

PLEASE YOUR FAVORITE FOODIES

Make a flavorful gift yourself or choose it ready-made. This selection of food gifts and tools has something to make almost anyone happy.

Photos by David Purdy, The Register

BOOKS FOR THE HOME COOK

"The Bonne Femme Cookbook," by Wini Moranville (Harvard Common Press, \$24.95)

This new cookbook by Wini Moranville, who reviews restaurants for The Des Moines Register, is getting thumbs-up reviews for breathing affability into classic French recipes that traditionally can seem snobby and stand-offish. At last, here's a book about French cooking that doesn't require a culinary arts degree or frequent visits to Paris or Provence for ingredients.

As suggested in the book's full title, "The Bonne Femme Cookbook: Simple, Splendid Food that French Women Cook Every Day," this collection of recipes might surprise anyone who grew up believing that French cooking was for none but the brave.

The November issue of The Wine Enthusiast magazine said of Moranville's book: "For those who struggle to find enough time to craft an inspired dinnertime meal without slaving for hours, this simple and delicious approach to French home cooking allows even the busiest people to taste joie de vivre."

Because Moranville lives in central Iowa, her recipes involve ingredients that can be found locally, which has to be worth a few extra stars in any review.

"Celebrations with Carmela's Cucina," by Carmela Tursi Hobbins (Nordin Press, \$19.95)

This is the second cookbook from Hobbins. A

resident of the Twin Cities, Hobbins was born in Des Moines, where she developed her love for

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cooking.

Her first cookbook, "Carmela's Cucina" is chock-full of classic Italian and Italian-American recipes. Her newest cookbook is a love letter to family, celebrations and great food.

One chapter — "Dinner at Tursi's Latin King" — is likely to be of special interest to local food enthusiasts. Hobbins gives away just five recipes from the popular Des Moines restaurant, which is owned by her younger brother Bobby Tursi. One of those recipes is for the Latin King's famous chicken spiedini, which makes this book more than worth the price.

"Baking with the Cake Boss," by Buddy Valastro (Simon & Schuster, \$30)

This is a book for show-offs. Really, would you expect any less from a real-life New Jersey baker who became a TV celebrity? No, of course not.

The Cake Boss gives readers plenty of panache. Forget about simple cupcakes; Valastro shows readers how to make flower tops for cupcakes and makes it look easy, which it won't be for everyone.

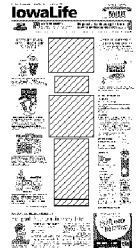
Beginners will be able to handle some of Buddy Valastro's recipes. Many are for the artistically inclined, making this book the perfect gift for anyone who enjoys baking and has the patience and talent for making desserts look almost too pretty to eat.

"Robin Takes 5," by Robin Miller (Andrews McMeel, \$29.99)

Anyone who lives a hectic life but still enjoys cooking at home will appreciate this book. It will be difficult to find a recipe in this tome that takes longer than a half hour to prepare and cook.

With 500 recipes that come together with five ingredients or fewer, this 480 page resource is also great for the health-conscious — each recipe has 500 calories or less and less than 500 mg of sodium.

Perhaps the best part of this book is that most recipes call for ingredients that are easy to find in central Iowa. Author-nutritionist Robin Miller, who has mastered the art of quick-fix meals, serves up ideas for soups, sides, salads,



sandwiches, pizzas and entrees.

“I Love Meatballs!” Rick Rodgers (Andrews McMeel, \$19.99)

They don’t get much respect from food snobs, but meatballs can be incredibly delicious when made properly and carefully. This cookbook has 50 recipes, billed as “the best of all time.”

Author Rick Rodgers includes recipes from places you’d expect such as Italy and Sweden. But here’s why this

cookbook is worth finding: There are recipes from Thailand, China, Greece, Vietnam, Morocco and India.

A few of the recipes will be time-consuming and some ingredients are difficult to find in central Iowa. But this book has plenty of helpful passages including one that contains a list of 16 recipes that work well with store-bought or frozen homemade meatballs.

— Tom Perry

