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Twenty Dinners



Synopsis

A photographer (who happens to be an ex-restaurant cook) and an indie rock star (who happens to be an avid home cook) show you how to slow down your life by cooking beautiful, straightforward, but sophisticated, food for--and with--friends. When he's on tour with his band, Grizzly Bear, what Chris Taylor misses most about home is the kitchen and the company. With his friend Ithai Schori, he cooks dinner parties for four to forty, using skills Chris learned from his mom and Ithai picked up working at high-end restaurants. Their food is full of smart techniques that make everything taste just a little better than you thought possible--like toasting nuts in browned butter or charring apples for a complex applesauce--but their style is laid-back and unhurried. This is about cooking not just for, but with, your friends, and so the authors enlisted their favorite pastry chef, mixologist, sommelier, and baristas to write detailed material on wine, desserts, stocking a home bar, mixing drinks, and buying and brewing fantastic coffee. Through more than 100 seasonally arranged recipes and gorgeous, evocative photographs of their gatherings you fall into their world, where you and your friends have all day to put food on the table, and where there's always time for another cocktail in a mason jar before dinner. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

I'm a sucker for hipster cookbooks. Cookbooks with rustic, earthy, and perfectly staged shots of food with names like "maple panna cotta with candied almonds and buttered bread crumbs." The kind that make me want to turn down the oil lamp in an urban homestead kitchen, throw on some vinyl, and drink cocktails out of a mason jar. Back in reality, my wife and I work full-time jobs, have two young children, and live central Kentucky. And although Cassie is an excellent cook and purchases far more practical cookbooks than me, I'm pretty incompetent in the kitchen. Throw more than one pot or concurrent steps and I turn into a gibbering mess. But, in spite of reality, *Twenty Dinners* by Ithai Schori and Chris Taylor fit my cookbook M.O., so I decided to take a look. There is something different about this book right from the introductions. It's not written by chefs for chefs. Ithai Schori is a professional photographer and Chris Taylor is the bassist for the indie band, The Grizzly Bears. Both have a great passion for cooking, but it's not their profession. This may not seem like a big deal, but I think it sets the tone for the entire book. *Twenty Dinners* has all the hipster aesthetics I love. Tasty, cool sounding dishes and excellent photography. It also has the sensibility and humbleness of a home chef's cookbook. It contains twenty different meals, each one including an appetizer, main dish, dessert or salad, and a drink, all grouped by seasons to coincide with the availability of fresh produce. What I most appreciated about this book was that it uses simple, plain ingredients. With few exceptions, the recipes don't require exotic spices, rare produce, or weird vegan cheese substitutes.

Twenty Dinners, written by Ithai Schori and Chris Taylor with Rachel Holtman, is divided by the 4 seasons. It offers 5 complete suggested dinner menus that take into account ingredients of that season. Each dinner menu includes a protein main, two sides, dessert, and suggested drink to accompany that dinner (always wine, sometimes a cocktail recipe is included in the chapter). In particular, the authors are promoting the concept of cooking with friends, not just cooking for friends. This means that the recipes are more like guidelines, generally the methods use basic techniques, with the most technical portion often being the cutting of the protein. I wish there had been a photo guideline on these cutting techniques, or at least some small photos with the recipe on what the right cut is. This seems like a detail that was missed since there are suggestion chapters written by other friends varying from "mastering" wine to how to create a home bar or coffee, and there are also special sections in the back that define cooking terms in normal layman speak (you will need it now and then- several recipes for instance call for bouquet garni), essential tools that you need in a kitchen, and how to shop and store for ingredients. The meals vary from the more

impressive like 5 courses (Sliced Fluke, Plum and Cilantro; Seared Kale Salad with Brown Butter Toasted Pine Nuts and Smoked Bacon; Roast Chicken; Morel and Shiitake Mushroom Risotto; Maple Panna Cotta with Candied Almonds and Buttered Bread Crumbs) to simple hearty ones that have a suggested ingredient or technique thrown in to raise it up a level from regular home cooking recipes (Meatballs and Spaghetti; Caesar Salad with Egg in a Frame, Affogato with Biscotti).

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