



# Simple to Spectacular: How to Take One **Basic Recipe to Four Levels of Sophistication**

By Jean-Georges Vongerichten, Mark Bittman





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What happens when a four-star chef and a culinary minimalist decide to join forces to create something different? They invent a new style that adapts to every occasion and every level of cooking expertise. Simple to Spectacular introduces a unique concept developed by one of the world's top chefs, Jean-Georges Vongerichten, and Mark Bittman, author of How to Cook Everything and the New York Times's hugely popular column "The Minimalist." Ever since their award-winning collaboration on Jean-Georges: Cooking at Home with a Four-Star Chef, the acclaimed duo has been cooking up a repertoire of new dishes that can be prepared in any of five progressively sophisticated ways.

Simple to Spectacular features a total of 250 recipes in 50 groups. Each group begins with a simple, elegant recipe-a few ingredients combined for maximum effect--followed by fully detailed, increasingly elaborate variations. For example, a recipe for Grilled Shrimp with Thyme and Lemon leads to Grilled Shrimp and Zucchini on Rosemary Skewers, Grilled Shrimp with Apple Ketchup, Thai-style Grilled Shrimp on Lemongrass Skewers, and Grilled Shrimp Balls with Cucumber and Yogurt.

Every aspect of the meal is covered, from superb soups and salads to unforgettable side dishes, entrees, and desserts. In Simple to Spectacular, everything--from the basics to innovations by a four-star chef--is tailored for a quick Tuesday night dinner or an elegant weekend party. And in the now-classic Vongerichten-Bittman style, all of the recipes can be made in the kitchen of any home cook. With 80 full-color photographs giving a mouthwatering view of the Simple-to-Spectacular transformations, readers and cooks will eagerly explore the possibilities. Jean-Georges Vongerichten (right) won the 1998 James Beard Award for Outstanding Chef and Best New Restaurant. His Manhattan restaurants include Vong, Jo Jo, The Mercer Kitchen, and Jean Georges, which earned a rare four-star rating from the New York Times.

In **Simple to Spectacular**, two titans of the food world have created a truly groundbreaking cookbook. Here are 250 superb recipes arranged in a uniquely useful way: a basic recipe and four increasingly sophisticated variations, with each group (there are 50 groups in all) based on a given technique. This ingenious organization enables cooks of all levels of expertise to understand how a recipe is created and to re-create the brilliantly simple recipes and dazzling variations from one of our best food writers and home cooks teamed with one of America's greatest chefs.

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#### **Editorial Review**

#### Amazon.com Review

What happens when a world-class chef--Jean Georges Vongerichten, to be exact--writes a cookbook with a culinary minimalist, the *New York Times* food columnist Mark Bittman? The answer is *Simple to Spectacular*, a book that presents more than 250 recipes in a unique way. Here's the drill: a few-ingredient "core" recipe is offered, followed by formulas for four increasingly sophisticated (though not necessarily more taxing) variations. Chicken Breasts in Foil with Rosemary and Olive Oil, for example, yields to recipes for the breasts with tomatoes, olives, and Parmesan; with mushrooms, shallots, and sherry; Thai style; and, finally, with foie gras and porcini mushroom. In hands other than the authors', the dishes could be banal or overwrought. Vongerichten and Bittman triumph, however, presenting richly imagined yet straightforward fare whose preparation almost all cooks can manage.

Dish categories range from soups, salads, and entrees to seasonings, sauces, and desserts. In a number of cases, a particular ingredient, such as pasta, or a technique, such as vegetable roasting, is explored (the authors offer recipes for making plain pasta flavored with curry, for example). The sauce section is particularly useful and provides interesting theme-and-variation recipes for vinaigrettes and mayonnaises. Desserts, including Roasted Almond Ice Cream, Butter-Poached Pears with Praline, and Chocolate Tart in a Chocolate Crust, should please all sweet lovers. With 80 color photos, useful tips, and notes on food and equipment, *Simple to Spectacular* offers an original premise that will stimulate thought as well as great cooking. --*Arthur Boehm* 

## From Publishers Weekly

Following their James Beard Award- winning collaboration, Jean-Georges: Cooking at Home with a Four-Star Chef, Vongerichten and New York Times food columnist Bittman (The Minimalist) team up again, this time ingeniously leading home cooks from simple to spectacular dishes. "A mastery of basic recipes and an idea of how to vary them leads to almost limitless options," writes Bittman. They emphasize time-saving techniques and offer an intriguing range of flavor possibilities. An excellent section on seasonings and sauces introduces innovative flavor-enhancers such as Citrus Salt, Mint-Licorice Spice Mix and Lobster Oil Mayonnaise. The authors expertly marry an updated French culinary sensibility with Asian-inspired influences, gradually transforming one basic recipe into four increasingly sophisticated dishes by adding luxury ingredients (e.g., truffles, caviar) or unusual seasonings (like harissa or pistachio oil), or by incorporating more advanced techniques (such as making beurre noisette). Among the mouthwatering permutations on French-bistro basics, One-Hour Chicken Stock morphs into Rich Chicken Soup with Chestnuts and Mushrooms; Best Scrambled Eggs is elevated to Oeufs au Caviar; and Tuna Tartare takes a fancy turn as Tuna Spring Roll with Soybean Coulis. Clean, pared-down prose, helpful "Keys to Success" sidebars and clear recipe instructions ably guide both novice and seasoned cooks. With a masterful understanding of today's global pantry, the authors have produced a modern classic. (Oct.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

#### From Library Journal

Based on the premise that "almost all recipes proceed from the basics," this is a book about learning to cook. Its ten chapters cover soups; salads; eggs, crepes, and savory tarts; pasta, noodles, and rice; vegetables; fish and shellfish; poultry; meat; seasonings and sauces; and desserts. Each begins with the fundamentals for working with that category and then proceeds linearly to build a basic recipe into mouth-watering complexities by introducing new techniques and ingredientsDoften Thai influenced. In less expert hands, this

could have been a formula for fussiness and frustration, but the steps are so clearly explained (with rarely more than five per recipe) and the progressions so logical that even novices should feel confident. Vongerichten, a four-star chef, and respected food journalist Bittman have collaborated before, notably on the highly acclaimed Jean-Georges. This outstanding new work should be no less well received. Highly recommended.DWendy Miller, Lexington P.L., KY Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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