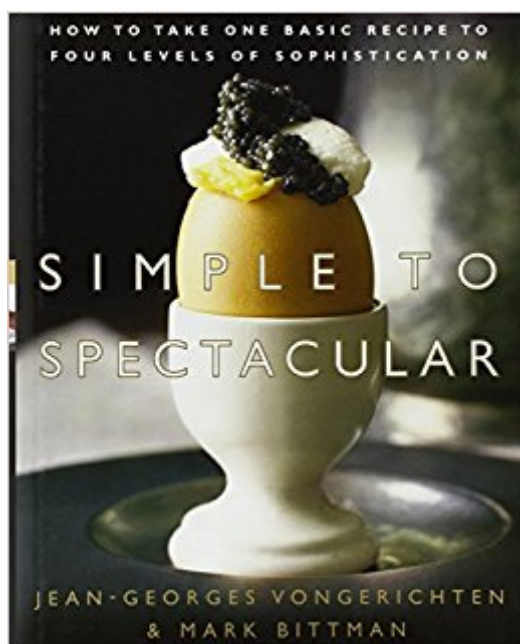


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# Simple To Spectacular: How To Take One Basic Recipe To Four Levels Of Sophistication



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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

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.)

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Chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten did a great job with Mark Bittman in writing this book. But, for myself I did not find the conversions provided of simple recipes to be all that spectacular. This is not to say that they are no good because, there are many decent recipes in this book. I personally just did not find any "culinary magic" in any of the spectacular conversions. A great example of this would be the section for braised short ribs. The simple option is braised short ribs in red wine, which does seem to be a simple technique and quite frankly well-known. The alternative options for braised short ribs range from as listed were from word in the book (short ribs braised with Chinese flavors, short ribs braised with citrus, short ribs braised with mushrooms, pearl onions and bacon, stewed short ribs with Marrow butter) while although I'm sure these all taste quite amazing I'm not really seeing "spectacular". When I think of spectacular and elegant for short ribs I'm thinking braised short ribs finished with a port demi-reduction or even go more modern contemporary and showcase a braised short rib tacos finished with a green chimichurri. Either way if you're looking to wow your guests at your home I do believe that you will find recipes in here that will suit your fancy.

This is a beautiful book. There are 250 categories of recipes and 5 variations of each. They start with a basic quick and easy to prepare version then increase the ingredients/techniques to make it

"fancier" over 4 variations. Scrambled eggs go from the old staple (but cooked in a special "soft" way) with eggs and butter to fancy with caviar served in an egg shell(as pictured on the cover). Lobster too undergoes transformation from steamed to extraordinary. The instructions are clear and precise and detailed notes/hints are provided as required. The full color photos are appealing and give you an idea of how beautiful the dishes are. The basic dishes can easily (and quickly) be prepared for weekday meals while the more exotic variations can be prepared for those special occasions.

This cookbook has some terrific recipes that are easy to follow and delicious. I have only made a few.

I cook a fair bit (many different cuisines). I am on the lookout for simple, tasty recipes ---I have two kids 2 and 5, so I no longer have time to try the fancier recipes of this book.However, the simpler recipes alone are worth the price of the book. They give some insight into how a famous chef might cook for himself when pressed for time. For example, I've baked salmon hundreds of times over the years but the recipe in this book (the one with crushed capers) has enough minor twists I would never dream of myself---cooking at 350 degrees, with the skin side up, for example--- that lead to much better flavor.The chicken with sherry vinegar is another example---credited to famous chef Paul Bocuse, but requires only half an hour, and uses no fancy ingredients. Several subtle touches lift it from the ordinary and show that chicken can sometimes be the best of all meats. All my family members, including the 2 year old, wiped their plates clean by soaking up the juices with bread!The frenchtoast with bananas is another good and quick recipe.To sum up, this is not an encyclopedic cookbook. It shows you how to do a few things well. It was a useful addition to my kitchen shelf. It might also be a good first cookbook for the starter cook who desires a few top-class results with minimal effort.

I love this cookbook. The steps are simple enough and yet produce great flavors. The cover of the book was simple. It simply gave me a new idea on how to present a sophisticated boiled egg for breakfast in a spectacular presentation. A great gift for yourself or for people you know who love to cook.

What a wonderful cookbook! I have a solid cookbook collection and have always loved the books by Mark Bittman. This book, however, is absolutely a wonderful compilation of gorgeous recipes. An

outstanding partnership. Buy it, you really won't regret it. From the best chicken stock I've ever made to wonderful desserts, this is one cookbook you will reach for again and again. From simple to spectacular is the perfect title. BUY IT!!!

Teaches you a lot about cooking, most of the recipes do not require really crazy to find ingredients and can be prepared by a home chef who likes to be inventive. Everything I have tried so far has been a success. The steak with ginger and soy was particularly succulent. Excellent book

Fabulous illustrations, solid text, and progressively imaginative recipes make this book one of my best cookbook purchases in years. As the title promises, Mr. Vongerichten takes some basic recipes for simple dishes and progresses each into more and more interesting variations. As an amateur chef, this is the kind of book that makes my hobby very interesting and teaches me not just what to cook but how to cook.

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