

Recipes for success

Roz Crowley

THERE'S never any shortage of cookbooks at this time of year. Publishers know they make great gifts, as do those who give gifts they want to last.

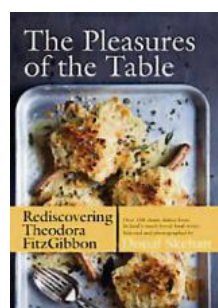
A good cookbook will offer a fresh take on everyday foods and introduce some new ideas into your cooking regime. It's unlikely you'll try every recipe but even a handful of new favourites will make it a worthwhile investment, to be revisited over and over.

Food needs not only to taste good but to look good too. And here's where every good cookery book comes into its own with top-notch pictures of dishes — often in rustic settings — that simply beg to be cooked and

eaten. There are plenty of new books by TV chefs from Mary Berry and Paul Hollywood, Jamie Oliver, to more local Catherine Fulvio and Rachel Allen, but this year I have stuck with other Irish cooks and publishers, some of them new to us, some them rediscovered.

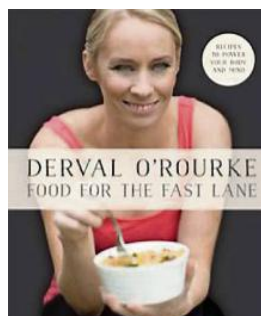
All of them have practical tips – less coloured foams and fancy flourishes, more earthy, and most of the time using local ingredients. All of them are well produced, are easy to read with good photographs, and tips throughout to make life easy. They are all available in bookshops and on line from publishers.

TOP 8 cookery books



The Pleasures of the Table: Rediscovering Theodora FitzGibbon, Gill & MacMillan €24.99

Theodora FitzGibbon died in 1991 but Donal Skehan has revived her recipes and re-photographed them to bring us a collection of recipes from beef stew with dumplings to pickled samphire, old fashioned blancmange (milk thickened with cornflour and eggs and flavoured with vanilla) to blueberry jam. Artichoke pie and creamed cabbage work well too and recipes such as these 30 years later appear on the most stylish of restaurant menus. A fitting tribute to one of Ireland's first food writers.



Food for the Fast Lane by Derval O'Rourke, Gill & MacMillan €19.99

The Olympic athlete encourages healthy eating in this book of simple recipes and guidelines for a healthy lifestyle. Grilled salmon with celeriac spinach mash, fiery spaghetti, burrito in a bowl give alternatives to take away fast food in a style that will appeal to young readers who will find the recipes uncomplicated and tasty.



The Lettercollum Cookbook by Karen Austin, Onstream, €21

Recipes from The Lettercollum Kitchen Project deli in Clonakilty have been gathered with treats from the former Timoleague-based restaurant. I edited this book so I know how easy they are to make and how good all the recipes taste. Among my favourites are the prawns with whiskey mayo, fish in pakora batter, chickpea and chorizo, crème brûlée with fruit, and a feather-light, yet rich, flourless chocolate and hazelnut cake. Quite a few recipes happen to be gluten-free and vegetables are given star treatment. Printed in Ireland.



Fresh Spice by Arun Kapil, Pavillion €29.99

Pistachio and rose pilau, spiced lamb cutlets, spiced wood pigeon, ginger and lime drizzle pudding are among the treats in a book perfectly timed for Green Saffron's founder. Relaxed on television, Kapil, who is based in East Cork, has become quite a star and enthuses in his book about fresh spices which get a decent A-Z listing. There is a recipe for fat-free mincemeat too.



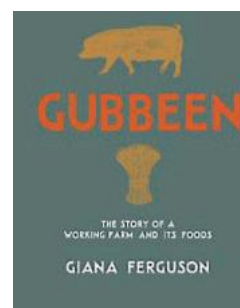
A Simply Delicious Christmas by Darina Allen. Gill & MacMillan €27.99

A book of Christmas recipes is always a good idea, all the more so if it features, as in Darina's offering, seasonal vegetables given luxury treatment. Now in a solid hardback, there are far more recipes than in the first 1989 edition. With oysters and crispy onions for starters, essential information for cooking the turkey, there are plenty of ideas for using leftovers. Lots of light dessert alternatives to classic pudding too.



Dinner by Domini Kemp. Gill & MacMillan €24.99

In a brave move not to include desserts, we find plenty of main courses to concentrate the mind and focus on what to cook for main course dinners. Pork fillet with celeriac and onion purée, chargrilled broccoli with lemon, chilli and garlic, balsamic potatoes and baked onions are delicious for this time of year and shredded sprouts with truffle oil are worth trying for the festive season.



Gubbeen – The Story of a Working Farm and its Foods, Kyle Books €28

A fitting tribute to a wonderful family of cheese-makers, farmer and more recently smoker, this book is warm and practical, like its subjects. The history of the Fergusons at Gubbeen is peppered with recipes using cheese, but also many other traditional Irish comfort foods such as potato cakes and soda farls as well as full instructions on how to make pepperoni and sausages.



The Irish Countrywomen's Association Book of Tea and Company, Gill & Macmillan €22.99

A collection of members' recipes, words of wisdom and short poems edited by Aoife Carrigy, this is a cosy book which will appeal to older readers who may like to bake treats with grandchildren. There are plenty of traditional recipes, but also interesting ideas new to me. Quarkblat-terteig are biscuits made with cottage cheese, filled with lemon curd and dredged with icing sugar – ideal for festive season visitors.