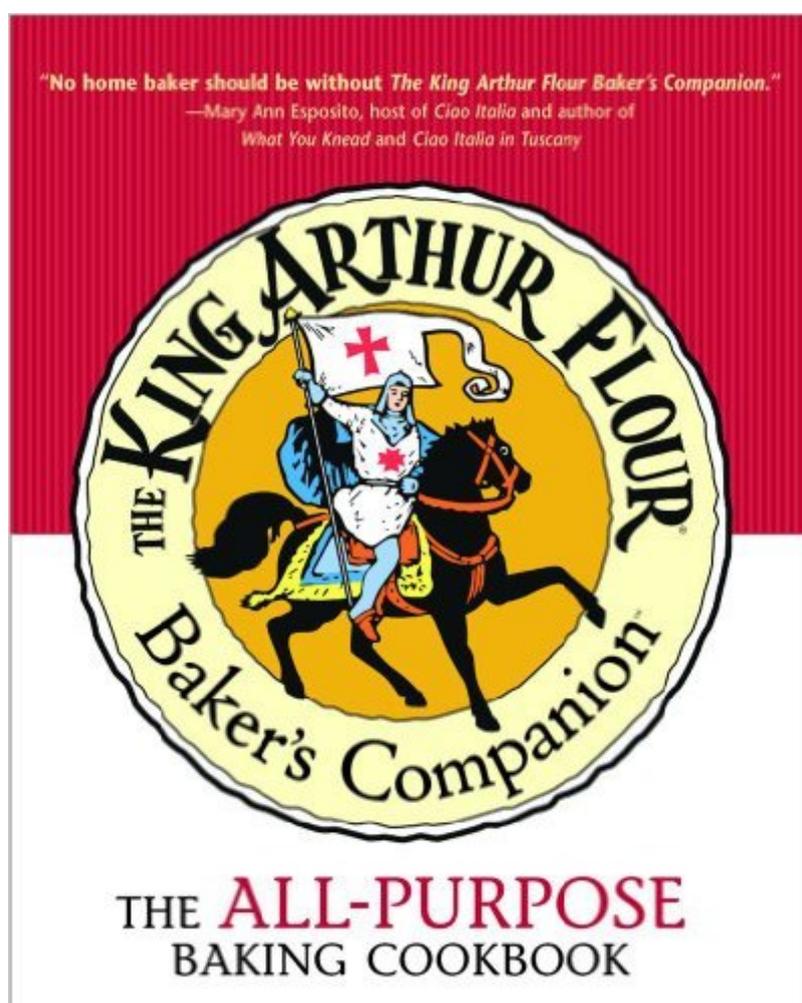


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The King Arthur Flour Baker's Companion: The All-Purpose Baking Cookbook A James Beard Award Winner (King Arthur Flour Cookbooks)



Synopsis

From Christmas cookies and pancakes to chocolate cake and sandwich bread, The King Arthur Flour Baker's Companion will be there to guide home bakers every step of the way. Every kitchen comes equipped with a fundamental, dependable cookbook classic such as Joy of Cooking or Better Homes & Gardens New Cookbook. Now bakers have a modern classic of their own. From leavening, mixing, proofing, and kneading, through shaping and baking, the experts at King Arthur Flour lead you through hundreds of easy and foolproof recipes from tricky yeast breads and sourdoughs, to trendy flatbreads and crackers, to family favorites such as pancakes and waffles. They also present fried doughs, quick breads, batter breads, biscuits, quiches, cobblers and crisps, cookies, cakes, brownies, pies, tarts, and pastries. For more than 200 years King Arthur Flour has been in the business of making the highest quality key ingredient in all of baking: flour. They've done decades of experimentation and research in their famous test kitchens on how the various ingredients in baked goods behave and why. The King Arthur Flour Baker's Companion now brings you more than 350 recipes that will teach you which ingredients work together, as well as what doesn't, and why. It is this knowledge that will allow you to unleash your own creativity and to experiment in the kitchen. You'll get a complete overview of ingredients in chapters on flours, sweeteners, leavens, fats, and more. You'll find information on substitutions and variations, as well as troubleshooting advice from the pros at King Arthur. Recipes are enhanced with sidebars that share baking secrets and provide clear-step-by-step instructions, and each recipe is accompanied by a detailed nutritional analysis. Techniques are further explained with easy-to-follow illustrations by culinary illustrator Laura Hartman Maestro. The King Arthur Flour Baker's Companion is the definitive kitchen resource. Exhaustive in scope, authoritative in style, and offering clear, practical, and encouraging instruction, it is the one book you'll turn to every time you bake. Like your set of measuring cups and favorite wooden spoon, it will become an essential kitchen tool. No kitchen in America should be without a copy. Two 8-page color inserts; 150 b/w illustrations; glossary, resources, index

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Customer Reviews

THE KING ARTHUR FLOUR BAKER'S COMPANION is a delight, both as a book to read and enjoy, and as a cookbook. The slightly oversized pages allow for plenty of room for the well-laid out text. Ink and paper colors make it easy to read. The handful of photos is attractive and inspiring. Line drawings are well rendered and do a great job of illustrating techniques. Each recipe includes a short or not-so-short comment on the recipe from the King Arthur team. The comments are chatty and interesting enough that you may find yourself paging through the book, reading it for pleasure. As a guidebook and manual, THE KING ARTHUR FLOUR BAKER'S COMPANION is excellent. The book is designed to make it easy to scan and plan. Each recipe tells you how much you'll make. Quantities of ingredients are given in both cups/teaspoons and in ounces. When a dish is made in distinct stages (such as crust and filling), both the ingredients and the instructions are separately labeled. Each recipe also -- though you may not want to know! -- gives very complete nutritional information (calories; grams of fat, protein, carbohydrates, sugars, and fiber; mg of cholesterol and sodium; vitamins and minerals). Like THE JOY OF COOKING, THE KING ARTHUR FLOUR BAKER'S COMPANION includes long sections that talk about the basics, in addition to great specific recipes. I am comfortable with the basics of making piecrust. I read their section on basic piecrusts and it was very solid information. I was so inspired that I decided to step out and try a variation, the Long Flake Method. The instructions were very clear and easy to understand and follow. It was like having a master baker there to give you great bits of advice like "Give your chilled dough 10-15 minutes to warm since you made it with all butter." My biggest challenge was believing that my dough should look as it did, as this method calls for visible pieces of fat in the dough. I gave in, followed the directions, and got a wonderfully flaky piecrust. To fill the crust, I used their recipe for The Best Apple Pie. It was delicious. They suggested a bit of rum, which gave this old favorite an exciting new twist. Things were going so well that I also tried their recipe for a streusel topping, and ended up with a fabulous, beautiful apple pie. I got an enthusiastic thumbs up (and clean plate) from

my husband and positive reviews from a baker friend that tried it. To address a possible concern you may have: While the King Arthur company sells excellent baking ingredients and tools, you would never know that from reading this book. There are no discussions of the best ingredients and gadgets and how you can get them from King Arthur. There are no references to brand names, and no ingredients that you can only get from a specialty supplier. The King Arthur team is a class act. (And by the way, I have bought some of their spices, mixes and tools, and all have been excellent.) THE KING ARTHUR FLOUR BAKER'S COMPANION is a book that you can read and enjoy. I recommend taking it into the kitchen and using it. The results will be delicious! NOTE (June 2006): This continues to be a favorite cookbook of mine. I recently used their recipe for a yellow cake and got *rave* reviews from my husband and a number of friends. Their yellow cake recipe produces a simple and yet surprisingly sophisticated cake -- not too sweet and with a texture almost like a good pound cake. I used their recipe for little white rolls at Thanksgiving and got a thumbs up from family members. I could go on. Enjoy! NOTE (November 2011): After *eight* years, this is still my "go to" cookbook for baking. I have yet to try everything, but am delighted with everything I try.

This volume, subtitled the 'All Purpose Baking Cookbook' perfectly fits the criteria I typically apply to a book in order to decide if I want to give it five stars. A book gets three stars if it meets my expectations. A book gets four stars if it meets my expectations in a very successful way. Typically, that means that it has few or no detected mistakes. A book gets five stars if it exceeds my expectations. This book certainly exceeded my expectations. What I anticipated when I opened this book was a dry, technical work steeped in discussions of the effects of gluten and altitude and humidity on bread making, similar to some of the more detailed parts of better books on bread baking. All of these discussions are here, plus others on the finer points of measuring flour and types of flour, but with a difference. The biggest surprise in the book was the light, personal touch of the writing. It all has the tone you may expect in a very good book on regional cooking. And, lo and behold, there is a hint of regionality and local tradition in the selection of materials in the book. In spite of the fact that King Arthur products are available throughout the country (unlike White Lily, for example), the book retains a very New England tone to its selection of recipes. One prominent example is in the recipe for biscuits, where it advises all experienced Southern biscuit makers to simply skip that page, as since 'we don't want to shock you with the way we make biscuits up north'. That doesn't mean the book does not touch on every subject you may expect it to cover. As I said in my opening paragraph, it easily covers much more than what I expected. The very first chapter dealing with breakfast foods covers material not commonly covered in conventional baking

surveys. Pancakes, waffles, crepes, French toast and their allies are not covered in either of my favorite general baking books (Julia Child's `Baking With Julia' and Nick Malgieri's `How to Bake'). If that were not enough, it presents recipes in such a way that you can prepare baking mixtures ahead to much the same effect as if you were laying in a supply of Bisquik. One of the secrets is in the use of dried buttermilk. I have seen this product in my local megamart, but have not until now had a clue as to how to use it. The homey, comfortable feeling of the book extends to even that most difficult subject of breads made with wild yeasts (Sourdough, Pain au Levain). The book does not cover every different type of artisanal bread you may find in such books as Carol Field's `The Italian Baker' for instance, and it does not cover such important French specialties as brioche as deeply as Rose Levy Beranbaum's `The Bread Bible', but it does cover them, and so much else as well. Another contributor to the warm feel of the book is the layout. Pages are airy with well positioned sidebars, titles, and tables. Technical information is always at the same place, accessible, but unobstrusive to the browser. In the long run, the greatest value of the book is in its encyclopediac coverage of just about every kind of baking you can do, extending the definition of baking to things outside the oven to include the griddle (pancakes, crepes, etc) and the deep fryer (doughnuts, beignets, etc). In fact, just about the only product made with wheat flour which this book does not cover is pasta, although it comes very close in its chapter on dumplings. The more technical aspects of the book are quite up to snuff in spite of the warmth of the presentation. Where appropriate, all measurements are given by both weight and volume. The importance of measuring by weight is also discussed in detail at the beginning of the book. The book also includes a nutritional analysis of each and every recipe, giving portion size, calories, fat, protein, complex carbohydrates, dietary fiber, sodium, potassium, vitamin A, iron, calcium, and phosphorus. I'm impressed. I confess that it is slightly easier for this book to provide this as they can make the very safe assumption that it is their brand of flour which is being used. The sixty pages on ingredients at the end of the book are easily worth the price of admission all by itself. It is no surprise that it gives a deep discussion of wheat and flour. What is surprising is that it also gives fairly detailed discussions of other products used in baking such as milk products, eggs, fats, sugars, fat substitutes, and sugar substitutes. The very nice section on baking tools is an equally valuable resource. In one page the book gives you everything you may see in a much larger three page article in `Cooks Illustrated'. I am really amazed at the value you get for a list price of \$35 for this book. Just consider a comparison to an Ina Garten book 1/3 as long with much less authoritative information for the same price. Amazing. I am not at all surprised to see an endorsing blurb on the back cover from Alton Brown. I strongly suspect that he will be cribbing material from this book for one or more `Good Eats' shows, if he has not already. The only thing I find missing in

the whole book is a decent bibliography. This type of encyclopedic reference really deserves one. This will easily be my new 'go to' book for baking. I will not give up the recipes I have come to love from other sources and I will probably still consult other sources for artisanal bread recipes, but I will definitely come to this book first for any new baking task I have in mind. I will not expect every single recipe to be perfect, but I will consider everything I find here with respect. Very highly recommended.

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