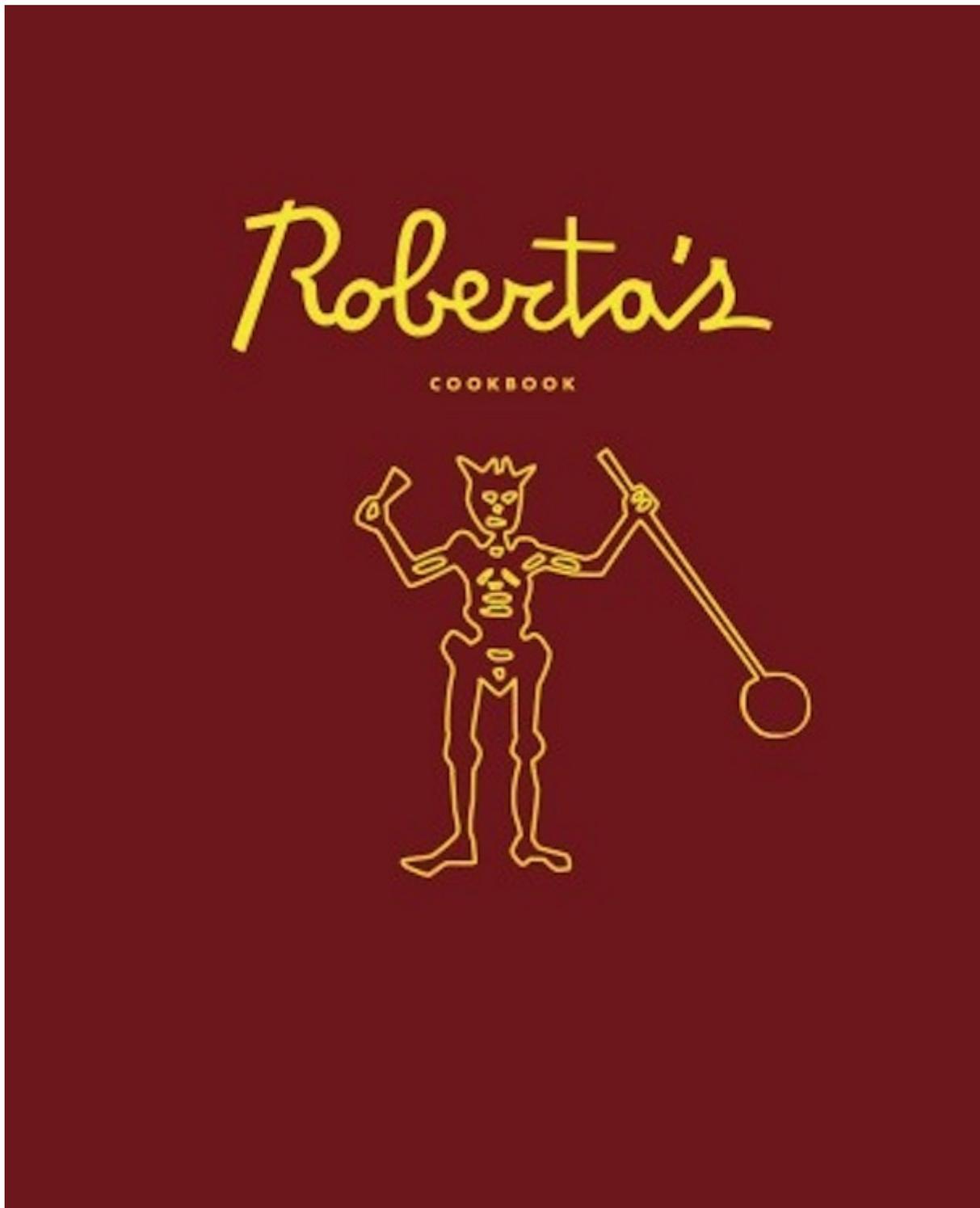


Cook the Book: The 'Roberta's' Cookbook

KATE WILLIAMS



The [Roberta's](#) cookbook tells the tale of the storied Bushwick [pizza-and-more restaurant](#) from its ramshackle beginnings through its growth into a dining destination. It's packed with a profusion of Instagram-worthy photographs that lend the book a creative and honest dynamic; it's just as much fun to read the book as it is to explore the food.

There is, however, a tension between the light-hearted nature of the writing and the super-strict directions in the recipes.

Chef and co-author Carlo Mirachi allows for few substitutions for the hard-to-find, expensive, and rare ingredients scattered throughout the book. In a cookbook this lighthearted in appearance, I found it frustrating that so many of the recipes were out of reach. These are the types of rules I would expect from Thomas Keller, not a casual Brooklyn joint. The idea is, of course, to encourage the reader to seek out and cook high-quality food, but there should be some kind of limit to the rigidity. Roasting a heritage chicken should come with a list of suggested sources, not a decree to find one particular breed of bird from one particular purveyor. Those of us who cook at home need options.

That said, Roberta's does offer an eclectic and compelling mix of recipes. There is plenty of pizza, of course, complete with two different recipes for dough (the pizza chapter is the one exception to my complaints above), as well as several pasta recipes using both freshly made and dried pastas. The remainder of the book consists of dishes added to the Roberta's repertoire over time: seasonal vegetables, roasted meats, a few desserts, and cocktails. Vegetables are where Mirarchi's creativity really shines. A Caesar-like salad is tossed with crisp candied walnuts in lieu of croutons, snap peas are plated with pickled rhubarb, and a cabbage trio is tossed with savory bonito butter.

The recipes themselves work reasonably well; as is the case with many restaurant cookbooks, there seem to be a few places where the process of scaling down from restaurant preparations to a size for home kitchens missed a few steps. Directions are short, but relatively clear. Roberta's pasta and pizza are the most challenging on an introductory level, as their doughs are tender and finicky. A few rounds of practice should smooth things out if one is committed.

This week, we'll tackle a range of recipes from Roberta's. First, we'll bake a **Speckenwolf pizza** and braise a **duck ragu to serve atop homemade pappardelle pasta**. Then we'll toss a **romaine salad** before ending the week with that **roasted heritage chicken**, complete with buttery cabbage and roasted turnips.

Win 'Roberta's'

Thanks to the kind folks at Clarkson Potter, we have five (5) copies of [Roberta's](#) to give away this week. All you need to do for a chance to win a copy is to tell us about **your most creative recipe** in the comments section below.