

COOKBOOK REVIEW

If you don't know how to boil an egg, you shouldn't use this book

By T. Susan Chang | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT MARCH 26, 2013

A book titled “How to Boil an Egg” may sound like something for new cooks, but don't be fooled. It's a book about eggs, and it's written by bakers, which should tell you right off the bat that you're in for a certain amount of fussing and fretting.

The Rose Bakery is an “Anglo-French” establishment in Paris, and if you're like me, you're probably wondering why a bunch of Parisians would be interesting themselves in English food. But the book — and, presumably, the bakery itself — is full of interesting, globally inspired egg-based dishes that sell themselves on their own merit, if you can manage the execution perfectly. That, it turns out, is not a guaranteed if.

A gratin of courgette and aubergine (zucchini and eggplant to us) is savory from Parmesan, with a toothy texture imparted by soaked bread. But it takes twice as long in the oven as called for. So does a moist pumpkin cake, tantalizingly topped with white chocolate and pumpkin seeds. Date and walnut scones, on the other hand, come out baked to perfection though you need self-rising flour. The dough is stamped out with a cutter, and there's no indication what you should do with the leftover remnants. But you might as well just bake them up with the rest, as the scones vanish in a trice.



PHAIDON PRESS

Rose Carrarini's book is full of globally inspired egg-based dishes that seem to require the hands of an experienced cook.

Chawanmushi is a sort of Japanese steamed egg custard, much like the Chinese one I grew up with. But there's a mystifying instruction to taste the raw, beaten egg for seasoning — surely not! And with no size specification for the steaming bowls, you are likely to end up with an overflow of egg, as I did.

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Eggs scrambled with red wine vinegar call for half a shocking stick of butter for a single serving. Horrified, I took the liberty of halving it again, and found the resulting scramble creamy in texture and surprisingly tasty, the vinegar losing its aggressive character and merely helping to cut what was still an ample dose of butter.

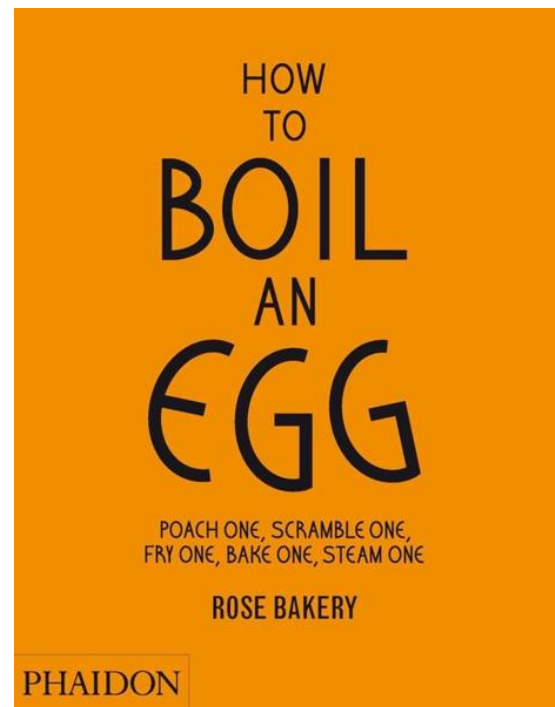
As for the boiled egg of the title, it gets a slightly different treatment from the one I and many others learned in cooking school: start in cold water, bring it to a long simmer, then drain and cover in more cold water. The eggs were done to a turn, and perfect for converting into a vividly flavorful curried egg salad, just barely sweetened with caramelized onion and apricot jam.

Lemon pancakes may not be the first thing you expect to see in an egg book, but these are special, moistened with ricotta and leavened with egg white. They're light and gone in two bites. An orange creme caramel positively brims with citrus flavor.

Like many Phaidon titles, this is an arty, stylish sort of book that you might consider giving as a gift as the spring egg season comes along. Just make sure you don't give it to your rookie friends. A better choice would be your grandmother, who won't be fazed by a little vagueness in a recipe. After all, to make an omelet, you must break some eggs. But in

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FIONA STRICKLAND

“How to Boil an Egg”

the hands of a seasoned cook, at least the resulting mess won't be so bad.

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