



# GIZZI'S KITCHEN MAGIC

GIZZI ERSKINE

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

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Gizzi Erskine's magic touch is simple – but effective. Instead of just dazzling one-off recipes, Gizzi gives you – the cook – confidence in the kitchen by helping you create the perfect meal every time. She'll provide you with techniques and tips that make time spent in the kitchen a real success.

From showing you how to master basic pasta dough and mix marvellous marinades, to making foolproof pastry and poaching the perfect eggs, Gizzi will ensure that cookery demons are a thing of the past.

As well as these techniques, Gizzi also adds an extra sparkle to some classic recipes. Whether it's sprinkling some rosemary into your millionaire's shortbread, infusing your chocolate fudge cake with Earl Grey, or combining old favourites in new ways – such as Mexican chicken tortilla soup – *Gizzi's Kitchen Magic* guarantees you'll soon be cooking with flair.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Gizzi Erskine is a food writer and stylist best known for being one of the presenters of Channel 4's *Cook Yourself Thin* and an author of the bestselling book by the same name. She trained at the prestigious Leith's School of Food and Wine, before going on to work at *BBC Good Food* magazine and is now a regular chef on GMTV, *This Morning* and Sky One's *Taste*. She is the food columnist for *Company* magazine and has contributed to *Marie Claire*, *In Style*, *Elle USA*, and *Arena*, among others. Gizzi lives in London.



**KITCHEN**

**MAGIC**

**GIZZI ERSKINE**





**FOR MY MAMA, MARIA, MY BIGGEST INSPIRATION. AS YOU  
WILL SEE, THIS BOOK IS FULL OF ERSKINE SPECIALS.**

# INTRODUCTION

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*I've been cooking* for as long as I can remember but I always struggled with some basic techniques, which I knew I needed to have under my belt. When I was at catering school, I would become a wreck when we had a pastry-making class. Pastry was my cookery nemesis. The best pastry is short – crisp and a bit crumbly. The best short pastry is a bugger to roll out, it falls apart when you try to line a tart case and frankly made steam come out of my ears. But for years now I have been making my own pastry. I add more egg to it, that's all, which means I can work with it, and maybe if Michel Roux was coming for dinner I'd be exposed, but between me, you and your mates no one is going to know.

So, I decided I wanted to write a cookery book that would address some of the cookery problems I had faced, including how to make foolproof pastry. My book would have a back-to-basics approach. I wanted to write a book that would complement more advanced cookery books out there. One that would arm you with the techniques and core recipes that would make cooking your favourites easier. And so Gizzi's kitchen magic was born.

However, whilst this book includes techniques, tips and basic recipes, it is also full of inspirational recipes, which will help you practise some of these techniques, all with my own 'Gizzi' stamp on them. Some come from my travels around the world (grilled snapper with chilli and mango sauce, Vietnamese prawns and lemongrass, lamb massaman curry), some inspired by my favourite London restaurant dishes (black cod with plum miso, Afghan yoghurt chicken, chicken katsu curry), some Erskine classics (chicken in weeds, Parma ham and sage-wrapped veal with tomato and spaghetti), and some from my love of being a bit experimental (millionaire's shortbread with rosemary-infused salted caramel, Earl Grey chocolate fudge cake).

So bear with me on these techniques and hopefully they will allow you to approach cooking with more self-assurance. You'll be able to face the kitchen with new gusto and, fingers crossed, some of the magic that I have sprinkled into this book will translate into your own cookery.

Happy cooking!

*Gizzi xx*





Equipment  
Understanding a Recipe

*Where do you start when it comes to setting up a kitchen? It's hard to know, and it really depends on how much you think you're going to cook, but I hope you'll agree that having a fairly well-stocked kitchen is a good idea. You can bet your life that it's incredibly annoying to suddenly have the urge to bake cupcakes and not have any cupcake tins or cases to hand.*

*So, this chapter is all about kitchen basics, including what equipment you need to get started, what makes a great store cupboard, how to get the best out of a recipe, and how to chop an onion. I'm aware that some of you might be right up there with the Ramsays of the world and be perfectly adept at chopping an onion, but let me tell you, my mum – my biggest inspiration when it comes to food – is hopeless when handling a knife, which goes to show that even experienced cooks still have something to learn. I also hope that this book will reach a few novices and so I think it's important to start at the beginning.*



Most of us think ‘basics’ means only pans, knives and the odd spatula, but a well-equipped working kitchen has a lot more going for it than that. Here’s my guide to what you should have and why. I know some of these can be expensive, but if you want to cook with conviction they’re worth the investment.

## PANS

Either stainless non-stick, cast iron or, if you’re in a dream world (or mega-rich), copper. Get them in varying sizes, from a small milk pan (non-stick) right up to a huge stockpot. For a starter set I would advise going for a large heavy-based 20cm depth x 20cm diameter pan, a medium, 15cm depth x 15cm diameter pan and a small 10cm deep x 12cm milk pan. Get two sizes of frying pan and go for non-stick. If you only want one, buy a larger pan. I live by my griddle pan. It’s a fast and healthy way of cooking and adds heaps of flavour to dishes with the pretty lines it chars into the food. Make sure you get a cast iron one of these – the others are rubbish.

## KNIVES

While it is so tempting to go for those starter sets of knives or for knives from a supermarket, I beg you – if you go out and spend money on one thing only, let it be knives. You don’t need a huge set: just a large cook’s knife, a small cook’s knife, a fruit knife, a bread knife and a small paring knife. What makes a good knife is the quality of the metal. Japanese knives tend to be constructed in the same way as samurai swords, where the metal is folded over and over to ensure it’s really strong (cool, eh?!). You can sharpen them yourself at home too, which is a definite benefit.

## OTHER KITCHENALIA

- **A rolling pin:** Essential for making pastry dishes. For me the best pins are the same size all along – so no handles – but again, experiment to see what works best for you.
- **A pestle and mortar:** Great for pounding herbs or spices.
- **A palette knife:** For easing things up, spreading and a whole host of other things.
- **A fish slice:** For lifting things out of a pan.
- **A slotted spoon:** For scooping things out of liquid.
- **Wooden spoons:** For mixing and stirring.
- **A peeler:** For peeling vegetables. A very personal choice, but my favourite is the wide swivel peeler.
- **Hand whisks:** Get a big one for eggs and a small one for sauces, they are so useful.
- **Measuring spoons:** For accurate baking.
- **Chopping boards:** Wooden or plastic are fine but a solid wooden board tends to last longer.

- **Scales:** Electric ones are more accurate and easier to clean.
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- **Measuring jugs:** Plastic or glass, these are essential for liquid quantities.
  - **Baking sheets:** For biscuits or to put casseroles or ramekins on. Your kitchen can't be without them.
  - **Roasting tin:** The more solid the better. The ones with handles are amazing (but expensive).
  - **Cake tins:** An 22cm springform cake tin tends to cover all bases, although at least one 20cm sandwich tin is good to have around too.
  - **A tart or pie tin:** You can't make a quiche or pie without one!

## ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

- **Electric hand whisk:** If you have ever had to hand-whisk something, you will know why these are such a kitchen essential. They have so many uses and should be in every kitchen.
- **A blender/liquidizer:** You can buy hand-held versions of these that are excellent value, but they never quite make things smooth enough. Table-top blenders are fantastic for making really smooth soups, purées and sauces.
- **A food processor:** A great all-rounder. The only thing this does not do is whisk. You can get fantastic mini-processors which are great. You can liquidize in them but they will not get your food nearly as smooth as a blender would.
- **A table-top mixer:** On all cooks' wish lists and really helpful for mixing, kneading and whisking. Shallow as this sounds, they look fantastic too.

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## KNIFE SKILLS

- **To chop:** The correct way to chop is to draw the knife back and forth across the chopping board from tip to base, without taking the knife off the surface, and feed the vegetable through your chopping motion with the back of your knuckles.
- **Chopping an onion:** Cut the onion in half from the pointy top down to the thick curly root. Trim the onion of its pointy top and curly bottom, then peel away the dry outer layers. Look at the onion – the bit where it clusters is the root. Slice into the onion in thin strips without cutting into the root. Cut the onion crossways, making sure you keep the distance between each slice the same. Repeat with the other side of the onion.
- **Chopping herbs:** Chop the herbs roughly first, then place one hand at the front of the blade and with a backwards/forwards motion chop the herbs into pieces. You can go as fine as you like here. At catering school we used to have to get parsley like dust – not fun, and pretty ugly if you ask me.



## DIFFERENT VEGETABLE CUTS

- **Baton:** Cut the vegetable into a 5cm long cubed rectangle, then cut into 8mm strips, then cut each of these strips into batons.
- **Julienne:** Cut the vegetable into a 5cm long cubed rectangle, then cut into thin strips. Cut the strips lengthways into julienne matchsticks.
- **Dicing or chopping:** Cut your vegetable into cubes. A rough dice would be large cubes – great for potatoes. Medium dice would be around a 1cm cube, and small dice around a 5mm cube.

## CRUSHING GARLIC

- Place an unpeeled garlic clove on your chopping board and slice off the root (the dry bit at the end). Lay the wide part of a large knife across it and push down so as to crush the garlic enough to release the skin, which you can now peel off.
  - There are two ways to crush garlic. Either use a very fine microplane grater and grate the garlic into a purée, or chop the garlic into small pieces by rocking the knife back and forth over it until it is finely chopped. Sprinkle some salt over the garlic, then with the back of the knife press the pieces up and down to squash them into the salt.
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The more experienced a cook you are, the more you will feel that cookery comes from somewhere within, but when you first start cooking it is worth looking at a recipe in the same way as you would an instruction manual. As with anything, the more you do it, the more confident you will get. Soon it becomes second nature and you will be putting your own flair and stamp on recipes. Here are a few pointers to think of when dissecting a recipe.



- Read through the recipe before you start working on it – that way you know exactly what to do before you do it.
- Work out in advance whether you want to work in metric (g/kg) or imperial (lb/oz) weights (assuming the recipe gives both) and stick to it. The youngsters among us will be going with metric, which is what I am using in this book.
- The same with oven temperatures – look at your oven dial. If it goes from around 100° to 280° it will be in Celsius, 300° to 600° will be Fahrenheit, and 1 to 8 will be the gas mark. If you have a fan oven you will need to decrease the temperature by 10°C/20°F or ½ gas mark.
- When baking, it is essential that you weigh all your ingredients accurately.
- Obvious, but easily done: don't leave any ingredient out!
- Always preheat your oven for at least 10 minutes before cooking. If you put something into a cold oven it will cook differently from how it will cook if you put it into one at the correct temperature. It can ruin baking and roasting dishes that you want to serve pink.
- Consider investing in some proper teaspoon and tablespoon measures. I know from my cutlery drawer that spoons come in all shapes and sizes, and at times cookery is such an accurate science that you're better off being precise.
- Get everything ready in advance. Pretend you're on your own cookery show and get it prepped that way you will be sure nothing goes in at the wrong time and it will all be cooked as it should.
- When baking, make sure you use the right size tin.



What I often hear when people find out I'm a food writer is that they don't feel comfortable using cookbooks because they never have all the ingredients to hand. While I know that in some cases there are specific things you need to buy fresh, a well-stocked store cupboard will help you make this problem a thing of a past. The other great thing is that on those days when you think you have no food, your perfect store cupboard means you will be able to make something out of nothing.

Here's my guide to the ultimate store cupboard, but you can always start small and build up, the more confident you become. An avid cook tends to pick things up as they go anyway.

### ns

chopped tomatoes  
chickpeas  
canned kidney beans  
tuna in oil

### rs

anchovies  
olives (I prefer them in vinegar)  
pickled onions or cornichons  
tomato purée  
white miso paste

### ttles

dark soy sauce  
fish sauce  
hoisin sauce  
red wine vinegar  
rice wine vinegar  
sherry vinegar  
white wine vinegar  
olive oil  
extra virgin olive oil  
corn or vegetable oil  
English mustard  
Dijon mustard

## **rains, flours & baking**

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sta and spaghetti

smati rice

sotto rice

ain flour

lf-raising flour

rong flour

aking powder

carbonate of soda

## **ices**

round coriander

round cumin

urmeric

nnamon

ushed chillies

oked paprika

prika

ylene

ffron

## **veet**

olden caster sugar

own sugar

ght muscovado

ng sugar

oney

% dark chocolate

## **ried goods**

ock cubes or powder

ried mushrooms

aldon sea salt

hole black pepper

## **esh**

ilk

utter

uble cream

igs

esh stock

urlic

nger

illies

erbs

mons





Supps Tips & Tricks

Accompaniment Ideas

Salad Tips & Tricks

Glittering Golden Salad Dressing

My Cheat's Caesar Salad Dressing

Mexican Chicken Tortilla Soup

Fish Tomato Soup with Cappelletti

Cajun Spatcho with King Prawns & Quails' Eggs

Chicken Satay Noodle Soup

Onion Soup with Soured Cream & Chives

Chinese Chicken & Mushroom Soup with Sesame Prawn Toast Croutons

Cooked Ham & Piccalilli Salad

Japanese Rare Roast Beef Salad with Mixed Radishes

Spicy Thai Chicken & Mango Salad

Roasted Aubergine, Mint & Yoghurt Salad

Deep-Fried Halloumi with Black Bean, Avocado & Chilli Salsa



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