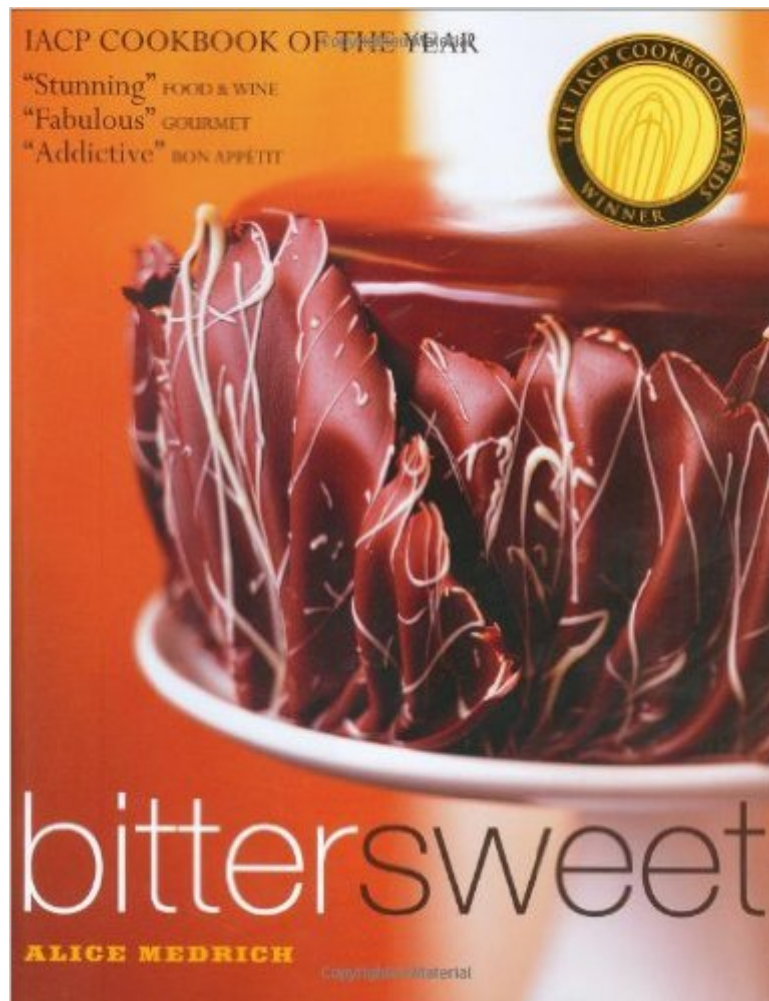


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Bittersweet: Recipes And Tales From A Life In Chocolate



Synopsis

It is hard, today, to imagine a time when the word bittersweet was rarely spoken, when 70 percent of the chocolate purchased by Americans was milk chocolate. Today's world of chocolate is a much larger universe, where not only is the quality better and variety wider, but the very composition of the chocolate has changed. To do justice to these new chocolates, which contain more pure chocolate and less sugar, we need a fresh approach to chocolate desserts—a new kind of recipe—and someone to crack the code for substituting one chocolate for another in both new and classic recipes. Alice Medrich, the "First Lady of Chocolate," delivers. With nearly 150 recipes—each delicious and foolproof, no matter your level of expertise—BitterSweet answers every chocolate question, teaches every technique, confides every secret, satisfies every craving. You'll marvel that recipes as basic as brownies and chocolate cake, mint chocolate chip ice cream and chocolate mousse, can still surprise and excite you, and that soufflés, chocolate panna cotta, even pasta sauces can be so dramatically flavorful. For the last thirty years, Alice Medrich has been learning, teaching, and sharing what she loves and understands about chocolate. BitterSweet is the culmination of her life in chocolate thus far: revolutionary recipes, profound knowledge, and charming tales of a chocolate life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've made many of Alice Medrich's recipes from her previous books, and none of them has ever disappointed. But this book is a standout. It is not at all just a collection of recipes; it actually has the ability to change the way cooks look at and use chocolate. The theme of the book is that, over the

past decades, most American cookbooks dealing with chocolate have been written assuming that the home cook is using typical supermarket chocolate, which may be serviceable, but which is undistinguished. In the past few years, though, superior chocolates have become very widely available, chocolates with complexity and sophistication. Past recipes, with their heavy reliance on added sugar, fats, and flavorings, may work for less remarkable chocolates. But these recipes may overwhelm and mask the unique characteristics of a finer chocolate. Assuming the home cook is using such a fine chocolate, Ms. Medrich analyzes and reconstructs many traditional recipes, and creates new ones as well, with an eye towards showcasing fine chocolate's personality rather than muting it. The recipes are incredible just to read (the half-dozen I've made myself so far have been easy to construct and superb to eat). Ms. Medrich's attention to detail is, as always, excellent; most of the recipes even includes notes describing how to adjust for chocolates with varying percentages of chocolate liquor. (If you're baking with a 60% chocolate bar, for instance, you'd use different quantities of added sugar and fat than you'd use if baking with a 72% chocolate.) Medrich also offers detailed explanations of the origins and philosophy behind certain dishes (mousse, for instance, or truffles). She devotes a large section of the book to the use of, and recipes for, roasted cocoa nibs.

Alice Medrich tells you everything you will ever need to know about cooking with chocolate: equipment, measuring, ingredients, types of chocolate, storing chocolate, melting chocolate-- it's all here. Now I know how to tell if baking powder is still good, why white chocolate should be cut into very small pieces before melting, how to substitute different kinds of chocolate in a recipe and why to avoid mixing water with chocolate at all costs. In her introduction, Ms. Medrich says she is attempting to write simple recipes for "busy home cooks." For the most part, she accomplishes what she set out to do. The recipes in general appear to be straight forward and with plenty of instructions for the most wary of beginners-- where to place the rack in the oven, exactly how long to beat a mixture, whether a creation tastes better the first or second day, for instance. Although there are several other recipes I want to try, I bought this cookbook for one recipe alone, the Tiger Cake (page 269). It has everything going for it. It is absolutely stunning in appearance-- a five-year-old named it because of the stripes-- it is simple to make, and tastes divine. The twist here is that the cake substitutes extra virgin olive oil for the usual butter and has a half teaspoon of white pepper in it. And as the author says, it really is better the second day-- should you have any left. In addition to the recipes, as the title indicates, Ms. Medrich has many stories about her experiences in chocolate. She could have called the book "My Journey from Milky Ways to Chocolate Truffles." There is much to be gleaned from this book. You will come back to it again and again, both for her stories and for

guidance on baking with chocolate.

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