

Cooking, inspired

Local chefs dish on their favorite culinary reads

Talented chefs find ideas in their favorite cookbooks that have inspired recipe revisions and flavor fusions at their restaurants. From family recipes to Irma S. Rombauer's time-honored culinary bible, inspiration flows abundantly from the pages of these chefs' recommended cooking manuals. Although amateurs might not be able to riff on the recipes with the expertise of the pros, everyone can learn a thing or two from these palatable reads. • LAUREN STEELE



JINA YOO
JINA YOO'S ASIAN BISTRO
2200 Forum Blvd., #108
446-5462

Chef recommends: *Asian Flavors of Jean-Georges* by Jean-Georges Vongerichten

After leaving Indiana University Bloomington a semester shy of earning her master's degree in music, Jina Yoo's career shifted from pianist to cook. But she still considers herself an artist and creator. "Now, instead of music, I compose food," she says. The recipes in *Asian Flavors of Jean-Georges* reflect Yoo's belief that the different textures, spices, colors and presentations of dishes are the melodies and harmonies of the food. "This book is my favorite because you read the recipes, and you can just imagine the tastes." Yoo says that with a little imagination, she is able to whip up daily soup specials and secret sauces, including her popular peanut sauce as the melodious addition to menu items such as the classic pad thai.



JOSHUA SMITH
LES BOURGEOIS
12847 W. Highway BB (Rochester)
698-2300

Chef recommends: *The Art of Simple Food* by Alice Waters

After working in restaurants that specialize in Italian, Cajun and Spanish-Latin cuisines, Joshua Smith found one unifying food factor: "It all depends on the food being fresh and local." Stressing that "ingredients are No. 1," he praises *The Art of Simple Food* for promoting the use of good ingredients and treating them right. "Food is impressive on its own," he says. Les Bourgeois' Gorgonzola cheesecake, which is topped with seasonal pesto and tomato sauce, and slow-cooked rabbit are a testament to the impression simple food can have. If you aren't sure which wine to pair with your meal and don't want to ruin a dish's flavor, he recommends drinking water. "At the end of the day, just drink what you like."



MIKE ODETTE
SYCAMORE
800 E. Broadway
874-8090

Chef recommends: *The Joy of Cooking* by Irma S. Rombauer

With no formal training and only restaurant business savvy under his apron, Mike Odette opened Sycamore in 2005. Since then, he's grown as a chef with Columbia's food culture. But his treatment of classically rooted ingredients has remained constant. Although Sycamore's menu changes seasonally, dishes such as the vanilla bean crème brûlée and brandade, a salt cod and potato fritters, are the results of fixed formulas. He learned from *The Joy of Cooking*, which he says is "part of the canon" of household-name cookbooks. "It is part of a rich, storied culinary tradition that reflects the regimented French style of cooking where everything is done a certain way," he says. "It has everything you can think of."



JEREMY BOWLES
ROOM 38
38 N. Eighth St.
449-3838

Chef recommends: his family's personal cookbook

Growing up in Rolla, Jeremy Bowles watched his grandparents can their garden veggies and milk their cows for breakfast cereal milk. At a young age, he learned to appreciate down-home cooking. "Diets are trendy, but comfort foods are always popular," he says. "You grow up with it, and when you eat it, you remember your childhood." For Bowles, his grandmother's coconut cream pie is his cozy-cuisine favorite. Occasionally, he calls his mom and aunts for tips on tweaking a traditional dish. The flavors of his family's recipes are "true," with basic ingredients and nothing too exotic. These traits have translated to Bowles' menu at Room 38, where comfort foods such as lobster mac 'n' cheese or gourmet funnel cake are given an unexpected and refined twist.

READ IT, AND EAT

Jina Yoo's chicken fried rice

Servings: 4

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 pound chicken breast, chopped
4 tablespoons peanut oil
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
2 tablespoons minced garlic
1/2 tablespoon minced ginger
5 cups cooked short-grain rice
1/4 cup carrots, roughly chopped
1/4 cup baby corn, roughly

chopped
1/4 cup water chestnuts, roughly chopped
1/4 cup red bell pepper, roughly chopped
1/4 cup green onion, chopped
2 tablespoons soy sauce
2 tablespoons oyster sauce
1 tablespoon sugar
2 teaspoons black pepper
3 tablespoons cooking wine

INSTRUCTIONS:

Chop all the vegetables, ginger and garlic. In a medium bowl, combine chopped chicken breast, 1 tablespoon garlic, 1 tablespoon ginger and 3 tablespoons cooking wine. Add salt and pepper to taste. Marinate for 10 minutes then cook the chicken in a skillet with a little hot oil. In a small bowl, combine soy sauce, oyster sauce, sugar and black pepper. Set aside. Heat a wok over high heat. Add oil and butter, and swirl to coat the pan. Quickly

sauté the garlic, ginger and green onion. Add the cooked rice, stir-fry it, and make sure all the rice is separated. Add the oyster and soy sauces, the remaining vegetables and cooked chicken to the rice. Gently incorporate them. At the end of cooking, while the wok is still hot, add 1 tablespoon soy sauce to the rim of the wok. Make sure not to pour the soy sauce directly on the rice. Serve immediately in a bowl.