



Frugal Gourmet

Jeff Smith , Gary Jacobsen (Illustrator)

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All the ingredients that make THE FRUGAL GOURMET one of the most popular cooking shows on television are in this bestselling cookbook, including: a complete range of cooking techniques, advice on kitchen equipment, special hints and tips, exciting ideas for vegetarian meals, PLUS more than 100 illustrations of recipes and techniques.

Frugal Gourmet Details

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Author : Jeff Smith , Gary Jacobsen (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Frugal Gourmet for online ebook

Dixie Diamond says

Seems like a good enough general book, but not really to my taste. Feels like it tries to cover too much ground and offers only a few recipes in each section. Might have been better with less breadth and more depth and variety.

Naomi says

I was given this book as a gift and really have never developed a love for it. While I have made a couple of recipes out of it, I didn't see them as really standing out compared to all the other cookbooks or to the hype of the cookbook had received.

Yaaresse says

This cookbook would seem very basic now, but in the 80s, it was very popular. Smith had a cooking show on PBS that taught many a college student to be competent in the kitchen (and in the grocery store.) It's the kind of cookbook that beginner cooks could feel confident using until they suddenly realize they don't need it anymore because they understand the skills and techniques behind the recipes.

It probably would rate much lower if I were reading it for the first time today, so my rating is based on my experience with the book when it was shiny and new. At the time, it was one of the better general cookbooks available.

Emmalee says

Loved watching his show on PBS for years as a child.

We never did make anything out of the cookbook though, as it seemed we needed to buy so many specific hard to find ingredients or tools at the time to make something.

We lived in a small town in the middle of cornfields in the 80s....it wasn't like we could just run out to whole foods or something.

Heather says

I adored this guy when I was a kid... I looked forward to this show! I wouldn't say it's beginner cooking, but

I'm finding some good recipes. A lot of basics, but a good staple for any cook's bookshelf.

Gheeta says

I like the chattiness of Jeff Smith's style. One can tell he was a minister and professor because each section comes with something of a short sermon discussing the history and cultural points of interest. It is written in an older style with no photos but occasional hand drawn or woodcut illustrations. It was also cozy to sit and thumb through the cookbook.

Jen Mays says

The Basics: This is a true recipe book---no gimmicks or flashy photos since that would take away valuable room from the 400+ recipes included. In addition, cooking tips and tricks and recommendations are liberal throughout and the introduction spells out the goal: to make cooking accessible to families and bring them back around the table with minimal fuss. Popular for his cooking show on PBS during the early 1980s, Smith provides a broad variety of recipe ideas, many of which were featured on his show.

The early sections are divided as one would expect from a cookbook: an introduction, a few recipes in expected sections like Poultry, Appetizers, Salads, etc. But there is a tremendous amount of other sections, from eggs dishes to southern style barbecue. There is even a section for International Cuisine, in which recipes from China, France, Greece, and Africa are featured. The index is organized by ingredient and/or type so that should one wish to make something with onions (for example), a quick look-up will provide recipe pages and suggestions for this ingredient. There are also other reference pages, including a glossary of herbs and their uses, cooking terminology, and how to treat and store garlic.

The Photos: Whether a consequence of the time it was published (1984) or the fact that it was keeping to its "frugal"ness, there are no photos at all in this book. There are occasional illustrations, pen and ink, most of which appear to be old fashioned woodcuts of thematic images rather than helpful to the recipe at hand.

The Audition: I decided to toss myself a little bit of a gauntlet with this one and chose a recipe for an ingredient that I don't particularly care for: sweet potatoes. I was curious to see if preparing them in some manner myself rather than sampling them as they were served to me (the only way I've ever tried them and I haven't liked them yet) might alter my feelings any. Plus, the recipe was provided in the Africa section and it used cardamom as an ingredient, which I had just that week purchased from the store. It seemed like it was meant to be.

The recipe itself was pretty simple: simmer cubed sweet potatoes in a bath of coconut milk mixed with ground cardamom and brown sugar until tender. Cutting the sweet potatoes into cubes proved to be challenging though; those suckers are tough! I served them with some Mesquite grilled steak and steamed broccoli and I actually kind of liked them! Well...didn't hate them might be more apt, but still--I consider this a vast improvement. I would not be opposed to making this recipe again once in a while, and my roommate who really likes sweet potatoes enjoyed having the leftovers (with some extra brown sugar) for breakfast the next day.

Overall: This book was clearly written and intended to be a go-to kitchen book, an every day kind of

resource. There are many recipes that rely on other basic core recipes also included in the book (many of the soups, for example, build upon a basic chicken stock recipe so that stock is included as an ingredient of the soup). If I were inclined to use this as an everyday or multiple times a week book, this wouldn't be so bad, but as a "one-off feel like doing a new recipe" exploration, I found it a little frustrating to find something substantial (i.e. not a sauce or something) that didn't require some other recipe as part of the ingredient list. The book is also quite dated, so I found myself amused when being advised to check an Oriental or fancy foods market for coconut milk. I wonder if I should let Safeway know that they are a fancy foods market now. These and the lack of photos make the book unappealing to me as an occasional cook.

However, I can remember watching The Frugal Gourmet with my dad when I was a kid. It was one of his favorite shows and the fact that I found this on the shelf of a used bookstore that he used to take us to in the town he used to live in...well, it's too much of a nostalgia item to let go of, even if all I keep it for is the one sweet potato recipe I don't hate.

OssifrageRage says

Jeff Smith is a strange but entertaining guy. I watched his show on PBS for years.

This book is great for some very simple to prepare classic dishes. Small book, and does not cover complex techniques, but there are recipes here you will turn to again and again.

This is a good addition to a library for someone who likes simpler recipes, and has a cookbook that covers technique already.

It is a bit dated.

James says

Not bad for it's time but I don't eat that much meat anymore. Old school measurements, no pictures and no total prep time listed.

My Standard Cookbook Rant

Gail says

A cookbook, history book, and sociology book in one volume! Jeff Smith's cookbooks read like historical novels because he seriously writes about the background of the ingredients, the dish itself, and the region/people where the dish originated. Some of the recipes are not what my family eats, but those I have tried and used were very good.

Megan says

I have very vague memories of watching Jeff Smith on television when I was quite young, and enjoying it, even when I didn't have the slightest idea of how to cook anything.

This book remains one of the most helpful in my collection of cookbooks; it's one of the places I turn when I want to find the simple way of doing something, rather than the method involving 10 extra ingredients or some entirely new tool for doing a simple task.

Kathleen says

i am so sentimental about this book. i remember the tv show. i remember the cookbooks on my parents shelves. and there are a few recipes in here that i go to frequently (esp. the hollandaise). however, looking through it now, it's definitely no longer gourmet (if it ever was). these are simple recipes for people just learning to branch out with cooking. and there are some great meat dishes i remember from my childhood. however, those aren't for us anymore...

David Webb says

Long before the Food Network gave us a dozen cooking shows a day to choose from, the Frugal Gourmet was "must-see-TV" for me! Jeff Smith was a font of wonderful insights on just about every area of food preparation---from utensils to spices to wines to ingredients both exotic and mundane, Smith gave me tons of wonderful advice that I use every day. I hate how his career ended. If the allegations brought against him are true, it gives me decidedly mixed emotions about him, his books, his show, and his legacy. But I still return to the cookbooks fairly often....they are full of treasures!

KennyO says

As the man recited often, "frugal" doesn't mean cheap, it means that you don't waste food or time. Here's a cookbook for real folks who aren't into salty prepared foods and canned goods. If you never get past the soups that open the book you'll find it a good addition to your kitchen bookshelf. Smith advocated spending most of one day cooking a week's worth of meals then doing little more than finishing the meals the rest of the week. You can do that or cook them one by one as I do. He wrote several books and this is the only one I happily return to.

Serge Pierro says

Jeff Smith presents classic and simple recipes from his entertaining TV series "The Frugal Gourmet". His enthusiasm inspired many (including me) to push themselves deeper into the culinary arts. The classic recipes from the TV show are here.

