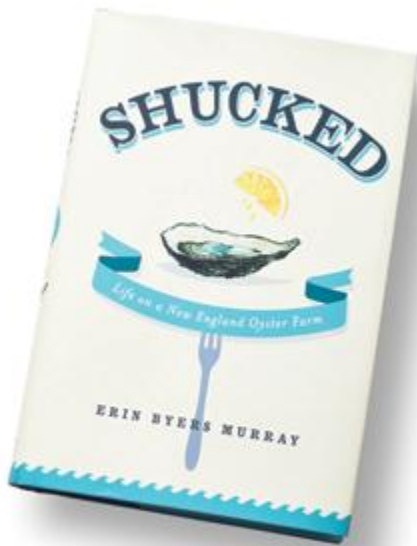


<http://www.ediblecommunities.com/boston/winter-2012/edible-reads.htm>

The Gift List
By Andrea Pyenson

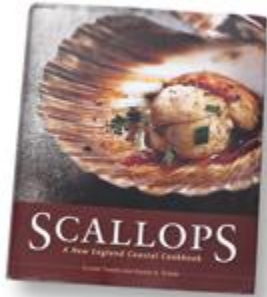
Maybe it's wishful thinking, but even though bookstores are struggling and the publishing industry is in disarray a continuous stream of new food- and cookbooks suggests that, to paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of the death of books may be grossly exaggerated.

This year's crop is well populated by local authors, some contributing first efforts, some expanding on significant catalogues of work. Two of the entries in the following list are from our very own contributors. Kudos to all! Happy reading, and happy eating!

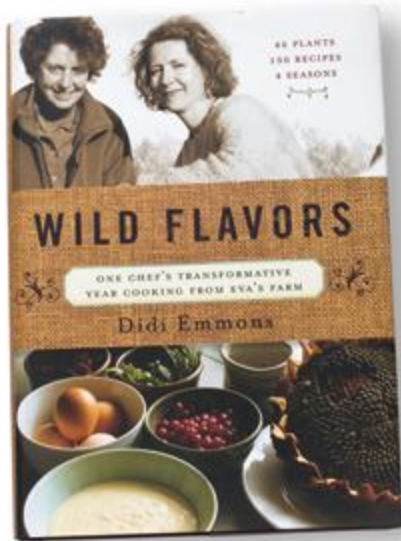


One of the joys of reporting and writing about food is the opportunity to meet so many people who are passionate about what they do. I can't count the times I've come away from an assignment wishing I could be part of the group I just left. But I've never actually done anything about it. Erin Byers Murray did. Murray, an *edible Boston* contributor, had an admittedly cushy life as the Boston editor of DailyCandy.com, a lifestyle and shopping website. But as she puts it, something was missing. One night at a Boston restaurant she met and was impressed with the business development director of Duxbury's Island Creek Oysters and before long she had traded her high heels for Wellies and joined the crew as an oyster farmer. The engrossing *Shucked* is Murray's account of the year and a half she spent working for this impressive operation. In addition to sharing her personal story, Murray delivers a fascinating insider look at the oyster industry, with a titillating peek at the restaurant world. Island Creek supplies some of the country's holy temples of gastronomy, and she manages a visit to one of the holiest. Her tenure also coincides with the birth of Island Creek's wildly successful Kenmore Square outpost, Island Creek Oyster Bar. Every chapter concludes with an oyster recipe developed by an Island Creek

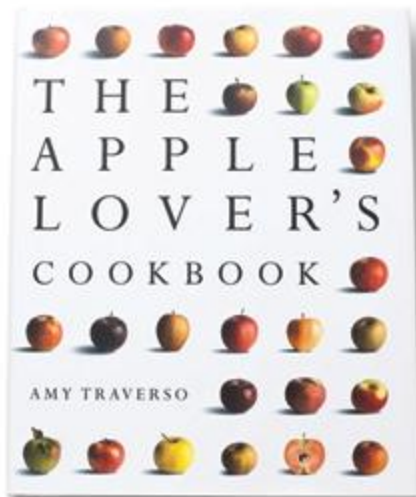
staffer or a well-known chef, most from the Boston area. But the best part? You don't have to get cold, wet, muddy or splattered with oyster poop to savor every bit of her story, then go enjoy your own oysters. List price: \$25.99.



The mother-daughter team of Elaine Tammi and Karin A. Tammi has taken a different approach to a similar topic in *Scallops: A New England Coastal Cookbook*. Where *Shucked* is a personal look at oysters and where they come from, *Scallops* purports to be a personal journey but is a lot more academic in tone. That makes sense, given that it began life as Karin Tammi's master's thesis. The younger Tammi is a marine biologist and manages the Luther H. Blount Shellfish Hatchery at Roger Williams University. She is known as "The Scallop Queen" to her students. Her mother, who lives on Cape Cod, is an avid home cook and food writer. With loads of interesting facts—New Bedford is the sea scallop capital of the world, for instance, and Nantucket Bay scallops command the highest price per pound of any shellfish—and information about scalloping, an industry that shares much with oyster farming, it's a bit of a heavy read punctuated by beautiful photos. And recipes. The women have you covered for every course but dessert. Many of the recipes come from Boston-area chefs, including East Coast Grill's Chris Schlesinger, who wrote the foreword; Pigalle and Marco chef-owner Marc Orfaly; and Ana Sortun, chef-owner of Oleana and Sofra. List price: \$39.95.



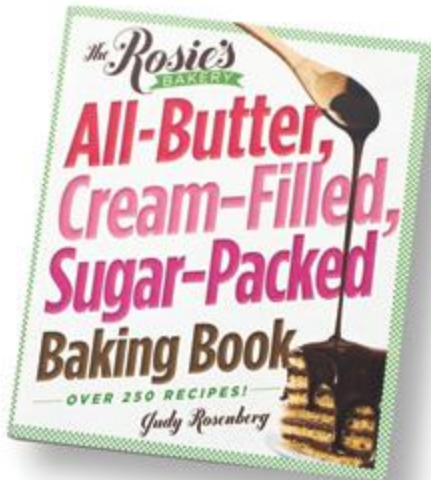
Didi Emmons compares her first visit to Eva Sommaripa's farm, in southeastern Massachusetts, to "the botanical version of the Louvre, impossible to absorb in a single day." Sommaripa is a legend, especially to local chefs, for the unparalleled quality and variety of herbs and greens she coaxes from the soil of her Dartmouth property. Emmons is no slouch herself. An award-winning author of two previous cookbooks and a chef-restaurateur, she is now teaching Roxbury and Dorchester residents how to eat and cook healthfully and consulting to the Boston Public Health Commission and the Boston Public School food service. But she credits meeting Sommaripa and spending time on the farm—lots of it, adopting the older woman's philosophy of eating every plant throughout its life cycle, and her abhorrence of waste—with her evolution as a cook. Emmons' lyrical *Wild Flavors: One Chef's Transformative Year Cooking from Eva's Farm* is an inspiration to adopt at least some of Sommaripa's teachings. She divides the book into seasons, assigning to each one of Sommaripa's guiding principles: Winter is for salvaging, spring for community, summer means bartering and fall, of course, is the time to preserve and conserve. Recipes in each chapter are devoted to seasonal vegetables and herbs, each one prefaced by a vignette and description of culinary uses, health virtues, tips for buying (or, if they're not available in markets, foraging) and storing, and growing. I can't say that since devouring this book I've started eating apple cores, as Sommaripa does, or stopped throwing away stems or cutting away vegetables' brown spots, but I feel a little guilty each time I do. It's a start. List price: \$34.95.



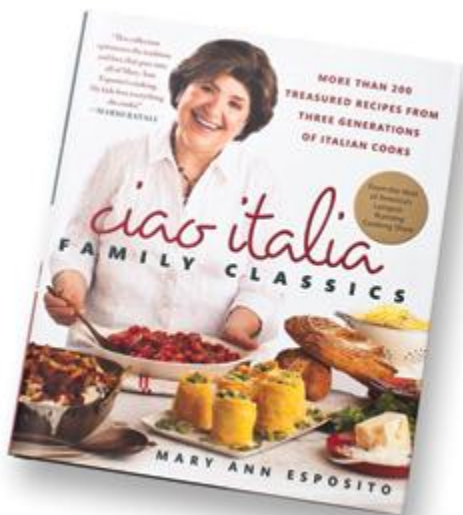
And speaking of apple cores, who knew that apples express terroir? Thanks to *Yankee* magazine food and home editor Amy Traverso and *The Apple Lover's Cookbook*, now we do. This beautiful, well-researched tome presents a history of the all-American fruit—which actually traces its origin to the Tien Shan forests in Kazakhstan. Traverso has thoughtfully, and conveniently, grouped 59 popular apple varieties into four categories based on how they perform in cooking: firm-tart, for sweet baked desserts that need acidity; firm-sweet, for sweet and savory baked dishes; tender-tart, for cooked soups and sauces; and tender-sweet, for quick-cooking dishes, like pancakes, and eating out of hand. As I was perusing the 100 recipes, which encompass savory and sweet, appetizer to dessert and everything in between, I was jotting down titles so I wouldn't forget the ones I couldn't wait to make. (I started with Apple Pumpkin Walnut Muffins and followed up with Pork and Apple Pie with Cheddar-Sage Crust.) Traverso also introduces us to apple personalities, like a breeder at Cornell University's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station; a farmer in Phillipston, Massachusetts, who grafts multiple varieties—sometimes in multiple colors—onto single trees, and a hard cider maker in New Hampshire. If you love apples—and who doesn't?—this book belongs in your collection. List price: \$29.95.



As it turns out, apple picking, that iconic New England fall activity, is not limited to the confines of our little corner of heaven. Even in the French countryside, where food writer, stylist and photographer Béatrice Peltre grew up, “Apple picking in the fall is a food tradition.” In her book *La Tartine Gourmande: Recipes for an Inspired Life*, Peltre shares stories from her childhood in France, where her family of superb cooks grew or raised much of their own food, as well as her life as a working mother. Having traveled the world and worked in a variety of countries and fields, Peltre started a food blog in 2005 as an outlet to channel her culinary obsession. With its luscious photography and creative recipes, many inspired by French country fare, the blog caught on and grew into this book (they share a title). Without promoting *La Tartine Gourmande* as gluten-free—it’s not; tartine recipes, for example, call for bread—Peltre explains that most of the flours in the recipes are gluten-free. This is because she was once advised to avoid gluten for a short time and, after trying the replacement flours, decided she liked them better than wheat. So we have Pâte Sucrée made from white rice flour, quinoa flour, cornstarch and xanthan gum; Basil-Flavored Zucchini and Comté Muffins with millet, quinoa and amaranth flour; and Brown Butter Pistachio and Poppy Seed Financiers made with white rice flour. Sounds pretty inspired to me. List price: \$35.

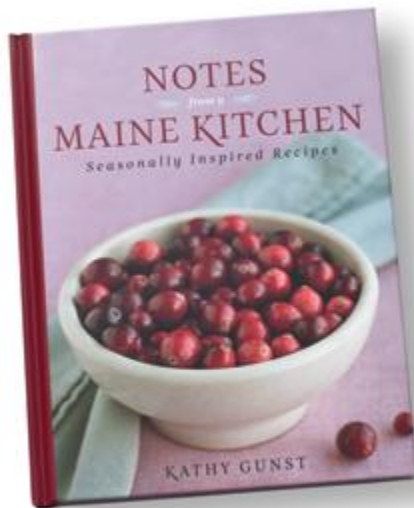


Back in the land of gluten ... and butter, cream and sugar ... Judy Rosenberg of Rosie's fame recently issued an update to her two 1990s cookbooks in the form of *The Rosie's Bakery All-Butter, Cream-Filled, Sugar-Packed Baking Book*. With Flour bakery expanding (though not to the suburbs) and cupcakeries popping up on every corner, it would be easy to dismiss a standby that has been around since the 1980s. That would be a mistake. Featuring the best recipes of the first two books, with 40 new ones, Rosenberg's latest effort has a bit of a retro feel, in a good way. Lots of people are afraid of baking and right off the bat the self-taught baker tries to dispel any misgivings, encouraging readers to relax, and going so far as to share examples of some of her early "mistakes" that turned into successes. She also gives very practical advice, like reading through a recipe before starting, and setting out all the ingredients before you begin. Like Rosie's, the recipes in this book are classics. The woman who brought us the chocolate orgasm hasn't lost her mojo. List price: \$15.95.

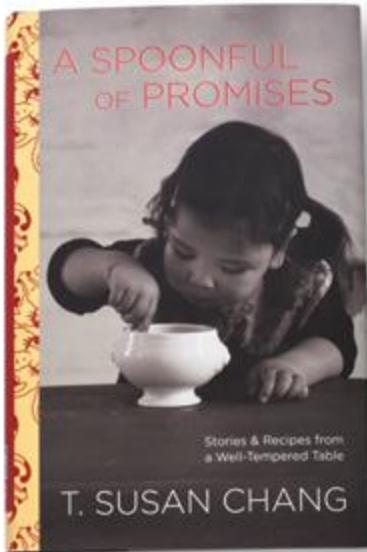


Mary Ann Esposito is another local icon, a food television pioneer whose "Ciao Italia" has been

airing on PBS for more than 20 years. The New Hampshire resident's latest in a long line of cookbooks, *Ciao Italia Family Classics*, celebrates family meals like the ones her mother and grandmothers used to make. As she notes in her introduction, the essence of Italian home cooking has always been to focus on the quality of ingredients, prepared simply, in tune with the seasons. Esposito's 12th written effort helps preserve and promote both home cooking and family-style eating with 200 of the types of delicious and satisfying dishes it seems we can never get enough of. Mac and cheese, anyone? Baked ziti? She mixes traditional fare, like her grandmother's Sicilian Rice Balls and Eggplant Rolls, with more modern dishes like Walnut, Dried Fig and Anise Bread, prepared in a stand mixer; and gives us her "simpler, gentler" version of Roman-Style Artichokes. Reading Esposito's account of watching her mother and grandmother make macaroni (which could mean any of a number of pasta shapes) from "a Mount Vesuvius mountain of flour" every Sunday makes your mouth water for some homemade pasta—even if you have to make it yourself. List price: \$40.



Fortified with pasta you may feel up to a trek to our region's northernmost state. There's lots to do up there—forget the outlet malls—and you are sure to eat well. According to Maine resident Kathy Gunst, lobster is just the beginning of what the Pine Tree State has to offer. In her latest offering, *Notes from a Maine Kitchen: Seasonally Inspired Recipes*, the food writer, educator and "resident chef" for WBUR's "Here and Now" takes us on a literary/culinary tour through her home, month by month. January is for ice fishing—apparently a rite of passage for Mainers. Luckily for Gunst, her rite takes place with chef Sam Hayward of Portland's renowned Fore Street restaurant and concludes with a feast of his Pan-Fried Cornmeal-Coated Smelts. At least we get the recipe. April finds the author foraging for ramps, and she's back at it in October—this time for mushrooms. Gunst shares her struggle to eat locally in the cold of northern New England and expresses her joy at the rise of winter farmers markets, issues we can relate to even down here in balmy Massachusetts. She sings the praises of Maine crabmeat and sweet shrimp, both so often overshadowed by the iconic crustacean for which the state is known. By the time you get to her New Year's Eve party, you'll wish you had been invited. List price: \$27.95.



Out in the western part of our state, freelance food writer T. Susan Chang, familiar to many of us as the cookbook reviewer for the Boston Globe and her contributions to NPR, is baring it all in *A Spoonful of Promises: Stories & Recipes from a Well-Tempered Table*. Who would have guessed, from her always helpful, detailed and well written reviews, that she harbors a past as a mushroom thief – and she feels no remorse? Her account of the desperation that led her to this impulsive act is the first in a series of 33 beautiful essays, written with humor and warmth, covering her Chinese-American heritage, single working life in New York, childless married life and life with children – all seen through the lens of culinary obsession. In addition to all the recipe testing she does for cookbook reviews, Chang attended culinary school in New York, so she knows her way around a kitchen. Each piece is followed by a recipe. Her son's favorite, chard tart, is on its way to becoming a favorite in my house, and may become one in yours, too. List price: \$24.95.



Back in our own yard, it is only fitting that the same year *edible* magazines won a James Beard award, one of our own, Steve Holt, should find himself in *Best Food Writing 2011*. In his story, “Guilt Free: Area Burger Joints Take the Junk Out of Fast Food,” from the Spring 2011 issue, Holt acknowledges that despite our best intentions, even those of us who appreciate fresh, local food still crave the occasional fast food fix. He goes on to profile two Boston-area restaurants, FOUR Burgers and b.good, that let us satisfy those cravings without sacrificing our principles—or health. You probably read the story in the magazine last spring, and can still see it in our online archive. But Holt is keeping good company in this year’s volume, so you might want to pop for the whole thing. Worth the list price: \$16.

Andrea Pyenson, who writes about food and travel, is trying to find space for all her new cookbooks.