



Profiles from the Kitchen: What Great Cooks Have Taught Us about Ourselves and Our Food

Charles Baker-Clark

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In an age where convenience often ranks above quality, many Americans have abandoned traditional recipes and methods of cooking for fast solutions to their hunger and nourishment needs. Modern families are busier than ever, juggling hectic schedules that send them to fast-food restaurant drive-through windows and to grocery stores crowded with pre-processed and ready-to-eat foods. With parents frequently working during the daytime, efficient food preparation in the evenings has become the number one priority in kitchens across the country. This trend began during the post-World War II years, which heralded the arrival of "fast foods" and innovative technological advancements that sought to simplify the cooking process. These products were marketed as quick and convenient alternatives that transformed the concept of cooking from a cultural activity and a means of bonding with one's family to a chore that should occupy as little time and energy as possible. Profiles from the Kitchen: What Great Cooks Have Taught Us about Ourselves and Our Food is Charles A. Baker-Clark's call to abandon the "homogenization of food and dining experiences" by encouraging us to reclaim knowledge of cooking and eating and reconnect with our ethnic, familial, and regional backgrounds. Baker-Clark profiles fifteen individuals who have shaped our experiences with food and who have gone beyond popular trends to promote cooking as a craft worth learning and sustaining. The cooks and food critics he writes about emphasize the appreciation of good cooking and the relationship of food to social justice, spirituality, and sustainability. Profiles from the Kitchen highlights prominent figures within the food industry, from nationally and internationally known individuals such as Paul and Julia Child, James Beard, and M.F.K. Fisher to regional food experts such as John T. Edge and Dennis Getto. The result is a collective portrait of foodlovers who celebrate the rich traditions and histories associated with food in our daily lives and who encourage us to reestablish our own connections in the kitchen.

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