

Food 101: Lessons for the kitchen klutz

by Franziska Gregoris

If you know everything (or at least too much) about Hamlet and advanced marketing, but can't cook your way out of a ziplocked flavour-saver pouch, try "Food 101"! This is how Cathy Smith promotes her new student-minded, fast'n'easy guide for absolute amateur cooks and kitchen klutzes.

Explaining recipes step-by-step (and ingredient-by-ingredient) in a witty and graphic manner, she tells the aspiring *chef de cuisine* how to increase their cooking ability, running the gamut from basic scrambled eggs to exotic Chicken Teriyaki.

For those who haven't had extensive experience in organising a household and stocking the pantry, there is a convenient list of so-called essentials. Included are helpful lists of how to get what where, and why. The book itself is divided

into the traditional sections - Meat, Veggies, Salads, Sweets, Breakfast, etc. - each of which have both easy and progressively more complicated recipes.

So there you are, sitting at the kitchen table (if you're lucky enough to have one). Probably for the first time in your life you are actively planning a meal. Because if you use Cathy's "Food 101", you're forced to mix and match, which makes for a lot of the same old fishing through the pages. Recipes are usually components of a full meal.

You have already bought all the specials in town, made sure that all the spices mentioned in the book are ordered out in front of you, and are ready to jump into action. Your choice: Sweet and Sour Chicken, Rice Pilaf and the Incredible Shrinking Zukes. The reason - it

tickles your fancy.

After an hour or so of doing everything almost simultaneously (keeping track of what you're doing to which recipe on which page, how to do it and when to do it) you can finally sit down to eat, having honestly earned a delicious meal. Not to be so.

The chicken turned out so heavy that queasiness lingered on into the evening. No wonder, the recipe sort of *menu fixe*, with possible variations at the bottom of the page, would cater perfectly to the student who wants it fast and easy.

The book is a fair "basics guide", but otherwise unremarkable. If you use it, you'll profit, but if you don't, not to worry; you're a student, so transfer all your creativity and intelligence from the schoolroom to the kitchen.

requires half a cup of margarine plus honey, which, when left with

fatty chicken skin, makes for an overly-rich, overly-dense sauce. After being seasoned with a whole salty bouillon cube, one portion of rice pilaf creates a strong thirst for more than a few cool ones. The zukes are not crisp and irresistible, but soggy after having been fried over medium heat for half an hour in a half-cup of oil.

You then try to lift your spirits by giving yourself a treat: Down East Apple Pudding. The so-called crust turned out cake-like - doughy and bland. And there was more of it than apples, which by themselves would have tasted fine.

After several discouraging experiences - the typical pitfalls of a cooking education - you finally hit on a few tasty meals, such as the meatloaf, the Cheesy Potatoes or the Broiled Tomatoes Italiano. And

then you realise that your creativity just has to play a part in this art of gastronomy. Why shouldn't you be able to *ad lib*? Adjustments such as half the required mayonnaise, a few more spices or less oil work wonders to what you may find to be insipid recipes. Soon you'll find out that, after all, the book was helpful, just not to be taken too religiously. Most recipes need some cultivation but some do have unique twists to them.

Smith did an excellent job with basic salads and salad dressing. As well, she catalogued all kinds of possibilities to make the process of making many combinations spring from one page. It did surprise me, though, that the book stresses the "healthy and nutritious" concept, using only fresh vegetables, but calls for lots of margarine and fats (oil, mayonnaise). Also the practicality of each page containing a

Records

Scorpions sizzle

The Scorpions: *Blackout*, on Mercury Records by Darla Muzzerall

This time Germany's Scorpions have released a unified package of metal music which, unlike many bands in the genre, includes music that is not screamingly offensive (à la AC-DC). The possible exception is side one's concluding track, "Now!". Typical comment: "Put the guy out of his agony!" But emotional? You bet!

Blackout has everything most people listen to rock for: energy, originality, quality vocals and hard-edged playing. Even a single for the airwaves - "No One Like You" - sears the wires on your radio. The band's material is good, though lyrics by Klaus Meine are a bit simple

in places. But top rate musicianship covers them well.

Not only is *Blackout* a good sampling of the Scorpions' work - they've put out enough albums to make a collector wince - but it is a true example of Hard Rock at its finest.

You'd have a bad time trying to find anything better!

Kinda basically great, I guess

Coney Hatch (on Anthem records) by Darla Muzzerall

A new Toronto band advertised as high energy rock; so what's new? Isn't high energy what rock and roll

is all about?

Absolutely, and the ads are telling it like it is. "Hey Operator" is a song you won't stop singing from the first listen on - and there's more of the same.

Any song touched by vocalist/guitarist Carl Dixon is more than worth your time. His voice is strong and clear in compliance with commercial rock's tradition. The remainder of the album's material is fronted by bassist Andy Curran. These four songs, including "Stand Up" and the final track "Monkey Bars" are more stark than the songs done by Dixon. While they break routine, they tend to slightly break the energy level as well.

But for sheer rock and roll enjoyment, you've got "Victim of Rock", "We Got the Night" and a record of basically great songs.

'Basically great' describes Coney Hatch just about right.



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