

Mar 6, 2014

Books Worth Buying: February and March's Best Food and Drink Releases

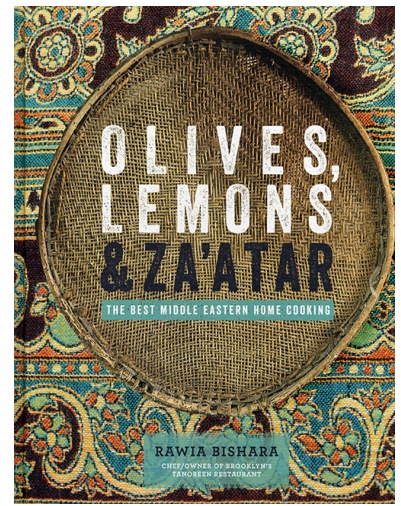
The monthly guide to our favorite new cookbook releases

We get dozens of cookbooks each week at SAVEUR, and every month we share our favorite new releases—books that, through one avenue of greatness or another, have earned a place on our over-stuffed shelves. This time, those books that piqued our interest came from all over the world—the Middle East, Myanmar, Paris, the American South—and covered a variety of recipes, from Palestinian mezze to cooking candy.



Credit: Laura Sant

[OLIVES, LEMONS & ZA'ATAR: THE BEST MIDDLE EASTERN HOME COOKING](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1906868840/ref=as_li_ss_tl?)
 [\(HTTP://WWW.AMAZON.COM/GP/PRODUCT/1906868840/REF=AS LI SS TL?\)](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1906868840/ref=as_li_ss_tl?)



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by Rawia Bishara

I have long been a fan of Tanoreen, Rawia Bishara's Palestinian restaurant tucked away in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, where her inventive mezze, like fried Brussels sprouts drizzled with fresh tahini and pomegranate seeds and eggplant napoleons slathered in babaganoush cream, make the forty-five minute trek from Manhattan well worthwhile. So, I was thrilled when I finally got my hands on her cookbook, and the secrets behind the delectable dishes I'd eaten at her restaurant. The recipes for my favorites turned out to be shockingly easy, 5-ingredient affairs, and as I flipped through the pages of mouthwatering photographs and lovely asides about local culinary folklore and her own food memories, I also discovered simplified recipes for many Palestinian classics. For example, her recipe for Musakhan, a complicated festival dish of sumac-rubbed roast chicken served on rounds of fresh-baked taboon bread, is transformed from weekend project to weeknight meal with a simple pizza-like flatbread recipe and smart substitutions like quick sautéed boneless chicken breast. Bishara's modern, approachable take on classic Palestinian food makes *Olives, Lemons, & Za'atar* a book I'm glad to have on my shelf as a source for doable, exciting dishes and tried and true favorites that I will be reaching for again and again. —*Felicia Campbell*

Available February 13 from Kyle Books; \$29.95.

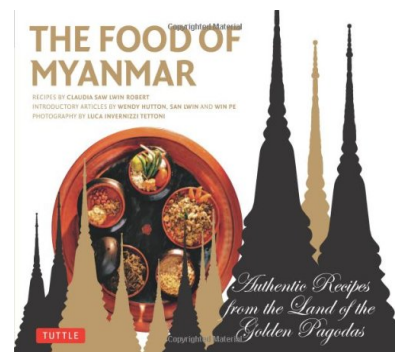
[Buy Olives, Lemons & Za'atar on Amazon.com](#)

[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1906868840/ref=as li ss tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1906868840/ref=as_li_ss_tl?)

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THE FOOD OF MYANMAR: AUTHENTIC RECIPES FROM THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN PAGODAS

[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0804844003/ref=as li ss tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0804844003/ref=as_li_ss_tl?)



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by Claudia Saw Lwin Robert, Win Pe, and Wendy Hutton

I've been collecting and hoarding cookbooks for years, and particularly love books from Southeast Asia. Recently, I came across this book about Myanmar's cuisine. Though I've never had the pleasure of visiting this country sandwiched between

India and China, Claudia Saw Lwin Robert paints a vibrant, colorful picture of both its food and history. The book is divided into three sections: “Food in Myanmar,” which includes a history of the people and the land; “Cooking in Myanmar,” a guide to useful methods and ingredients; and “The Recipes,” which encompasses everything from basic dips, sauces, and pickles to hearty soups and curries. One of my favorite recipes included in the book is for fermented tea leaf salad, or *lephet thoke*. Alongside the recipe, Robert describes the salad’s importance in Myanmarese social culture as a welcome meal for guests, a peace offering, a snack, and even a palate cleanser. She also shares how the dish is traditionally served (in lacquered containers with separate compartments) and eaten (with your thumb and first two fingers). Accompanied by gorgeous photos, it feels almost as if I’m in Myanmar every time I open the book. —*Farideh Sadeghin*

Available February 4 from Tuttle Publishing; \$11.22.

[Buy The Food of Myanmar on Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0804844003/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0804844003&linkCode=as2&tag=saveur-20)

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DOWN SOUTH: BOURBON, PORK, GULF SHRIMP & SECOND HELPINGS OF EVERYTHING

[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0770433189/ref=as li ss tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0770433189/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0770433189&linkCode=as2&tag=saveur-20)

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by Donald Link and Paula Disbrowe

I grew up in the South, and on cold, blustery days in New York, I long for it. The Gulf Coast holds particular charms for me, and whenever I go to New Orleans a visit to one of Donald Link’s restaurants is a must. So when Link’s latest cookbook, *Down South*, arrived, I grabbed it off the shelf and headed to the liquor store, inviting a few friends over along the way. Oftentimes, cocktails are relegated to the back of cookbooks, ancillary to the “real” stars of the show. In *Down South*, however, cocktails proudly set the stage for all of the deliciousness to come. Meyer lemon French 75s were my favorite, but the punch from the famous Flora-Bama bar (whose wallop I have felt on a few youthful road trips down the coast) was the crowd pleaser at my house. Following the initial cocktail section of the book, Link takes you inside an “old-school Southern cocktail party” with dishes—spiced pecans, crab beignets, silky onion dip, and my favorite, bacon and Parmesan gougères—that transformed my Brooklyn kitchen table into a groaning Southern sideboard. The rest of the book is just as inviting, and Link’s enthusiasm for the region is palpable. Cooking from this book took me a thousand miles down south and out of the northeastern cold. —*Kaylee Hammonds*

Available February 25 from Clarkson Potter; \$24.63

[Buy Down South on Amazon.com \(http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0770433189/ref=as li ss tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0770433189/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0770433189&linkCode=as2&tag=saveur-20)

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A LA MERE DE FAMILLE: RECIPES FROM THE BELOVED PARISIAN CONFECTIONER

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by Julien Merceron

I'm not a candy cook or even much of a baker, but I was drawn to this cookbook from the 250-year-old French confectioner because I've loved their beautiful shop in the rue Faubourg-Montmartre ever since I stumbled upon it during my first trip to Paris back in high school. I remember being totally charmed by the old-fashioned interior, the incredible variety of sweets, and the bright orange ribbons and bags that enveloped the little gifts I bought there. I don't think I knew then that the shop had been operating in the same location since before the French Revolution—it's Paris' oldest confectioner—but I sensed immediately that À La Mère de Famille was something special, an institution. The book is something special, too. From the handsome embossed cover replicating the shop's iconic green façade to the gorgeous full-page photos that accompany each recipe, this is the kind of cookbook you'll want to pass on to a child or grandchild after enjoying it liberally yourself. Written by À La Mère de Famille's chief chocolatier, it includes nearly a hundred recipes, from *calissons* and caramels to the stores' signature candied fruits and cakes. And for the less experienced candy maker, there are helpful step-by-step guides and tips. Sprinkled throughout are mini-chapters on the confectioner's history and owners, "Customer Portraits" of current-day devotees, and wonderful archival photos. As much a tribute to the company's culture and longevity as a practical, instructional cookbook, *À La Mère de Famille* is a treat to be savored by anyone who loves sweets, Paris, or both. —*Camille Rankin*

Available February 11 from Chronicle Books; \$24.92.

Buy A la Mere de Famille on Amazon.com

(http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1452118280/ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1452118280&linkCode=as2&tag=saveur-20)

UNDER THE SHADE OF OLIVE TREES: RECIPES FROM JERUSALEM TO MARRAKECH

AND BEYOND (HTTP://WWW.AMAZON.COM/GP/PRODUCT/1617691089/REF=AS_LI_SS_TL?

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by Nadia Zerouali & Merijn Tol

This playful romp through Arabia comes from the hosts of a Middle Eastern cooking program in the Netherlands who, through their travels, have come to see the area that stretches from the Mediterranean and North Africa to Iran, as a multicultural tapestry united by an ancient culinary history. In their latest book, *Under the Shade of Olive Trees*, they incorporate historic dishes such as Iraqi *madfun*a—a ground lamb-stuffed eggplant dish spiked with rose water that was

popular in the Middle Ages—with easy, contemporary riffs on Middle Eastern cuisine, including their two-ingredient tahini-halva ice cream. Informative sidebars provide short histories of ingredients such as sumac and argan oil, along with tips on incorporating them into all manner of cooking. Nadia and Merijn's inventive energy comes through in recipes like a modified Arabic flatbread, which uses an upside-down wok in place of the traditional rounded metal griddles used by street vendors in Lebanon. They have even included a special section in the back of the book where friends like Kamal Mouzawak, the founder of the first organic market in Lebanon, and Ingmar Neizen, an expert on African cuisine, share their favorite recipes. Though many of the recipes are basic, this book is full of surprises, my favorite of which was Niezen's Sudanese falafel, a spicy, sesame encrusted version of the ubiquitous Middle Eastern snack served, in her version, with a tart-hot African peanut sauce. This cookbook offers a modern, innovative perspective on an amazing culinary region.—*Felicia Campbell*

Available March 18 from Stewart, Tabori & Chang, \$31.50

Buy Under the Shade of Olive Trees: Recipes from Jerusalem to Marrakech and Beyond

([http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1617691089/ref=as li ss tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1617691089/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1617691089&linkCode=as2&tag=saveur-20)

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THE SUGAR SEASON: A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF MAPLE SYRUP, AND ONE FAMILY'S

QUEST FOR THE SWEETEST HARVEST (HTTP://WWW.AMAZON.COM/GP/PRODUCT/0306822040/REF=AS LI SS TL?

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by Douglas Whynott

Until recently, whenever I thought about how maple syrup was produced (which was pretty often, because I keep a jug of it on hand for sweetening my coffee and for cooking with), I would imagine a scene from *Little House in the Big Woods*—sap drip-dripping into metal pails from maple trees; rectangular boiling pans slowly reducing that sap to syrup over a wood fire. Thanks to *The Sugar Season*, a surprising new book by Douglass Whynott, that vision has now been supplanted by something far more complex, accurate—and interesting. Whynott, a professor of writing at Emerson College in Boston, spent three years in the northeastern states with maple syrup producers and distributors. The result is a closely observed portrait of a largely unknown world—one that is full of interesting characters who have devoted their lives to transforming an intensely seasonal crop (sap can be harvested for just a few short, unpredictable weeks each winter) into a global commodity that's traded on world markets and valued at more per barrel than oil. It's a smart, engrossing read that gives this sweet crop—one of America's oldest agricultural products—it's full due. —*Karen Shimizu*

Available from Da Capo Press, \$24.99

Buy The Sugar Season: A Year in the Life of Maple Syrup, and One Family's Quest for the Sweetest

Harvest (http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0306822040/ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0306822040&linkCode=as2&tag=saveur-20)

THE ITALIAN VEGETABLE COOKBOOK: 200 FAVORITE RECIPES FOR ANTIPASTI,

SOUPS, PASTA, MAIN DISHES, AND DESSERTS

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IE=UTF8&CAMP=1789&CREATIVE=390957&CREATIVEASIN=0547909160&LINKCODE=AS2&TAG=SAVEUR-20)

By Michele Scicolone

We tend to associate Italian cooking with dishes like pasta, pizza, and veal Parmesan. But as anyone who has visited the boot or lived in an Italian-American neighborhood will tell you, it's all about the vegetables. However inadvertently, Italians, to whom meat was long considered a luxury, are masters of vegetarian cuisine, whether it's turning some bulbous eggplant from a Naples produce stand into a sumptuous lasagna, or transforming vine-ripe tomatoes from an old man's Boston garden into a transcendent Sunday sauce. Michele Scicolone knows all this, and in her inspiring new cookbook (she's written or co-written 19 now) she teaches us how to evoke the true flavors of Italy with fresh fruits and vegetables. While entrees, like her brightly flavored green fettucini with asparagus, basil and butter, are spectacular (and have me yearning for spring), I particularly like the simple, occasionally surprising, sides: an enlivened broccoli roasted in lemon juice and olive oil, carrots sweetened with fresh milk, the dairy turning to a creamy sauce when simmered. This summer, when the fig tree in my Brooklyn backyard starts to fruit, I will harvest a handful and follow Scicolone's instructions, poaching them in red wine, devouring them at my kitchen table, thanking the old Italian man who planted that tree so many years before I arrived. —Keith Pandolfi

Available from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, \$30

[Buy The Italian Vegetable Cookbook: 200 Favorite Recipes for Antipasti, Soups, Pasta, Main Dishes, and Desserts \(http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0547909160/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0547909160&linkCode=as2&tag=saveur-20\)](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0547909160/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0547909160&linkCode=as2&tag=saveur-20)

LA MERE BRAZIER: THE MOTHER OF MODERN FRENCH COOKING

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by Eugenie Brazier

Simple French fare is my preferred comfort food: an omelet with salad, a slice of pâté, perfectly-executed *moules marinières*—for me, these simple bites can transform a drab day into something else entirely. My collection of French cookery books has swallowed my bookshelf to the degree that I've had to enforce an "only if it's extraordinary" rule on my purchases, but *La Mère Brazier: The Mother of Modern French Cooking* is just that. Available in English for the first time this month, *La Mère Brazier* brings the life, voice, and recipes of an iconic French chef to an Anglophone audience at long last. Paul Bocuse, who apprenticed in Brazier's kitchen, wrote the highly respectful and nostalgic forward to this book. Care has been taken to retain the historical accuracy of the recipes while making them accessible to modern home cooks. And the stories of Brazier's rise from farm-hand to fêted, decorated chef—she was the first woman to receive six Michelin stars—is told with such charm and simplicity, and with such emphasis on the humble roots of much of her food, that I could not help but hear her voice as I stood in my kitchen recently, whipping up a batch of her Parisian gnocchi, feeling grateful that there was room on my shelf for at least one more book. —Kaylee Hammonds

Available March 25 from Rizzoli, \$24.92

[Buy La Mere Brazier: The Mother of Modern French Cooking](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0847840964/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0847840964&linkCode=as2&tag=saveur-20)

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YUCATÁN: RECIPES FROM A CULINARY EXPEDITION

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by David Sterling

Before I picked up this book, I knew little about the Yucatán, apart from what I had read in the story [The Queen of Yucatán](http://www.saveur.com/article/Travels/Yucatan-Mayan-Heritage) (<http://www.saveur.com/article/Travels/Yucatan-Mayan-Heritage>) from our Mexico issue. With that meager knowledge in mind, I approached David Sterling's tome not without apprehension. The book runs through all the sub-regions of the Yucatán, almost a food-driven road trip in text. And beyond Sterling's encyclopedic and meticulously-researched knowledge of Yucatecan food, his love for and connection to the region and its fare are evident on every page; it is rare to find such humble passion and vigor in a volume that is so comprehensive and informational. The photographs capture scenes from the streets, food stalls, and home kitchens, as well as landscapes from the region. Nothing feels staged; the images of the recipes are mouth-watering, yet homey, imperfect, and entirely in tune with the rest of the book.

The recipes, too, are surprisingly accessible. On a snowy night in New York City, I set out to make Ajiaca, a deeply garlicky stew with a strong orange color. After roasting six heads of garlic and squeezing out the slightly sweet, liquified cloves, I started adding vegetables to a stock pot. By the end of a long stew, large hunks of pork tore apart under the tines of my fork. An entire diced potato had disintegrated into the stew, giving it a comforting thickness and satisfying texture. I spooned out bowls of pork and vegetables, topped them with the orange broth, and finished with plantains I had twice fried into *tostones*, putting together a bowl of the Yucatán. I couldn't imagine eating anything better on a cold winter night. —*Oliver Erteman*

Available March 30 from University of Texas Press, \$40.65

[Buy Yucatán: Recipes from a Culinary Expedition](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0292735812/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0292735812&linkCode=as2&tag=bonniercorpco-20)

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LODGE CAST IRON NATION: GREAT AMERICAN COOKING FROM COAST TO COAST

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By The Lodge Company

It was my mother-in-law—an exemplary cook—who gifted me with a Lodge cast iron skillet when I was just a newlywed. That was a decade ago, and it's since been U-Hauled across the country and moved in and out of countless New York City apartments. But no matter how tiny the stove (and there have been some Easy Bake Oven-style varieties in past kitchens), I always find a home for my trusty skillet on the back left burner. In Cast Iron Nation, Lodge celebrates the deep ties Americans have to this well-seasoned cookware, with recipes that span the nation. A few classics make an appearance: center-cut, bone-in pork chops that become sweet with a quick sear; a buttermilk-brined fried chicken; and a handful of trusty cornbreads, cooked in the vessel that gives the requisite cracking crust. But there are plenty of rather sophisticated recipes represented here, too, and I fell hard for the squash bisque with mascarpone and apple-cheese crostini. I could never have imagined making soup in my skillet, yet the flavors roast and melt down to a wintery perfection. The North Carolina clam chowder, a warm-your-belly kind of dish, ditches the thick base, and allows plump clams to steal the thunder. Since I've found this cookbook, now thoroughly dog-eared, it seems that my beloved skillet has made its way to the front burner on a near-daily basis. —*Anne Roderique-Jones*

Available March 18 from Oxmoor House, \$25

[Buy Lodge Cast Iron Nation: Great American Cooking from Coast to Coast](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0848742265/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0848742265&linkCode=as2&tag=saveur-20)

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SLICES OF LIFE: A FOOD WRITER COOKS THROUGH MANY A CONUNDRUM

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IE=UTF8&CAMP=1789&CREATIVE=390957&CREATIVEASIN=0762452706&LINKCODE=AS2&TAG=BONNIERCORPCO-20)

by Leah Eskin

For charm, you can't beat Leah Eskin's memoir and cookbook, *Slices of Life* (Running Press, 2014). The long-time SAVEUR contributor and *Chicago Tribune* columnist brings an irreverent humor, cool precision, and gustatory gusto to her accounts of American family life. Each small, resonant moment is occasion to cook something delicious: a child's obsession with dinosaurs leads to batches of stegosaurus-shaped pumpkin muffins; an audiophile husband's grudging surrender of the aubergine-colored mega-speakers that hogged the living room inspires a bout of eggplant cookery; a sulking pre-teen gets Mom's love in the form of an Asian chicken salad. So much domesticity necessarily inspires nostalgia, but Eskin is such a versatile cook that such reveries offer pithy surprises: college memories come attached to a recipe for lobster rolls; tax day merits its own dessert, an almond and popcorn brittle. Readers with a more categorical sensibility might be disconcerted by Eskin's haphazard organization—ice cream recipes up against a granola recipe up against a tarragon chicken recipe—but the book simply mirrors life, which is brimming with episodes either happy or sad but always punctuated by a meal. —Betsy Andrews

Available March 25 from Running Press, \$26

Buy Slices of Life: A Food Writer Cooks through Many a Conundrum

(http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0762452706/ref=as li ss tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0762452706&linkCode=as2&tag=bonniercorpc-20)