

Cook the Book: 'Little Jars, Big Flavors'

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I didn't grow up in a house with a dedicated canning pot or a stockpile of home-preserved goods in the basement. My mom made her mom's bread and butter pickle recipe once in a blue moon, but otherwise we bought our jams, jellies, dill spears, and tomato sauces from the neighborhood Publix. It wasn't until I worked on a few DIY-focused cookbooks a while back that I finally got my canning feet wet. These days, I try to sneak in putting up a preserves or two on empty weekends. Now that summer produce is in full swing, I've got even more motivation to break out my empty Ball jars.

A wonderful new resource for home canners is **Southern Living Magazine's** new cookbook, *Little Jars, Big Flavors*. Like many newer canning cookbooks, *Little Jars, Big Flavors* focuses on small-batch preserving (instead of the massive homesteader-sized projects in books from our parents' generation). Preserving small amounts of jams, jellies, and pickles keeps canning manageable, even in small kitchens with negligible counter space.

Even so, canning can be daunting to the novice. When I first learned how to use a boiling water bath canner, I was terrified that my jars would explode, fail to seal, or worse, make me or one of my friends sick. *Little Jars, Big Flavors* does a great job quelling those anxieties. Between the warm, welcoming tone of the recipes and no-nonsense,

information-packed canning intro, the book could put even the biggest hypochondriac at ease. There are plenty of step-by-step photos as well as super-helpful sections like: ingredients and techniques not to fudge, spoilage signs, and a list of issues that are "not ideal, but usually not a big deal."

The recipes, written with help from Southern culinary maven [Virginia Willis](#), cover a wide range of preserves, from simple berry jam and dill pickle spears to [scuppernong](#) jelly and pickled cherries. Towards the end of the book, there are a few DIY pantry items like vanilla extract and mustard to expand the preserver's repertoire. In addition, there are recipes that make use of the preserves scattered throughout the book for those of us who need a little nudge to get through the last jar of jam. Yet, while some of the recipes add an intriguing spice or two, the flavor profiles are generally familiar—you won't run into recipes for things like mole-infused zucchini or Cynar artichokes anywhere on these pages.

What you will see this week are an assortment of summer preserves, like **cardamom-plum jam**, **jalapeño jelly**, and **spicy peach salsa**. We'll end the week by pickling several bunches of **Japanese turnips with shiso** and then using the results in a **bánh mì-inspired sandwich**.

Win 'Little Jars, Big Flavors'

Thanks to our friends at Oxmoor House, we have five (5) copies of [Little Jars, Big Flavors](#) to give away this week. All you need to do for a chance to win is **tell us about your favorite preserve (Jams, pickles, jellies, chutneys, you name it!) in the comments section below.**