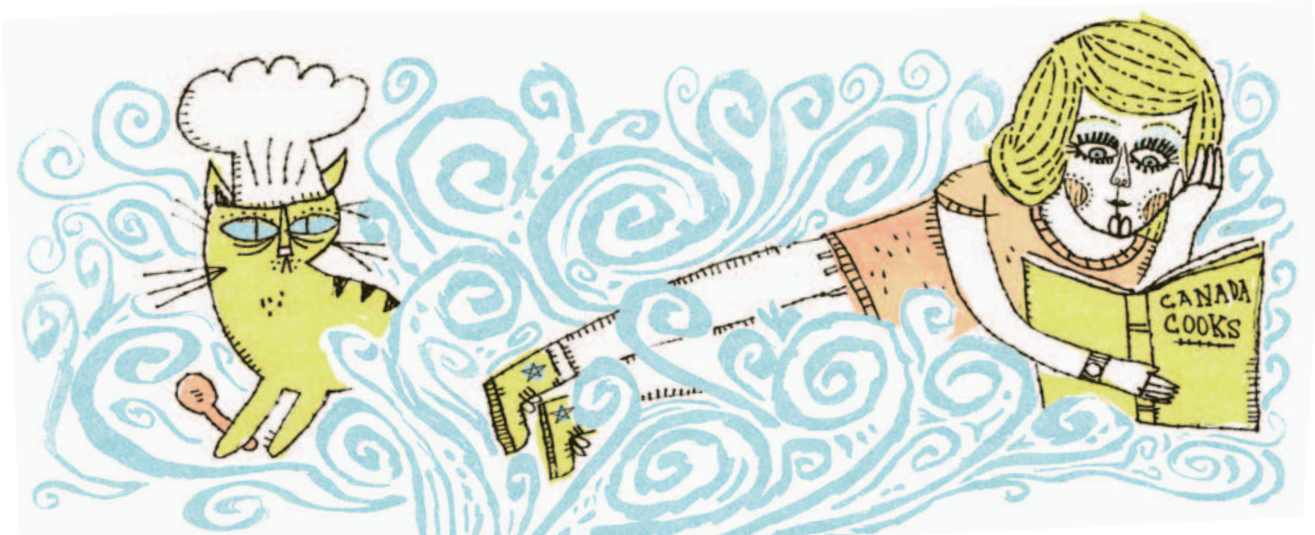


FRONTMATTER

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

What are the ingredients of a classic Canadian cookbook?



Food is so fundamental to our culture it's almost impossible to think of how ephemeral recipes once were, with family favourites collected in loose stacks of handwritten cards.

The forerunners of today's commercial cookbooks were stapled booklets published by companies like Cook's Friend Baking Powder or McAllister Milling Co., or by the Ladies' Aid Society of some church or small town. In 1915, the *Five Roses Cook Book*, distributed by the flour company of the same name, hung on the walls of more than 600,000 Canadian households, dangling by the string that snaked its way through a hole in its top corner.

Five Roses remains popular today, in the company of vintage titles like *The Laura Secord Canadian Cook Book* (1966) and *The Purity Flour Cookbook* (1967), all three of which were reprinted in the last decade as part of by Whitecap Books' Classic Canadian Cookbook series.

While many titles have stood the test of time, including Jehane Benoit's *Encyclopedia of Canadian Cooking* (1974), Elizabeth Baird's *Classic Canadian Cooking* (1995), and Jean Paré's ubiquitous Company's Coming series, it is still difficult for booksellers, publishers, and writers to pinpoint the exact ingredients for making a classic Canadian cookbook.

"We're a different type of country," says Barbara-Jo McIntosh, owner of Vancouver's Barbara-Jo's Books to

Cooks. "We don't have really distinct cuisine in an all-encompassing way." What we do have, she says, is history.

While Alison Fryer, owner of Toronto's The Cookbook Store, believes that classic cookbooks attract readers through their storytelling and presentation, she says the only thing worth a thousand words is a thousand well-written words. "*Classic Canadian Cooking* has no photos and doesn't have a particularly engaging layout, but the recipes resonate with Canadians," she says. For Fryer, the reason is simple: "They are so Canadian."

Arsenal Pulp Press publisher Brian Lam suggests classic cookbooks should speak to other aspects of the culture, beyond food. "Whether it's a particular community or region, or that it simply reflects our sense of social well-being," he says. "Those are the things that resonate long after the meal has ended."

In May, Arsenal Pulp released a new edition of Judie Glick's 1985 tome *The New Granville Island Market Cookbook*, which features current photos of dishes and life at the popular Vancouver market. "The original book was very much of its era: a trade paperback, black type only, no photographs," says Lam. "We wanted the new book to be a complete overhaul of the original."

It's not just the cookbook's design that radically changed: only a handful of original recipes appear in



the revised edition. “The new ones reflect consumers’ increased sophistication, as well as the influences of Asian and other cuisines,” Lam says.

Wilfrid Laurier University Press took the opposite approach this spring when transforming Edna Staebler’s 1968 Menonite cookbook *Food that Really Schmecks* into an iPad app. Photos and video were added for interactivity, but “we did not tinker with the recipes,” says Clare Hitchens, publicist at WLU Press.

She suggests that writer Rose Murray nailed the essence of a classic – and of Staebler’s cult popularity – in her introduction to the book’s 2006 edition.

“[Murray] talks about the use of fresh, local, seasonal ingredients, and the conversational tone that comes from sitting in the kitchen and learning the recipes as they are created,” says Hitchens. “Edna herself said about the cookbook that it is ‘not elaborate, or exotic, with rare ingredients and mystifying flavours; traditional local cooking is practical.’”

Hitchens adds, “A classic cookbook can be used no matter what the trends of the day are.”

Patrick Murphy, managing editor at Halifax’s Nimbus Publishing, believes that

To become a classic, a cookbook “has to offer something unique, and it has to have recipes that have been tried and tested and loved”

timeless recipes, along with a dash of nostalgia, are key to a cookbook’s longevity. “It has to offer something unique and it has to have recipes that have been tried and tested and loved,” he says.

In 2010, Nimbus published the 40th anniversary edition of Marie Nightingale’s *Out of Old Nova Scotia Kitchens*, an East Coast staple that has never been out of print. Like Staebler’s *Food that Really Schmecks*, the book’s recipes have remained the same since it was first released.

“Marie has been around a long time and the book has sold over 100,000 copies, so I’m simply not going to change it,” says Murphy.

Over the years, Nightingale says she has been asked many times if she plans to update the book’s contents. “I just said, ‘You can’t change history.’” – *Melissa Buote*



SNAPSHOT

TRACY HURREN

Tracy Hurren has clearly made a mark at Montreal comics publisher Drawn & Quarterly. First brought on as an intern in spring 2010, Hurren was hired later that year as production manager. In August, she was promoted to managing editor.

“Tracy has excelled in production at D&Q like no one has before,” says associate publisher Peggy Burns. “She really has made herself an integral part of the process in the best way possible, whipping everyone into shape.”

Were you always a comics fan? I’ve always enjoyed comics, but my interest was piqued while studying for my Master of Publishing at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, where my research focused on comics and how the industry has evolved. That eventually led to my thesis, which examined the current state of comics reprints.

What are your responsibilities as production manager? I handle the artwork from the time it comes in the door until we send it off to print. The process is unique to each book. Some artists, like Chris Ware (*Multi-Story Building Model*), will send us PDFs that are pretty much ready to go, whereas the opposite would be Seth (*Palookaville 21*), who mails us the originals and we have to scan each layer and assemble it.

Do you expect your role will change as managing editor? It’s more of a leadership role, but the basic job will stay the same. My position with D&Q has grown organically over the past two years. I’ve taken on new responsibilities based on what they needed, and where I had proven my strengths. My new title as managing editor reflects the job that I’ve gradually grown into, so I won’t be putting on a new hat, just one that fits a bit better and more accurately reflects what I’ve been up to.

D&Q released its first ebooks this year. What were some of the production challenges you faced? This winter, we prepared Chester Brown’s *Louis Riel* and *Paying for It*

for Kobo. I think some of the challenges of digital comics are also their strengths. With regular ebooks, you have to deal with reflowable text, and as a designer, you’re always worried about it not being beautifully presented. With comics, you’re limited to a set presentation and you know it will appear the same on the e-reader as it does in print.

You recently worked on D&Q’s first non-comics book, Tavi Gevinson’s *Rookie Yearbook*. How was that experience different? That was a huge project I worked on this spring and into the summer. It was interesting from a design and production perspective, as it was so different from what we normally do. With the typical comics we publish, our talented artists do all the heavy lifting, but with *Rookie* a lot more of the design fell on my lap. As well as editing the 352-page book (which comes with stickers, a Flexi-disc, and a designer paper crown), Tavi art directed, and made my job as designer a lot easier. It was great working with D&Q artist Sonja Ahlers (*The Selves*), who did the illustrations.

Do you enjoy working on comics series? Series have always been of particular interest to me. The continuity of design appeals to me – collections just look so perfect on a shelf and I just can’t shake my material obsession with their beauty. Comics reprint series in particular have really evolved into something exquisite over the last few years, bringing some of the finest content back into print, and honouring it with first-class design and production.