

Lean times, Mean recipes - by Jennifer Murrant. Information Services.

Over time as families became accustomed to both spouses working outside the home fine dining experiences were more likely to occur in local upscale restaurants. Dinner parties became less frequent as people had less time to spend preparing gourmet meals to share with family and friends. Leaner economic times may change that. The Orillia Public Library is always adding new cookbooks to its collection to encourage even the most reluctant cook to venture into gourmet cooking.

A Taste of Canada: A Culinary Journey by Rose Murray is a great place to start. This book celebrates the best dishes that have become part of this country's cuisine. From Gorgonzola Focaccia for starters to Peach-Blackberry Upside-Down Cake for dessert and everything in between this book has plenty of tasty recipes for a fantastic dinner party.

A little closer to home is Marty's World Famous Cookbook: Secrets from the Muskoka Landmark Café. In 1996, Marty Curtis opened an ice cream parlour in Muskoka with nothing more than a credit card and a vague business idea. Curtis has even included his up until now carefully guarded secret recipe for butter tarts.

James Barber hosted the popular cooking show, The Urban Peasant, for several years. The Genius of James Barber: His Best Recipes is not only a collection of over 300 of Barber's top recipes but also includes contributions from celebrated chefs and food writers that stay true to Barber's simple approach to cooking.

An example of one of the many new ethnic cookbooks at the library is Simply More Indian: More Sweet and Spicy Recipes from India, Pakistan and East Africa by Tahera Rawji. Rawji is an experienced Indian cooking class instructor who teaches the reader the correct use of spices and seasonings to create delicious Indian meals.

To complete the gourmet meal Rod Phillips' The 500 Best-Value Wines in the LCBO will help the reader choose the best wine for every taste and occasion. Phillips gives suggested food matches for each wine, value-ratings and easy-to-understand reviews.

If you have an inquiring mind and have wondered things like why we do not like mold on our bread but need mold to make cheeses such as Camembert or Stilton then The Science of Good Food by David Joachim and Andrew Schloss is an excellent resource. The purpose of this book is to clearly explain the physical and chemical transformations that govern all food preparation and cooking. The authors explain the various food terms, outline what the process does to the food and how it accomplishes the end result. "Fast facts" such as "Oreos are the best-selling cookies in the world..." are peppered throughout this great reference guide along with other interesting sidebar information. It even has a recipe for making perfect French fries.

According to Rose Murray "Canadians have always had a strong tradition of hospitality. The first social gourmet club in America was "The Order of the Good Time" at Port Royal in 1606, when Samuel de Champlain had each of the 15 gentlemen of the company take turns hosting a dinner to distract the members from discontent with the long winter months. This tradition can be continued with these and many other cookbooks that can inspire creativity in the humble kitchen.