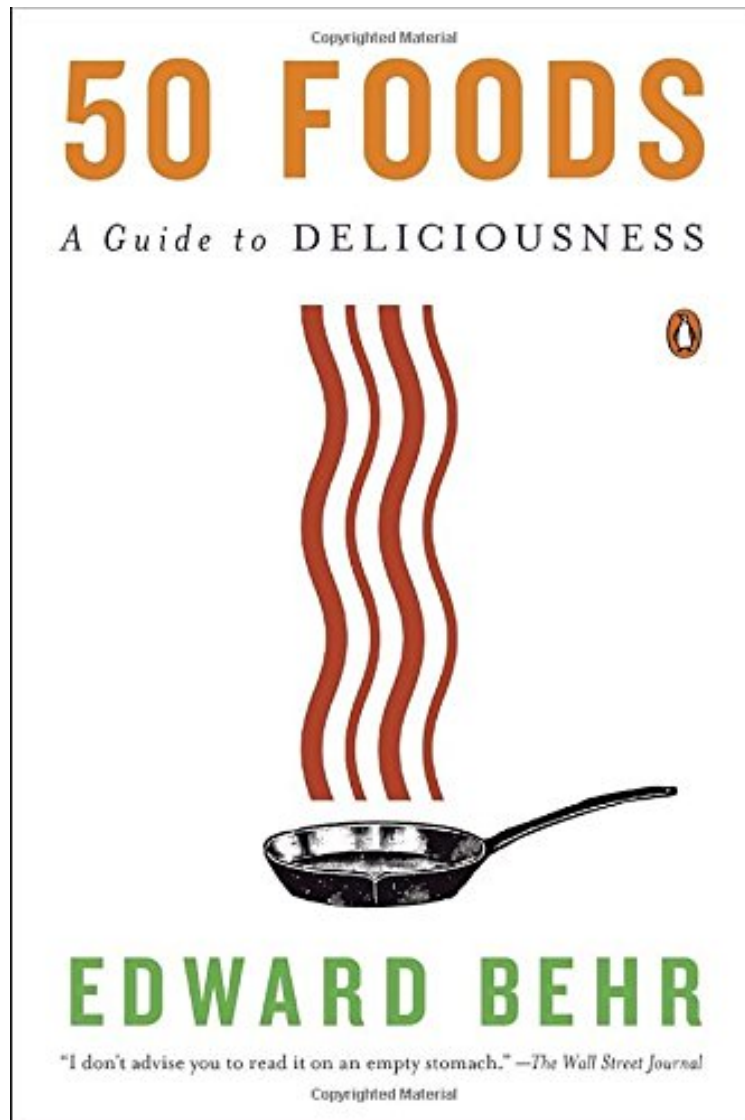


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50 Foods: A Guide to Deliciousness

Edward Behr

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Edward Behr : 50 Foods: A Guide to Deliciousness before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised 50 Foods: A Guide to Deliciousness:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. If you're a foodie, you'll love everything about this book. Everything.By Esther SchindlerI consider myself fairly knowledgeable when it comes to food topics. I can extol the relative values of the different ways to make spaetzle, I regularly compare five pot roast recipes before choosing which one to make, I became good friends with someone after we began a correspondence about verjus, I have chosen travel destinations based solely on their proximity to foodstuffs to bring home. Sometimes I'm not even tiresome when I

explain all these topics. So even though I bought myself this book (based on my earlier experiences with Behr's food newsletter, *The Art of Eating*), I didn't think I'd learn THAT much. Boy, was I wrong. It's chock full of "Wow I didn't know that!" and "Gosh, that's useful to know" and "Well, now I know what wine to serve with such things." As the book title suggests, Behr goes into great depth about 50 foodstuffs. They aren't necessarily essential-to-eat (not everyone needs or wants caviar or oysters), but rather, as he describes them, the "essentials of good taste." In other words: Any self-respecting foodie should know something about each of these foods, and this is a delightful way to learn. For each food, Behr offers an in-depth explanation of what the item is and where it fits in the meal pantheon; gardening notes when relevant; how to buy and store it; complements to the item; notes on wine. The chapters are generally 5-8 pages, making them an excellent choice for savoring during short reading stints. I kept the book in the kitchen, where I'd read it while I waited for water to boil or for the oven to pre-heat. While there are chapters for gourmet and specialty items such as truffles and chestnuts, most of the book is dedicated to "ordinary" foods we don't think about much, or at least don't appreciate as well as we ought to. So, for example, a chapter about asparagus extols the virtues of truly fresh asparagus, explains the extra cost of white asparagus the Germans prefer (as well as specific advice: "If the spears weren't just harvested, then in the field they must have been plunged immediately into very cold or iced water and afterward held at just above freezing. Green asparagus deserves the same treatment, but white demands it. Otherwise, the white soon has a cardboard flavor"--an observation I've found to be true, though I can't keep myself from buying it). Behr tells exactly what to look for in the market ("...the tips should be small and tight, not starting to open..."), how to prepare and serve it ("Is peeling green asparagus worth it? Emphatically, yes. Peeling reduces the stringiness that exists to some extent even in green asparagus, and it eliminates any grit lurking behind the shieldlike bracts on the stems. Because the strongest flavor lies in the skins, peeled asparagus tastes sweeter and more delicate..."), other foods that complement it (butter, olive oil, eggs -- sometimes he gives descriptive recipes), and wine notes (including the obvious discussion of its reputation as impossible with wine, and his exceptions: "Condiou, made from Vioigner grapes in the northern Rhone valley"). I learned a lot: "Like almost every fruit, melons ripen first at the blossom end, which remains the sweetest, most aromatic part" not to mention the various breeds of chicken and the sources and uses of various honeys (note to self: buy some thyme honey). The writing is particularly evocative and lovely. Behr shares his love of all these items, and makes me yearn to run out RIGHT NOW to find perfectly ripe strawberries, top quality Gruyere, and the finest dark chocolate. Oh okay... you know I'm always willing to consume chocolate. But still. Want to plaster a smile on a foodie-friend's face? Give this book as a present. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Ed Behr can do no wrong. By Zeldie Stuart. Ed Behr is one of my favorite food writers. I subscribe to his magazine for years and much enjoyed his articles. This book is clear, concise, informative and entertaining to read. I like being able to open a book to any chapter and read which is very doable with this book. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Long Over Due. By T. Stump. Edward Behr has swung and knocked it out of the park. All manner of food considerations are presented, with the whys and wherefores!! Anyone interested in learning about the ingredients to exemplary cooking would do well to read this tome!

With *50 Foods*, noted authority Edward Behr has created the definitive guide to the foods every food lover must know. A culinary Baedeker, *50 Foods* will delight and inform the connoisseur as well as the novice. Like Behr's celebrated magazine, *The Art of Eating*, *50 Foods* presents simple, practical information about buying, using, preparing, and enjoying. Behr focuses on aroma, appearance, flavor, and texture to determine what the best means for each food. He tells you how to select top quality signs of freshness and ripeness, best season, top varieties, proper aging. If the way to prepare, serve, or eat something is little known, then he explains it (how to open an oyster, why the best way to cook green beans is boiling, how to clean a whole salted anchovy, when to eat and when to discard the rind of a cheese). Behr also names the most complementary foods and flavors for each of these fifty marvelous foods and the wines that go with them. The fifty selections provide a broad sensory range for the modern gourmet. Most of the foods are raw materials, but some have been fermented or otherwise transformed into bread, ham, cheese. Six of the fifty are cheeses. As Behr explains, cheese is probably the best food, as wine is the best drink. Behr argues that food tastes more delicious when it is closer to nature. Skilled low technology is almost always superior to high technology. But with scientific insight, the old methods can be refined to achieve more consistent high quality. We can't always have the best, but with the information in this book we can eat better every day. Knowing good food is part of a complete understanding of the world part of a full enjoyment of nature, a full experience of the senses, a full life. For the connoisseur at any level, *50 Foods* is a beautifully written guide to deliciousness, with color illustrations by Mikel Jaso throughout.

From Booklist. Compacting the world's myriad foods to an inventory of just 50 may prove a formidable task. But Behr is up to the challenge and makes compelling and intelligent arguments for each of his selections. Beef, lamb, and veal appear, as do seafood and vegetables, such as green beans, and even condiments, such as vinegar. Rarely is any of the enumerated foods eaten on its own, so Behr appends items whose flavors don't simply complement but also generate synergies enhancing each. Behr's tastes are particular but not fussy, although some of his prescriptions, such as

avoiding combining oysters with lemon juice, fly in the face of convention. Behr chooses the best wines, where appropriate, to accompany each item on his list. Some favored wines will be familiar to connoisseurs only, but plenty abound on the shelves of any decently stocked wine merchant. This is equally a reference text and a book for foodies to savor. --Mark Knoblauch *The Wall Street Journal*: In putting together *50 Foods*, Mr. Behr has made use of his decades of interviewing farmers and wine producers and his travels in Europe and America. He has strong tastes and strong opinions, and his smart and evocative descriptions make for good reading. Stop at any entry, and he'll draw you in...it will be useful to both the novice and the connoisseur." *Los Angeles Times*: Great reading." *The Minneapolis Star Tribune*: "For the reader who loves to burrow into a food book with as much enthusiasm as with a novel...It's a delightful book with beautiful design and clever illustrations from Mikel Jaso that will make you smile (at least I did)." *The Daily Beast*: "One ingredient at a time, Edward Behr will change the way you eat for the better....Behr is after something more fundamental and elusive. He is after good taste. He is after questions that have animated humans since we could eat why things taste good; what tastes best together; why we eat certain things at certain times, and so on. That is why, unlike the dozen or so brilliant, useful, and enticing cookbooks published this year (see Heston Blumenthal, Fergus Henderson, Alice Waters, Le Pigeon, etc.), Behr's book deserves your attention. In elegant, clear, and enthusiastic prose, he gives us the building blocks to think about food, to move beyond the recipes and understand why things taste good." *The Atlantic*: "Each [entry] has something on buying and storing you can learn from, and an observation you might never have thought of but will make you nod in agreement." *The Austin Chronicle*: "[Behr has] a quiet voice and unfussy style -- spare but rich, erudite yet straightforward. This is a book to dip into, to surprise and educate yourself. It engages both the brain and the palate, and you'll be newly inspired to enjoy and appreciate your food because of it." *Kirkus*: "A delicious compendium of food facts and practical advice showcasing 50 foods that everyday cooks, gardeners, foodies and the modern gourmet should include in their culinary repertoire. A treasure trove of culinary history, sound advice and easy enlightenment though consuming the narrative in one sitting is not advised; try spreading the enjoyment by dipping in often for tasty bites." *Publishers Weekly*: "In his elegantly composed, alphabetically organized primer on the most tasty ingredients in good cooking, Behr, the founder of the *Art of Eating* magazine, shares useful ways of growing, choosing and pairing foods with other foods and, especially wines....The book is certainly a welcome resource for the home chef." *David Chang*, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Momofuku* and chef/founder of *Momofuku*: "Ed Behr is one of the great food writers, and this book may be his best work. Any book that increases culinary knowledge is must-have in my opinion... *50 Foods* is a book that every chef and home cook should have." *Marion Nestle*, Professor of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health, and author of *What to Eat*: "Ed Behr's *50 Foods* extols the pleasures of his favorites from anchovies to walnuts, with plenty of handy advice about how to tell the difference between a great pear or cheese and one that's not so great, and what wines make good foods taste even better. He knows the ins and outs of delicious food, and you will too after reading this book." *Dan Barber*, Executive Chef and Co-Owner, *Blue Hill* and *Blue Hill at Stone Barns*: "*50 Foods* may take the shape of a culinary encyclopedia, but it is never encyclopedic in its approach. Instead, Edward Behr plays curator, selecting the best ingredients as his subjects (crab, blue; oysters, raw) and crafting descriptions at once evocative, educational, and eminently practical. You'll learn about the history of the baguette, but also (more importantly) how to predict its quality at the bakery. You'll brush up on the anatomy of an artichoke, then salivate over descriptions of them prepared alla giudia. It is, as Behr puts it, 'a guide to deliciousness' a promise that he manages to deliver on, artfully." *Danny Meyer*, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Setting the Table*: "What a compelling and original gift Ed Behr has given food amateurs of every stripe with his brilliant canon, *50 Foods*. The topics themselves are so thoughtfully curated, and the entries are authoritative, opinionated, and eminently useful whether one is a cook, eater, wine lover, or just wants to know and appreciate more than you ever did about 50 important foods." *Ren Redzepi*, chef and co-owner of *Noma*, voted *San Pellegrino Best Restaurant in the World*, 2010, 2011, 2012: "Smashing! This compelling book tells the story of 50 iconic foodstuffs, taking you around the world in search of deliciousness. To me, that's what's especially captivating here. Deliciousness is one of the things that makes life fun and this book is full of just that." *Alice Waters*, bestselling author, founder and Executive Chef, *Chez Panisse*: "Ed Behr has a unique and holistic gastronomic vision, beautifully reflected in his examination of these 50 diverse foods that form the building blocks of taste. This fascinating, eminently readable book is a beautiful resource for curious cooks and people who want to know where their food comes from." *Harold McGee*, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Keys to Good Cooking*: "Ever since I saw the first issue of his *Art of Eating* in 1986, I've admired Ed Behr for his scrupulous research and forthright judgments about food and drink. I'm always learning something new from him, even about the most familiar things, and especially when I disagree with him. This book is the fruit of Ed's decades-long pursuit of the best edibles that nature and western tradition have to offer. *50 Foods* is his summa of the varieties of delicious experience, packed with useful information, a wonderfully concise source of both advice and provocation. If you know *The Art of Eating* you'll welcome this brisk tour; if you don't, *50 Foods* will introduce you to one of the best guides a food lover could have." *About the Author* Edward Behr is the founder of the acclaimed food magazine *The Art of Eating*. His writing has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Forbes*, and the *Financial*

Times. He lives in Vermont.