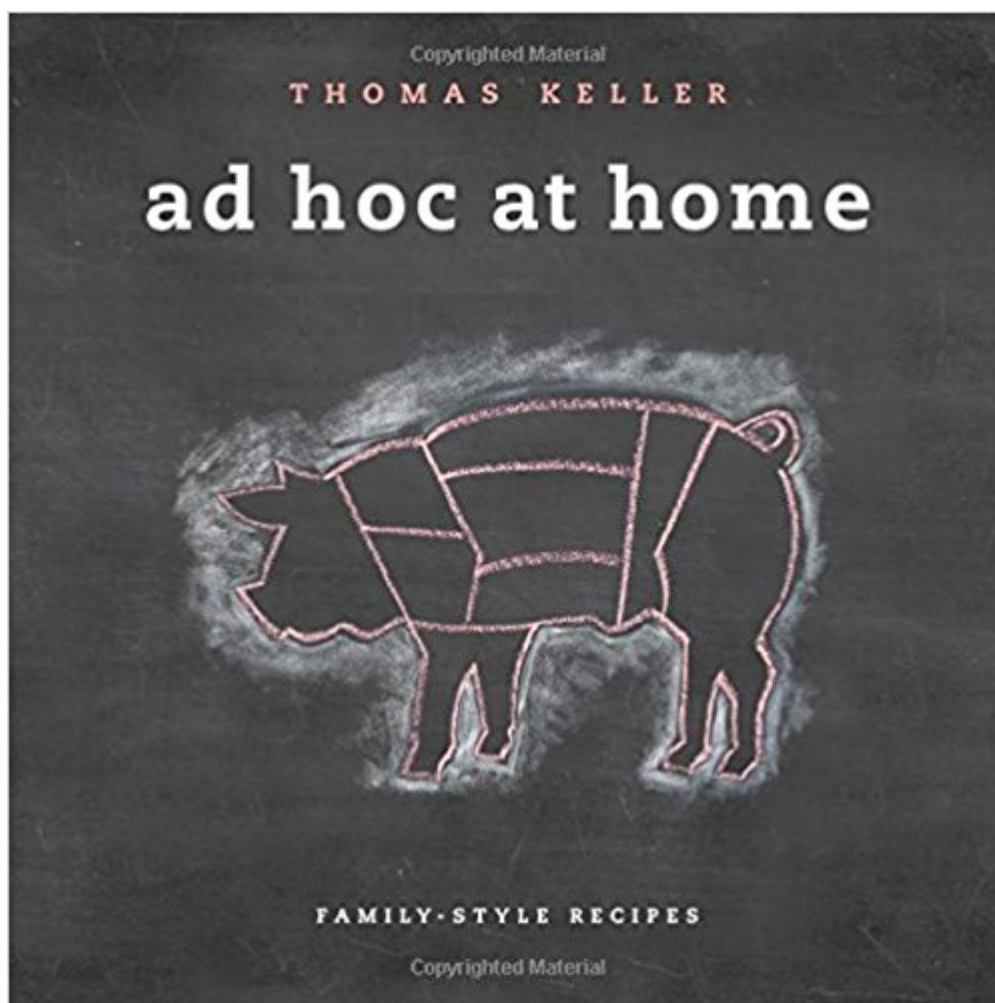


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Ad Hoc At Home (The Thomas Keller Library)



Synopsis

Thomas Keller shares family-style recipes that you can make any or every day. In the book every home cook has been waiting for, the revered Thomas Keller turns his imagination to the American comfort foods closest to his heart—flaky biscuits, chicken pot pies, New England clam bakes, and cherry pies so delicious and redolent of childhood that they give Proust's madeleines a run for their money. Keller, whose restaurants The French Laundry in Yountville, California, and Per Se in New York have revolutionized American haute cuisine, is equally adept at turning out simpler fare. In *Ad Hoc at Home*—a cookbook inspired by the menu of his casual restaurant Ad Hoc in Yountville—he showcases more than 200 recipes for family-style meals. This is Keller at his most playful, serving up such truck-stop classics as Potato Hash with Bacon and Melted Onions and grilled-cheese sandwiches, and heartier fare including beef Stroganoff and roasted spring leg of lamb. In fun, full-color photographs, the great chef gives step-by-step lessons in kitchen basics—here is Keller teaching how to perfectly shape a basic hamburger, truss a chicken, or dress a salad. Best of all, where Keller's previous best-selling cookbooks were for the ambitious advanced cook, *Ad Hoc at Home* is filled with quicker and easier recipes that will be embraced by both kitchen novices and more experienced cooks who want the ultimate recipes for American comfort-food classics.

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Customer Reviews

Best Books of the Month, November 2009: You don't often see the name Thomas Keller mixed with words like "accessible" or "home cook," but with *Ad Hoc at Home*, the award-winning chef presents a collection of recipes destined for the center of the table at casual family gatherings. Don't throw away your whole notion of "quick and easy," though, as this is still a casual cookbook filtered through the genius mind of the man behind *The French Laundry Cookbook*, but the sense of whimsy and the pure joy of Keller doing his version of comfort food proves irresistible. The inspiration for his restaurant *Ad Hoc* was the simple family meals created and served by the staff at his restaurants. As he says in the introduction, "here is food meant to be served from big bowls and platters passed hand to hand at the table." And with dishes like Buttermilk Fried Chicken and Pineapple Upside-Down Cake, who's going to argue with that? --Brad Thomas Parsons

From *Ad Hoc at Home*: Buttermilk Fried Chicken If there's a better fried chicken, I haven't tasted it. First, and critically, the chicken is brined for 12 hours in a herb-lemon brine, which seasons the meat and helps it stay juicy. The flour is seasoned with garlic and onion powders, paprika, cayenne, salt, and pepper. The chicken is dredged in the seasoned flour, dipped in buttermilk, and then dredged again in the flour. The crust becomes almost feathered and is very crisp. Fried chicken is a great American tradition that's fallen out of favor. A taste of this, and you will want it back in your weekly routine. --Thomas Keller

Ingredients (Serves 4-6) Two 2 1/2- to 3-pound chickens (see Note on Chicken Size) Chicken Brine (recipe follows), cold For Dredging and Frying Peanut or canola oil for deep-frying 1 quart buttermilk Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Coating 6 cups all-purpose flour 1/4 cup garlic powder 1/4 cup onion powder 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon paprika 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon cayenne 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon kosher salt 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper Ground fleur de sel or fine sea salt Rosemary and thyme sprigs for garnish

Directions Cut each chicken into 10 pieces: 2 legs, 2 thighs, 4 breast quarters, and 2 wings. Pour the brine into a container large enough to hold the chicken pieces, add in the chicken, and refrigerate for 12 hours (no longer, or the chicken may become too salty). Remove the chicken from the brine (discard the brine) and rinse under cold water, removing any herbs or spices sticking to the skin. Pat dry with paper towels, or let air-dry. Let rest at room temperature for 1-1/2 hours, or until it comes to room temperature. If you have two large pots (about 6 inches deep) and a lot of oil, you can cook the dark and white meat at the same time; if not, cook the dark meat first, then turn up the heat and cook the white meat. No matter what size pot you have, the oil should not come more than one-third of the way up the sides of the pot. Fill the pot with at least 2 inches of peanut oil and heat to 320° F. Set a cooling rack over a baking sheet. Line a second baking sheet with parchment paper. Meanwhile, combine all the coating ingredients in a large bowl.

Transfer half the coating to a second large bowl. Pour the buttermilk into a third bowl and season with salt and pepper. Set up a dipping station: the chicken pieces, one bowl of coating, the bowl of buttermilk, the second bowl of coating, and the parchment-lined baking sheet. Just before frying, dip the chicken thighs into the first bowl of coating, turning to coat and patting off the excess; dip them into the buttermilk, allowing the excess to run back into the bowl; then dip them into the second bowl of coating. Transfer to the parchment-lined pan. Carefully lower the thighs into the hot oil. Adjust the heat as necessary to return the oil to the proper temperature. Fry for 2 minutes, then carefully move the chicken pieces around in the oil and continue to fry, monitoring the oil temperature and turning the pieces as necessary for even cooking, for 11 to 12 minutes, until the chicken is a deep golden brown, cooked through, and very crisp. Meanwhile, coat the chicken drumsticks and transfer to the parchment-lined baking sheet. Transfer the cooked thighs to the cooling rack skin-side-up and let rest while you fry the remaining chicken. (Putting the pieces skin-side-up will allow excess fat to drain, whereas leaving them skin-side-down could trap some of the fat.) Make sure that the oil is at the correct temperature, and cook the chicken drumsticks. When the drumsticks are done, lean them meat-side-up against the thighs to drain, then sprinkle the chicken with fine sea salt. Turn up the heat and heat the oil to 340° F. Meanwhile, coat the chicken breasts and wings. Carefully lower the chicken breasts into the hot oil and fry for 7 minutes, or until golden brown, cooked through, and crisp. Transfer to the rack, sprinkle with salt, and turn skin side up. Cook the wings for 6 minutes, or until golden brown and cooked through. Transfer the wings to the rack and turn off the heat. Arrange the chicken on a serving platter. Add the herb sprigs to the oil (which will still be hot) and let them cook and crisp for a few seconds, then arrange them over the chicken. Note on Chicken Size: You may need to go to a farmers' market to get these small chickens. Grocery store chickens often run 3 to 4 pounds. They can, of course, be used in this recipe but if chickens in the 2-1/2- to 3-pound range are available to you, they're worth seeking out. They're a little easier to cook properly at the temperatures we recommend here and, most important, pieces this size result in the optimal meat-to-crust proportion, which is such an important part of the pleasure of fried chicken. Note: We let the chicken rest for 7 to 10 minutes after it comes out of the fryer so that it has a chance to cool down. If the chicken has rested for longer than 10 minutes, put the tray of chicken in a 400° F oven for a minute or two to ensure that the crust is crisp and the chicken is hot.

Chicken Brine Makes 2 gallons
5 lemons, halved
24 bay leaves
1 bunch (4 ounces) flat-leaf parsley
1 bunch (1 ounce) thyme
1/2 cup clover honey
1 head garlic, halved through the equator
3/4 cup black peppercorns
2 cups (10 ounces) kosher salt, preferably Diamond Crystal
2 gallons water

The key ingredient here is the lemon, which goes wonderfully with chicken, as do the herbs: bay

leaf, parsley, and thyme. This amount of brine will be enough for 10 pounds. Combine all the ingredients in a large pot, cover, and bring to a boil. Boil for 1 minute, stirring to dissolve the salt. Remove from the heat and cool completely, then chill before using. The brine can be refrigerated for up to 3 days.

Starred Review. Keller, one of America's most acclaimed chefs (The French Laundry; Bouchon), shifts his focus from fine dining to family-style meals for the home cook in this accessible and dazzlingly beautiful book based on the fare served at his Ad Hoc restaurant, in Napa, Calif. He does not disappoint, providing a thorough primer on the foundations of cooking, offering clear and easy-to-follow instructions on techniques such as butchering and trussing chickens and tying a pork loin. He also includes a section on becoming a better cook, which helps fine-tune the cook and instructs on using salt properly, learning to make one really good soup and getting organized. Throughout are helpful sidebars that clarify potentially murky subjects, including brining fish and meat, salad basics and using fats. Dishes such as braised beef short ribs, buttermilk fried chicken, and fig-stuffed roast pork loin highlight a vast array of offerings that range from crab cakes to shortbread cookies. This collection is what legions of Keller fans have been waiting for, a book that allows them to replicate the merest glimmer of his culinary genius in their own homes. (Nov.)

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Thomas Keller's books have long been on my shelves. But when it comes to cooking a dinner for friends, I rarely pull out the French Laundry or Bouchon cookbooks. I grab Ad Hoc. The recipes here are much more designed for cooking at home (versus a restaurant) and so are easier to cook and better to enjoy. But this is more than a collection of recipes. Keller includes some food philosophy and ways to get you thinking about how you cook. Some of the more complex recipes include detailed step-by-step photos, while some have no photos at all. There is everything from fried chicken and prime rib, to buttered farrow and leek bread pudding. I've cooked many recipes from this book and have always been pleased. They are unique without being strange and always manageable for skilled or ambitious cooks.

After eating at Ad Hoc, I couldn't wait to buy this book. It's beautiful with lovely sentiment and bright, colorful pictures, and many good tips. In my opinion, the recipes are time intensive and a bit daunting to tackle. I hope to make a recipe for a holiday or special occasion when I'm more likely to spend the time.

Keller's Ad Hoc at Home is a great cookbook for those wanting to step into the pool of gourmet restaurant level cuisine but don't have access to their own kitchen brigade. The richly illustrated book is packed with recipes that are accessible and highlight basic and classical cooking methods - roasting, braising, frying, etc. My first week with the book we tried several recipes - the braised beef short ribs, the homemade pasta (pappardelle) and the beef stroganoff. While some recipes are very time consuming (step one of beef stroganoff is to make a batch of braised short ribs, which takes about 3.5 hours), they are not very intense, hands on cooking times (of the aforementioned 3.5 hours, over 2.5 hours is slow cooking steps that are completely hands off). Some recipes include fussy steps (make a lid out of parchment paper, for example) these are not difficult at all. Also, ingredients are very accessible at most markets, I haven't come across an ingredient that I didn't know where to procure locally. As a side note, the beef stroganoff with homemade noodles was incredible Well worth the time invested, and a lot of fun to make. I highly recommend this book - it is filled with great, accessible, yet gourmet recipes without the need for a restaurant kitchen or ingredients that need to be ordered from a small village in Andorra. For the home cook, I would recommend this over The French Laundry Cookbook, which is great for a whole sort of other reasons, but fairly rough for the home cook to make recipes from.

This is a very exciting book. Thomas Keller shares his techniques and many recipes that I have always wanted to have. Despite being rewarded as a French chef, this book gives me some of the best things someone can have in America.

What a terrific book for the novice chef who wants to produce outstanding meals! I've now cooked three selections and have found the dishes to be absolutely delicious! What I like best is that Mr. Keller uses readily available ingredients and spices, and the recipe descriptions are extremely easy to follow. I have other cookbooks from chefs that are difficult to translate into home cooking, but this book reawakens the desire to create incredible main courses without spending the entire day cooking. What a great find!

I have been cooking for nearly three decades, this book offers some interesting recipes, new ideas. I have to tell you though they are not the easiest ones ever, time consuming. The good news? Nothing wrong with cutting some corners, it still taste great and .I would definitely purchase this book, it's hard to find refined, original yet not too hard to do meals.

Absolutely the most accessible and beneficial cookbook I own. These are elevated versions of family style meals and old classics, and a healthy dose of technique is also included in much of the first 30 pages. Keller is a culinary genius, and that isn't just the hype, he really understands and appreciates food in a way most of us can't even imagine. Either way, I own a plethora of cookbooks, and if I find a new / unique ingredient I want to use, Ad Hoc is without fail the first book I pull to check for ideas. I've purchased multiple copies as gifts and even my less culinary inspired friends and family love the book.

I have certain criteria for a cookbook. I like good pictures, explanations for what and why they are doing or adding something, and I want the book to look good. This book does all that. For instance he discusses the various salts he uses and what to use when. Sometimes he follows a recipe that may yield a lot of meat with how to use the leftovers to make other great tasting dishes. He discusses letting meat rest. One recipe calls for a jam that he also includes the recipe for with suggestions on other ways to use the jam. If all that isn't enough, this book is heavy enough to use to exercise your arms thus burning enough calories to maybe have another spoonful of that wonderful fig and balsamic jam!

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