

STAR OF FOOD NETWORK'S *DINNER: IMPOSSIBLE*

ROBERT IRVINE

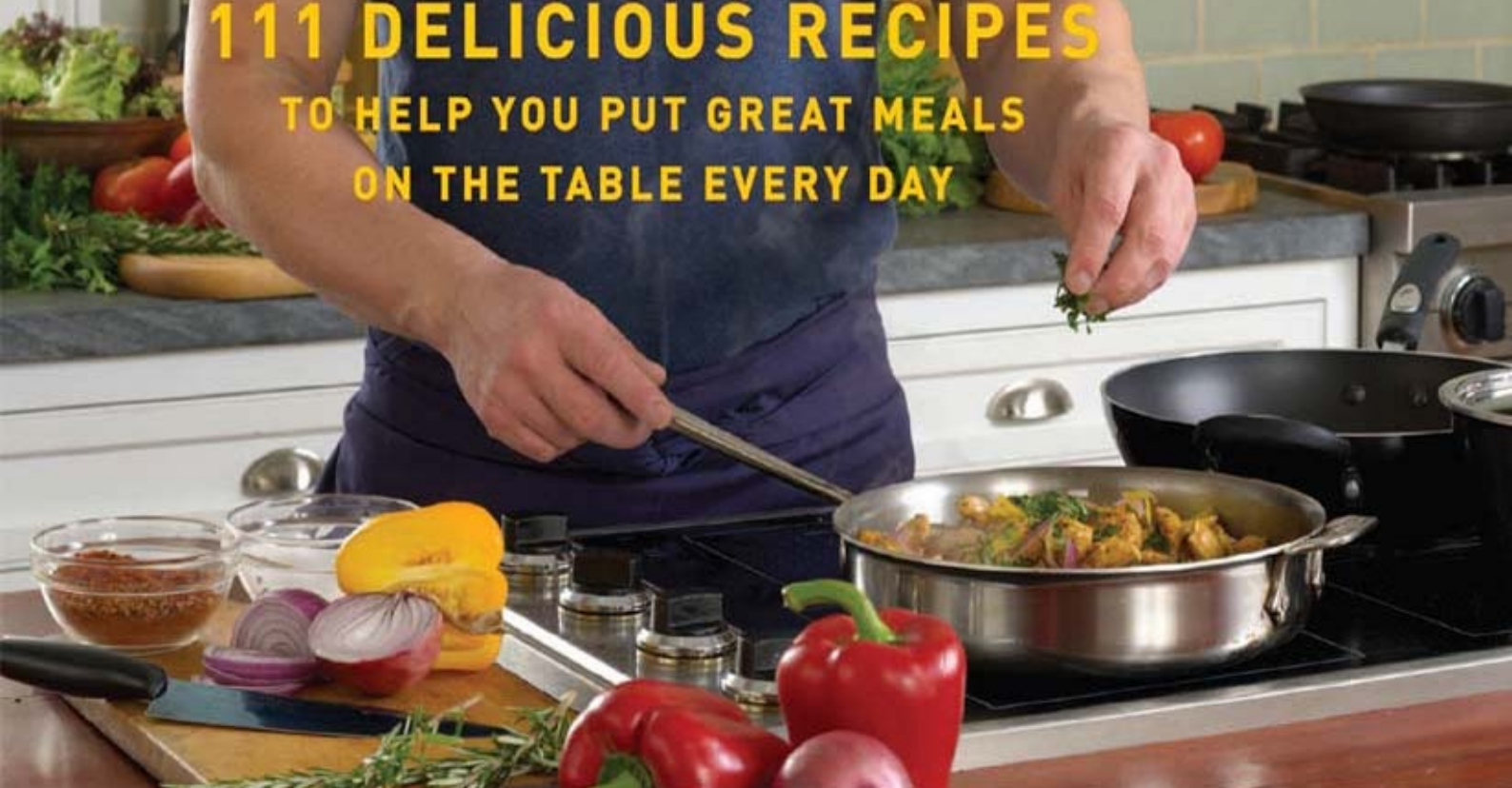
WITH BRIAN O'REILLY



IMPOSSIBLE TO EASY

111 DELICIOUS RECIPES

**TO HELP YOU PUT GREAT MEALS
ON THE TABLE EVERY DAY**



Impossible to Easy

111 Delicious Recipes to Help You Put Great Meals on the Table Every Day

Robert Irvine with Brian O'Reilly

 HarperCollins e-books

Contents

[Introduction](#)

1. Mise en Place: In the Beginning...

[Retro Caesar Salad \(with Pasteurized Eggs\)](#)

[Veal Milanese with Warm Fingerling Potato Salad](#)

[Champagne Peach and Mint Soup](#)

[Champagne Brie Fondue](#)

[Salad of Tender Greens with Mascarpone-Chive Dumplings and Candied Walnuts with Champagne Vinaigrette](#)

[Duck Confit with Three-Bean Cassoulet](#)

[Peanut Butter and Jelly Donut Sandwiches](#)

2. Flavor Is the Key

[Veal Saltimbocca](#)

[Good Tidings Salad with Balsamic Thyme Vinaigrette](#)

[Sea Scallop Sandwiches in a Crisp Potato Crust with Citrus Jus](#)

[Everybody Loves Scalloped Potatoes](#)

[Mesquite Beef Medallions with Tomato Demi-glace over Cheddar Grits](#)

[Lamb Tenderloin over Rice with Sauce Robért](#)

[Salad of Seasonal Greens and Fresh Herbs with Orange-Shallot Vinaigrette](#)

[Endive with Granny Smith Apples, Smoked Bacon, and Creamy Cheddar Dressing](#)

[Asparagus “Benedict” with Hollandaise](#)

[Savory Shrimp and Celery Cream Tart with Lime Aioli](#)

[Boneless Buttermilk-Marinated Fried Chicken](#)

[Asiago-Stuffed Chicken Cacciatore](#)

3. For Starters

[Artichoke Hearts Stuffed with Crab Salad](#)

[Pommes Frites with Chipotle Aioli](#)

[Seared Tuna with Hummus on Crostini](#)

[Welsh Rarebit](#)

[Lobster Brie Quesadilla](#)
[Cheese Fritters with Sauce Tomate](#)
[Island-Style Bay Scallops Ceviche](#)
[Walnut Wontons with Goat Cheese over Apples](#)
[Swedish Meatballs in a Bag](#)

[4. What Is Life Without Soups, Sauces, and Stews?](#)

[Photographic Insert](#)
[Cauliflower Soup with Maine Lobster and Herb-Lemon Oil](#)
[Fresh Pea Soup](#)
[Lime-Cured Shrimp and Roasted Corn Chowder](#)
[Roasted Elephant Garlic Soup with Warm “Salad” of Fennel and Cumin-Scented Eggplant Drizzled with Fennel Emulsion](#)
[Black Bean and Mocha Chocolate Soup](#)
[Roasted Parsnip and Vanilla Chocolate Soup](#)
[Shrimp and Melon Gazpacho](#)
[Saffron Mussel Soup](#)
[Unbeatable Bouillabaisse](#)
[Veal Blanquette](#)
[Beef Carbonnade](#)
[Salmon Fillets over Whipped Potatoes with White Wine Sauce](#)
[Pork Chops with Asian Diable Sauce, Parsnip Puree, and Potato Galettes](#)
[Basic Beurre Blanc Sauce](#)
[Mahimahi with Orange Beurre Blanc Sauce](#)
[Béchamel Sauce](#)
[Velouté Sauce](#)
[Braised Drumsticks with Potato Gnocchi and White Onion Sauce](#)
[Mornay Sauce](#)
[Broccoli with Mornay Sauce](#)

[5. The Importance of Being Protein: Meats and Poultry](#)

[Veal Chops with Honey-Roasted Figs, Caramelized Onion—Potato Puree, and Port Wine Sauce](#)
[Veal Scaloppine and Lemon Confit over Warm Salade Niçoise with Potato Puree](#)
[Grilled Skirt Steak with Roast Corn Haricot Salad](#)
[Chicken Marsala with Garlic-Scented Red Bliss Potato Salad](#)

[Citrus-Braised Chicken Breast with Sweet Roasted Garlic and Savory Artichoke Tart](#)
[Pork Medallions with Goat Cheese and Apple Cinnamon Raisin Compote](#)
[Sun-dried Tomato Pesto—Crusted Chicken Breast over Creamy Polenta with Cave-Aged Cheddar and Pineapple-Mango Demi-glace](#)
[Roasted Cornish Game Hen with Sweet Potato Gnocchi](#)
[Shredded Roast Beef au Jus over Crostini with Horseradish Cream](#)
[Porcini-Dusted Pork Chops with Cremini Mushrooms and Golden Raisins over Horseradish-Scented Potatoes](#)
[Garlic and Herb Pesto—Crusted Lamb Chops](#)
[Roasted Chicken Thighs with Black Cherry Chutney and Sweet Potato Cakes](#)
[Thyme-Roasted Pork Chops with White Wine Reduction, Crisp BBQ Wontons, and Roasted Root Vegetables](#)
[Blue Cheese Filet Mignon with Turnips, Parsnips, and Potatoes Anna](#)
[Lamb Racks with Peach-Mint Polenta and Rosemary Reduction](#)
[Venison Potatoes Brandade](#)

6. Bounty of the Sea: Fish and Shellfish

[Wasabi Honey-Crusted Black Cod and Green Apple—Red Cabbage Slaw with Curry Oil](#)
[Citrus-Braised Lobster Tails over Savory Corn “Cake”](#)
[Crispy Crab and Smoked Salmon Cakes with Baby Arugula and Mango Aioli](#)
[Tuna with Portobello Mushrooms and Ruby Port Reduction over Citrus Rice](#)
[Herb-Steamed Halibut Fillet with Rock Shrimp Sauce, Braised Greens, Plum Tomatoes, and Chive Essence](#)
[Ocean Perch over Herbed Couscous with Baby Bok Choy and Lemon Horseradish Sauce](#)
[Pan-Seared Salmon and Lemon Confit over Sage Ratatouille](#)
[Thyme-Roasted Sea Bass with Shrimp Fritters, Sweet Corn, and Roasted Garlic Essence](#)
[Seared Sea Scallops with Shelling Bean Salad](#)
[Sea Scallops over Leeks with Mango Curry Chocolate Sauce](#)
[Pan-Seared Scallops with Saffron Broth and Tomato Relish](#)
[Olive and Sun-dried Tomato—Stuffed Black Bass over Braised Potatoes with Tomato Broth](#)
[Lobster Napa Cabbage Wraps](#)

7. Pasta and Rice and Everything Nice

[Smoked Salmon Pillows with Black Beans and Yogurt Sauce](#)

[Linguine Serrano with Tequila, Red, Green, and Yellow Bell Peppers, and Sautéed Shrimp](#)

[Porcini Mushrooms with Potato Gnocchi, Truffle Olive Oil, and Mushroom Sauce](#)

[Chicken and Shrimp Jambalaya](#)

[Spaghetti and Smoked Salmon Carbonara with Caramelized Lemon](#)

[Chicken Stroganoff with Fried Heirloom Tomatoes](#)

8. Finish Your Vegetables (and Fruit, Too!)

[Cauliflower Huevos Salad](#)

[Brussels Sprouts with Dijon Mustard Sauce](#)

[Ginger Vichy Carrots](#)

[Sour Cream Mashed Potatoes with Tomato Caper Chutney](#)

[Ragout of Brussels Sprouts, Roasted Shallots, Navy Beans, and Tiny Carrots](#)

[Braised Asian Pear with Roquefort and Sweet Port Wine Dressing](#)

[Allium Tossed Salad](#)

[Louisiana Caviar](#)

[Sprouts, Squash, and 'Shrooms with White Wine and Hoisin Sauce](#)

[Pineapple and Artichoke Pasta with Pine Nuts](#)

9. "I'm Not a Baker, But...": Baking Savory Meals

[Simple Salmon Wellington](#)

[Chicken Pot Pie](#)

[Sweet and Savory Crepes](#)

[Windy City Stovetop Pizza](#)

[Curry Brandade Pizza](#)

[Zucchini and Red Onion Quiche](#)

[Cornish Pasties](#)

10. Never Skip Dessert!

[Caramel Bananas with Chocolate Espresso](#)

[Layered Tropical Fruits with Chamomile Frozen Yogurt](#)

[Almond Rochers](#)

[Brioche Figgy Pudding with Eggnog Ice Cream](#)

[Pecan Bourbon Pralines](#)

[Chocolate Friands](#)

[Cranberry Clafoutis](#)

[Lemon Cream Tartes](#)

[Zucchini and Orange Marmalade Tea Cakes](#)

[Candy Cane Shortbread in a Bento Christmas Box](#)

[Nut Bread Pudding with Date Compote and Cardamom Ice Cream](#)

[Coda](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Searchable Terms](#)

[About the Authors](#)

[Other Books by Robert Irvine with Brian O'Reilly](#)

[Credits](#)

[Copyright](#)

[About the Publisher](#)



INTRODUCTION

I've always thought of myself as a student of culinary theory. I started collecting secondhand cookbooks and interpreting and analyzing the photographs contained therein from about the age of eleven, devising my own approaches (though sometimes only in my imagination) for preparing and presenting the dishes they depicted. I've always felt that cooking is largely about creativity and inspiration, not just talented mimicry of other cooks' recipes and favorite tricks of the trade. Whenever I managed any opportunity to cook for people in my youth, whether at sleepaway camp, at school, onboard a school ship, or at home for my family and neighbors, I inevitably added personal touches of my own to old standards, kept or eliminated elements according to my personal preferences, experimented by recombining ingredients and preparations in ways that excited me and that I thought would excite the taste buds of my dining audience (or victims, depending on the success or failure of my latest and greatest innovations).

I've never been attracted to the esoteric in cooking for its own sake. The majority of my preferred methodologies are tried and true. My goal has always been to cajole the most flavor that can possibly be achieved out of my chosen ingredients. I've studied classical French technique. I understand the importance of ambient temperature when creating a terrine, I know how emulsification works in a wide variety of circumstances, and I can fillet a fish and break down a chicken in no time flat. My soufflés rise, my sauces don't break and, on a good day, I can smell a perfect sear or a tainted stock from fifty feet away.

I graduated with honors from the Culinary School of Hard Knocks. My early professional instruction came at the hands of hundreds, if not thousands, of hungry sailors in Her Majesty's Royal Navy at every mealtime. They worked hard, played hard, and came to the table hungry, wanting to eat as much good food as they could get their hands on. They were tough. Yet I've seldom, if ever, run across an audience more appreciative of the special touches that I learned to bring to some of the typical shipboard fare, whether it be a sprinkling of fresh herbs, a surprisingly tender and flavorful cut of meat, or a dessert that might have unexpectedly reminded them of home. They could be hard to handle when disappointed but purred like kittens when they were well fed. They taught me many valuable lessons, the most important of which is what it takes to get a good hot meal on the table in the real world.

I've traveled extensively and have cooked and eaten a swath through miles and miles of ships' messes, captain's tables on cruise ships, VIP and state dinners in the capitals of the world; in hotels, both modest and fine, large and small; in taverns, restaurants, pubs, and bars of every stripe and description. As I cook and as I sample, I try to pay attention, both to the bad and the good on the plates in front of me.

My experience as the crazed, overstressed, somewhat tyrannical (but lovable!) star

of *Dinner: Impossible* has broadened my portfolio even more. Now I know that when you're cooking in an Ice Hotel and you cut into a potato when the temperature around you is eleven degrees Fahrenheit, its high moisture content causes ice crystals to form at the point of the cut, at which point it's best to place it in water in a refrigerator to keep warm. I now have at least half a dozen recipes at my fingertips for venison appetizers, including venison Oscar, venison curry meatballs, venison hot dogs, and venison-stuffed shrimp, and they all serve four thousand. I've learned that the proper application of liquid nitrogen to pureed mango will cause it to look and behave like Cheddar cheese. I know that fresh hogs' ears and trotters need a bit longer than three hours when braised in an iron pot in a blazing hot fireplace before they are perfectly al dente. I can tell you with perfect confidence that frogs' legs are delicious stewed with a little white wine on a cattle range over an open fire, that golf club shafts (with the heads neatly knocked off) make a terrific rotisserie turning device when grilling whole beef tenderloins, that Elvis ate fried peanut butter and banana sandwiches only *once* in a great while (gospel according to Priscilla), and that I will probably never completely and perfectly understand what children like to eat for their dinners.

I know these things because I am a chef. My job demands that I gather information, constantly experiment with cooking methods, preparations, and presentations, and endlessly obsess over the detail of every plate I serve. It's not for everybody.

But *everybody* has to eat, and most everybody either needs to, likes to, or wishes they could cook.

So, cook!

It's not hard to learn the mostly simple skills that can make you a good cook, even if you start without much knowledge at all. You can learn how to make a roux, and from there, how to make great soups, sauces, and stews. You can learn knife skills: how to julienne (cut meat or vegetables into thin strips), chiffonade (cut herbs and leafy vegetables into thin strips), or brunoise (cut vegetables into tiny bits—the French have a different word for everything). Learn the difference between a simmer and a rolling boil, and you can perfect your approach both toward poaching an egg and cooking al dente pasta. Learn how to take whisk in hand and move it briskly in a clockwise motion (come on, how hard can it be?), and you too can make hollandaise and meringue. Then you're already more than halfway to eggs Benedict and lemon meringue pie. And if you're already handy in the kitchen, you know how satisfying it is to broaden your outlook and try new techniques, new flavor combinations, and new recipes.

Learn when to be patient and when to be active in the kitchen:

Patient: Wait an extra minute or two when putting a sear on a piece of fish or meat, especially a nice piece of meat. Most cooks, even practiced ones, try to move the food too soon and break the sear before the surface of the protein has perfectly caramelized. Wait...for...it.

Active: Whether you're working on stiffening peaks in a whipped cream or emulsifying that hollandaise, whisk with authority. Let that mixture know you mean business, and serve no meringue until it stands up and salutes you back.

In cooking, easy is a state of mind. It may seem easy for anybody to open a boxed, prefabricated mac-and-cheese product and mechanically follow the instructions. They'll end up with something that resembles macaroni and cheese in a fairly short