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Design, illustrations and layout by A.C. Harkness : perilouspaper.tumblr.com

Dear Reader,

What a year it has been at the bookstore.

We put in new floors, added a bunch of bookshelves and bought cozy armchairs for both the large and small set. We redesigned our logo and put up a new awning so everyone could see it. We threw an event last summer with Patti Smith where we packed a standing-room-only audience into Brooklyn Bridge Park. We tore out our old kitchen to enlarge our on-site event space and launched a major off-site reading series with Congregation Beth Elohim, Brooklyn by the Book.

It would be false modesty if we claimed not to be proud of everything we've accomplished this past year. At the same time, however, there is nothing like putting together this annual list of holiday reading recommendations to restore us to our normal humble selves. Picking titles for the list reminded us that for all the changes this year, and for everything that happened at the store over the preceding 40 years, it has always been about books. We are nothing without the authors who pour their hearts and skills into their words, who spend years researching their subjects, who drive themselves crazy over the phrasing of a sentence, the structure of a chapter, the depiction of a character.

In the end, what makes us most proud is one of the things at the store that hasn't changed at all: the quality of the books we sell. That, in turn, makes us proud of our customers: good capitalists that we are, we stock well-written books because those, overwhelmingly, are what our customers buy.

Good writing, as always, was our major criterion in picking our holiday list, but it is also hard to look at this list in the context of Hurricane Sandy and not see a bias toward hopefulness and human connection.

That bias might be reflective of our staff, which, despite protestations to the contrary, is a sensitive and caring bunch. Absolutely, it is reflective of our neighbors, where every day we hear astronomical new totals for the number of meals cooked and delivered, items donated and hours volunteered to Sandy's victims. We strive to curate our bookstore for the community in which we live and operate and it follows logically that our recommendations would lean in the same direction.

So here's our holiday list, which we offer in the spirit of the season, of our neighborhood and of all the things that will never change at the bookstore as long as we're in charge. This list was pared down from a much longer one, so we have lots more to recommend. Also, we deliberately excluded some of our favorite books because they are already so well known; we wanted to feature as much work as possible that has escaped widespread attention. Finally, rest assured that we all also have our favorite books of despair, if that's your cup of (bitter) tea.

Happy Holidays,

The Community Bookstore

THE ART OF GIVING

HARE WITH AMBER EYES

By Edmund de Waal

One of the best books we read last year, in an updated hardcover edition with dazzling color illustrations.

MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS

Edited by Luke Dempsey

Every line from every bit, plus photos! Say no more, say no more, wink wink nudge nudge.

FLOWER

photographs by
Andrew Zuckerman

Does for flowers what last's year's Trees did for, well, trees: each page, each flower, a masterpiece.

WALKER EVANS AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHS

MOMA's reissue of the landmark 1938 master collection.

GRACE

by Grace Coddington

She stole the show in the documentary The September Issue and now Vogue's creative director steals it again with her charming and sweetly-illustrated memoir about her fashionable life.

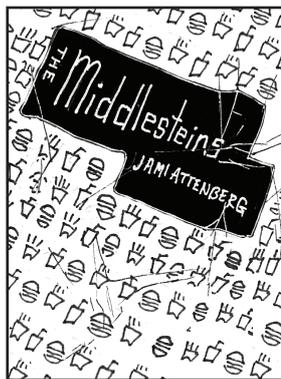
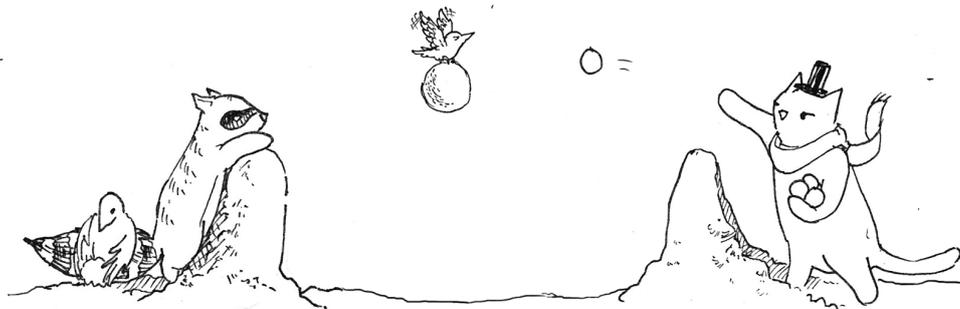
MY IDEAL BOOKSHELF

By Thessaly La Force
illustrated by Jane Mount

Mount asked cultural icons to name the books they found most memorable then illustrated a bookshelf for each person, from Alice Waters to John Jeremiah Sullivan.



FICTION



THE MIDDLESTEINS

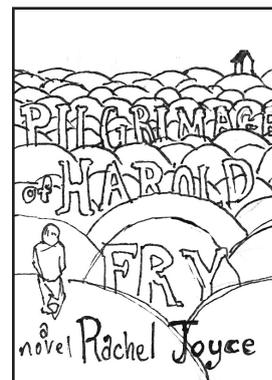
By Jami Attenberg

A serious novel infused with comedic moments, centered around a matriarch who can't stop eating.

THE INCREDIBLE PILGRIMAGE OF HAROLD FRY

By Rachel Joyce

What man of a certain age won't see a bit of Harold in himself, and yearn for the open road?



NW

By Zadie Smith

The story, told primarily by two women who have been friends for life, is of the women's deep distrust of their own dreams.



MAY WE BE FORGIVEN

By A.M. Homes

The darkest and funniest novel since Skippy Dies, and also the ultimate dysfunctional family story.

LIONEL ASBO

By Martin Amis

Lionel is so over-the-top despicable that we root simultaneously for his comeuppance and for his horrifyingly entertaining escapades to continue forever.

STORIES, SHORT BUT TELLING

BATTLEBORN

By Claire Vaye Watkins

A consistently excellent collection of stories set in the West and featuring gritty, but gorgeous, prose.

BIRDS OF A LESSER PARADISE

By Megan Mayhew Bergman

A sublime debut collection of short stories that explore our complex and unsettling relationship with animals and the natural world.

DEAR LIFE

By Alice Munro

Each of Munro's stories, as usual, is a perfectly constructed miniature universe.

MICROSCRIPTS

By Robert Walser and

The most minute of fictions plus a tribute by Maira Kalman and an afterword by Walter Benjamin.

THE REVISED FUNDAMENTALS OF CAREGIVING

By Jonathan Evison

We root so hard for grief-stricken Benji that we become caregivers too and he our charge as he sets off on a Bilbo Baggins-like road trip.

DOG STARS

By Peter Heller

The protagonist may be forgiven for being stuck in a literal, post-apocalyptic rut, and when he does finally venture forth our hearts race with his for the next hundred pages.

BRING UP THE BODIES

By Hillary Mantel

Worthy of all the prizes it has won.

LAURA LAMONT'S LIFE IN PICTURES

By Emma Straub

A small-town girl moves to Hollywood and discovers the high price and the fragility of superstardom.

CAPITAL

By John Lanchester

Lanchester's near-epic novel might be more accurately called *Pepys Road* as he limns the lives of people on the street riding England's 2008 economic rollercoaster.

BEAUTIFUL RUINS

By Jess Walter

Richard Burton—yes, that Richard Burton—steals the love of a man's life in a tale that moves from the backwaters of Italy to the back lots of Hollywood.



SMALL PRESS / MAJOR FICTION

MY BRILLIANT FRIEND

By Elana Ferrante

Ferrante, in her signature understated style, makes us care deeply whether two girls can grow up in a Naples slum in the 1950s with egos, talents and hope for the future intact.

THE LOLA QUARTET

By Emily St. John Mandel

A literary thriller about jazz, plagiarism and the financial crisis that will hook you from page one.

HOW TO GET INTO THE TWIN PALMS

By Karolina Waclawiak

A fresh look at the immigrant experience featuring a Polish woman in a Russian neighborhood who longs to fit in.

GLACIERS

By Alexis M Smith

Any bookworm will appreciate this deceptively slim novel about a librarian obsessed with ephemera and pining after a co-worker.

MY ONLY WIFE

By Jac Jemc

Jemc's debut novel is a truly literary page-turner; who knew memories and obsession could be so suspenseful?

RHYME AND REASON

LIFE ON MARS

By Tracy K. Smith

Brilliant and topical poems about our place in the universe with a dose of David Bowie added for good measure. The 2012 Pulitzer-Prize winner

THE POEMS OF OCTAVIO BAZ

Edited and translated by Eliot Weinberger

This bilingual collection, assembled by Paz's principle translator for many decades, is the first to span Paz's entire, remarkable career.

JACK GILBERT: COLLECTED POEMS

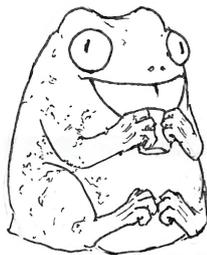
"There is a wren sitting in the branches of my spirit/and it chooses not to sing" laments Gilbert. Luckily for all who love his poetry, that wren sings plenty in this wonderful collection.

GRAPHIC NOVELS

KING CITY

By Brandon Graham

One of our favorite comics ever, written with a sense of humor and illustrated in a fantastic graffiti style. (A bit too sexy for anyone bellow high school.)



THE SECRET OF THE STONE FROG

By David Nytra
A simple, beautiful tale with a level of artistry that appeals to adults and kids on different levels, making it a perfect small present.

SAGA

By Brian K Vaughan

A colorful head trip comic for Adults Only; a reminder that scifi can be crazy in content and realistic in character, and an inexpensive intro to the best comic series to come out this year.



ECONOMIX

By Michael Goodwin

Our bookkeeper says this graphic book taught her more about the American economy than her degree in accounting. It presents a complex topic in a very accessible and enjoyable way

HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER SPECIAL

FAIRY TALES

FAIRY TALES FROM THE BROTHERS GRIMM

By Phillip Pullman

Pullman is a master storyteller and his retellings of the Grimms' tales provide context for why they've inspired his writing and continue to capture our imaginations.



FROM THE FOREST A SEARCH FOR THE HIDDEN ROOTS OF OUR FAIRY TALES

By Sara Maitland

A wondrous and revelatory look at how fairy tales rose from Europe's geographical landscape after the last ice age as glaciers retreated and forest spread.

MR. FOX

By Helen Oyeyemi

In this wry and playful novel, a twist on the Bluebeard tale, a writer is confronted by his muse for killing off his female protagonists.

THE ANNOTATED BROTHERS GRIMM

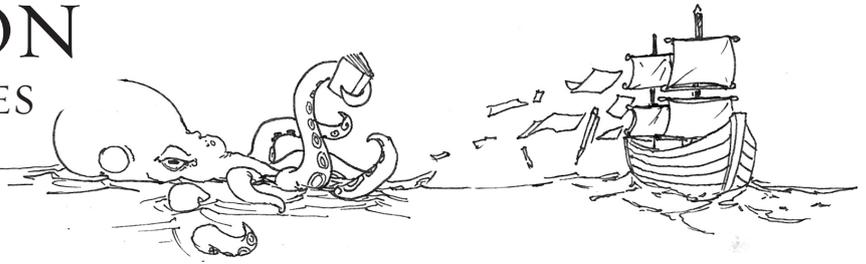
Edited By Maria Tartar

A beautifully illustrated and comprehensive look at the Grimm's original fairy tales and their meanings. Fall into a fairy tale rabbit hole with this masterful presentation of classic stories.



NON-FICTION

ADVENTURESOME LIVES
REMARKABLY LED



THE LAST VIKING
THE LIFE OF
RONALD AMUNDSEN
By Stephen R. Brown

Just as Amundsen captivated an international audience with his daring explorations of the farthest reaches of the globe, this engaging biography will keep you in its thrall to the end.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

THE ART OF POWER
By Jon Meacham

More than a biography, a primer on the clash between high concepts (life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness) and the gritty political realities that continue to shape American governance.

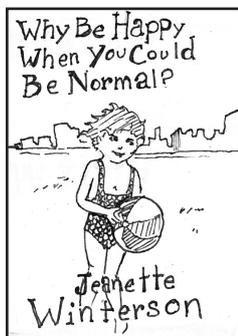
THE PASSAGE OF POWER
THE YEARS OF LYNDON JOHNSON
By Robert Caro

A serious undertaking, we know, and a book that hardly needs any more publicity from us, but a masterpiece about how the American political system, for all its cranky flaws, can be made to work when not stonewalled by the rigid ideologues.



BLACK COUNT
GLORY, REVOLUTION, BETRAYAL
AND THE REAL
COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

By Tom Reiss
The improbable but true story of Alexandre Dumas' larger-than-life, impossibly heroic, up-from-slavery father, and also a chronicle of a time, the European backdrop to America's first decades.



**WHY BE HAPPY WHEN
YOU COULD BE NORMAL**

By Jeanette Winterson

A memoir with the force and drama of a novel that reminds us of Winterson's place as a major writer.

HEROINES
by Kate Zambreno

The perfect blend of memoir, literary criticism and feminism in a whip-smart, raw, energetic manifesto for female artists.

THE ART OF THE ESSAY

THROUGH THE WINDOW
SEVENTEEN ESSAYS AND A SHORT STORY

By Julian Barnes

It should come as no surprise that a master stylist like Barnes can write with great intelligence about writers and writing in this collection that sometimes reads like a master class in the literary arts.

THINGS THAT ARE
By Amy Leach

Exquisitely-crafted essays about the inner workings of big and small things in the world that otherwise go unnoticed; a big treasure in a small package.

LET ME CLEAR MY THROAT
By Elena Passarello

A quirky and insightful collection for fans of John Jeremiah Sullivan.



ALL WE KNOW THREE LIVES

By Lisa Cohen

Three brilliant intellectual women and the women they loved; the perfect blend of high-brow gossip and serious biography.

JEWISH JOCKS

Edited by Franklin Foer and Marc Tracy

Not your normal, once-a-decade book about sports stars with some smidgen of Jewish blood but a fun, smart, contrarian collection of essays about athletes in the broadest sense of the word.

DEARIE THE REMARKABLE LIFE OF JULIA CHILD

By Bob Spitz

A chef shall guide us all: Julia Child changed the way Americans eat and led an amazing life besides.

SUBVERSIVES

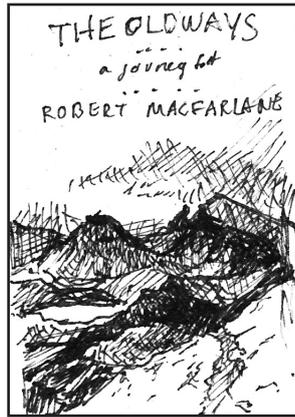
By Seth Rosenfield

Rosenfeld pushed the FBI for decades to cough up records that reveal the agency's silly, wasteful vendetta against student protestors at UC Berkeley in the '60s; a must-read for all convinced—or hopeful—that they, too, are named in musty FBI files.

DISREPUTABLE MENTION: HOW NOT TO READ

By Dan Wilbur

A rare humor book that is both funny and smart. But what do you expect from a classics major and Community Bookstore staffer who says, in all modesty, "This is the greatest book of all time."



PEOPLE WHO EAT DARKNESS

By Richard Lloyd Parry

The creepy, dark, true story about the murder of a young woman who gives up her job as a British Airways stewardess to become a hostess in Japan.

WINTER JOURNAL A MEMOIR

By Paul Auster

In a clear, lyrical voice, Auster touches on moments in his life to ruminate about what these memories mean as he hits his mid-60s.

THE OLD WAYS

By Robert Macfarlane

A beautifully written travelogue and exploration of the old walking paths and trails of the British Isles (and abroad) with echoes of Sebald and Dalrymple.

CUSTER

By Larry McMurtry

McMurtry weaves his characteristic storytelling voice through a large trove of archival material in an important book about a man who never deserved the heroic status he was accorded for generations.

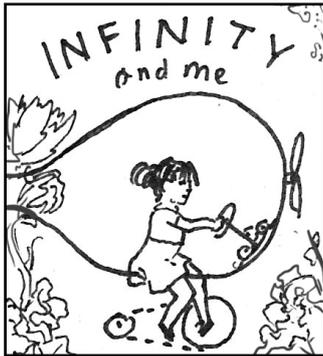
SHORT NIGHTS OF THE SHADOW CATCHER THE EPIC LIFE AND IMMORTAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF EDWARD CURTIS

By Timothy Egan

Curtis's photos are American icons, shrines to Indian cultures our forbearers did their best to destroy (see the accompanying book about Custer). Egan tells us how Curtis and his photos came to be.



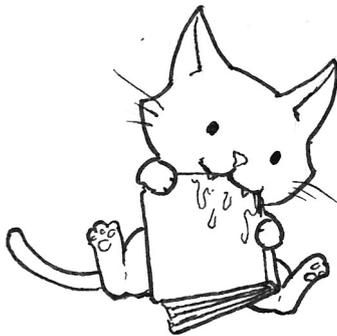
Picture Books



INFINITY AND ME

By Kate Hosford and
illustrated by Gabi Swiatkowska

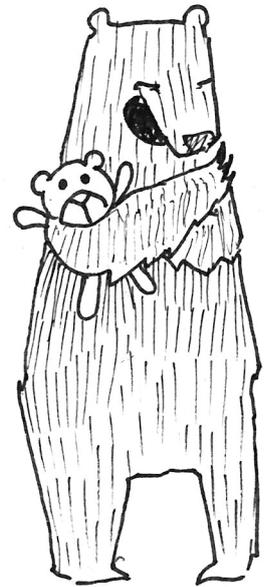
A smart, warm, and beautifully illustrated quest by eight-year-old Uma to grasp the concept of infinity.



BEAR DESPAIR

By Gaetan Doremus

A wordless but empowering picture book for young children who fear having their beloved stuffed animals taken away from them.



CECIL THE PET GLACIER

By Matthea Harvey and illustrated by Giselle Potter

A normal little girl goes on vacation to the far north with her “two not-normal at all parents” and is adopted by a normal little glacier. Great fun.

DADDY CHRISTMAS AND HANUKKAH MAMA

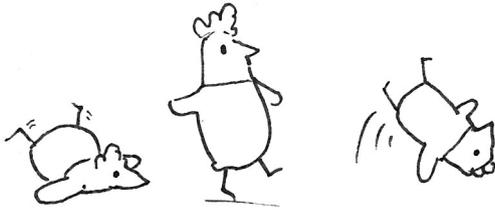
By Selina Aiko

Blended families deal with the holidays in different ways. The family Alko depicts is a delightful model of happy co-existence.

THE CHICKEN PROBLEM

By Jennifer Oxley and
Billy Aronson

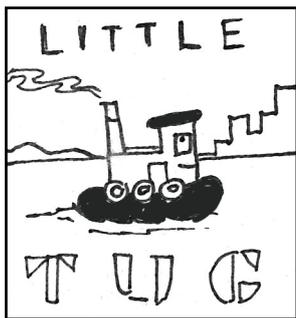
A quirky and intelligent book
dealing with the complex issues of
infinity, chickens, pie and fairness.



LITTLE TUG

By Stephen Savage

A deceptively simple story with
(like all of Savage's work)
lots to teach about love and
respect.



LAND OF NEVERBELIEVE

By Norman Messenger

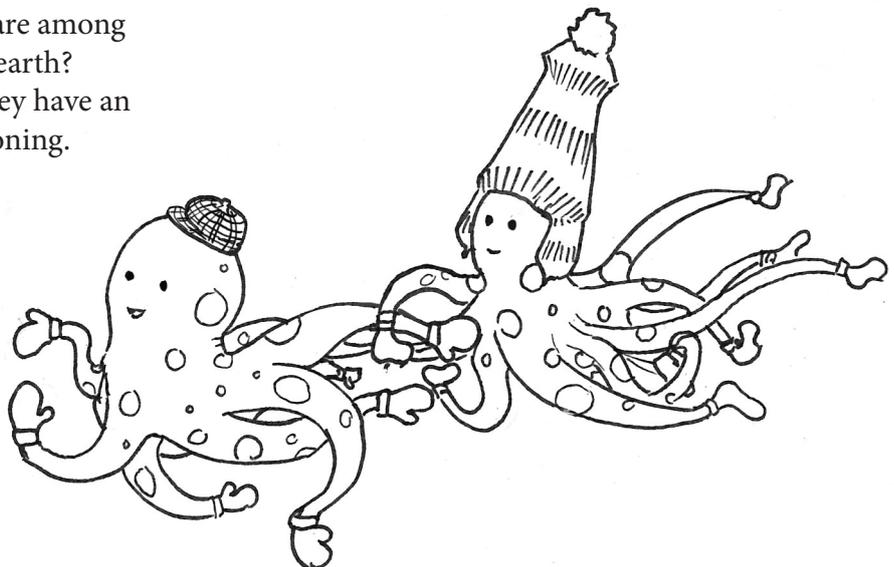
Messenger, as is his
delightful wont,
creates an entire animal
phantasmagoria in this
most unnatural nature
guide.



SQUID AND OCTOPUS FRIENDS FOR ALWAYS

By Tao Nyeu

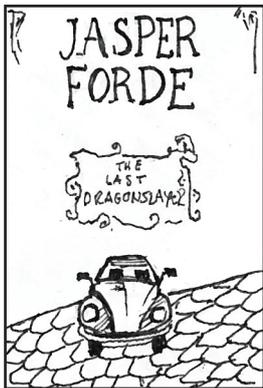
Did you know that cephalopods are among
the most intelligent creatures on earth?
They are able to use tools, plus they have an
amazing capacity for spatial reasoning.



YOUNG READERS



Books with reading level and content directed at ages 8-12



THE LAST DRAGONSLAYER

By Jasper Forde

A good, funny fantasy for ages 10 and up
(no adult content whatsoever).

LIAR AND SPY

By Rebecca Stead

Stead's follow-up to her Newberry Award-winning novel, *When You Reach Me*, is just as masterfully attuned to middle graders' dawning awareness and intense questioning.

HERE WHERE THE SUNBEAMS ARE GREEN

By Helen Phillips

Mix exotic birds, erupting volcanoes, two young sisters and the mystery of their missing dad and you've got a great yarn for pre-teens.

ACTIVITY BOOKS

DON'T LET THE PIGEON FINISH THIS ACTIVITY BOOK!!!

By Mo Willems

Put your pigeon fan to work on this giant collection of activities. The perfect present to bring to a house full of children.

UNUSUAL CREATURES: A MOSTLY ACCURATE ACCOUNT VOF SOME OF EARTH'S STRANGEST ANIMALS

By Michael Hurst

In this charming guide, the creatures are real, the illustrations will provoke gasps, and the tone is just the right blend of informative and silly.

I SAW ESAU

By Iona & Peter Opie,
illustrated by Maurice Sendak.

A reissued gem filled with indispensable childhood fodder including jump-rope rhymes, riddles, schoolyard insults and classic jokes, sprinkled with Sendak illustrations and bound into a neat volume.

UNBORED THE ESSENTIAL FIELD GUIDE TO SERIOUS FUN

By Joshua Glenn and
Elizabeth Foy Larsen

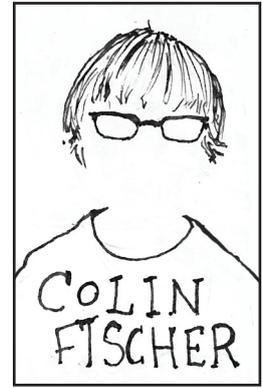
Just as there are many flavors of childhood boredom, this book provides a toolkit of projects, activities, shenanigans and more to save even the most glum of January days.



COLIN FISCHER

By Ashley Miller

Colin is a modern-day Sherlock—socially inept and highly intelligent—who delves into everything from a mystery at school to his new alliances and friendships.



ALEX AND THE AMAZING TIME MACHINE

By Rich Cohen

Who knew that the author of such non-fiction histories as *Tough Jews* and *The Fish that Ate the Whale* could write a pre-teen sci-fi mystery that keeps even adults on the edge of their chairs?

WONDER

By RJ Palacio

A beautifully written (and totally non-cloying) book about a boy with a facial deformity taking his first, tentative steps into the world.

YOUNG ADULT

Books for readers 13 and up (and up and up)

ASK THE PASSENGERS

By A.S. King

An insightful, character-driven story, great for thoughtful teens questioning themselves, the world they've come to know and the world they'd like to live in.

EVERYDAY

By David Levithan

Levithan's best, which is saying a lot; a blending of the insight and challenging philosophies fans have come to expect from the stories he pens and the heightened stakes of the fantasy epics he edits.



BURNING BLUE

By Paul Griffin

A hyper-charged dark mystery, a kind of *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* for the teen set, and also a meditative and sensitive look into the lives of teens who have to grow up too quickly.

COOKBOOKS



JERUSALEM

By Yotam Ottolenghi
and Sami Tamimi

Our cookbook of the year will help you perfect your hummus recipe while also introducing you to the essential flavor combinations of traditional Jerusalemite delicacies. Read this one cover to cover.

EAT YOUR VEGETABLES

By Arthur Potts
Dawson

Not a vegetarian cookbook but a celebration of the many ways vegetables can add flavor and excitement to your menu.

CANAL HOUSE COOKS

EVERY DAY

By Melissa Hamilton &
Christopher Hirsheimer

For cooks of every level and aspiration, this collection of seasonal recipes is one to cook your way through.

TACOS, TORTAS, AND TAMALES FLAVORS FROM THE GRIDDLES, POTS, AND STREETSIDE KITCHENS OF MEXICO

By Roberto Santibanez

The secrets of Mexican street food explained by the chef and owner of Park Slope's Fonda restaurant. Inexpensive enough to be the perfect present for gift exchanges, co-workers and the like.

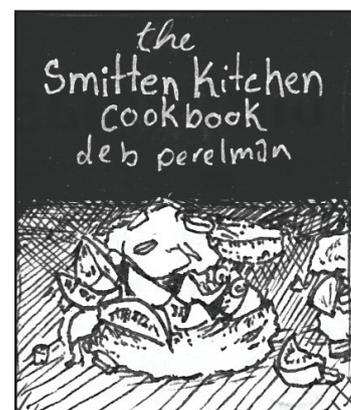


SMITTEN KITCHEN COOKBOOK

By Deb Perelman

Why should you buy a book, when you can read the blog for free?

Because Perelman developed original recipes for the book, and none of them disappoint.



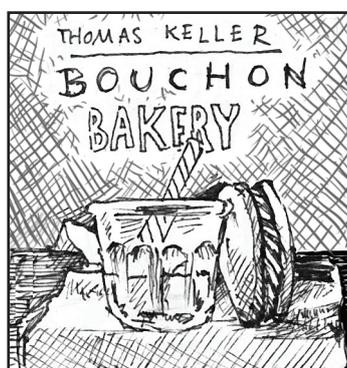
BAKED ELEMENTS

By Matt Lewis and Renato Poliafito

The third book from the creators of Baked bakery decodes some of their favorite ingredients (yes, one of them is booze).

Try a few recipes then head down to their bakery in

Red Hook to compare notes and support post-Sandy recovery.



BOUCHON BAKERY

By Thomas Keller

Keller delivers the ultimate gift for a baker in this lavish volume, with treats ranging from simple cookies to exquisite pastries.

