

# THE FLAVOR BIBLE

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CULINARY CREATIVITY, BASED  
ON THE WISDOM OF AMERICA'S MOST IMAGINATIVE CHEFS



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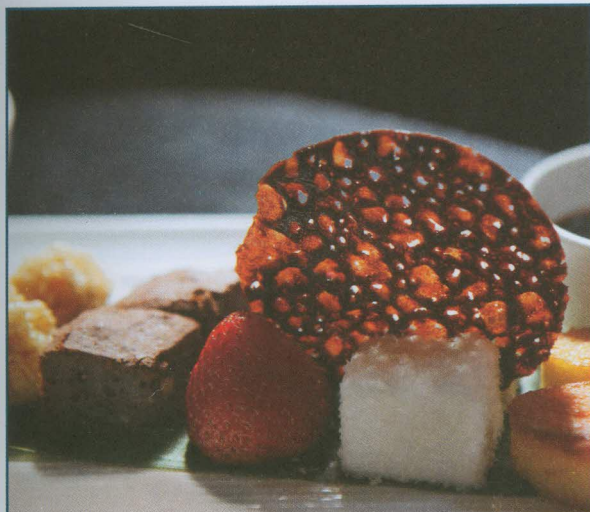
GE AND ANDREW DORNENBURG

Cookbook of the Year *What to Drink with What You Eat*



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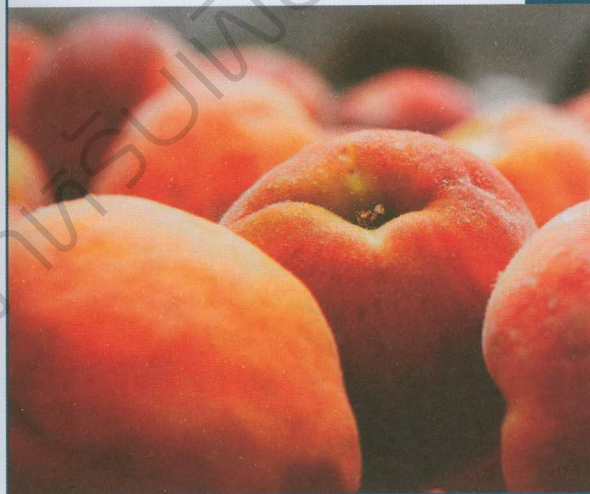
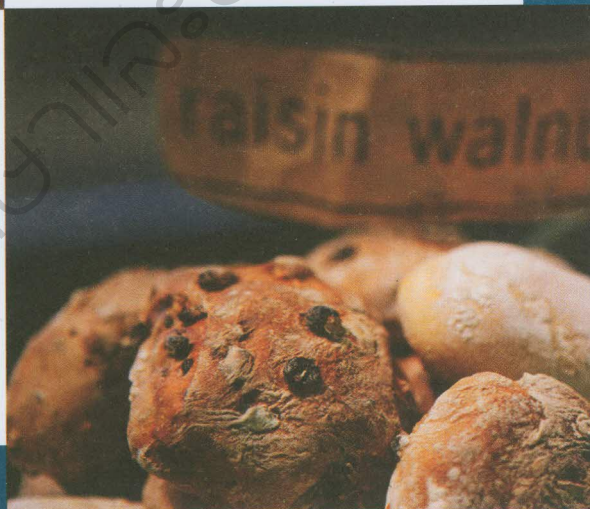
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## PREFACE

*“When we no longer have good cooking in the world, we will have no literature, nor high and sharp intelligence, nor friendly gatherings, nor social harmony.”*

— MARIE-ANTOINE CARÈME, CHEF (1784–1833)

*“Good cooking is an art, as well as a form of intense pleasure. . . . A recipe is only a theme, which an intelligent cook can play each time with a variation.”*

— MADAME JEHANE BENOÎT, CHEF (1904–1987)

*“You have to love either what you are going to eat, or the person you are cooking for. Then you have to give yourself up to cooking. Cuisine is an act of love.”*

— ALAIN CHAPEL, CHEF (1937–1990)

The first quotation suggests why we do what we do, while the others suggest how. We published our first book in 1995, and it is exciting as we approach the publication of *The Flavor Bible* in 2008 to witness the realm of good cooking as it reaches a new “tipping point.”

No longer content simply to replicate others’ recipes, today’s cooks — professionals and amateurs alike — increasingly seek to create their own dishes. In doing so, they celebrate the creative *process* of cooking as much as the finished *product*.

Cooking at its most basic level is a creative act, one of transforming food through the application of heat and the incorporation of other ingredients. But there are different orders of creativity, and merely following a recipe is a creative act of the most basic order, like painting by numbers.

When accomplished cooks grow restless, they start to analyze instructions before following them to see if they can improve upon the results, thus raising the act of cooking to a creative act of a higher order. As their experience grows, cooks are able to bring greater intuition and even inspiration to their cooking.

Traditional cookbooks are aimed at first-order cooks. Every cook owes a debt of gratitude to those who have brought progress to cuisine throughout history — those who famously codified classic cuisines through the painstaking chronicling of recipes, from Auguste Escoffier in France to others around the globe. Appreciation is also due to those who have elevated and expanded the



range of available ingredients and techniques, the essential building blocks of cooking.

Over the years, cookbooks have come to dictate precise measurement of ingredients along with instructions for their preparation and assembly, which has done much to improve the general accessibility of recipes. However, they also have come to provide a false sense of security for which the unsuspecting cook pays a price. When a recipe is rigidly scripted and blindly followed, it negates the cook's own creative instincts and good judgment — not to mention much of the pleasure of truly “being” in the moment.

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*“Great cooks rarely bother to consult cookbooks.”*

— CHARLES SIMIC, U.S. POET LAUREATE

Those with the urge to innovate had long been on their own in the kitchen until many adopted our 1996 book, *Culinary Artistry*, as their muse. That book sought to break the mold of contemporary prescriptive cookbooks and to restore the creative instinct to chefs. Drawing on classic flavor combinations and preparations, it put the wisdom of history at cooks' fingertips for the first time — and with the same ease with which writers consulted a thesaurus.

As time passed, it became clear that chefs were thinking of flavors and their combination in new ways, beyond the classics chronicled in *Culinary Artistry*. Meanwhile, the gap between professionals and amateur cooks narrowed, as the latter installed Viking ranges at home to prepare a burgeoning array of new ingredients, with their TVs transformed into virtual twenty-four-hour cooking schools, given the advent of culinary programming.

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*“Food without wine is a corpse; wine without food is a ghost.  
United and well matched, they are as body and soul: living partners.”*

— ANDRÉ SIMON, CHEF (1877–1970)

Since the year 2000 we have been studying the new ways in which flavors are being combined. It has been a privilege to interview many of the country's most imaginative chefs and other food and drink experts (turning to an entirely differ-



ent lineup from those we spoke to for *Culinary Artistry*). Some are well-established industry pioneers, while others have risen on the scene in recent years. All have wowed us with their savory cuisines and/or desserts, and often in spots less traveled, from Dallas to New Orleans to Hoboken. We've also combed the most recent culinary literature published in 2000 or later.

The first result was our 2006 book, *What to Drink with What You Eat*, which celebrated the harmonious combination of food and drink and, indeed, their inseparability, as suggested by the André Simon quotation.

The second result is *The Flavor Bible*, which, like *Culinary Artistry*, is not intended to be prescriptive; rather, it is an empowerment tool. *The Flavor Bible* is a comprehensive, easy-to-use single-volume reference of more than six hundred alphabetical entries listing modern-day compatible flavors, chronicling new flavor synergies in the new millennium.

Our books *Culinary Artistry* (classic flavor combinations before 1996), *The Flavor Bible* (modern flavor combinations since 2000), and *What to Drink with What You Eat* (classic and modern food and drink combinations) are essential to use in concert, as each covers different aspects of food and drink flavor harmony.

#### Flavor Combinations



#### Food and Drink Combinations



We believe cooking will continue to evolve, and not only as a means of “doing” (i.e., putting dinner on the table, or “problem-solving” by “following a recipe”). Over time, we believe more people — including, perhaps, yourself — will have discovered it as a way of “being” in the world. We have learned enough over the past decade or two to question why cooking is done one way versus another. This thoughtful sensory engagement leads to a store of experiences that allow us to bring more intuition to the cooking process, synthesizing what we’ve done before into innovative approaches to creating a dish. Ultimately, cooking offers the opportunity to be immersed in one’s senses and in the moment like no other activity, uniting the inner and outer selves. At these times, cooking transcends drudgery and becomes a means of meditation and even healing.



It is little surprise to us, then, that when U.S. Poet Laureate Charles Simic was asked by the *New York Times Magazine's* Deborah Solomon earlier this year, "What advice would you give to people who are looking to be happy?" his response was "For starters, learn how to cook."

We hope this book makes you happy — literally.

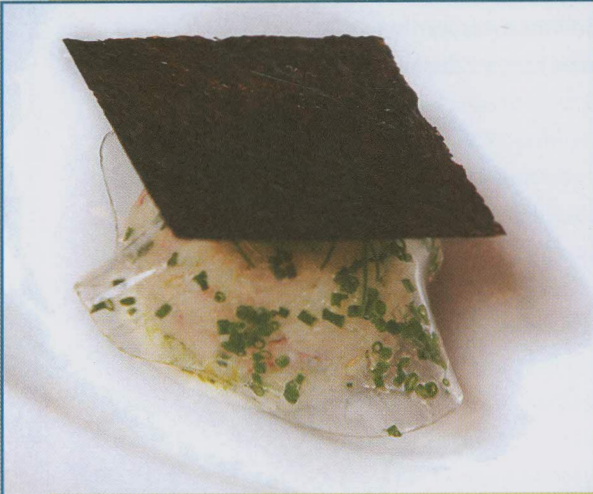
— KAREN PAGE AND ANDREW DORNENBURG

New York City

April 2008

"คำทริบเพื่อการตักษาและอำนองทำนุ"





Chapter





**FLAVOR = TASTE + MOUTHFEEL + AROMA +  
"THE X FACTOR": LEARNING TO RECOGNIZE  
THE LANGUAGE OF FOOD**

*Magical dishes, magical words: A great cook is, when all is said and done, a great poet. . . For was it not a visit from the Muses that inspired the person who first had the idea of marrying rice and chicken, grape and thrush, potatoes and entrecôte, Parmesan and pasta, eggplant and tomato, Chambertin and cockerel, liqueur brandy and woodcock, onion and tripe?*

— MARCEL E. GRANCHER, *CINQUANTE ANS À TABLE* (1953)

**FLAVOR = TASTE + MOUTHFEEL + AROMA + "THE X FACTOR"**

**Taste** = What is perceived by the taste buds

**Mouthfeel** = What is perceived by the rest of the mouth

**Aroma** = What is perceived by the nose

**"The X Factor"** = What is perceived by the other senses — plus the heart, mind, and spirit

Our taste buds can perceive only four basic tastes: sweet, salty, sour, and bitter. The essence of great cooking is to bring these four tastes into balanced harmony to create deliciousness. It's that simple — and that difficult. After all, flavor is a function not only of taste, but also of smell, touch, sight, and sound. Because we're human beings, other nonphysical factors come into play, including our emotions, thoughts, and spirits.

Learning to recognize as well as manipulate both the obvious and subtle components of flavor will make you a much better cook. This book will be your companion in the kitchen whenever you wish to create deliciousness.



Learning to cook like a great chef is within the realm of possibility. However, it is something that is rarely taught; it must be “caught.”

Everyone who cooks — or even merely seasons their food at the table before eating — can benefit from mastering the basic principles of making food taste great. This complex subject is simplified by one thing: while the universe may contain a vast number of ingredients and a virtually infinite number of ingredient combinations, the palate can register only the four basic tastes.

Great food balances these tastes beautifully. A great cook knows how to taste, to discern what is needed, and to make adjustments. Once you learn how to season and how to balance tastes, a whole new world opens up to you in cooking. Of course, several factors conspire against your ever doing so — not the least of which is a culture that sees the publication of thousands of new cookbooks annually featuring recipes that promise to dazzle you and your guests if you follow them to the letter. And yet you’re often left wondering why the results aren’t as delicious as promised. That’s because great cooking is never as simple as merely following a recipe. The best cooking requires a discerning palate to know when a dish needs a little something or other — and what to add or do to elevate its flavor.

## WHAT IS PERCEIVED BY THE MOUTH

### Taste Buds

Sweetness. Saltiness. Sourness. Bitterness. Every delicious bite you’ve ever tasted has been a result of these four tastes coming together on your taste buds. We taste them as individual notes, and in concert. Each taste affects the other. For example, bitterness suppresses sweetness. In addition, different tastes affect us in different ways. Saltiness stimulates the appetite, while sweetness satiates it. Take the time to explore the four basic tastes.

### Sweetness

It takes the greatest quantity of a substance that is sweet (versus salty, sour, or bitter) to register on our taste buds. However, we can appreciate the balance and “roundness” that even otherwise imperceptible sweetness adds to savory dishes. Sweetness can work with bitterness, sourness — even saltiness. Sweetness can also bring out the flavors of other ingredients, from fruits to mint.

### Saltiness

When we banished more than thirty of America’s leading chefs to their own desert islands with only ten ingredients to cook with for the rest of their lives (*Culinary Artistry*, 1996), the number-one ingredient they chose was salt. Salt is nature’s flavor enhancer. It is the single most important taste for making savory food delicious. (Sweetness, by the way, plays the same role in desserts.)

## Sourness

Sourness is second only to salt in savory food and sugar in sweet food in its importance as a flavor enhancer. Sour notes — whether a squeeze of lemon or a drizzle of vinegar — add sparkle and brightness to a dish. Balancing a dish's acidity with its other tastes is critical to the dish's ultimate success.

## Bitterness

Humans are most sensitive to bitterness, and our survival wiring allows us to recognize it in even relatively tiny amounts. Bitterness balances sweetness, and can also play a vital role in cutting richness in a dish. While bitterness is more important to certain people than to others, some chefs see it as an indispensable “cleansing” taste — one that makes you want to take the next bite, and the next.

## Umami (Savoriness)

In addition to the four basic tastes, there is growing evidence of a fifth taste, *umami*, which we first wrote about in 1996 in *Culinary Artistry*. It is often described as the savory or meaty “mouth-filling” taste that is noticeable in such ingredients as anchovies, blue cheese, mushrooms, and green tea, and in such flavorings as monosodium glutamate (MSG), which is the primary component of branded seasonings such as Ac'cent.

## Mouthfeel

In addition to its sense of taste, the mouth has a sense of “touch” and can register other sensations, such as temperature and texture, that all play a role in flavor. These aspects of food, generally characterized as mouthfeel, help to bring food into alignment with our bodies, and bring some of a dish's greatest interest and pleasure. The crunchiness and crispiness of a dish contribute sound as well as textural appeal.

## Temperature

*I always pay attention to temperature. I look at what I feel like eating now. If it is cold and rainy outside, I make sure that soup is on the menu. If it is hot outside, I make sure there are lots of salads on the menu.*

— ANDREW CARMELLINI, A VOCE (NEW YORK CITY)

Temperature is one of the foremost among the other sensations that can be perceived by the mouth. The temperature of our food even affects our perception of its taste; for example, coldness suppresses sweetness. Boston pastry chef Rick Katz, with whom Andrew cooked at Lydia Shire's restaurant Biba, first taught him the lesson of pulling out the ice cream a few minutes before serving so that the slight rise in temperature could maximize its flavor.

A food's temperature can affect both the perception and enjoyment of a dish. A chilled carrot soup on a hot summer day — and hot roasted carrots on a cold winter day — could be said to be “healing” through their ability to bring our bodies into greater alignment with our environment.





### Texture

*I would never serve pike on a base of chowder, because balance and texture are so important when it comes to creating a dish. Is there a rich component, a lean component, a crunchy component, and a cleansing component? Are all the taste sensors activated so that you want to go back for a second bite? Cod works better over a richer preparation like chowder. I would also make sure to choose the right technique for the cod: I would not poach it, because if it is poached it would be silky on silky. If it is seared, it is crunchy on silky — which is more appealing because of the contrast.*

— SHARON HAGE, YORK STREET (DALLAS)

A food's texture is central to its ability to captivate and to please. We value pureed and/or creamy foods (such as soups and mashed potatoes) as “comfort” foods, and crunchiness and crispiness (such as nachos and caramel corn) as “fun” foods. We enjoy texture as it activates our other senses, including touch, sight, and sound.

While babies by necessity eat pureed foods, most adults enjoy a variety of textures, particularly crispiness and crunchiness, which break up the smoothness of texture — or even the simple monotony — of dishes.



## Piquancy

Our mouths can also sense what we often incorrectly refer to as “hotness,” meaning piquancy’s “sharpness” and/or “spiciness” — whether boldly as in chile peppers, or more subtly as in a sprinkle of cayenne pepper. Some people find the experience of these *piccante* (as the Spanish refer to it, or *piccante* as the Italians do) tastes more pleasurable than others.

## Astringency

Our mouths “pucker” to register astringency. This is a drying sensation caused by the tannins in red wine or strong tea, and occasionally in foods such as walnuts, cranberries, and unripe persimmons.

## WHAT IS PERCEIVED BY THE NOSE

### Aroma

Aroma is thought to be responsible for as much as 80 percent or more of flavor. This helps to explain the popularity of aromatic ingredients, from fresh herbs and spices to grated lemon zest. Incorporating aromatic ingredients can enhance the aroma of your dish and, in turn, its flavor.

Some qualities are perceived through both the sense of taste and smell, such as:

### Pungency

Pungency refers to the taste and aroma of such ingredients as horseradish and mustard that are as irritating — albeit often pleasantly — to the nose as they are to the palate.

### Chemesthesis

Chemesthesis refers to other sensations that tickle (e.g., the tingle of carbonated beverages) or play tricks on (e.g., the false perception of “heat” from chile peppers, or “cold” from peppermint) our gustatory senses.

## WHAT IS PERCEIVED BY THE HEART, MIND, AND SPIRIT

### “The X Factor”

When we are present to what we are eating, food has the power to affect our entire selves. We experience food not only through our five physical senses — including our sense of sight, which we ad-

## Heightening Flavor with Dominique and Cindy Duby of Wild Sweets

*We believe that food preparation is 60 percent ingredients and 40 percent technique.*

— DOMINIQUE AND CINDY DUBY, WILD SWEETS  
(VANCOUVER)

Flavor is the combination of the taste you experience on your tongue and the aroma you experience through your nose. We believe that as much as 90 percent of what we perceive as taste is actually aroma. When you eat a pineapple, the flavor really comes through the nose. So, if your pineapple is not ripe, it won't have much aroma. It may taste sweet, but it won't taste like pineapple.

There are two ways to bring flavor to a dish, through aroma or through chemical reaction. We always say that cooking is no different from doing a lab experiment: The minute you add heat to a raw product, you are changing the status of that product. When you use the Maillard reaction — which is what happens when you sear a piece of meat — you are getting a reaction of caramelization from the carbohydrates and amino acids. This chemical reaction creates flavor.

To add aroma to a dish, think of a piece of fish cooked in broth with herbs or lemon. The problem is that the flavor escapes into the air. If you walk into a room and it smells great, that means there is not much flavor left in the dish. The aroma has escaped. So, if you want to add aroma to a dish, the best way is through *sous-vide* cooking [which cooks encased food at long, slow temperatures]. This method traps the aroma into what you are cooking without letting it escape.

The problem is that *sous vide* is not available for home cooks. What a home cook can do is “sealed cooking,” where you take a heavy-duty freezer zip-lock bag, put in what you want to cook with the liquid, then cook it over a steady heat on your stove. Another method that works is putting the bag in a pot with a single-cup water heater that goes to about 140 degrees Fahrenheit and, from time to time, stirring the water. [Note: Care must be taken with this low-temperature method of cooking to avoid food poisoning.]

This is a way to put — and keep — a lot of flavor in whatever you are cooking.





## Compatible Flavors

An essential aspect of great cooking is harnessing compatible flavors — which involves knowing which herbs, spices, and other flavorings best accentuate particular ingredients.

A process of trial and error over centuries resulted in classic cuisines and dishes, some of which feature timeless combinations of beloved flavor pairings — for example, basil with tomatoes, rosemary with lamb, and tarragon with lobster.

However, today it's possible to use scientific techniques to analyze similar molecular structures to come up with new, compatible pairing possibilities, as odd as some might sound — such as jasmine with pork liver, parsley with banana, or white chocolate with caviar.

dress first below — but also emotionally, mentally, and even spiritually.

## The Visual

The visual presentation of a dish can greatly enhance the pleasure we derive from it. Just a few decades ago, it was still possible to taste a dish with the eyes, but only those who'd spent time in world-class kitchens knew the tricks of such artistic plate presentation. Since the advent of *Art Culinaire* and the Web, it's become easier to reproduce a great dish's elaborate form than its exquisite flavor.

How a dish looks can also affect our perception of its flavor in more direct ways; for example, the deeper the color of a berry sorbet, the more berry flavor is perceived. The stronger the connection between a particular food and a particular color, the stronger the flavor impact — such as berries with red, lemon with yellow, and lime with green.

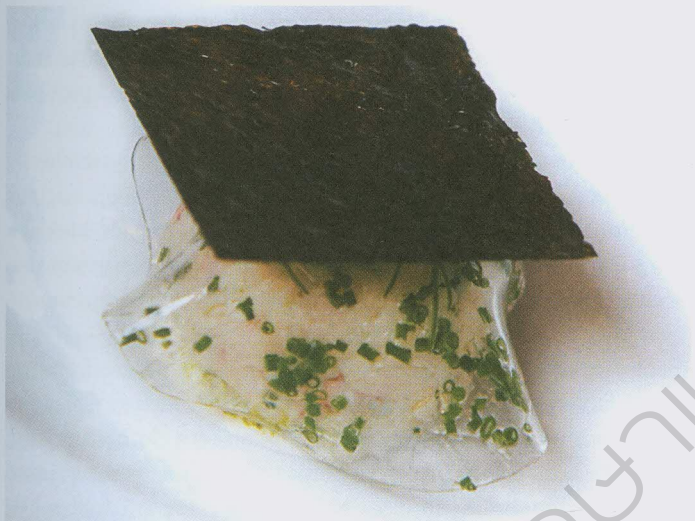
## The Emotional

*I say all the time that [my mother's Spanish potato and egg tortilla] is my favorite because it conveys a point: that sentimental value comes above all else.*

— FERRAN ADRIA, EL BULLI (SPAIN)



We taste with our hearts as much as with our tongues. What else could explain adult preferences for one's mother's dishes over those prepared by a great chef? This also helps to explain the lasting appeal of traditional dishes and cuisines of countries around the globe, which stem from our love for their cultures, their people, and the deeply rooted culinary traditions that have sustained them over centuries.



### The Mental

If we ate only for sustenance, we could probably survive on nutritive pills and water. But we also eat for pleasure. Because we typically eat three times a day, 365 days a year, we enjoy novelty, such as a twist on the traditional construct of a dish. Increasingly, since the 1980s and the advent of “tall” food, chefs have played with the presentation of their ingredients. Since the 1990s, the advent of avant-garde cuisine and so-called molecular gastronomy has seen chefs experiment more and more with both the chemical composition and presentation of dishes as well.

### The Spiritual

The preparation, cooking, and eating of food is a sacrament. Treating it as such has the potential to elevate the quality of our daily lives like nothing else. Several of the world's leading chefs have worked to perfect each aspect of the dining encounter — from the food and drink to the ambiance to the service — to raise the overall experience to a new level imbued not only with pleasure, comfort, and interest, but also with meaning.

## Choosing a Cooking Technique with Michael Anthony of Gramercy Tavern in New York City

When we look at an ingredient, we ask, “How can we maximize the inherent flavor or quality of what this is?” As in any other progressive modern kitchen, there is a fascination with examining all the new techniques we can get our hands on. We have used *sous vide* [i.e., cooking vacuum-packed ingredients at low temperatures for long periods of time], but we are far from letting any technique drive a dish.

Alice Waters described something cooked via *sous vide* as “dead” food. I can understand her opinion because she is all about inflecting that “fresh-cut crunch” feeling into her food. *Sous vide* is all about a long, slow cooking process — and those products calling for that [such as tougher cuts of meat] will be awesome.

Why we choose any specialized piece of equipment for a dish always gets back to good old-fashioned cooking principles: What is the best way of capturing flavors?

That is how choosing a technique fits into my cooking.

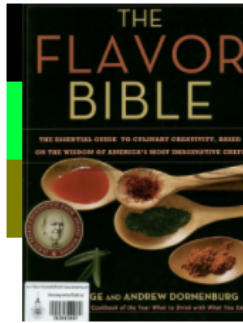
I'm excited to eat in restaurants that are pushing the boundaries of presentation and technique. Yet my personal take on food that is too technically driven is that technique comes first and taste comes second. I feel the meals that hit home are ones where the flavor is there and you are eating a meal in a distinct time and place. I love it when people look back on a meal, and the time of year is what made it special. The ingredients they tasted seemed naturally a part of that moment because that is what is available then.

Sometimes straightforward flavors are the ones people can latch on to, even though the ingredients can be very sophisticated behind the scenes. If, ultimately, the flavor combination is one that is simple and straightforward, with an impressive balance of acidity and bitterness, and you remember it, then you win as a diner. Sometimes the meals that hit home are not the ones that were the most complicated.



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**The flavor bible : the essential guide to culinary creativity, based on the wisdom of America's most imaginative chefs / Karen Page and Andrew Dornenburg ; photographs by Barry Salzman.**

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"สำหรับเพื่อการศึกษาค้นคว้าและอ่านออนไลน์"