

New cookbooks make great holiday gifts

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The holiday season is upon us, a time for gathering friends around our dinner table and giving gifts to our loved ones. What better gift to give, or receive, than a beautiful cookbook that unravels the secrets of making the perfect red wine risotto or baked apples with caramel rum-raisin sauce.

The following cookbooks promise to keep the sweet and savory smells of holiday cooking wafting through your home all year long:

- "Unplugged Kitchen" by Vienna La Place, (William Morrow & Company, Inc., \$25)

The simply illustrated white cover sets the theme for this cookbook's contents: Eloquent, simple everyday cooking that reflects the author's Italian and European heritage. "Spaghetti with Tender Parsley and Lemon" comes accented with little more than mint leaves, sea salt, black pepper and lemons. "Unplugged Kitchen" presents its recipes for salads, stews, soups, appetizers, pastas and desserts in a visually uncluttered manner. La Place serves sensually, her comments often stirring up the feel of warm Mediterranean breezes. No food processors used in this book, only the pleasurable physical contact between hand and food.

- "Rick Bayless's Mexican Kitchen," (Scribner \$35).

The author, an acclaimed chef and restaurant owner, says Mex-

A quick look:

- "Unplugged Kitchen"
- "Rick Bayless's Mexican Kitchen"
- "365 Easy One-Dish Meals"
- "Old-Fashioned Christmas Cookbook"
- "Healthy Homestyle Desserts"
- "Four-Star Desserts"

ican cuisine is "rich with complex flavors, remarkably delicious, invigorating and satisfying." And it all starts with the "essential recipes," 14 building blocks of *salsas*, *sauces* and *seasonings* that weave their way through many of this cookbook's more than 160 recipes. Thought that pumpkins were only for carving? Try "Smoky Braised Mexican Pumpkin with Served White Onions." How many ways do you love to taste? Try dozen, including "Crispy Black Bean Bacon Tacos" or "Tacos of Creamy Braised Chard, Potatoes and Poblano." From soups to desserts, Mexican Kitchen celebrates the marriage of full-flavored cooking with simplicity of preparation.

- "365 Easy One-Dish Meals" by Natalie Haughton, (Harper & Row \$15.95).

Flip through this compact, spit-

ral-bound cookbook for a year's worth of great recipes like "Mom's Fast Chili," "Easy Mine-strone" or "Super Taco Skillet Pie." Easy One-Dish Meals makes efficient use of your skillet, slow cooker and casserole dishes, and few recipes call for more than 20 minutes preparation time. The recipes may be quick, but they're hearty, varied and make the best of American cooking available to today's busy cooks. No illustrations; just neat, easy-to-read black and white print.

- "Old-Fashioned Christmas Cookbook," (Time-Life Books \$24.95)

Beautifully illustrated glossy pages of memorable Christmas recipes tempt the eye and the palate in this cookbook: "Christ-mas Eve Borscht with Polish Mushroom Pockets," "Glazed Carrots with Red Grapes," "Honey-Glazed Roast Turkey with Orange and Sweet Potato Stuffing," and "Tortierie," a savory, spicy pork pie eaten France on Christmas Eve. And what's a Christmas cookbook without recipes for plum pudding and sugar plum? This one has both, as well as ideas for food gifts and holiday decorations. A perfect Christmas gift for your favorite host or hostess.

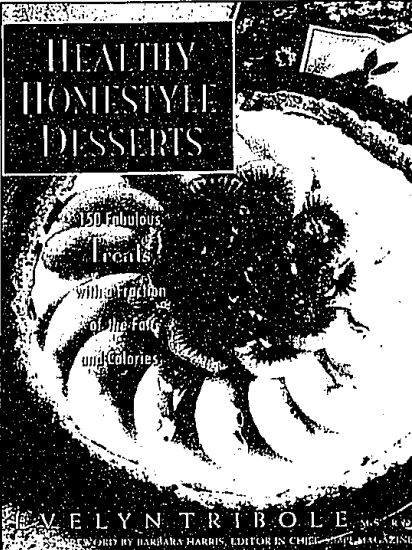
- "Healthy Homestyle Desserts" by Evelyn Tribole, (Viking \$24.95)

The author, a registered dietitian, proves that "healthy desserts" is not an oxymoron

with the 150 great recipes she includes in this cookbook. If "Frozen Peanut Butter Fudge Pie," "Triple-Layer German Chocolate Cake" or "Fudgy Black-bottom Pie" is not on your menu, put it there. Tribole puts a healthy twist on fatty desserts by substituting low- and no-fat products, egg substitutes, butter-milk and crispy cereals for there fatty counterparts. Author of the best-selling "Healthy Homestyle Cooking," has appeared on ABC's "Good Morning America" and written nutritional features for Good Housekeeping, Redbook and USA Today. "Healthy Homestyle Desserts" includes substitution and quantity reduction charts.

- "Four-Star Desserts" by Emily Luchetti, (Harper Collins \$32.50)

Both the illustrations and the recipes in this compact, glossy-bound cookbook are luscious. The chapters are divided according to main ingredients, like chocolate, and summer berries. The author's pairing of nouns and adjectives make every recipe sound appealing. Who could resist "Morning Apple Cake," "Raspberry Champagne Cream Cake," or "Topsy Italian Nectarines"? These are not heart-smart recipes, but when cream, sugar and butter result in a dessert art form, who cares. Luchetti, author of "Stars Desserts," is the former pastry chef of the highly acclaimed San Francisco brasserie, Stars.



Healthy desserts: "Healthy Homestyle Desserts," by Evelyn Tribole is sure to delight the calorie conscious on your holiday gift list.

Stew stirs up good taste and good smell

Cookbook author Jim Fobel loves to cook — especially when it's cold outside.

Fobel says one of his cooler weather favorites is Burgundy Beef Stew, "a dish that benefits the house as well as the palate. The long, slow simmering warms the kitchen, provides incredible aromas and results in sensational stew."

"Gentle simmering brings out a bigger, deeper flavor in the beef as well as making it fork-tender," says Fobel, author of "Jim Fobel's Big Flavors," winner of the 1996 James Beard Foundation Award for the Best General Cookbook.

This stew is a favorite for entertaining — he makes it a day in advance then reheats it

just before serving. Since the beef is teamed with carrots, potatoes, onions and mushrooms, only simple accompaniments are needed. Fobel suggests a mixed green salad and warm, crusty bread.

To make this savory one-pot meal, Fobel uses three easy steps: browning the beef, adding liquid to cover, and finally, covering tightly and gently simmering. It begins with economical beef chunks and cuts it into pieces which he browns slowly and evenly.

"Don't rush this process," says Fobel.

After browning, he adds a full-bodied red wine, bay leaves and thyme, then gently simmers the beef. The end result captures the



Sensational stew: Burgundy Beef Stew is the perfect meal for those colder days.

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PUMPKIN PIE NADA

Serves 8

This is a very easy and great-tasting crustless pumpkin pie. It's full-bodied enough that you really don't miss the crust.

TOPPING

4 tablespoons no-fat sour cream
2 ounces fat-free cream cheese, softened at room temperature
1 tablespoon sugar

With an electric mixer or blender, mix all ingredients together until smooth.

Nutrition per serving
Calories: 196
Protein: 7.2 grams
Fat: 0.66 grams
Sodium: 196.93 mg
Carbohydrates: 39 grams
Calories from fat: 3.38 percent

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix all ingredients well. Pour into a nine-inch pie plate that has been sprayed with vegetable oil spray. Bake for approximately 45 minutes to one hour. You may want to cover the edges with aluminum foil for last 15 to 20 minutes. Let pie cool then spread with topping.

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