises to the surface. Alternatively, cool the stock and chill it overnight. The fat will harden on top of the stock and is easily scraped off and discarded.

Once the fat is discarded, return the stock to the pot and simmer until reduced by one third, about 30 minutes. Refrigerate or use as desired.