

Seasonal Culinary Inspiration The Green Notebook

I am so inspired! I stumbled across a great read at the bookstore and can't wait to try out my new expertise at the next Farmer's Market or at the grocery store. I was trying to find copies of my two favorite cookbooks that I lost—both had simple, seasonal recipes which I loved. (I told my husband I couldn't cook anymore because I simply lost my inspiration and my guidebook.) So, I finally gave up searching the house, after six months, and went to the bookstore to replace them and, of course, couldn't find them. But what I did discover was even better.

Called *How to Pick a Peach*, this combination cookbook and history book is an indispensable guide to how to select, store and cook fresh fruits and vegetables. Written by Russ Parsons, a food and wine columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, this book is fun to read, gives you practical information, great recipes, as well as interesting tidbits about the produce industry.

Maybe you already know how to pick a good watermelon, but do you know how it was grown? Who grew it? How long ago it was picked? Under what conditions it was stored? Parsons lays it all out for our fruits and veggies (organized by season) and even traces the effect of global competition on our food chain. Who knew produce could be so fascinating? He even takes you through the maze of supermarket selections and offers advice on organic and Farmer's Market purchases as well.

The cookbooks I lost, which I still aim to replace, are called *From a Monastery Kitchen: The Classic Natural Foods Cookbook* by Brother Victor-Antoine d'Avila-Latourrette and *Simply in Season* by World Community Cookbooks. Both books feature simple, wholesome recipes using nature's seasons as a source of ingredients. Both also combine little stories and quotes which feed your soul. The World Community Cookbooks can often be found here in Delaware at Global Village, if you are interested. I'll be heading there soon to buy a replacement.

Out of curiosity, I did a search online for seasonal cookbooks and was amazed to see the variety—it is great to see a return to eating and using local, seasonal foods, like our grandparents did. There was even a book listed for children called *Simply in Season: Children's Cookbook*, which said it ties recipes in with prayers of thanksgiving and gardening tips. There were vegetarian selections as well as macrobiotic cookbooks. That last one intrigued me so I got to digging around about a macrobiotic diet and found out it involves eating grains as a staple food supplemented with other local foods like vegetables and beans. A lifestyle change, not just a diet, macrobiotic avoids the use of sugar and other highly processed or refined foods. I'll have to do more research on that one.

With the changing of the season (this is the first official week of fall) and harvests abounding, now is the time to take a look at returning to the simple pleasures of eating seasonally. After all, it does reduce the need to ship strawberries to Ohio in the middle of the winter or asparagus in the middle of fall—a green bonus to be sure. Eating locally is good for you and for the environment. Bon appetit!

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