

GOOD
COOK
~~BAD
COOK~~

slattery
MEDIA GROUP

visit slatterymedia.com

The Slattery Media Group
1 Albert Street, Richmond
Victoria, Australia, 3121
visit slatterymedia.com

Text copyright © Victoria Heywood, 2012
Illustrations copyright © Bill Wood, 2012
First published by the The Slattery Media Group, 2012

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means without the prior permission of the copyright owner. Inquiries should be made to the publisher.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

Title: Good cook bad cook / Victoria Heywood ; edited by Helen Alexander ; illustrated by Bill Wood.
Author: Heywood, Victoria.
ISBN: 9781921778544 (pbk.)
Subjects: Cooking.
Other Authors/Contributors: Alexwood, Helen. Wood, Bill, 1966-
Dewey Number: 641.5

Group Publisher: Geoff Slattery
Author: Victoria Heywood
Editor: Helen Alexander
Creative Director: Guy Shield
Designer: Kate Slattery
Illustrations: Bill Wood

Printed in China through APOL

DEDICATION

For my son, Jerome,
may he learn to cook well,
and in memory of
my father, Stewart Heywood
(1925-2004), who did.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6	SOUPS	46
20 RULES FOR KITCHEN NOVICES	9	* Gazpacho	48
BREAKFAST	12	* Tomato soup	50
* Scrambled eggs	14	* Minestrone	52
* Hotcakes	16	* Pumpkin soup	54
* Omelette	18	* French onion soup	56
* Hash browns	20	VEGETABLES	58
* Baked beans	22	* Asparagus	60
* Pancakes	24	* Eggplant	62
* Poached eggs	26	* Roast and mashed potatoes	64
* Breakfast bars	28	* Chips	66
* Muffins	30	* Avocado	68
SNACKS	32	* Zucchini	70
* Croque monsieur	34	* Vegetable salad	72
* Croquettes	36	PASTA AND NOODLES	74
* Sandwiches	38	* Homemade pasta	76
* Pizza	40	* Shop-bought pasta	78
* Quiche	42	* Bolognese	80
* Chicken nuggets	44	* Gnocchi	82
		* Macaroni cheese	84

RICE AND GRAINS	86	* Mayonnaise	140
* Risotto	88	* Jam	142
* Couscous	90	* Custard	144
* Tabouli	92	DESSERTS AND BAKING	146
* Quinoa	94	* Shortcrust pastry	148
FISH AND SHELLFISH	96	* Lemon tart	150
* Fish en papillote	98	* Trifle	152
* Salmon	100	* Sponge	154
* Fish pie	102	* Apple pie	156
* Squid	104	* Fruit crumble	158
* Moules marinières	106	* Peach melba	160
* Tempura prawns	108	* Scones	162
MEATS	110	* Berry tart	164
* Steak	112	* Biscuits	166
* Roast chicken	114	* Ice cream	168
* Beef casserole	116	* Brownies	170
* Hamburger	118	* Cupcakes	172
* Sausages	120	* Meringues	174
* Pork stir-fry	122	* Pavlova	176
* Roast pork	124	* Chocolate fudge cake	178
* Roast lamb	126	* Bread	180
SAUCES AND CONDIMENTS	128	DRINKS	182
* Béchamel sauce	130	* Hot chocolate	184
* Hollandaise sauce	132	* Smoothie	186
* Vinaigrette	134	* Lemonade	188
* Pesto	136	* Iced tea	190
* Tapenade	138	* Champagne punch	192

GOOD COOK ★ BAD COOK

INTRODUCTION

This is a book of fundamentals—the dishes that we all love and eat regularly. Cooking isn't rocket science. It's about fine ingredients, treated with respect and an understanding as to what works and why.

The dry risotto. The gluggy pasta. The leaden scones that no amount of cream can save. The roast chicken that's promisingly golden on the outside and running with blood within. The execrable takeaway re-warmed in the microwave. The veggie stir-fry that's cooked to mush.

There's no doubt that the average kitchen today sees more crimes against humanity than the International Court of Justice handles in a year.

And yes, good food may be a first-world problem, but it's an important one. Good food is soul food—bad food leads to crankiness, constipation and spots, and is doubtless the driving force behind today's obesity epidemic. Eat good food, and you'll be sitting around the table grinning contentedly; eat bad food and you'll be looking for some extra carby comfort before you know it.

We live in a privileged society, with great ingredients at our fingertips, running water at the end of a tap, and gas or electricity at the flick of a switch. So why do we accept less than the best? Why do we eat tepid take out while watching gastroporn cooking shows? Why spend a fortune at the butcher's only to butcher the end

result? Hell, if a 15th-century Italian peasant could throw together a perfectly good meal from a bunch of basil, some garlic, parmesan and pasta after a long day toiling in the fields, then surely we can do the same after a day at the office? We need to man up in the kitchen—men and women alike.

Cooking isn't rocket science. It's about fine ingredients, treated with respect and a smidgeon of understanding as to what works and why.

So this book is written for all those who want to cook good food rather than the alternative. It's for those who are starting out in the kitchen, who don't want to poison or embarrass themselves or others. It's for those otherwise competent folk who remain flummoxed by certain dishes while being perfectly capable of acing others. Trust me, it's possible for anyone to cook feather-light scones or deliver up beautifully cooked fish with a sauce that sings.

This book is also for those who want to perfect some classics, and understand how the hell we got here in the first place.

This is a book of fundamentals—the dishes that we all love and eat regularly. You'll find no foams here, or tricky restaurant fare, just good food that will give you a lifetime of happy eating.

This book should be in the backpack of every person leaving their mother's apron strings—and in the Christmas stocking of every kid still living at home and old enough to rustle up their own dinners once in a while.

But first, let's get one thing straight: good food comes from good cooks, and good cooks aren't born—they're made. Even super-chefs like Heston Blumenthal and Nigel Slater and Stephanie Alexander didn't come kicking and screaming from the womb, shouting: "I've a great idea for bacon and egg ice cream!" or "I know how to cook the perfect leg of lamb. With anchovies!" First you need to master the basics, and only then should you be free to experiment.

Far from many cooks spoiling the broth, all it takes is one over-confident kitchen klutz who cooks with good intentions, but no clue. The kind of cook who thinks that sushi is nice, burritos are nice—hey, how about a sushi burrito?! The same thought process is likely responsible for similar monsters such as curried pizza, coriander pesto, banana guacamole, marshmallow coleslaw and other travesties.

And don't even get me started on the perils of meals in cardboard boxes or 'just add water' powdered mixes. Forget fusion food—our world is being taken over by Frankenfood, packed with chemicals, genetically modified ingredients and all sorts of other nasties.

It's time we got back to basics, starting with great ingredients in season, not flown thousands of miles and yanked from the cool room of the supermarket. And the basics of technique, too.

Think about the classics, like bangers and mash, lasagne, roast chicken, chocolate cake, apple pie... In the hands of a cook who knows what they're doing, these trusty dishes always

seem to turn out just right. And the reason why? The cook has made them so often that every little wrinkle in the process has been ironed out.

Sure, occasionally the cook tinkers around the edges a bit—perhaps to suit the needs of an unfamiliar oven, or to account for a sudden change in available ingredients, but essentially the recipe, the process and the whole look and feel of the dish as it's coming together are imprinted into the good cook's DNA. Think of how your grandmother could pull off a perfect Sunday roast. She could probably manage it after half a bottle of sherry. (And probably did, if my family is any indication.)

I grew up in the 70s, so the kinds of dishes my father could turn out without fail included Sunday night curried eggs (béchamel sauce flavoured with curry powder, with the cunning addition of mashed boiled eggs, served on hot buttered toast) and a lethal cocktail called 'Norwegian tiger's milk', which saw many dinner party guests staggering home to bed before dinner was even served. A shame, really, as it often included another of Dad's trusted favourites—Tasmanian scallops lightly pan-fried in lemon, butter, garlic and parsley.

All of these recipes had something in common. They celebrated simple ingredients cooked well, and were designed for a very specific purpose, respectively: 1) comfort food for family, and 2) the joy of entertaining friends. Once Dad was onto a good thing, he stuck to it. He cooked and cooked and cooked and cooked, until he could cook the damn dish in his sleep. I suggest you do the same with the recipes here. Make them part of your DNA, too.

For me, these days, curried eggs don't really cut the mustard. But I have to say that the lemon scallops are still on the menu.

Unlike many recipe books, in this one I've tried to distil all the knowledge you need to make the dish turn out perfectly. You know, the kind of tips and tricks your grandmother picked up at the knee of her grandmother. To broaden my understanding of what works and why, I also immersed myself in some hefty reference tomes: Harold McGee's *On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen*; Michael Ruhlman's *The Elements of Cooking*, and of course, *Larousse Gastronomique*, aptly subtitled 'the world's greatest cookery encyclopaedia'. Mashed together with information from all sorts of other sources, all tested in my kitchen at home, I like to think that this book doesn't just give you recipes for 80 classic dishes, but also clear guidance on how not to stuff them up. In one day alone, I made eight, yes EIGHT, different pavlovas, testing to see what happened when I changed the balance of the ingredients and ignored long-standing kitchen lore. Answer: disaster. There's a reason why you should stick to a good recipe when you find it.

This book is organised into the usual suspects—breakfast, baking, meats, vegetables, and so on—but within this, you'll find lots of useful links. For example, once you've mastered the art of a good béchamel sauce, a squillion other dishes are now at your fingertips—cauliflower cheese, macaroni and cheese and fish pie, to name but a few. The same for basics such as a buttery shortcrust pastry, which can be transformed into the base for pies, both savoury and sweet. Also a speedy hollandaise, which can be lavished over fish, asparagus, eggs, smoked salmon, ham or whatever else takes your fancy. There are also links between techniques—once you've got the hang of whipping egg whites

for a meringue, suddenly pavlova, soufflé, and more are all within your reach. And that perfect custard of yours? Enjoy it as is, or turn it into a trifle or an ice cream.

So with endless permutations and combinations—just some of which I've noted here—this book is the basis for literally hundreds of meals, snacks and other tasty treats. Enjoy.

One final word of warning: yes, it's great to be able to cook good food at home, but there is one side effect you should be aware of: restaurant rage. Next thing you know, you'll be down the pub or at your local Italian ordering a veal parma and you'll find yourself looking at the sauce-slathered slab on your plate thinking: "It's just a frozen, pre-shaped schnitzel, tossed straight from the freezer into the deep-fryer, and covered in commercial sauce. Hell, I can do better than that."

Congratulations. You now know the difference between good food and bad.

Victoria Heywood, October 2012

20 RULES FOR KITCHEN NOVICES

1. Good food starts with good ingredients.

Find a decent butcher, fishmonger and greengrocer—you never know when you'll need them to pin bone a side of salmon, or save you some offaly good bits that aren't generally available. And hunt down a good supply of quality fresh and dried pasta, as well as rice, oils, cheese and spices.

Supermarkets are good for loo paper, but not always great for world-class produce, lovingly selected and prepared by experts who, like some mothers at playgroup, will bend your ear about their offspring's home environment, developmental progress and all-round superiority.

2. Never drive past a farmers' market.

Stallholders actively encourage you to eat as you shop, which is generally frowned upon in supermarkets, plus you never know what you might find in season.

3. Eat seasonally and locally. That's why farmers' markets are so good. You're unlikely to find some Chinese garlic grower has flown halfway around the world to set up shop, but he may well have sent his bulbs as unaccompanied baggage to a shop near you.

It's not just about the air miles—although you should care about those, too—it's also about the amount of time those bulbs might have spent in detention in a warehouse somewhere. Food grown locally is likely to be fresher, less tired and certainly less homesick.

4. Keep your pantry well stocked and you'll always be able to throw together a quick meal. A full-to-bursting cupboard saves time and provides the basis for many good meals.

SCRAMBLED EGGS

You can just imagine the delight of the first hungry person who smashed his eggs on the way back to the cave, decided to cook them anyway, and ended up inventing scrambled eggs. Written references to this dish date back to Roman times, only popping up in English cuisine in the 16th century, where they were also known as buttered or jumbled eggs.

Although today they're considered a 'basic' dish, making scrambled eggs takes practice. And it requires constant attention—you can't walk away and leave them to their own devices.

Make sure the pan is heated and the butter foamy (but not browned) before you add the eggs. Think low and slow—too much heat will cook the eggs too quickly, leaving pockets of goo inside the layers of cooked egg. Likewise, too much vigorous stirring will dry the eggs out and make them powdery. And on no account should you ever cook them so much that they start to brown! What you're looking to create are light, fluffy, golden curds that are soft and creamy—not rubbery or dry.

SERVES 1

Ingredients

2 free-range eggs

1 tablespoon water,
full-cream milk or cream

salt and black pepper

20g butter

buttered toast, to serve

Optional additions include
a handful of chopped fresh herbs,
grated cheese or slivers of ham

Method

1. Crack the eggs into a medium-sized bowl and remove any blood spots or bits of shell. Add the milk or cream (or water for a fluffier result) and use a fork to lightly whisk until just combined. Don't overbeat the eggs. Season to taste.
2. Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Swirl the pan around so the butter coats the base.
3. When the butter is just starting to foam, pour in the egg mix. Let it cook for 30 seconds, then use a wooden spoon to stir gently and continuously until the egg mixture starts forming creamy curds. Push the formed curds towards the centre and tilt the pan so the runny bits flow to the edge. Break apart any large pieces as they form with your spoon—you want fluffy little pillows, not great big beanbags.
4. When the eggs have reached the point where they show just a tiny bit of moisture on the surface (around 2-3 minutes), add any additional ingredients, such as cheese or herbs, and remove from the heat. Stir once more and serve on slices of buttered toast.

5. When eaten for breakfast, scrambled eggs are often dished up alongside hash browns, bacon or sausages. You can also spice them up with any number of sauces—tomato, HP, chilli or Worcestershire.

TIPS FOR PERFECTION

- * Use a spatula or wooden spoon. A whisk will break up the eggs too much and powdery little yellow crumbs will be created.
- * The lower the heat and the more constant the movement, the creamier the end product. Stir the mix just like you would a soup, making sure to keep all the curds moving so they don't stick to the bottom or sides of the pan and brown.

- * The eggs should be slightly undercooked when you remove them from the heat. The residual heat will continue to cook them even as you slide them onto the buttered toast.



BAD SCRAMBLED EGGS

It's a truth universally acknowledged that on any long-haul flight, you'll be served scrambled eggs during at least one leg of the trip. And no matter what airline you fly, the eggy offering is always the same—rubbery but powdery at the same time, and somehow tasting of stale farts. You can achieve much the same result at home by using powdered eggs, adding water and nuking them in the microwave, but I seriously wouldn't advise it. Even if you use real eggs—the kind that come in a shell and not from a packet—and make sure to stop the machine and stir every few seconds, you'll still end up with rubber.

Going to the other foodie extreme, I also wouldn't bother with the classical technique for scrambled eggs, which involves slow cooking in a double boiler and an aching amount of slow whisking. Who has the time? A well-buttered saucepan and some steady wrist action will deliver much the same results.

