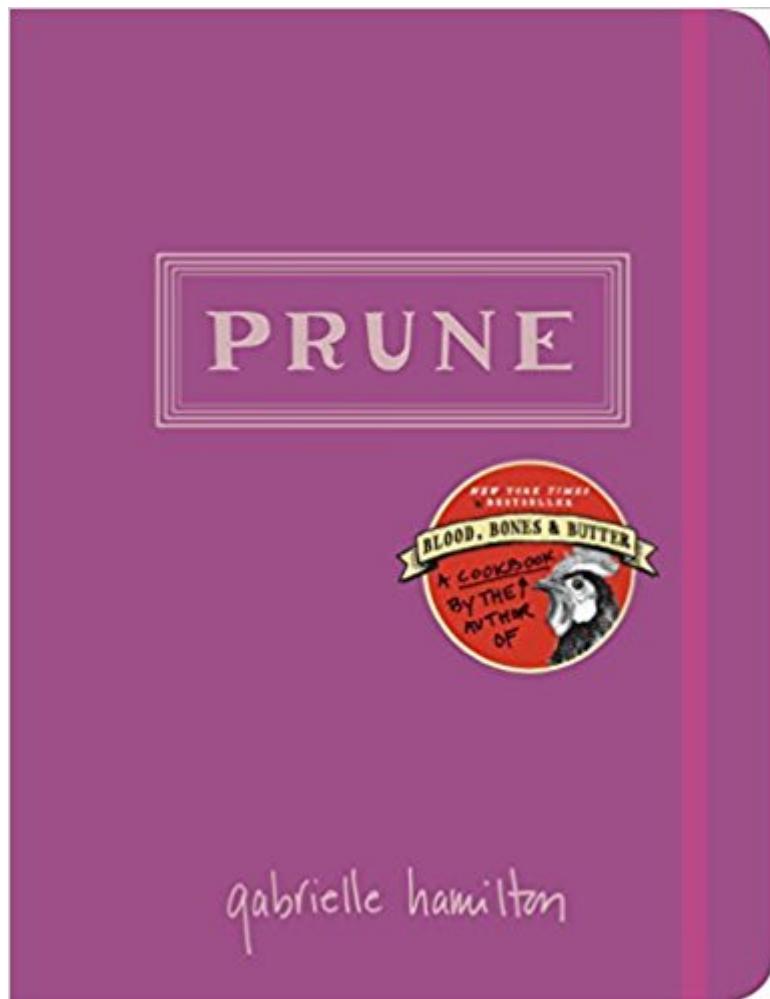


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# Prune



## Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER From Gabrielle Hamilton, bestselling author of *Blood, Bones & Butter*, comes her eagerly anticipated cookbook debut filled with signature recipes from her celebrated New York City restaurant Prune. NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY PUBLISHERS WEEKLY NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE SEASON BY Time & O: The Oprah Magazine & Bon Appétit & Eater A self-trained cook turned James Beard Award-winning chef, Gabrielle Hamilton opened Prune on New York's Lower East Side fifteen years ago to great acclaim and lines down the block, both of which continue today. A deeply personal and gracious restaurant, in both menu and philosophy, Prune uses the elements of home cooking and elevates them in unexpected ways. The result is delicious food that satisfies on many levels. Highly original in concept, execution, look, and feel, the Prune cookbook is an inspired replica of the restaurant's kitchen binders. It is written to Gabrielle's cooks in her distinctive voice, with as much instruction, encouragement, information, and scolding as you would find if you actually came to work at Prune as a line cook. The recipes have been tried, tasted, and tested dozens if not hundreds of times. Intended for the home cook as well as the kitchen professional, the instructions offer a range of signals for cooks "a head's up on when you have gone too far, things to watch out for that could trip you up, suggestions on how to traverse certain uncomfortable parts of the journey to ultimately help get you to the final destination, an amazing dish. Complete with more than 250 recipes and 250 color photographs, home cooks will find Prune's most requested recipes "Grilled Head-on Shrimp with Anchovy Butter, Bread Heels and Pan Drippings Salad, Tongue and Octopus with Salsa Verde and Mimosa'd Egg, Roasted Capon on Garlic Crouton, Prune's famous Bloody Mary (and all 10 variations). Plus, among other items, a chapter entitled "Garbage" smart ways to repurpose foods that might have hit the garbage or stockpot in other restaurant kitchens but are turned into appetizing bites and notions at Prune. Featured here are the recipes, approach, philosophy, evolution, and nuances that make them distinctively Prune's. Unconventional and honest, in both tone and content, this book is a welcome expression of the cookbook as we know it. Praise for Prune "Fresh, fascinating . . . entirely pleasurable . . . Since 1999, when the chef Gabrielle Hamilton put Triscuits and canned sardines on the first menu of her East Village bistro, Prune, she has nonchalantly broken countless rules of the food world. The rule that a successful restaurant must breed an empire. The rule that chefs who happen to be women should unconditionally support one another. The rule that great chefs don't make great writers (with her memoir, *Blood, Bones & Butter*). And now, the rule that restaurant food has to be simplified and prettied up for home cooks in order to produce a useful,

irresistible cookbook. . . . [Prune] is the closest thing to the bulging loose-leaf binder, stuck in a corner of almost every restaurant kitchen, ever to be printed and bound between cloth covers. (These happen to be a beautiful deep, dark magenta.)" The New York Times "One of the most brilliantly minimalist cookbooks in recent memory . . . at once conveys the thrill of restaurant cooking and the wisdom of the author, while making for a charged reading experience." Publishers Weekly (starred review)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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Gabrielle Hamilton is the chef/owner of Prune restaurant in New Yorkâ™s East Village and the author of the New York Times bestselling memoir *Blood, Bones & Butter: The Inadvertent Education of a Reluctant Chef*. She received an MFA in fiction writing from the University of Michigan, and her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *GQ*, *Bon AppÃ©tit*, *Saveur*, *House Beautiful*, and *Food & Wine*. She has also authored the 8-week Chef column in *The New York Times*, and her work has been anthologized in eight volumes of *Best Food Writing*. She has appeared on *The Martha Stewart Show* and the *Food Network*, among other TV and she has won a James Beard Foundation Award for Best Chef NYC. She currently lives in Manhattan with her two sons.

Restaurant cookbooks tend to be a peculiar sort. Tomes from Thomas Keller are beautiful coffee table books that are as gorgeous to look at as to cook from. Additionally, many of these books are marketed toward professional chefs and dedicated hobbyists. The techniques, equipment, and ingredient lists required make them inaccessible for the novice, if they choose to cook from them. Prune, named after the landmark NYC brunch spot headed by Chef Gabrielle Hamilton, is another massive entry in the restaurant cookbook category. However, unlike the books from Keller, or recent ones from such celebrated restaurants as Noma, Daniel, Eleven Madison Park, Coi, and so on, Prune takes a more direct approach. The cookbook is organized very much like a restaurant recipe book. For those not aware, most restaurant recipes are usually kept in huge binders, recipes are printed from chef's computer and the sheets are added to the binder in laminated looseleaf page holder, to protect from kitchen spills. These recipe books are essential for new cooks and old as they prepare the house recipes. In Prune, Gabrielle speaks to you as you are one of her cooks. The basic instructions also include scribblings in the margin, made in Sharpie marker, with her clarifications and addenda. The recipe yields are restaurant size, so you must adjust them if you want feed less people. Also, the book assumes that you know your way around the kitchen. Little details you may find in books for the home cook--preheating stoves and pans, exact pan sizes and such are missing. However, for a serious home cook or restaurant professional, Prune is a treasure trove of recipes. Chef Hamilton's fare doesn't really know much bounds--there are American, Italian, French influences in her cooking. Additionally, like most restaurant fare, her cooking is very rich. Chef Hamilton loves her heavy cream and butter. I've been pouring through the recipes and many look outstanding. I've also visited her restaurant a few years ago and went during their heralded brunch service. Like many I waited an hour or so, as they do not take reservations and the brunch

seats are coveted. All her best brunch dishes are here, so no more waiting hours to replicate them at home. For food fans, serious home cooks, and professional, Prune makes a great resource to your cookbook library. Cocktail lovers will also find much to love here as their entire cocktail program is listed with recipes as well. My only complaint is that I wish Chef Hamilton had another restaurant and as such another cookbook to look forward to, but you can tell Prune is her baby from the careful and direct instruction she provides in this book.

The chief reason I opted to write a review (my first, and not beholden to anyone) is to warn the reader that this book contains NO INDEX, unusual in a book of recipes. To find a recipe using duck, for example, one would need to search through each of 13 chapter's table of contents. She has composed the book this way because that is how they use it in the restaurant. But me, I find an index to be essential in a cookbook and I fault the chef for this. After all, we are not working in her restaurant. Her notes to her chefs are really interesting. The recipes are things I want to cook. And her attitude to food and leftover food is admirable.

This is one of the best "cookbooks" I've ever read. I hesitate to call it a cookbook, really, as it is more of an incredibly useful primer on what to do, and just as importantly, NOT to do in the kitchen. Granted, this is Chef Hamilton's kitchen and she wants things done correctly. She doesn't want waste or sloth or dirty stations. Any good chef or restaurateur would tell you the same thing. There's a lot of humor in this book, too. Perhaps it's only funny to those who have done time in a professional kitchen, as I see a lot of reviews here bemoaning her admonishments as too controlling. This is poppycock. There's one way to do things in a kitchen: the right way. So when Chef tells you to plate the asparagus tips all facing the same direction, there's a reason for it. It's not because she's controlling, it's because it's her name over the door (not literally in this case) and every plate that goes out on the floor says something about her and her restaurant. The devil IS in the details. As soon as you start slacking on the little details it starts to spread like a virus. People notice things not done correctly, whether consciously or not, and it has a great impact on people enjoying themselves in your restaurant. As for the home cook, the takeaway from this book should not be, "ovaltine? radishes? are you kidding?!", but the reminder to "keep it simple". Not everything has to be show-offy, look-at-me cookery. Perfect radishes on a plate with properly tempered butter and excellent sel de mer sounds simple, but try it. It's not as simple as it sounds. It's also freaking delicious. Lastly, for those reviewers here who say they are cooks or work in kitchens and STILL don't get this book: I hope that someday you will get this book. Because if you don't, I'd respectfully

suggest another line of work.

I loved this book. Many of the recipes I will never make, but that is true for most of the cookbooks I buy. What makes this a valuable cookbook is the quality of the recipes I will make. The sweet desert omelette is fabulous. The supreme simplicity of some is appealing. What is really valuable is the detailed instructions and brand names when it is important. The half dozen or so recipes I have made have turned out well. I will probably make more of them and expect them to turn out well also. (Most likely I will not attempt the recipe whose instructions begin "When you are ready to make this for the first time, come and get me." If pro cooks need a mentor for success, I think that recreational reading is enough for me.)

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