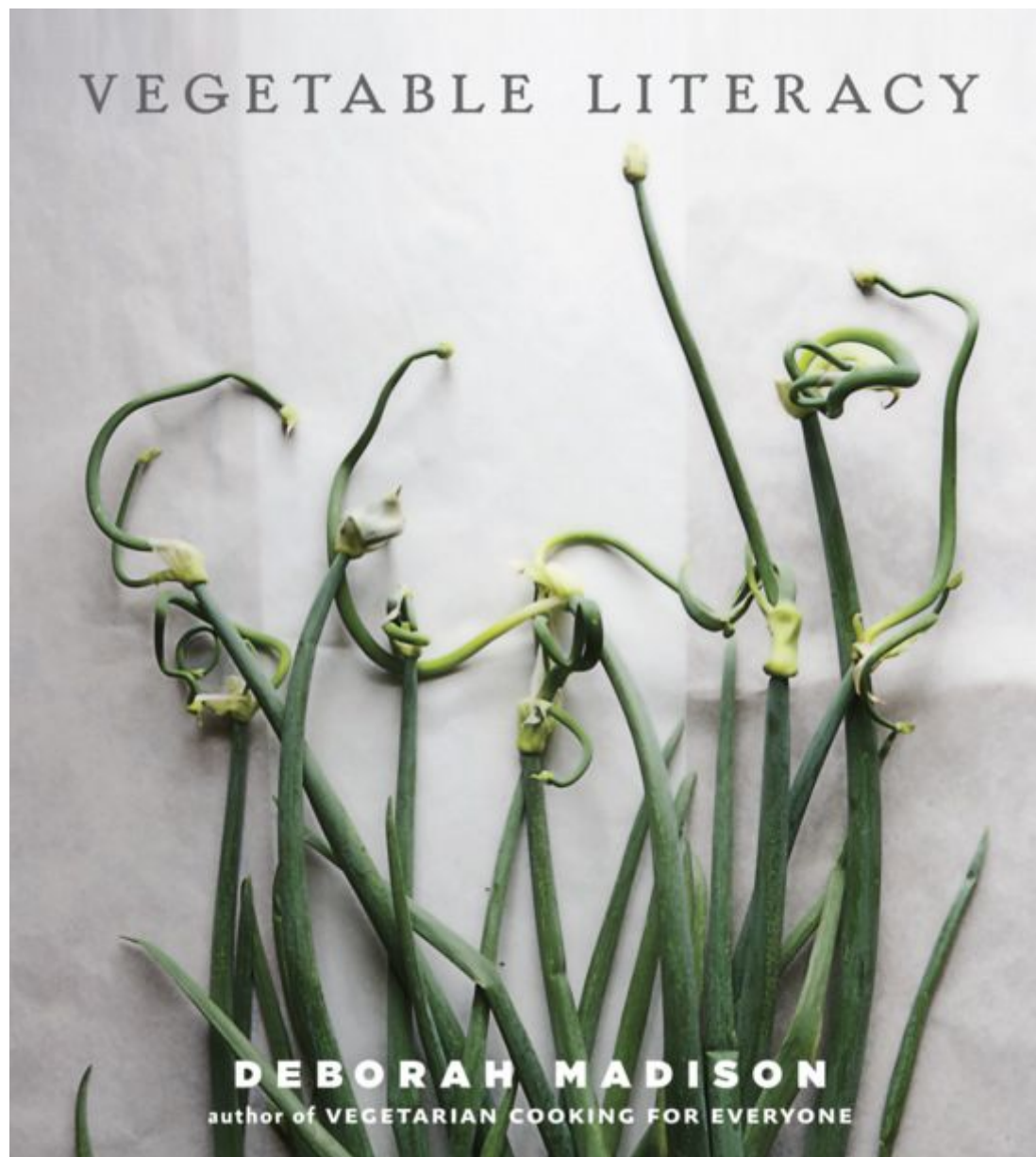


Cook the Book: 'Vegetable Literacy' by Deborah Madison

KATE WILLIAMS



Every once in a while, a cookbook comes along and completely shifts the way I think about cooking. Maybe the book offers new, vibrant flavor pairings; it will send me to the spice section of the market in a tizzy, grabbing tins of saffron, fenugreek, and Tahitian vanilla beans. Other times, I'll read a book with gorgeous photographs of happy friends gathered around an abundance of rustic, thoughtful food. This will lead me to plan dinner parties each weekend for a month or so, hoping to mimic the same communal magic.

But the most useful type of inspiration is one that blends culinary know-how with practical recipes and resourceful technique. **Deborah Madison's** gorgeous new book, *Vegetable Literacy*, does just that.

Madison is a known expert in vegetable cookery; her *Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone* should be a kitchen staple for anyone with a penchant for the plant family, no matter their stance on meat-eating. With *Vegetable Literacy*, she delves deeper into the plant kingdom; each chapter is dedicated to one of 12 plant families and includes gardening

advice in addition to cooking techniques. While many of the featured vegetables and families will be familiar, Madison also throws in some curveballs. (Who knew rhubarb, buckwheat, and sorrel were all related?)

The recipes themselves are relatively simple, but they are designed to bring out the best in each vegetable and family. Madison's explanations of how vegetables "interact in the kitchen" (as she says) help the curious cook develop his or her own style and encourage experimentation, while at the same time providing instruction. But *Vegetable Literacy* is far from a textbook. The book is filled with stunning photographs courtesy of the venerable team of **Christopher Hirsheimer and Melissa Hamilton**. Cooking through each recipe is a calming, meditative process, and each resulting meal is delightfully wholesome.

Vegetable Literacy is the perfect companion in early spring. While those of us on the west coast are already enjoying the first tastes of spring, those of you in the still-shivering northeast may need to wait a little longer before tasting freshly shucked peas. With that in mind, we'll sample recipes on both sides of the spring divide. First, we'll taste Madison's striking **Ivory Carrot Soup** and then toss together **Cauliflower with Saffron, Pepper Flakes, Parsley, and Pasta**. Then we'll work with greenery to make **Peas with Baked Ricotta and Bread Crumbs**, **Summer Squash Tartines**, and a **Spring Garden Hodgepodge**.

Win 'Vegetable Literacy'

Thanks to our good friends at Ten Speed Press, we have five (5) copies of *Vegetable Literacy* to give away this week. All you need to do is tell us about your favorite way to cook your favorite vegetable in the comments section below (bonus points for inspired flavor pairings!).