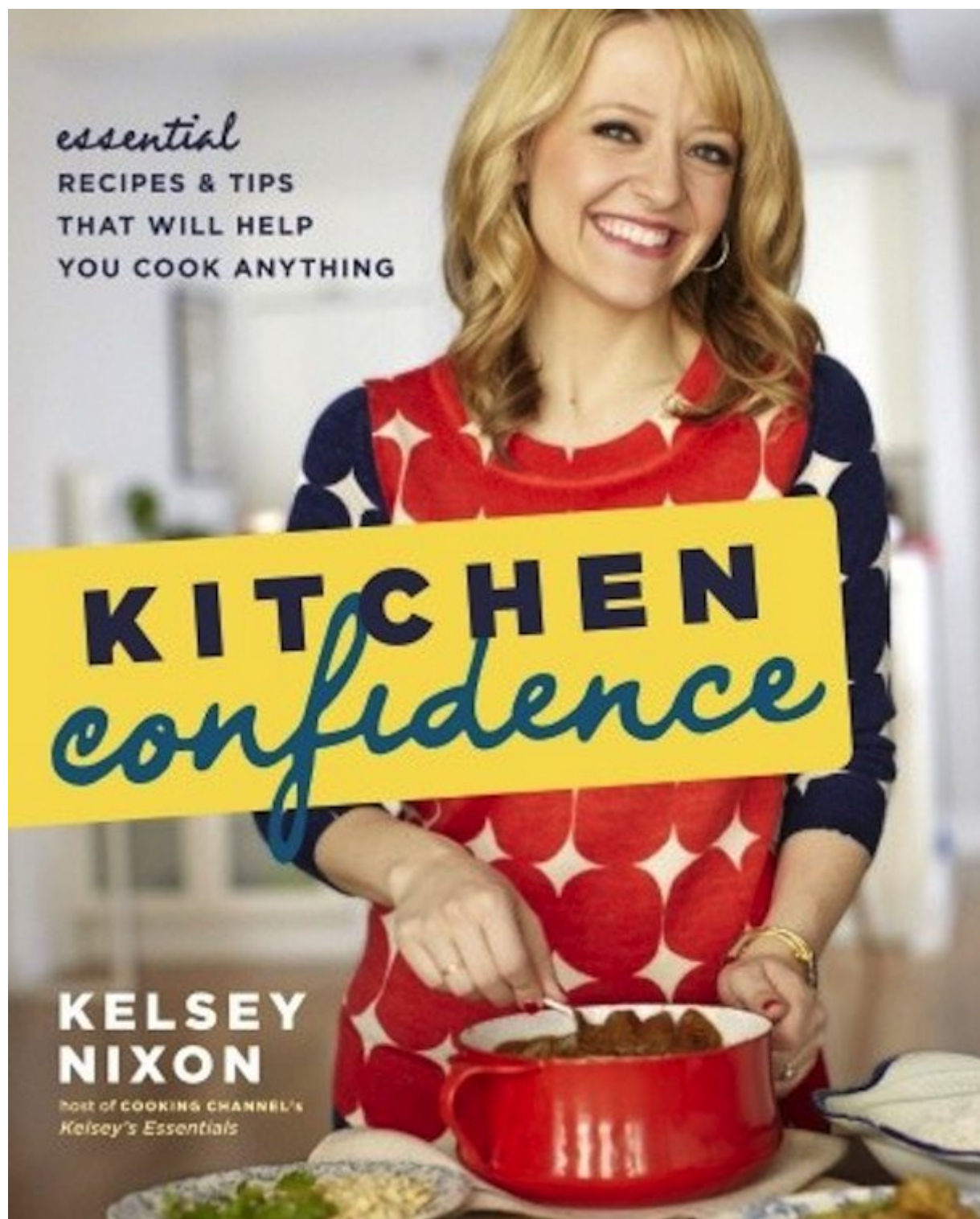


Cook the Book: 'Kitchen Confidence' by Kelsey Nixon

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For the last few weeks, I've mostly been featuring fairly challenging cookbooks in this column. Not all of them required precise culinary technique, but they have all asked for either close attention to detail or a commitment to seeking out obscure or unfamiliar ingredients. While those recipes certainly could be prepared by novice cooks, they still require a pretty steep learning curve. This week, the featured cookbook takes an entirely different track.

Kitchen Confidence, the new cookbook by the [Cooking Channel](#)'s [Kelsey Nixon](#), presents a straightforward, basic approach to American cuisine. Nixon's cooking show emphasizes what she calls "essential" techniques—methods like roasting, braising, stir-frying, and simple bread baking. She breaks down the elements of these different techniques in a friendly, enthusiastic manner that helps to erase kitchen anxieties. Sure, her bubbly personality may be slightly irritating to some, but Nixon's clear instruction is useful for anyone who's unsure in the kitchen.

Nixon's cookbook follows the same format as her show. Each chapter centers around an "essential" recipe or technique, many of which are riffs on simple, homey dishes Nixon was taught to cook by her mother. For example, her roast chicken doesn't employ any cheffy tricks or twists in its basic preparation. However, Nixon demonstrates how to add a bit of flair by rubbing the bird down with Moroccan-spiced butter. The fragrant butter bastes the chicken in the oven and drips on top of the small potatoes, infusing the entire dish with aromas of cinnamon and cumin. It's a dead simple dish, yet still pretty darn impressive. Most of Nixon's recipes play with seasoning in a similar way; this style of recipe-writing is a great way to build readers' technical confidence while still allowing for creativity and improvisation.

The book isn't perfect. The bread recipes could use clarity and more visual cues for those unfamiliar with yeast dough, and her listed prep times sorely underestimate the time needed for proper chopping and measuring. Still, it is refreshing to encounter a cookbook that is practical and fun at the same time. *Kitchen Confidence* gives an excellent introduction to the kitchen.

This week, we'll be cooking through several of Nixon's essential recipes. We'll blend up a **simple pea soup** and bake quick (yes, quick) **yeast rolls**. Later, we will make our own **quick pickles** and then fry the pucker-y slices. For a quick weeknight dinner, we will whip up simple stovetop **macaroni and cheese**. Finally, we'll round out the week with the aforementioned **roast chicken**.

Win 'Kitchen Confidence'

Thanks to our friends at Clarkson Potter, we have five (5) copies of *Kitchen Confidence* to give away this week. All you need to do for a chance to win is to tell us about **your most essential recipe(s)** in the comments section below.